

**“We faced Mabvuto”: A Gendered Socio-economic History of Malawian Women’s
Migration and Survival in Harare, 1940 to 1980.**

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Dedication

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Abstract

This dissertation examines Malawian women's migration from their natal homes to the colonial capital of Zimbabwe, Harare between 1940 and 1980. It stresses that though colonial states in the two territories instituted policies designed to deny or limit women's access into the migrant stream, women challenged such policies. Especially from 1940, the governments instituted a male oriented migrant system which spurred the most massive male exodus from Malawi, draining rural areas of able bodied male laborers. It also caused serious family disintegration leading to the escalation of women's vulnerabilities in the rural areas, forcing many to flee the villages against state efforts to limit their mobility. They entered and settled in Zimbabwe's capital, although the colonial government therein sought to deny them access and primarily preferred male workers. Even so, they faced serious hardships en-route and in Harare due to brutal police inspections, arrests and repatriations. They also had very limited, if any, employment opportunities and had to establish economic ventures such as urban farming, beer brewing and usury to supplement men's meager wages and survive as families. In varied ways, they coped with, fought against and resisted the male biased system in both Malawi and Zimbabwe. As the women who came from a wide variety of ethnicities and faced similar hardships in Harare, they came together in welfare and burial unions that transcended ethnic divisions by the 1960s. By the 1970s, they had drawn from events in Malawi where Kamuzu Banda, the new independence leader, called for umodzi/ unity under the concept of dziko/ nation. They thus redefined themselves as Malawians even as they remained migrants in Harare, where they illegally settled and transformed the socio-economic landscape.

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Chapter 1: “It was never easy to get here or even to remain here.”¹

My very first meeting with Alice Mbalami Kutengo on the 7th of September 2008 at her home in Old Highfield of Harare was very instructive. On that day, when the friendly, intelligent and feisty Chewa woman of about seventy years of age was seeing me off, she talked with much animation as we walked. Yet when we met the Lomwe woman Mama Ndawara, Alice abruptly broke our conversation and slowly moved to the edge of the gritty and dusty street to kneel down in the hot late afternoon sun with her walking cane stuck firmly to the ground, in deference to her. The Lomwe woman of about her age responded by also going down on the other side. As I also knelt, I closely observed the respectful way in which the two women conversed in Chewa after greeting each other. They similarly kept their heads bowed down even if one was Mchewa and the other, Mlomwe. Though I had surely seen this with little interest in the past, on this particular day it struck me that for this generation of Malawian women, this was not just some wistful relic of bygone days, but a powerful expression of their recognition of their common plight as migrants in the urban locations of Harare. In this simple act, they articulated not only the *umodzi*/unity² necessary to support each other amidst the hardships of urban life, but their transformative claim to socio-economic space going back to the colonial era.

In this dissertation, I argue that going back to the colonial period Malawian women occupied a significant place in the social and economic history of both Malawi and Zimbabwe. However, very little if any scholarly attention has been paid to their importance in the history of international labor migration which has dominated economic relations between the two colonies. In this study, I adopt a gendered transnational perspective framed within the concept of the “*carceral* archipelago of surveillance” to bring the women to the center of historical inquiry. I understand the concept to mean a pervasive system of regulations imposed by states on the movement of populations across

¹Interview with Alice Mbalami Kutengo, Highfield, 8 September 2008.

² *Umodzi* is a Chewa term denoting oneness or the state of coherent integration which became important particularly from the 1960s nationalist era among migrants in Harare.

territorial boundaries and within specific locations of settlement. Applied from a transnational gendered perspective, the concept enables us to fill an important gap in Zimbabwean and Malawian history by bringing into central focus the significance of women in the migrant stream. In Malawi, while the state developed policies to facilitate and obtain the best benefits from exporting male labor to Zimbabwe, women figured prominently in such policies. Though the state primarily encouraged men to migrate to Zimbabwe so as to be better able to contribute to the colony's economic upkeep, its ability to maintain the economic balance whereby, the colony's own internal economy thrived, depended on the position of women. In the official mind, where men's migration represented a major income generating venture for an impoverished colony, women had to remain behind. As protected dependents of men, women had to attract men's earnings into the economy while providing the stable rural work force necessary to maintain peasant livelihoods. Not surprisingly, at the forefront in its negotiations, the Malawian colonial state debated issues of tax and cash remittances and deferred payments with the colonial state in Zimbabwe allegedly "in respect of wives left behind."³ Testifying to their significance in the socio-economic history of Malawi, the state felt compelled to enlist household heads, headmen and chiefs to implement its policies against women's migration even as it promoted men's.⁴

By applying the concept of the gendered "carceral archipelago" of transnational surveillance it becomes possible to also view Malawian women's significance in the socio-economic history of Zimbabwe to which they increasingly migrated since 1940. In Zimbabwe the colonial state focused efforts on limiting or controlling their entry especially into Harare and cooperated with Malawi to deny them access. Such systems of surveillance were not unique to Malawian women's migration experiences but constituted part of migrants' lives in other parts of the world. Foucault argues that in 19th century

³ MA, File LB5/1/1, Native Tax Ordinance- District census and payments, 1941-50: Tax remittance Notice from the Governor to Labor Commissioner, 19 December 1947.

⁴ Michel Foucault's concept is applied to the study of immigration control in the United States by Eithne Luibheid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the border*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, c2002), p.xxvii.

Europe systems of surveillance or “calculated management of life emerged as a key objective of liberal governments who applied it to the regulation of population movements to root out deviants”⁵ Eithne Luibheid sees the same “calculated management of life” in US immigration policies as “always designed to foster only certain populations while other populations were ejected or remained unfostered to the point of death⁶.” In Zimbabwe, where Malawian men constituted the largest foreign work force especially in Harare, the colonial state was keen to facilitate their entry while eliminating as much as possible the women and their children, who would be a liability. However, Malawian women not only impacted on official policies governing labor migration and urban settlement. They transformed the gender composition of the migrant stream as they increasingly moved from their natal homes to Harare amidst states’ concerns and efforts to curtail their movements. Not only did their migration impact on socio-economic life in Malawi both shaping and upsetting state plans and African authorities’ power, it primarily affected life in Zimbabwe where they adamantly claimed and forever transformed the gendered social and economic landscape of the “white city”, Harare.

Adopting a transnational analysis based on the concept of the gendered *carceral* archipelago of surveillance also opens up new areas of scholarly inquiry shaping four propositions of this dissertation. Firstly, Malawian women’s migration must be understood in the context of their perpetual vulnerability in Malawi but mostly in Zimbabwe, which mainly emanated from the institution of a male biased migrant system. Within the context of the trans-national systems of surveillance established between and within the two territories, women experienced extreme hardships due to declining rural livelihoods in Malawi; as they left their original homelands to traverse other foreign lands to reach the Zimbabwean border; and as they moved from the border to make a living in the hostile and unstable world of colonial Harare.

⁵Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, (New York, Vintage Edition, 1990), p.140.

⁶ Luibheid, *Entry Denied*, pxiii.

Especially from the 1940s, as labor migration from Malawi to Zimbabwe peaked, it had drastic impacts on peasant women's lives. By instituting the male migrant system, the Malawian and Zimbabwean colonial states failed to foresee the extent of damage and destruction to rural social and economic existence that such a policy entailed. Indeed, these miscalculations not only revealed the inherent contradictions in colonial policies given that it spurred the most massive male exodus in Malawian history. As hundreds of thousands of men left Malawi as laborers, women reeled under the escalating burdens of peasant production, social reproduction and experienced the feminization of rural poverty. Of course, this impact of male biased migrant patterns marked the colonial experience in most parts of Africa. Elizabeth Francis notes that in Kenya, as men migrated to seek work in the East African region, "the loss of male labor began to be felt in the agricultural sector." In Nyanza district, women grappled with starvation as they lost food security.⁷ While Francis fails to see this as reason enough for Kenyan women to leave rural areas, Marion Sinclair demonstrates that African women migrated in East and Southern Africa not only to realize their goals of obtaining power, independence and success but to effectively escape rural poverty.⁸

In Malawi, men's cross border exodus was however most acutely felt among peasant women since it kept away about 50 percent of all able bodied men for between one and two years. Existing statistics show that Malawian men made up over half of Zimbabwe's urban workforce in the colonial era.⁹ In short, the male exodus triggered an unprecedented rise in rural insecurities marked by irregular and absent remittances; the

⁷ Elizabeth Francis, "Gender, Migration and Multiple Livelihoods: Cases from Eastern and Southern Africa", <http://grov.ufl.edu> The study draws on material from the author's book, *Making a living: Changing Livelihoods in Rural Africa*, (London, Routledge, 2000).

⁸ Sinclair Marion Ryan, "Community, Identity and Gender in Migrant Societies: Emerging Epistemological Challenges", *International Affairs*, 74, 2, (April 1998), pp. 339-353.

⁹ For general statistics see British Foreign Affairs Office (BFAO), File 137/1944-48, Appendix B. Puts the figures of Malawians in Zimbabwe at 227 054 in 1941, the Malawi Archives (MA), Colonial Reports, Nyasaland Protectorate for the year 1941 and 1942 places them at 80 000 while the 1947 figure was 84 000 and the 1953 figure is 159 000 with only 42 000 going on to South Africa. Cynthia Crosby, *The Historical Dictionary of Malawi*, 2nd Edition, (London, The scarecrow press Inc., 1993) places the figures at 100 000 Malawian working in Southern Rhodesia and 40 000 South Africa in 1950. Used together, the records give a good approximation of the rate of migration and most popular destination for Malawian migrants in the colonial period.

breakdown of marriages and betrothals as men completely abandoned their women and children or stayed away longer. In this context, the colonially instituted male centered migrant system exposed the peasant women to extreme suffering and vulnerability within their own natal homelands and ironically constituted the conditions impelling them to plunge into the migrant stream.

However, their migration was not easy since the two states colluded to impose one of the strictest networks of surveillance in the region. In a series of agreements, the states sought to limit or render impossible the migration of women and their children. The rigid transnational controls were so pervasive as to expose these women to serious risks and challenges in their efforts to migrate. Firstly, the agreements between the two countries marginalized women by issuing migrant certificates and from 1948, migrant work books permitting only men to migrate as workers. Even male juveniles could obtain passbooks in their districts; in any other district of Malawi, en-route or from the office of the then Nyasaland Resident Officer in Harare. The documents offered men a facilitated migratory option since they could either travel independently, or access transport, medical care, clothing, food and shelter in transit camps.

Up to the 1960s, Malawian women could not hold similar documents and could therefore hardly access similar privileges. They were first and foremost illegal migrants. To even leave Malawi, they needed husbands' letters of invitation; men's registration numbers as well as their employers' letters indicating approval of wives' arrival and availability of adequate accommodation. This amounted to a virtual denial of mobility even for married women who could little control access to such records. Of course such vulnerability affected women in other parts of colonial Africa. For instance, Phillip Bonner notes the efforts by the apartheid government of South Africa to eject Mozambican women from the Rand through raids and repatriations.¹⁰ However, the case seems to have been even

¹⁰ Philip Bonner, "African urbanization on the Rand between the 1930s and 1960s: Its social character and Political consequences", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21, 1, (1995), p.128.

worse for Malawian women since surveillance for them did not begin at the point of entry into Zimbabwe but from their natal homes into Harare.

In Malawi, the women were actually defined as perpetual minors who had to stay home or go through very cumbersome procedures where they liaised with a male hierarchy of household heads, village headmen and chiefs. They had to have this hierarchy's approval to proceed to the district commissioners who sat at its helm, to obtain migrant permits. The women had to comply with any decision within the hierarchy, even if it meant refusal to issue them permits. It appears that the same experiences of surveillance affected women in other parts of the world. In her examination of the plight of Chinese and other ethnic women who migrated into the USA from the 1890s to the 20th century, Eithne Luibheid stresses control at the border and in the USA as police and the immigration authorities imposed "systems and regimes of ongoing surveillance." She notes how "disciplinary power does not inhabit any one institution but rather works between and across institutions."¹¹ In other words, the central "disciplinary power does not replace other forms of power which exist in society, but rather invests in or colonizes them, linking them together, honing their efficiency."¹² For Malawian women, the state extended its disciplinary power by co-opting African authorities and policemen to ensure that women simply fit into the system as village bound recipients of men's remittances, deferred wages and taxes. The same applied even in other African colonies such as Swaziland where according to Siphon Simelane, African and colonial authorities co-opted each other to prevent women's migration to the Rand.¹³ However, Malawian women's experiences were unparalleled given that two states cooperated to hone the surveillance not only internally but at a transnational level. In the USA case, surveillance started at the

¹¹ Luibheid, pxiii.

¹² Herbert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd edition, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1983), p.153.

¹³ Simelane Hamilton Siphon, "The State, Chiefs and the Control of Female Migration in Colonial Swaziland, c 1930s-1950s" *Journal of African History*, 45, 1, (2004), pp.103-124.

border while in Swaziland it ended within the Swazi borders and was not transnational in scope of intensity.

Demonstrating the transnationality of their field of vulnerability, the colonial state of Zimbabwe was instrumental in the promulgation and implementation of major international laws such as the 1948 Act. The state posted police details at popular entry points through which Malawians entered the colony, that is, at Mkumbura in Darwin, Nyamapanda in Mutoko and Forbes in Mutare. It also had police men at major train and bus stations inside the country and in urban locations including Mutare and Harare. As the state sought out those who did not hold the “wife’s permit” as required under the 1948 Act, women generally faced brutal inspections, arrests and repatriations at various points of their journey. The colonial state’s fear of “alien” Africans’ permanent domicile in Zimbabwe where the African majority was hemmed in a mere 1/3 of the total agrarian land and in inadequately endowed urban locations made surveillance meticulously brutal. This explains intrusive house raids, street searches; repatriations, even of wives who held all adequate documentation, as long as they lacked housing from husbands’ employers or if their husbands were too elderly, injured, or sick to work or died.

Secondly, the transnational perspective allows us to explore Malawian women’s survival strategies at both ends of the migrant stream, that is, both in their rural villages and in Harare. It provides an interior view into the ways in which they coped with and adapted to life in this unstable transnational migrant world. Before resorting to migration, peasant women coped with starvation, death of children due to malnutrition related diseases and increased demands on their labor. Given that they could no longer rely on men who had previously undertaken the heavy agrarian tasks such as clearing both *madimba*/swamp gardens and *minda*/rain fed fields, many adapted by taking on tree cutting, bush clearing and hand hoeing of vast tracts of land. They woke up with the dawn in order to divide their time between agrarian work on rain fed fields and also on swamp gardens which represented an important source of food security in case of droughts or just before the main planting season when grain bins were empty. In this period, green vegetables were

scarce and water levels in wells dropped. Women woke up at dawn to farm and fetch water from long distances of above 5km, gather *nyika*/water lily bulbs, *kasunika*/spicy vegetables that grew on river beds, cassava leaves and edible flying ants, all of which were crucial in their daily diet. Others begged for *nkute* or crushed water lily bulbs, cassava and plantains to make *ufa* to cook and feed their families. *Nkute* is a term which refers to the previous day(s) left overs of *nsima*, a polenta or thick porridge made of *ufa*/corn meal but sometimes of other substitutes. Hence, begging for *nkute* in villages as well as gathering wild foods represented central coping strategies for women in the face of the disruptions to normal life caused by the male exodus.

The women also coped with death, especially since five in every ten children of between infancy and ten years of age died of malnutrition related diseases between 1940 and 1956.¹⁴ At village level, women mourned and buried their dead alone. Even so, such coping strategies were not enough and in all my discussions with them, the women emphasized how migration itself was the ultimate way out. Indeed, Marion Sinclair's argument that for women in Eastern and Southern Africa, migration was one way by which women sought to cope with new hardships, holds true for Malawian women.¹⁵ They adapted to their reality by plunging into the migrant stream, sometimes with the aim of confronting truant husbands, their *azungu*/employers and to find a way to earn income to support their children.

In comparative terms, it must have been easier for women to find ways to cope with their situation in Malawi, given the familiarity with their surroundings as well as the desire by colonial officials that they remain in these villages. Their migration into a city which was officially designated as "white" space in which only necessary Africans, that is the workers, could legally enter made their situation extremely hard. They migrated into a city in which women were mainly on the margins of capitalist employment, making up a

¹⁴Embassy of Malawi, Harare, Mt Pleasant, Tract entitled *Marching From the past to the future: Improving the health and mortality of infants in Malawi*, Ministry of Health, 8 June 1965, p.3.

¹⁵ Sinclair Marion Ryan, "Community, Identity and Gender in Migrant Societies: Emerging Epistemological Challenges", *International Affairs*, 74, 2, (April 1998), pp. 339-353.

mere 5 percent of the total workforce as late as 1956. Indeed, unlike people of mixed race known as “coloreds” in Zimbabwe as in South Africa and indigenous Shona women who could obtain jobs as nannies, Malawian women had extremely limited, if any, access to employment even in European suburbs. In addition, their men earned very meager wages which generally fell below the required urban family income of 7 pounds 10 shillings 6 pence in 1957, for instance.¹⁶ Even though many employers adhered to a system of food rations to supplement meager wages, the rations too were inadequate since they were primarily meant for a “single worker.” At most, the rations like the wages did not cater for urban family reproduction predicated as they were on the dominant understanding that women and children had to remain in their countries of origin. While single women, divorcees and widows lacked even those meager wages and rations due to their lack of working husbands’ support, wives whose husbands got sick, were too elderly to work or lost their jobs also faced the same plight.

In this foreign city, the women had to find ways to make ends meet and adopted various strategies in order to cope with urban realities in Harare. They drew from a repertoire of long established peasant survival strategies based on their Malawian experiences. Among their most important strategies therefore was urban farming. They occupied the vast tracts of unoccupied swamps and rain fed land surrounding the townships to cultivate beans, cassava, sweet potatoes, rice, pumpkins and corn. This illustrates Hopolong Phororo’s hypothesis based on his study of Lesotho that “the lack of employment and economic hardships lead people to venture into urban agriculture.”¹⁷ Indeed, each of the four townships in which Malawians dominated between 1940 and 1980, that is, Mbare, Highfield, Rugare and Mufakose were then located in the middle of vast tracts of

¹⁶ NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957.

¹⁷ Hopolong Phororo, “The Economic role of gardens in peri-urban and Urban settlements of Lesotho” in Chris de Wet and Roddy Fox(Eds) *Transforming settlement in Southern Africa*, (Edinburg University Press, Edinburg, 2001) pp100-104. See also Adeniyi Gbadesini, “Farming in the urban environment of a developing nation-a case study from Ibadan metropolis in Nigeria”, in *The Environmentalist*, vol. 11, No.2, (2006), pp.105-111. Daniel Maxwell and Samuel Zziwa, “Urban Farming in Africa: The case of Kampala, Uganda, (Nairobi”, ACTS Press, 1992). Paul Memon, “Urban agriculture in Kenya”, *Canadian Journal of Africa Studies*, vol. 27, No. 1, (1993), pp.25-42.

unoccupied land which they therefore turned into food producing *madimba* and *minda*. Of course, under the urban farming by laws passed since the 1940s in direct response to the women's activities, this was illegal and under the NUARAA of 1945, Vagrants Act of 1960 and FMLA of 1960, such economic ventures had to be stifled to discourage illegal migrant women from claiming urban space. The women therefore moved into their fields at dawn cutting footpaths by moon and star light throughout the swamps and rain fed soils in the outskirts of their towns. They worked beyond the gaze of the state and harvested enough for their families and for the market.

In addition, they engaged in illegal beer brewing in their backyards, in their squatter settlements such as Kwamazai and at Pinto's Quarry, as well as in other clandestine locations such as on the banks of the Mukuvisi River which cut across the four African locations. In direct breach of the Harmful Liquors Act passed in the 1940s to remain extant into the 1970s, they adamantly maintained their ventures and even sold Malawian meals such as *nsima* and a relish of dried fish or cassava leaves in *sinjiro*/peanut butter at their breweries. To stay ahead of municipal beer gardens established in each location, the women brewed two types of opaque beers, *chiseven days* and *chikokiana*, and also brewed the only clear distilled beer called *kachasu*. To cope with police surveillance, they brewed and sometimes sold at night, hiding their brew in pits, posting sentries on tree tops, and paying them with food and beer for warning them of patrols.

While beer brewing was among the most lucrative trades, they also established *chimbado*, that is, illegal money lending schemes where they charged interest to debtors. Since this was a highly profitable but dangerous trade given that some debtors refused to pay or reported them to the police for extortion, the women had to find ways to maintain this venture as well. They made use of the African beliefs in witchcraft especially the view that Malawian women thrived in their ventures because of witchcraft and sorcery. For instance, they required every borrower to swear that they would pay peacefully while holding a supposedly doctored black cloth, thus instilling superstitious fear to ensure payment. Many others engaged in prostitution or informal marriages whereby they lived

with married Malawian men whose wives had travelled or returned back home. They took the identity of the departed wife and used her marriage and other documents. While some lived in squatter settlements, Pinto's Quarry and Kwamazai, many prostitutes obtained shelter and money from their trade.

These ventures became even more important from the 1960s, when conditions worsened due to the economic decline caused by the nationalist war and the European World's imposition of economic sanctions against the colonial regime. Malawian women needed to maximize their economic activities as the main source of survival. They ventured further into the city center and European suburbs to market fresh agrarian produce thereby challenging existing restrictions and marring the racial compartmentalization of the city as they played hide and seek with authorities. Through all their ventures, they transformed the urban landscape, establishing alternative beer breweries, eating houses, money lending systems and above all creating a continuous field of green crops around the townships even as the municipality sought to clarify the distinction of the city from farms or rural zones. In this way, they established coping strategies closely associated with their foreign identity as captured in the reference, *mabhindauko emanyasarandi*/ Malawian women's economic ventures, in the townships.

Thirdly, the gendered transnational approach enables us to see that, try as they might, both Malawian and Zimbabwean colonial authorities backed by a series of inter-territorial and internal laws, could not fully hold the women to their expectations. Malawian women were able to exercise enough autonomy to migrate and settle in Zimbabwe even despite colonial efforts to curtail their movements or ability to make a living. It is true that they did not directly confront the states in revolt against the system given their awareness of their limited power. They were however not passive recipients or hapless victims of the colonial mandate. In Malawi, they adopted different strategies and hidden forms of agency ranging from flight, negotiations with their male guardians at household level, bribery, the use of illegal transporters popularly known as *madhobhadhobha*, resort to clandestine routes, liaising with husbands to obtain required documents, all of which

were typically the “weapons of the weak.” In the specific case of Malawi, even if the system relied on fairly massive African involvement as household heads, village heads, chiefs and their respective police men collaborated, they were not enough to saturate the countryside and routes. Also the women knew how to persuade some who were already sympathetic to their daughters and wards’ interests. They bribed some well-known “cruel” functionaries such as Chief Muroro and Headmen Kuntiwa as well as *ankoswe*/male household heads. Others threatened their husbands with divorce if they did not gather for them all required documents to obtain permits and also if they did not pay bribe money or bring Rhodesian goods like bicycles and coats to oil the palms of responsible authorities. Others hiked to distant main roads in the company of male friends who hid them in train cabins until they arrived in Harare.

Amidst concerted state controls, they found ways to migrate and make a difference not only in their own lives but on the migrant composition and the urban socio-economic setting of the colonial capital of Zimbabwe, Harare. Given their determination to migrate, even the Zimbabwean colonial state and its armies of policemen could hardly force women to comply with the migrant regulations. Little could they control clandestine entry points which women frequently used with the help of highly skilled informal transporters, *madhobhadhobha*. This also meant that as thousands arrived from the 1940s,¹⁸ the state could not stem the tide and neither could it police all entry points especially given the vastness of the Zimbabwean border. The women knew that the police manned only three points, Forbes, Nyamapanda and Mukumbura. Indeed, this partly illustrates what Jonathan Crush means when he argues in the case of Southern Africa that the colonial borders were too under policed to fully control migration across territories.¹⁹ Aderanti Adepoju who examines colonial migration in West Africa also notes that indeed, “border regulations could be circumvented and extensive borders, relative to

¹⁸ NAZ, File 2239, Migratory Labor Carried by Southern Rhodesia Government Migrant Labor Transport (Ulere), 1947-60. In 1960, 2, 013 women travelled by Ulere into Zimbabwe.

¹⁹ Jonathan Crush, “Mine Migrancy in the contemporary era”, in Jonathan Crush and W. James, (Eds), *Crossing boundaries, Mine Migrants in democratic South Africa*, (Cape Town, IDASA/IDRC, 1995), pp.64-81.

available manpower, made effective policing extremely difficult.”²⁰ As the women determined to migrate, the states could hardly keep up or support the numbers of functionaries necessary to effectively police even bus or train stations leading to Harare.

In Harare, senior women known as *anyankungwi*/instructors because of their wisdom, helpfulness and knowledge of the city, liaised with African policemen who warned them of impending house or street raids under the Native Urban Areas Registration and Accommodation Act (NUARAA) of 1945, the Vagrants Act of 1960 and the internal Foreign Migratory Labor Act (FMLA) of 1960. The FMLA was designed to keep them beyond the 10 miles radius of Harare. They established friendly relations with “police-boys” who warned them of impending beer raids and the implementation of urban bylaws. Hence, even in Harare, the laws as well as state and municipal policemen could not prevent women from waking up with the dawn to carry out their socio-economic activities under cover of darkness. Neither could they stop them from constituting powerful socio-economic organizations to protect even illegal members of their communities from arrests, beatings, detentions and forced repatriations. The state could combine internal urban laws with international laws in the city to deny housing and social amenities to undocumented women, but could not prevent them from housing each other illegally. Neither could it prevent them from shifting residency to evade raids, or moving into marriage houses using marriage certificates of fellow Malawian wives who had travelled or returned permanently to Malawi. To this extent, women negotiated, resisted and circumvented the strict policies and surveillance that threatened to stifle their urban existence.

Finally, examining their experiences through a transnational lens set within the framework of the gendered network of surveillance directs my inquiry into how and why, in such a constrained environment, the women forged a new sense of unity and social

²⁰ Aderanti Adepoju, “Creating a borderless West Africa: Constraints and prospects for inter-regional migration” in Antoine Pecoud and Paul de Guchteneire, (Eds) *Migration Without Borders: Essays on the Free Movement of People*, (New York, Bergahn Books, 2007). pp.161-174.

identity. I maintain that, thrown together in the volatile urban milieu from diverse ethnicities, villages, chiefdoms and districts of Malawi, the women needed to unite and cooperate so as to maximize their chances of survival. Even as they coped through the establishment of different economic ventures, they forged a new unity to effectively cushion each other in the face of random raids, arrests, seizure of income or wares by police details, loss of a year's crops in their urban fields when state and municipal policemen slashed them down before they were ready for harvest. In addition, illegal women especially divorcees, widows, singles and wives whose husbands could no longer work for some reason required the cooperation and support of those who were in marriage quarters to obtain shelter. All of them also had to contend with the reality of deaths of loved ones away from their villages and the support of extended families. Funerals in the city were expensive. The bereaved families needed food for themselves, food and drink for mourners during wakes of between 3 and five days; their dead had to be properly shrouded and blanketed for burial; and the city fathers required burial permit fees for the gravesites in the African cemetery at Warren Hills. In this context, Malawian women constructed their own support networks in the form of *mutandizi*/welfare associations and *mwariro*/burial organizations starting in the 1940s when they began to claim space in the city in significant numbers.

The organizations marked the beginnings of community construction among women in the main African townships. Initially ethnicity emerged as the major organizing principle, as women established and identified their associations under ethnic names. The existence of *mutandizi*/welfare associations such as *Tikumbuke Achewa* of Mufakose led by Enifa Njewa; Ayao of Mufakose led by Twasume Chigwegwere; Alomwe of Rugare led by Ayinesi Mlewa; the Man'anja's *Nkokwe* Society of Old Highfield led by Loda Dhaka and the Sena's *Kusunza* of Mbare formed by Lukia Mbeta among others, testify to the significance of ethnicity.²¹ Ethnic burial societies included Erise Chunga's Ayao Burial

²¹Interview with Enifa Njewa, Mufakose, 9th February, 2009; Chigwegwere Twasume, Rugare, 10th November, 2008; Mlewa Ayinesi, Rugare, 17th, November 2008; Loda Dhaka, Highfield, 11 September 2008 and Lukia Mbeta, Mbare, 18 August, 2008.

society of Rugare consisting of Ayao members and Hlekwise Ngandu's Agomani burial for the Gomani women.²² Welfare societies provided food, money, moral support, friendship to needy members and even sheltered newly arrived illegal women, some of whom they matched with eligible men in married housing whose wives had jilted them to return to Malawi. They also arranged fictive kinship with men from their own ethnicities who became the guardians to marry singles off under pretenses they were their sisters born in Harare whom their parents had left under their guardianship. They created networks to provide information and even assistance whereby illegal women would arrive straight from Malawi into their homes. The leaders became so well known among their own people that men would bring new arrivals found roaming at main train or bus stations in Harare to their doorsteps.

This process of community building reached a peak in the 1960s period with nationalist struggles in the Southern African region. In Zimbabwe, nationalism fanned a strong sense of cohesion among indigenes, while in Malawi it reached a peak with the rise of Kamuzu Banda. In this era, African nationalism and European powers' demands that the regime in Zimbabwe concede to majority rule pushed the regime into a Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Its efforts to tighten its grip on Zimbabwe saw the introduction of new laws such as the Vagrants Act, FMLA, with the Law and Order Maintenance Act of 1973, Riotous Assembly Act of 1973 combined with the NUARAA as amended in 1951. All these laws made Harare a police city just as many men lost their jobs, wages declined and food rations dried up as investors and entrepreneurs fled to South Africa and Britain. Never had life in Harare been more volatile for migrant women. Combined, the need for survival in this unstable city and the calls on all Malawians at home and abroad to focus on *umodzi*/oneness transcending ethnic divisions influenced reforms in women's social organizations. That the shift in welfare and burial organizations occurred just as the Malawian women's League opened its branch and

²² Interview with Hlekwise Ngandu, Highfield, Harare, 11th September, 2008. Chunga Erise, Rugare, 29th November, 2008.

proselytized among the women to unite as people of the same *dziko*, was not a mere coincidence. Ethnic associations died down while others expanded their boundaries to incorporate any Malawian.

The new associations became the springboards upon which the League worked to draw women's attention to politics at home. The new, larger associations became more sophisticated in organization with various branches, chair persons, treasurers and committees to collect subscriptions. Leaders coordinated with the League and the Malawi High Commission Office based in Mt Pleasant in Harare to facilitate members' yearly travels for *chikumbutso*/independence commemorations in Malawi between 1966 and the 1970s. They even obtained similar uniforms emblazoned with Banda's bust and the red rising sun denoting *kwacha*/the dawn of freedom. It was at this time that language renegotiations became apparent illustrating what Andre Tabouret-Keller means when he stresses, "confrontations of the migrants' cultures and social conditions encountered where migrants settle result in migratory linguistic renegotiations..."²³ In their supra ethnic unions, they adopted Chewa which also served as the *lingua franca* of Malawi. This clearly demonstrates Albert Verdoot's conclusions that among migrants thrown together from different ethnicities, "there develops a tacit consensus as to which language is to be used for communication on what topics or for what purpose..."²⁴ This marked the establishment of a new transnational concept of identity based on the concept of *dziko*, both as a sign of connection with Malawi and a survival strategy in the increasingly volatile world of Harare. Ethnicity lost its relevance as migrant women sought to claim citizenship in Malawi as *mbumba yaNgwazi*/ members of Banda's national family, even as they remained *alendo*/ migrants in Harare.

²³Andre Tabouret-Keller, "Language use in relation to the growth of towns in West Africa: A survey" in *International Migration Review*, vol. 5 No. 2, (1971), p.10. Barbara Meier "Migrant women's associations in Ghana: the case of female chief and female chain migration", in Jacqueline Knorr and Barbara Meier, *Women and Migration: Anthropological perspectives*, (New York, St Martin Press, 2000), pp.181-196.

²⁴Albert Verdoot, "The differential Impact of French Speakers on indigenous German Speakers: A case study in light of two theories", in *International Migration Review*, 5, 2, (Summer 1971), p.142.

In examining Malawian women's struggles for survival, I particularly refer to them as inter-territorial, international or cross border migrants. This makes it easy to differentiate those who moved from Malawi through Mozambique, Zambia or Botswana to get into Zimbabwe in the studied period, from internal, rural to urban migrants. According to the United Nations Secretariat's definition, in its simplest form "migration is a change of residence."²⁵ While rural to urban mobility is also a temporary or permanent change of residence, international migration is defined in terms of crossing territorial and political administrative boundaries. My work subscribes to the United Nations Secretariat's definition that "an international or inter territorial migrant is a person who changes his or her country of usual residence, someone who crosses one or more state boundaries to stay in another country for a certain period of time."²⁶ Such migration can be circular, denoting regular movement between two or more territories; more permanent capturing both lengthy settlement in the receiving country before final return, or even permanent domicile. Though there are many types of inter-territorial migrants, the two major ones are labor migrants and refugees, with the latter being defined according to the involuntary or forced nature of their mobility. While my study seeks to examine Malawian women's experiences within the context of labor migration which makes them labor migrants in their own right, I also seek to enhance my scope by noting that migration entails "a movement of cultural forms, as people bring not only their physical presence but their food habits, work habits, economic strategies, social relations, rituals and ideologies."²⁷ I thus examine the gendered ways in which migrant women traversed inter territorial as well as ethnic boundaries to creatively adapt to the vagaries of urban life; and how they collectively drew from an arsenal of their peasant work patterns, socio-economic norms and cultural strategies to define urban life in terms that helped them to survive.

²⁵ United Nations Secretariat, *World Urbanization Prospects*, (New York, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 1995).

²⁶ United Nations, *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*, (New York, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 1999).

²⁷ Mirjam de Bruijn, Rijk van Dijk and Dick Foeken, *Mobile Africa: Changing Patterns of movement in Africa and Beyond*, (Brill Boston 2002), p.21.

Malawian women and the Historiography of Migration in Africa

The dissertation builds upon prior scholarship on women's migration as well as broader literature on labor migration in Africa. It underscores the important insights of scholars such as Christine Obbo that African women were not victims trapped in the passive, immobile grass widow syndrome.²⁸ It emphasizes Obbo's observation that migration was among the most important strategies that African women used to achieve better livelihoods as individuals and families in the hostile and male dominated colonial world. Writing about different colonial settings in Africa, Teresa Barnes, Elizabeth Schmidt, Julia Wells, Gina Buijjs, Jose van Santen and Jacqueline Knorr have reached similar conclusions.²⁹ For instance, Schmidt and Barnes examine how Zimbabwean women struggled for mobility against colonial structures and customary laws. Wells defines African women as "migrant workers in their own right" and traces how "they fought to preserve their income generating options..." in urban South Africa.³⁰ While Sapire stresses how women ran away from "patriarchal controls" and poverty in the reserves, moving to urban East Rand to work in their own right, Buijjs examines Pondo women's migration to Natal. Knorr explores migrant women's societies in the unfamiliar male dominated environment of Freetown, Sierra Leone, just as Jean Bernard Ouedraogo's Dagara girls moved to Bobo Dioulasso in Burkina Faso to escape rural marginalization.³¹

²⁸ Christine Obbo, *African Women: Their Struggle for Economic Independence*, (London, Zed Books, 1980).

²⁹ Obbo, *African Women*. Julia Wells, *We Now Demand! The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa*, (South Africa, Witwatersrand University Press, 1993). Buijjs Gina, "Women alone: Migrants from Transkei employed in rural Natal", in Gina Buijjs, (Ed), *Migrant Women: Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities*, (Oxford, Berg Press, 1993), pp.179-194. Elizabeth Schmidt, "Negotiated spaces and Contested Terrain: Men, women and the law in colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1939", in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 16, 4, (1990), pp.622-648. Barnes Teresa, "The fight for the control of African women's mobility in colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1939", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 17, no. 3, (1992), pp.586-608. Barnes Teresa, "'Am I a man'? Gender and the pass laws in urban colonial Zimbabwe", *African Studies Review*, vol.40, No. 1, (1997), pp.59-81. Hilary Sapire, "African Settlement and Segregation, p.145. Jacqueline Knorr, "Female Secret Societies and Their Impact on Ethnic and Trans-ethnic Identities Among Migrant Women in Freetown, Sierra Leone", in Barbra Meier and Jacqueline Knorr, (Eds), *Women and Migration: Anthropological perspectives*, (New York, Pelgrave and St Martin Press, 2000), pp.80-95.

³⁰ Wells, *We Now Demand!* p.34.

³¹ Jean Bernard Ouedraogo, "The Girls of Nyovuuru: Dagara Female Labor Migrants to Bobo Dioulasso" In Tade Akin Aina and Jonathan Baker(Eds), *The Migration Experience in Africa*, (Sweden, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1995) pp. 303-321.

The literature raises important issues that my dissertation takes up. Firstly, it makes the point summed up by Jose van Santen and Juliette Schaafsma in their study of Mafa women and migration in North Cameroon thus, “a careful historical examination of different forms of migration affirms that the system, even in the colonial era, was not just reserved for men as much of the literature on Africa has taken for granted.”³² While it is unique in terms of the lengths to which states systematically collaborated with each other to obstruct them, the experiences of Malawian women which this dissertation examines exhibit important similarities with women’s experiences in other parts of colonial Africa. For instance, like their counterparts in apartheid South Africa, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, French Burkina Faso and Cameroon, they joined the migrant stream as “workers in their own right”. My work derives great benefits especially from this scholars’ radical insistence that though there existed a gendered distinction in who was or was not a migrant worker, migrant women also acted in economic and structural contexts as “workers.” For Malawian women too, “work” represented more than capitalist engagement, but informal survival strategies and social reproductive engagements in the city of Harare.

It underscores the fact that despite the lack of formal work opportunities for them, Malawian women migrated to Zimbabwe where they claimed socio-economic space despite their primary exclusion from capitalist wage labor. Despite their general marginalization, as dictated by a combination of internal and inter-territorial laws, they struggled, coped and creatively adapted by engaging in illegal socio-economic ventures. As other scholars have observed about other colonial settings such as Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and Sudan, such women’s work was also important given that their earnings subsidized husbands’ meager wages. With working men’s wages generally falling below the required urban family income of 7 pounds 10 shillings 6 pence in 1957, the women’s

³² Jose van Santen and Juliette Schaafsma, “Mafa women and Migration” in Jacqueline Knorr and Barbara Meier (Eds), *Women and Migration: Anthropological Perspectives*, (Pelgrave and Martin Press, New York, 2000), pp.21-79. See also “Sylvia Chant and Sarah A, Radcliffe, “Migration and Development: The importance of Gender,” in S, Chant and S Radcliffe (Eds), *Gender and Migration in Developing Countries*, (London, Belhaven Press, 1992), pp1-29. Jean Bernard Ouedraogo, “The Girls of Nyovuuru”, pp.303-321.

work in Harare was pivotal to family reproduction.³³ Recalling her encounter with a Rhodesian Police squad which raided her beer brewing hide out in Old Highfield location of Harare, Alice Mbalami Kutengo captures the importance of such work.

So then, the police boy said, “now mother, you are in very serious trouble, do you know that? Doesn’t your husband work? Do you want to be repatriated back to Nyasaland?” I replied, “You are wise my son so you know, I your mother already committed a greater crime in having many children who must eat. My husband earns very little and this is my work, right here, I work very hard at it because my family lives by it!”³⁴

Malawian women therefore joined other migrant women throughout Africa who engaged in relevant work as beer brewers, prostitutes and traders to maintain their families in racially and gender segregated socio-economic environments.³⁵

Notwithstanding the benefit that my work derives from the groundwork laid by prior scholarship, a closer examination of the literature reveals one major conceptual weakness limiting efforts to integrate women in international migrant histories. In her critical observation, Belinda Dodson rightly emphasizes the failure among feminists and Africanists to make a conscious differentiation between women as internal and women as international migrants. Dodson aptly observes, “there has been a considerable amount of research on internal rural to urban migration by women...but African women as international migrants in their own right have only recently begun to attract due academic attention.”³⁶ Thus, a persistent lacuna remains since existing scholarship makes little

³³ NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957.

³⁴ Interview with Alice Mbalami Kutengo, Highfield, 8 September 2008.

³⁵ Edna Bay, *Women and Work in Africa*, (Illinois, Westview Press, 1982).

³⁶ Belinda Dodson, “Gender, Migration and Livelihoods: Migrant Women in Southern Africa”, in Nicola Piper, *New Perspectives on Gender and Migration: Livelihoods, Rights and Entitlements*, (London, Routledge, 2008), p.137. A survey of the following literature will show the accuracy of Dodson’s claim: Maxine Schoeman, “Mindsets and Migrants: Conceptions of State, Sovereignty and Citizenship of Insiders and Outsiders in South Africa”, in Jim Whitman, (Ed), *Migrants, Citizens and the State in Southern Africa*, (London, Macmillan Press, 2000), pp.62-81. Piet Konings, “Mobility and Exclusion: Conflict between autochthons and allochthons during political liberalization in Cameroon” in Mirjam de Bruijin, Rijk van Dijk and Dick Foeken(Eds), *Mobile Africa: Changing patterns of movement in Africa and Beyond*, (Boston, Brill, 2001), pp.169-194. Jonathan Crush and Alan Jeeves, “The failure of Stabilization Experiments on South African Gold Mines”, in Jonathan Crush and Alan Jeeves, *Crossing Boundaries: Mine Migrancy in a Democratic South Africa*, (Cape Town, Institute for Democracy in South Africa, 1995), pp.1-13.

distinction between internal and international migrants and misses much of the unique struggles of inter territorial migrant women.

This is not to ignore insights from scholars such as Belinda Bozzoli, Phillip Bonner, David Coplan and Teresa Barnes who have laid the foundations for inquiry on women's international migration.³⁷ Barnes' most recent work "Virgin Territory", lays the most significant base by firmly establishing the presence of Malawian, South African and Batswana women in Harare during the colonial period. However, Barnes merely seeks to identify women's international migration as an unexamined terrain and leaves the reader with the exhortation to carry out research on "why women were on the way."³⁸ Bozzoli and Coplan also place Basotho women as migrants in South Africa but do not necessarily explore why or how they came to be in the city even as they stress the women's goals and work therein. This therefore results in silences about their difficult experiences, struggles and impacts of their presence on urban life. Their journeys from their homelands; the reasons and strategies they applied to make them; their struggles for socio-economic survival in male dominated and state controlled environments remain uncharted.

A few scholars such as Phillip Bonner and Sipho Simelane have however considered the reality that women did not migrate in a vacuum but in an environment charged with states' concerns, interests and hence gendered structures of control. They have started to lay the ground work to fully integrate international migrant women's confrontations with authorities in the country of origin and in host communities.³⁹ Though he also does not

³⁷ Belinda Bozzoli and Nkotswe Mmantho, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life strategy and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983*, (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 1991). Bonner Phillip, "Desirable or Undesirable Basotho women? Liquor, Prostitution and the Migration of Basotho women to the Rand, 1920-1945", in Cheryl Walker, (Ed), *Women and gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), pp.227- 243. David Coplan, "You've left me wandering about: Basotho women and the culture of mobility", in Dorothy L Hodgson and Sheryl A. McCurdy, (Eds) "Wicked" women and the reconfiguration of gender in Africa, (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 2001), pp.189-209.

³⁸ Barnes Teresa, "Virgin Territory? Travel and Migration by African Women in 20th Century Southern Africa", in Allman Jean Marie, Geiger Susan and Musisi Nakanyike, (Eds), *Women in African Colonial Histories*, (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2002), p.163-190.

³⁹ Phillip Bonner, "African urbanization on the Rand between the 1930s and 1960s: Its social character and Political consequences", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21, 1, (1995), p.128.

examine how the women got there, Bonner stresses not only Mozambican women's dominance as beer brewers on the Rand but their repatriations in thousands in the 1920s. Simelane's most recent work on the establishment of African patriarchal controls designed to keep women in Swazi villages even as men migrated to South Africa is also illuminating for my work. He stresses "the power of homestead heads, village headmen and chiefs and *their influence* [my emphasis] on the colonial administration to create barriers against female migration to cross border industrial centers."⁴⁰ Of course, Simelane's exclusive attention to the *influence* of African authorities means that he underplays the real power of colonial officials who themselves coopted African authorities into their gendered *carceral* archipelago of surveillance. He also misses colonialists concerns with maintaining the social fabric and economic life of their respective colonies. Also, Simelane like Bonner represents the scholarship which looks at controls on one side of the border but not on the other, therefore missing the transnationality of women's struggles within the gendered system of surveillance, a subject that this dissertation pursues.⁴¹

Nevertheless, for all its limitations, the above literature provides the best foundation for my work given that most scholars who have attempted to demonstrate gender awareness in migration studies have not gone as far. For instance, in Southern Africa, though Charles van Onselen's *Chibharo* mentions women in about seven scattered pages, its predominant Marxist approach precluded any in-depth exploration of the gendered dynamics of labor migration.⁴² Similarly, Elizabeth Francis sees Kenyan women as waiting passively in their homesteads for male migrant workers to send remittances from as far as Tanzania. Even when she, like other scholars, accepts that "during the Second World War era, the loss of male labor began to be felt in farm production", little did she envision the possibility of women's outmigration as one of their logical

⁴⁰ Simelane, "The State, Chiefs and the Control of Female Migration," p.104.

⁴¹ Simelane, p105.

⁴² Charles van Onselen, *Chibharo: African Mine Labor in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1933*, (London, Pluto, 1976), pp. 103; 123; 168; 175; 178-179; 180.

responses.⁴³ Despite the gender awareness even in the post 1980s literature represented by Siphon Hamilton Simelane (1995), Sharon Stichter, Elizabeth Francis' works as well as the *UNESCO Survey of African History* among others, these scholars still did not fully integrate gender.⁴⁴ While some works such as *UNESCO Survey of African History* and Stichter's, Awumbila's and Francis' works made a more visible attempt to consider gender and women in the analysis, they did not shift far from dominant masculinist assumptions. With the focal perspective on the organizing structures of capitalism and labor relations, men remain the primary units of production and exclusive subjects. Simply adding the term "male" or "female" to "migrants" or including a few pages on women or explaining their absence from migration did not mean an imbedding of gender as an analytical category in African migrant history.

The persistent point of limitation was that, because capitalist enterprises attracted male labor, generating more records on labor relations, the scholars leaned on colonial perceptions of a typical migrant as being a male laborer. Just like scholars such as Rudo Gaidzanwa and Angela Cheater, D. Gelderblom and Pieter Kok, the *UNESCO Survey* explains women's absence in migration literature by stressing how migrant labor in African was exclusively restricted to adult males. Southern and Central African scholars' explanations pinpoint "white fears" about African urban settlement or pressure from "white trade unions", while West and East African scholars stress the many customary and capitalistic hindrances to women's migration.⁴⁵ To an extent, this literature

⁴³Elizabeth Francis, "Gender, Migration and Multiple Livelihoods: Cases from Eastern and Southern Africa", <http://grov.ufl.edu>, The study draws on material from the author's book, *Making a living: Changing Livelihoods in Rural Africa*, (London, Routledge, 2000).

⁴⁴ Simelane, "Labor Migration and Rural Transformation in post-colonial Swaziland," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 13, 2 (1995), pp.167-184. Adu A Boahen, *UNESCO General History of Africa*, vol.7, (London, James Currey, 1990). Sharon Stichter, *Migrant Laborers*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985). Dunbar Moodie, "Migrancy and Male Sexuality on the South African Gold Mines", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14, 2, (1988), pp.228-256. Elizabeth Francis, "Gender, Migration and Multiple Livelihoods". Dunbar Moodie, *Going for Gold: Men, Mines and Migration*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994). Thaddeus Sunseri, "Labor Migration in Colonial Tanzania and the Hegemony of South African Historiography", *African Affairs*, (1996), pp.581-598.

⁴⁵ Angela P Cheater and Rudo Gaidzanwa, "Citizenship in Neo-patrilineal States: Gender and Mobility in Southern Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, 2, (1996), pp.189-200. G Gelderblom and Pieter

subscribes to the illusory but then normative stereotype of African women as “passive rural widows”⁴⁶ who stayed in the reserves or their countries according to state or capitalist prescriptions. Yet, as Teresa Barnes “Virgin Territory” and the colonial documents on Malawian migration reveal, women who migrated across boundaries were far from negligible and in Harare, Malawian women dominated among them.⁴⁷

However, the conceptual gaps inherent in the above cited scholarship pales in comparison to earlier literature produced in the 1970s and 1980s decades. While this is the major body of scholarship on international labor migration in Africa, going back to the colonial era, the 1970s to ‘80s literature is loudly silent about women or gender issues. Rather, it focuses on capitalist development, male labor relations and class struggles. This may be legitimately attributed to the fact that gender had not yet become a significant field of analysis in African history at the time of its production. In any case, as Cynthia Cranford correctly observes, “a retrospective of the migration literature in various disciplines obscures women’s participation in migration. In spite of all of the women on the move throughout the 20th century, with a few exceptions, early research strategies have focused largely on African men.”⁴⁸ This dissertation therefore is part of the literature which seeks to fill this gap in scholarship by focusing on gender and women in migrant labor history. In particular, despite Malawian women’s migration and settlement in Zimbabwe in their thousands between the 1940s and 1970s, this earliest scholarship has not even envisioned the significance of their active participation in the country’s migrant labor history.

Kok, “Urbanization, South Africa’s challenge”, vol. 1, *Dynamics*, (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council, 1994), pp.16-25.

⁴⁶ Hilary Sapire, “African Settlement and Segregation”, pp145-163. Sylvia Chant and Sarah Radcliffe, *Gender and Migration in Developing countries*, (London, Belhaven Press, 1992).

⁴⁷Barnes, *Virgin Territory*, p173. NAZ, File2239, Migratory Labor Carried by Southern Rhodesia Government Migrant Labor Transport (Ulere) 1947-1960. Ulere records alone show that in 1958, apart from un-enumerated illegal migrants, 1733 women migrated from Malawi to Zimbabwe as compared to 100 women from Zambia. In 1959, 1 305 women migrated from Malawi as compared to 56 women from Zambia.

⁴⁸ Cynthia Cranford, “Gender and Migration in Africa” in *Handbook of Sociology and Social Research*, Part 2, (2006), p105.

This reflected the prevailing male bias resulting from the rise of the intellectual paradigm informed by the success of the 1970s and 1980s revisionist Marxist scholarship, querying the exclusive historical focus on white settlers. The scholarship, represented by Jonathan Crush and Alan Jeeves, Crush and David Yudelman, Van Onselen and Ian Phimister's works, therefore examines men's migrant labor flows to Southern African regional centers of development.⁴⁹ That such Marxist approaches also influenced scholarship in other parts of the continent, for instance in North, West and East Africa is evidenced by leading works such as John Arthur's and William Freund's. Freund examines male labor migration, state recruitment processes and labor control as well as workers' resistance in Northern Nigeria.⁵⁰ For Tanzania and Kenya, scholars such as Thaddeus Sunseri and Tiyambe Zeleza locate international or inter regional migration in the context of men's struggles to obtain a fair wage, better living and working conditions. The same applies to works such as Ismail Serageldin, James A. Socknot, Stace Birks and Clive Sinclair which define inter regional labor migration between countries of North and East Africa as a strictly male phenomenon.⁵¹ Because official definitions of work limited it to what

⁴⁹ Ian Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle*, (London, Longman, 1988). Ian Phimister, *Wangi Kolia, Coal, Capital and Labor in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1954*, (Harare, Baobab Books, 1994). Ian Phimister, "African Labor Conditions and Health in the Southern Rhodesian Mining Industry, 1918-1953", in Ian Phimister and Charles van Onselen (Eds), *Studies in the History of African Mine Labor in colonial Zimbabwe, Harare*, (Mambo Press, 1978), pp.56-89. Sean Moroney, "The Development of the Compound as a Mechanism of Worker control", *South African Labor Bulletin*, 4, 3, (1978), pp.30-37. Jonathan Crush, Alan Jeeves and David Yudelman, *South Africa's Labor Empire: a history of Black Migrancy to the Gold Mines*, (Boulder, West View Press, 1991). Cassandra R. Veney, *Forced Migration in Eastern Africa: Democratization, Structural Adjustment and Refugees*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Aderanti Adepoju, Ton van Naerssen and Annelis Zoomers, *International Migration and National Development in sub-Saharan Africa*, (Boston, Brill, 2008). Richard Black, Jonathan Crush and Sally Peberdy, *Migration and development in Africa: An Overview*, (Cape Town, Idasa, 2006). Jonathan Crush, "Cheap Gold: Mine labor in Southern Africa" in Robin Cohen, *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 168-190. Michael Gelfand, "Migration of African Laborers in Rhodesia and Nyasaland", in *Central African Journal of Medicine*, 7, 8, (1961), pp.293-300. S. Gool, *Mining capital and black labor in the early industrial period in South Africa: A critique of the new historiography*, (Lund, 1983). W.T.S Gould and I Masser, *Inter-regional migration in Tropical Africa*, (London, Institute of British Geographers, 1975). Jeeves Alan, *Migrant Labor in South Africa's Mining Economy: The Struggle for the Gold Mines Labor Supply, 1890-1920*, (Kingston and Montreal, 1985).

⁵⁰ William Freund, "Labor Migration in the Northern Nigerian Tin Mines, 1903-1945" in *Journal of African History*, vol. 22, (1981)pp73-84. See also John A Arthur, "International Labor Migration Patterns in West Africa", *African Studies Review*, 34, 3, (1991), pp.65-87.

⁵¹ W. S. Gould, "Regional Labor Migration Systems in East Africa: Continuity and Change", in Robin Cohen (Ed), *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995),

transpired in capitalist establishments where men represented productive laborers, the scholarship uniformly focuses on men's labor migrancy. Even the scholars who applied dependency and underdevelopment theories such as John Arthur, locates migration in West Africa within the development of colonial capitalism, based on cheap supplies of male African labor from underdeveloped zones to areas of relatively higher demand and remuneration. Not surprisingly, while this scholarship traces labor processes and relations in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and the Maghreb countries, it forecloses inquiry into the experiences of those women who chose to migrate.

Even in some of the post 1990s literature such as Allen and Barbara Isaacman, Patrick Harries and Dunbar Moodie's whose great conceptual contribution has enriched transnational and cultural histories of labor in Africa, the problem has persisted. While these works emphasize the inexorable linkages between transnationality, work, culture, community construction and function, major silences about women's experiences still persist. Moodie and Harries both examine Mozambican migrants' socio-cultural experiences on the South African gold mines and their survival strategies as workers and ethnic specific men. The works keep the central theme of workers' struggles with their environment to fashion lives in which they could meet their socio-economic needs.⁵² The

pp.122-145. Tiyanbe Zeleza, "Labor Migration in Early colonial Kenya" in A Zegeye and S. Ishemo, (Eds) *Forced Labor and Migration: Patterns of movement within Africa*, (London, Hans Zell Publications, 1985) Thaddeus Sunseri, "Labor Migration in Colonial Tanzania and the Hegemony of South African Historiography", *African Affairs*, (1996), pp.581-598. Ismail Serageldin, James A Socknot, Stace Birks and Clive A Sinclair, *Manpower and International Labor Migration in East and North Africa*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁵² Dunbar Moodie, "Ethnic Violence on South African Gold Mines", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 3, (1992), pp.584-613. Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c1860-1910*, (London, James Carrey Ltd, 1994). Patrick Harries: "A forgotten Corner of the Transvaal": Reconstructing the history of the relocated Community through oral Testimony and Song" in Belinda Bozzoli, *Class, Community, and Conflict: South African Perspectives*, (Johannesburg, Raven Press, 1987), pp.165-211. Harries, "The roots of Ethnicity: Discourse and the Politics of Language construction in South Africa", *African Affairs*, 346, (1988), pp.25-52. Harries, "Exclusion, Classification and internal colonialism: The Emergence of Ethnicity in among the Tsonga speakers of South Africa", in Leroy Vail, (Ed), *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa*, (London, 1989), pp.82-118. Harries, "Symbols and sexuality: Culture and Identity on the early Witwatersrand Gold Mines" in *Gender and History*, 2, 3, (1990). Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Slavery and Beyond: The making of men and Chikunda ethnic identities in the unstable world of South-Central Africa, 1750-1920*, (Portsmouth,

Isaacmans trace the construction of a Chikunda community made up of peoples from initially disparate ethnic groups, seized as slaves from their natal homes. As they argue, inextricably tied to Chikunda survival was their masculine cultural work as elephant hunters, carriers, slave warriors and canoe men. Women remained outside the scholars' chosen angle of vision, despite the reality that they too engaged in transnational work and cultural strategies of survival since the colonial era or even earlier.

The dissertation before you joins in the general efforts among historians of Africa to grapple with this single glaring silence by examining how Malawian women transformed the composition of the migrant stream, the urban environs of Harare and fostered a new sense of community based on their various economic engagements. Malawian women's socio-economic strategies, which were distinct enough to be termed *mabhindauko emanyasarandi*/ Malawian women's ventures extended to the construction of vibrant cross ethnic unions in the city. Such socio-economic strategies were a distinct platform upon which they articulated their shared determination to survive as a coherent migrant community with transnational ties to their home country especially by the 1960s. It was on that platform that they transformed their environment against efforts to exclude them or make it impossible for them to reside in Harare. Only Malawian women had the skill to brew the clear beer, *kachasu*, and only Malawian women engaged in *chimbado*/ interest money lending, and only they adamantly marked the urban landscape with their presence by producing rice, cassava, corn, beans and other crops in the swamps and dry lands surrounding the Townships. Only they had the need to construct welfare and burial unions which became springboards for their transnational political fraternity in the city.

In the process, women from the Lomwe, Tumbuka, Man'anja, Chewa, Ngoni, Tonga and Yao, to mention only a few Malawian ethnic groups, engaged in linguistic renegotiations to enhance the viability of their supra ethnic socio-economic unions. In the studies of

Heinemann, 2004). Sinclair Marion Ryan, "Community, Identity and Gender in Migrant Societies of Southern Africa: Emerging Epistemological Challenges", *International Affairs*, 74, 2, (April 1998), pp. 339-353.

Basotho, Tswana, Mozambican or Swazi men and women in South Africa, Bonner, Coplan, Simelane and many others did not consider the linguistic factor in migrants' survival strategies. Most importantly, while the Isaacmans' work is most explicit in its transnational perspective, they too have not examined how the Chikunda who originated from different ethnic peoples negotiated their language. By following examples from anthropologists such as Barbara Meiers and Andre Tabouret-Keller, whose focus is West Africa, the work before you also notes how "confrontations of the migrants' cultures and social conditions encountered where migrants settle result in migratory linguistic renegotiations..."⁵³ Meiers and Keller state that as different ethnic groups in Ghana and Nigeria move to main urban centers, "the usual solution to language diversity is the so-called *lingua franca*."⁵⁴ Hausa became the *lingua franca* in urban Ghana while in the Malawian case examined in this dissertation, women established what Verdoot termed, "a tacit consensus as to which language is to be used for communication on what topics or for what purpose..."⁵⁵ Malawian women accepted Chewa as their *lingua franca* since;

When we met among our own ethnic people we spoke our own languages, Chiyao for Ayao, Chisena for Asena, Chichewa for Achewa... But in the 1960s, when we met as women from many ethnic groups in welfare or burial societies, in the League or in our works, we communicated in Chichewa. We did it because that was how we could put our minds and hands together to survive...⁵⁶

Time Frame and Spatial dimensions

The dissertation is set in the period beginning in the 1940s to 1980 - the last decade of colonial rule in Zimbabwe. The 1940s decade is significant because it was from this period that the Zimbabwean economy expanded and diversified to levels where it attracted a hitherto unprecedented influx of Malawian workers. In 1948 alone, over 140 000 entered the colony while less than 45 000 moved to South Africa. The figure more

⁵³ Andre Tabouret-Keller, "Language use in relation to the growth of towns in West Africa: A survey" in *International Migration Review*, vol. 5 No. 2, (1971), p10. Barbara Meier "Migrant women's associations in Ghana: the case of female chief and female chain migration", in Jacqueline Knorr and Barbara Meier, *Women and Migration: Anthropological perspectives*, (New York, St Martin Press, 2000), pp.181-196.

⁵⁴ Meier "Migrant women's associations in Ghana", p.185.

⁵⁵ Albert Verdoot, "The differential Impact of French Speakers on indigenous German Speakers : A case study in light of two theories", in *International Migration Review*, 5, 2, (Summer 1971), p.142.

⁵⁶ Interview with Katesi Chirima, Mufakose, Harare, 6th January 2009.

than doubled the 1903/4, 1910/11, 1934/5 figures of 6000, 8000 and 57 000.⁵⁷ With the new import substitution industrialization in urban Zimbabwe and the Second World War time demand for the colony's products, the exodus of men which affected women's lives therefore began in earnest. Unlike in the previous decades when migration, even of men represented a trickle and women's was almost non-existent, beginning in the 1940s, thousands of women also entered Harare, outstripping women from other colonies.⁵⁸ Not surprisingly, such transformations raised official concerns generating the most important written records on migration available. More than before, the Malawian protectorate state bargained endlessly to protect its interests while Zimbabwe also cooperated so as to maintain control and reserve access only to preferred populations, workers. This was a period when they entered a rapid series of inter-territorial agreements to institute migration as a male phenomenon and relegate women to the margins.⁵⁹

Since the historian's work is driven by the necessity of tracing change over time, the chosen time frame opens the way towards undertaking this challenge. Firstly, during this period, the 1953 to 1963 Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland tightened relations and provided wider ground for compromise, cooperation and protection of each other's interests as the gendered system of control remained intact. Firstly, that the 1948 Act remained extant until the collapse of colonial rule in Malawi in the second half of the 1960s testifies to the fact that, instead of nullifying labor agreements, Federation facilitated transnational cooperation. Malawi as the economically weaker partner sought to maintain the control on her only source of income, migrant labor, by maintaining the

⁵⁷ For general statistics see also British Foreign Affairs Office (BFAO), File 137/1944-48, Appendix B. See also Malawi Archives (MA), Colonial Reports, Nyasaland Protectorate for the year 1900-1964. Cynthia Crosby, *The Historical Dictionary of Malawi*, 2nd Edition, (London, The scarecrow press Inc., 1993).

⁵⁸ NAZ, File2239, Migratory Labor Carried by Southern Rhodesia Government Migrant Labor Transport (Ulere) 1947-1960. Ulere records alone show that in 1947, apart from un-enumerated illegal migrants 1 838 women migrated from Malawi to Zimbabwe compared to 67 from Zambia, by 1958 , 1733 women migrated from Malawi to Zimbabwe as compared to 100 women from Zambia. In 1959 I 305 women migrated from Malawi as compared to 56 women from Zambia.

⁵⁹ NAZ, File 482/22/42-48, Ordinances enacted by the Governor of Nyasaland Protectorate in agreement with the Prime Minister of Southern of Southern Rhodesia, with advice and consent of the Legislative Council thereof; 1940, 1942 and 1946 Migrant Workers Ordinances and Provisional Agreements; The Migrant Workers Bill, 1947; The Migrant Workers Act, 1948.

regulations in the 1948 Act. Zimbabwe on the other hand wanted to maintain the status quo by preventing an influx of Malawians that would upset the eco-political balance in a colony where indigenous populations had already lost over 2/3 of land and other resources to Europeans. Pertaining to urban areas, even as the Zimbabwean colonial regime set at the helm of the federal government, Federation did not prevent it from drafting the FMLA in 1958 and implementing it by 1960, that is, even before the collapse of Federation in 1963. The FMLA indiscriminately made it illegal for all unnecessary foreign Africans, the majority of who were Malawian women, to enter Harare.

Both the collapse of federation and the end of colonial rule in Malawi in the 1960s marked one of the most significant ruptures in the system of trans-colonial cooperation. No longer could Zimbabwe rely upon the protectorate state of Malawi to regulate population movements. Banda relaxed the system by granting all married women with marriage certificates the right to automatically obtain travel permits without any hindrances so they could freely move to and from Malawi. By 1973, the new registration and passport system ended women's minority status upon which restrictions on their migration were predicated. Singles, divorcees and widows could now join their married counterparts to travel freely. The pressure from the women and Banda's own political need to co-opt them into his Malawian Congress Party (MCP) saw his adoption of a positive cross border migrant policy.

On the other hand, the 1960s were a volatile period when nationalist struggles escalated into warfare in Zimbabwe. Facing the guerilla war and the European World's demands that it should concede to majority rule, the colonial regime in Zimbabwe made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence against Britain. It was in this decade that the European Union and the United Nations slapped the colony with severe economic sanctions. The sanctions plus the demands of the war severely impacted on the colony's

economy, which crumbled.⁶⁰ In ways that worsened the situation for migrant women, the regime enforced old laws such as the NUARAA, and new ones such as the Vagrants Act of 1960, the FMLA of 1960, the Riotous Assembly Act of 1973 and the 1973 Law and Order Maintenance Act. This made for a highly policed urban area, especially when guerillas attacked too close to home by bombing the Shell gasoline tanks in Harare in the second half of the 1970s.

In the same period running up to 1980, the nationalist war led by Frelimo in Mozambique coincided with that in Zimbabwe impacting severely on migration processes. The wars made transit camps and old routes running through Mozambique too dangerous. Because Malawi does not directly share a border with Zimbabwe, the women and men who migrated had to pass through other countries, that is, Zambia or Mozambique to reach Zimbabwe. Mozambique offered the shortest and most popular routes but the wars made it very dangerous terrain to traverse, driving thousands to take new, safer but very long routes through Zambia's Kazungula and Livingstone to Botswana, from where they entered Zimbabwe through Bulawayo.

Hence, while inflows continued through Botswana to Harare, internal flows also changed the urban dynamics for Malawian women in this period. As thousands of Malawians and other foreign workers fled from neglected farms which like African reserves were a central theater of the guerilla war, to the city, indigenes also escaped to the relative safety of Harare. This increased pressure for the provision of amenities on the city fathers and in response, Harare became a maximum police city, making Malawian women's lives most difficult. It was only with the collapse of colonial domination in 1980 that the new government led by Robert Mugabe suspended colonial laws and recognized foreign people as contributors to the country's nationalist struggle and economic strength. A new

⁶⁰Meredith Martin, *The Past is another country: Rhodesia, UDI to Zimbabwe*, (London, Pan Books, 1980), p98-107. Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, (Alfred Knopf, c1977), pp385-411. Robert Sutcliffe, *Sanctions against Rhodesia: The economic background*, (London, Africa Bureau, 1966) p11.

economic era with completely different official perspectives governing migration thus emerged, making for a whole new project for future research.

In terms of the spatial choice of study, this dissertation focuses on Harare, taking examples from the four earliest African locations of Mbare, Highfields, Mufakose and Rugare, in which migrant women and their families dominate to this day. While foreign women and Malawians in particular settled on mines and farms too, the specificity with which the colonial state and municipalities designed the city to privilege white settlers made the city a unique space distinctively shaping migrant women's experiences. The city was heavily policed with a legion of internal and international legislative pieces designed to exclude or create serious bottlenecks against women's settlement. Harare was the seat of colonial administration which set the pace in policies and in capitalist structures which favored the employment of men even as cooks and houseboys. At most, only a handful of local colored or Shona and Ndebele women got jobs as nannies. Together, internal pass laws and acts such as the NUARAA and the international ones such as the 1948 Migrant Workers Act and the 1958 FMLA denying foreigners access into Harare, were especially enforceable against urban based migrant women and not on farms.

Even with talks of labor stabilization in the 1940s and 1950s, Malawian women's urban settlement was highly constrained considering the passage of the 10 miles law between 1958 and 1960 in Harare. Based in urban locations of Harare such as Mbare, Mufakose, Highfield and Rugare these women had to launch the most determined struggles against the system which defined them mainly as vagrants since they had limited, if any, chances of urban formal employment. Harare therefore provides the best setting to unravel the central puzzle of this dissertation- that is, why and how the women secured a socio-economic space for themselves and their families in such an androcentrically, racially and legalistic colonial city, after traversing spaces marked by a transnationally instituted *carceral* archipelago of surveillance.

A Synoptic Historical Background of Harare

Malawian women experienced their struggles, pains and successes in the city whose unique history as the crown of colonial administration made it both a protected center of European settlement and of attraction for migrants. In 1890 the pioneer column, a volunteer military force of European migrants, organized by Cecil John Rhodes' British South Africa Company, marched into Harare and established a fort on 11 September 1890. By 1897, the settler regime upgraded Harare into a municipality. Though up to 1935 it was a very slow process, the settler regime labored to install electricity supplies, railways, light industries and processing plants marking early urban developments. In 1935, the settlers, the state and municipality elevated Harare to city status. As a growing city, it attracted not only an influx of around 300 000 settlers and investors by the 1940s, but of African migrant laborers as well who serviced the colonial economic establishments.⁶¹

The regime however sought to maintain the city based on the racial principle that the urban areas were to be no go areas for Africans. However, tensions arose between the need for African labor in European trading, manufacturing and processing plants on one hand and the need to keep the city exclusively white on the other. Firstly, the regime responded to this dilemma by adopting a racially distinguished settlement pattern. Racial segregation became such an established policy that urban planners endorsed the three tier settlement pattern whereby Europeans, coloreds, and Africans occupied distinct spaces. Following the South African urban planning structure, it set up European suburbs such as Mount Pleasant, Vinona, Queensdale, Hatfield and Bluffhill among others and endowed them with permanent, durable, brightly lit and beautiful homes of low density and with a myriad of entertainment venues, restaurants, baths, parks as well as other trappings of civilization. Unlike the African shanty townships which relied on very limited communal water taps, the European suburbs also enjoyed clean piped water systems installed all the way from Cleveland and Seke Dams since the 1930s. They also placed the major colored

⁶¹ Alois Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia*, (Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2002), p10.

suburbs such as Acardia, Breaside, Ardbernie and Cranbourne at a distance that ensured less racial interaction, but created an effective buffer between European and African locations. Urban planners sited African locations such as Mbare, Highfield and Rugare adjacent to Lytton, Willowvale and Graniteside industrial centers, to allow Africans to travel to and from work easily and without traversing either European or colored space.

The earliest African location, Mbare, emerged in the 1890s as a temporary residential area situated in this racially segregated system. Followed by Highfield which only developed in the 1930s as the second largest African settlement, Mbare was the major township in which all early urban African settlers had to reside as dictated by the Native Urban Areas Act of the 1890s and the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. Since the Land Apportionment Act defined the city as white space, even the development of Mbare or Highfield was a temporary measure designed to accommodate temporary residents who had to maintain ties with rural homelands or countries of origin. Reflecting this aim, in Mbare the city fathers took little care to accommodate the Africans and permitted the sprouting of shoddy, temporary structures which Africans constructed for themselves. Even in the 1940s, when the city fathers erected a few huts and houses in Mbare, the African location was still characterized by all kinds of overcrowded shacks as workers, who migrated internally but mostly from neighboring territories, far outstripped available resources. According to Lawrence Vambe who lived in the city in this period, “the location was awash with all kinds of undesirables including human waste and excreta. It was a place of poverty, congestion and noise; it was foundering in neglect and degradation.”⁶²

Indeed, cardboard and zinc structures in Mbare set a presidency for the African housing in other locations which also reflected the perceived temporality of African presence prior to the 1950s. In Rugare, Africans resided in all asbestos or all zinc arc shaped

⁶² Lawrence Vambe: *An Ill-fated people: Zimbabwe before and after Rhodes*, (London, Heinemann, 1972), p.65.

See also Maurice Taonezvi Vambe, “Aya Mahobo: Migrant Labor and Cultural semiotics of Harare (Mbare) African Township, 1930-1970”, in *African Identities*, vol. 5, 3, (2007), pp.355-369.

housing that could be easily razed when no longer needed. It was from this material that the houses were called *majarata*, a derivative term from *rata*, the *chewa* word for zinc or other related material. Highfield and Mufakose developed between 1935 and the 1940s as the European need to keep Africans out through the use of pass laws, curfews and policing clashed with the need for labor to propel development. Highfield especially developed first and foremost as a transit center for inter-territorial migrant workers upon whom the Europeans increasingly relied due to the reluctance by local Africans to comply with internal labor requirements. However, just as was the case in Mbare and Rugare, the location became a primary abode for “single” migrant workers who resided in singles quarters.

It was not until the 1940s when Harare’s manufacturing, light industries, transport and food processing plants, such as National Foods Ltd, Farmers Co-op, Messrs Van Den Berg and Blacks Ltd, Rhodesia Railways, British African Tobacco Ltd, Lever Brothers, David Whitehead and many others, expanded rapidly in response to Second World War Era demand, that talks of labor stabilization yielded changes in African urban space. Here, some Companies stepped in to accommodate their workers and since they looked positively to the future, they sought to replace temporary constructions with relatively durable and healthy housing. The Rhodesia Railways led the way and razed the “*majarata*” houses to construct red brick four roomed houses with arc shaped asbestos roofs in Rugare. It also constructed quarters of concrete blocks and four roomed houses currently known as “*mafour rooms madhara*/old four rooms”, to house mainly single workers. Indeed, the development of other townships such as Mabvuku, Glen-Norah, Glen View, Tafara and Epworth among others occurred as the state and municipalities encountered the tension of maintaining Harare as a white space in the face of European need for foreign African labor.

In this context, as Zimbabwe followed behind South Africa in regional development, the earliest townships in its capital city, Harare, received a large share of migrants who sought better wages and livelihoods. While South Africa received a major share of

Mozambicans who reached over 100 000 by the 1950s, Zimbabwe took in the majority of Malawians, who dominated especially in urban employment.⁶³ In general, because local people initially resisted wage labor by increasing production in rural areas, engaging in trade or outmigration to the Rand, the country as a whole relied on foreign workers. In the particular case of the city, because of Malawian migrants' dominance, it became a well-established adage that "Salisbury was constructed by *mabwidi*/foreigners" and its earliest African locations, Mbare, Highfield, Rugare and Mufakose are *komboni dzemanyasarande*/Malawian people's compounds.⁶⁴

Their dominance in the urban labor force however did not negate the fact that the colonial authorities' primary aim was still to maintain Harare for white supremacy. For this reason, the state, municipality and some companies did not approach African accommodation whole heartedly and still relied on the 1930 Land Apportionment Act, the Pass Laws, the vagrants laws and Native Urban Areas Acts to control African influx. The colonial regime therefore promoted the adoption of policies designed to open access only to the needed members of the African population, that is, workers who were primarily men. With women constituting below 5 percent of urban workers as late as the 1950s, it therefore followed that Harare developed as an androcentric city run by male European settlers represented by the city fathers, state leaders and capitalists.⁶⁵ This system promoted the employment of "single" male workers with women being expected to remain in reserves or countries of origin. Even when the city employed over 1/3 of all foreign people who entered the colony, not only from Malawi but also from Mozambique and Zambia, these were primarily men.⁶⁶ This made economic sense since it reduced the costs of labor by eliminating costs of family maintenance and ensuring that women and

⁶³ Giovanni Arrighi, "Labor Supplies in Historical Perspective" and "The Political Economy of Rhodesia", in Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul, (Eds), *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa*, (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1973,), pp.180-234; pp.336-377.

⁶⁴Salisbury is the colonial name for Harare. It was named after the third Marquess of Salisbury who was Prime Minister of Great Britain in the 1890s.

⁶⁵ Teresa Barnes, "*We Women Worked so Hard*": *Gender, Urbanization and Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe, 1930-1956*, (Harare, Baobab Books, 1999), p.5.

⁶⁶ NAZ, File S3287/85/A/76, Southern Rhodesian Government: Annual Analysis of African Employees by Country of origin.

children left behind subsidized men's meager wages and diverted pressure on inadequate urban amenities. This male biased outlook of the city affected the urban environment in such a way that the women who constitute central subjects in this dissertation, inevitably faced serious challenges as they attempted to settle and make better livelihoods for their families.

Sources and methodology: The Archive

When I commenced my research in Harare in 2008, I was very concerned about the methodological challenges of archival research on Malawian women's experiences within the context of labor migration to Zimbabwe. My primary concern was about the possible paucity of data on women given the characterization of labor migration as a male domain. My first instinct was to abandon the subject of inquiry for one that would direct me to firmer archival ground. However, I could not shake off the compulsion to learn how the women among whom I grew up in the Railway town of Rugare came to constitute both a part of my own history as a Zimbabwean and that of Malawi? Hence, both as a curious student of history and at a personal level, I needed to search for and connect the hidden parts of their stories and lives. I started from a place of appreciation that in society as well as in official domains of power, important events have generated archives which are themselves gendered, that is, in light of the fact that gender is "a principle, organizing social arrangements and even cognition..."⁶⁷ I armed myself with Dorothy Petsch's reasoning that since "gender is a mode through which social roles, expectations and power relations between masculine and feminine members of society are constructed, regulated and organized"⁶⁸, it must have organized official perceptions. I set out to retrace and analyze the records from a gendered perspective.

⁶⁷ Myra Marx Feree and Beth B Hess, *Analyzing Gender*, (Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1987), p.19.

⁶⁸ Petsch, Dorothy Wessel, "Gender and Migration research: An analysis of gender as a variable in models of migration", (M.A. Thesis, University of Minnesota, September 1989), p.33.

I regarded the archives as a way to follow the tracks, putting together scraps and information so that even in the unforeseen future, migrant women would find, in my text, “a place to inhabit, from where they would continue to express themselves...”, telling their unique stories to future generations.⁶⁹ Indeed, I remained mindful of Achille Mbembe’s encouraging reasoning that even if the past is dead, “there will always remain traces of the dead (the past), elements that testify that a life did exist, that deeds were enacted, and struggles engaged in or evaded. For all their limits, archives are born from a desire to reassemble those traces...”⁷⁰ This therefore saw the long mornings spent in the National Archives of Zimbabwe, in the Malawi Archive and Municipal Archives in Harare.

The National Archives of Zimbabwe proved to be the single most important repository of material for the period I set out to study. Even though women constituted the central agents in my inquiry, the best place to begin was in the colonial mind(s). As much as possible, I had to draw on gendered colonial conceptions about labor migration in order to understand the environment in which these women had come to be where they are. To begin, I focused on the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC), Salisbury’s files. The CNC received all sorts of correspondence, reports, memos and other documents pertaining to migration, not only to Harare but other parts of Zimbabwe. Since he sat at the helm of administration, that is, above all other commissioners in the colony, his office received correspondence from capitalist employers, the city fathers, labor officers and even the then Nyasaland Resident Officer whose office was in Mt Pleasant suburb of Harare. The documents reveal the colonial concern with maintaining power and control over African subjects and workers. In addition, they were authored within an androcentric bureaucratic system whereby male labor officers wrote about the construction of labor transit camps, the numbers of men who could be accommodated therein, the processes of food, medical and clothing provision as well as documentation for Malawian men passing through such

⁶⁹ Achille Mbembe, “The Power and limits of the Archive”, in Carolyn Hamilton, (Ed), *Refiguring the Archive*, (South Africa, springer, 2002), p.25.

⁷⁰ Achille Membe, p.19.

centers. The Nyasaland Officer also forwarded correspondence between himself and his Malawian superiors to the CNC Salisbury so as to negotiate about issues of taxation of Malawians on behalf of their natal home, wage remittances to wives and deferred pay reviews.⁷¹ Border officials from Mukumbura, Nyamapanda and Forbes in Mt Darwin, Mutoko and Mutare sent reports and sometimes letters requesting assistance with special cases concerning migrant workers and apprehended women. The CNC's files hold illuminating records about repatriations of Malawians and the processes and reasons for such repatriations, repatriates' gender, specific villages, chiefdoms and districts of origin.⁷²

In Malawi, the archives, located in Zomba are not very different in terms of the obsession of the colonial state with male labor migration and the significance of taxes, deferred wages and remittances for families. At most, the Governor of Malawi received letters from the Resident Officer based in Zimbabwe about his concern with labor conditions, housing and social life of workers as well as negotiations entered into with the Zimbabwean state and employers. Important files include those that hold memos, letters and orders from the Governor instructing African authorities in Malawi to help ensure that migrants sent in taxes from Zimbabwe and also that they would return to families and to provide labor internally for specified periods of time.⁷³ Other memos instructed these headmen and chiefs to ensure the compliance of migrants with state requirements by maintaining population census records. The memos instructed that the African authorities inform their subjects that if they left without any sign of return, with women being some such signs, they would be struck out of census records.⁷⁴ The archival records from Native Commissioners in Malawi also reveal the cooption of African authorities in

⁷¹ NAZ, File S3292/37/3, Payment of taxes by Nyasaland Natives working in Southern Rhodesia, 1940-1951. NAZ, File S482/171/1/49, Agreements between Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland on double taxation relief for migrants, 1944-1949.

⁷² NAZ, File S1007/8, Office of the Chief Native Commissioner: Repatriation of Native aliens, 1949-1971; Reports, notices and correspondence.

⁷³ NAM, File LB5/1/1, Native Tax Ordinance- District census and payments, 1941-50: Tax remittance Notice from the Governor to Labor Commissioner, 19 December 1947.

⁷⁴ NAM, File LB5/1/1, Native Tax Ordinance, District Census and Payments 1941-1950. See Minutes of a meeting held at Government House, Nyasaland, 10 March, 1947.

the colonial administrative system by stressing the wages they would obtain for working with the government in regulating the whole gendered system.⁷⁵ In addition, the Malawi archives also house the annual reports generated by the Colonial Office up to the 1960s to cover social life, economic conditions and political life in Malawi. Under the heading “Migrant Labor” which appears in every annual report, the yearly numbers of male migrants, the issue of remittances and the deteriorating social conditions for women and families are recorded.⁷⁶

Together, the records in the Malawi Archive, National Archives of Zimbabwe and those that I received from a colleague who copied them from the Foreign Affairs Office in Britain also held statistical data which has been very important for this study. Apart from the numbers of Malawians in employment in the whole colony, statistics show that they dominated urban employment in Harare among other foreign workers.⁷⁷ Separate from the Censuses that record Africans in Employment by location, gender and country of origin, the archives provide the most important data in the form of a series of agreements between the two countries on labor migration. They furnish data on negotiations, debates and compromises between Malawi and Zimbabwe as well as the concerns of employers and the municipality of Harare about the nature of labor migration, the position of women and the implications of their presence on the city. Infact, I found the sources very good insofar as they helped me to develop my work along transnational lines given that they brought out the cooperation and concerns of both countries not only about male labor but about women’s migration. The shifts and continuities between the 1940, 1942, 1946 ordinances and the 1948 agreement which became the centerpiece of the international gendered control on migration until the 1960s are apparent in these documents.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ NAM, File LB5/1/1, Native Tax Ordinance, District Census and Payments 1941-1950. Minutes, 10 March, 1947.

⁷⁶ MA, Annual Report on Nyasaland Protectorate, Colonial Office, London, 1954.

⁷⁷ British Foreign Office (BFAO), File 137/1945-1946, Extent of Inter-territorial Migration in Central Africa by the Central African Secretariat, Salisbury, 5 August, 1946. NAZ, File S482/136/3/48, Nyasaland labor Recruited for Southern Rhodesia, 1900 – 1948.

⁷⁷ Malawi Archives (MA), File LB5/1/1, Native Tax Ordinance- District census and payments, 1941-50.

⁷⁸ NAZ, File S14/A/1834, Notes on the Migrant Workers Bill, 1947. NAZ, File 482/22/42-48, Ordinances enacted by the Governor of Nyasaland Protectorate in agreement with the Prime Minister of Southern of

Nevertheless, clearly dominant in these sources is the jostle for power and the profitable control over migrant labor between the two countries. Indeed, for Zimbabwe, the 1940s were a period of unprecedented urban industrial development which however coincided with the expansion in settler agriculture and mining. The demands of the Second World War led to increased production while the closure of external markets boosted internal production as the country launched import substitution industrialization. So, the records that emerged within this period reflect the country's need for greater amounts of labor. In Malawi though, the recruitment of men to fight on the British side during the war and the increased demand for labor in Zimbabwe but also in South Africa, raised concern which then generated the archives of the time. At this time when Malawian women increasingly responded to the instability resulting from male exodus by also entering the migrant stream, they entered the colonial record relatively more visibly. Though Ulere records running from the 1940s to 1960 show that way over a thousand women left Malawi each year both legally and clandestinely, the issues of male labor migration remained dominant.

Despite that major labor agreements included important clauses to limit women's migration the records remained primarily male labor oriented. Important here is the fact that because the colonial officials exercised the power to generate the records, they also reserved the power to decide what counted for inclusion, exclusion or marginalization. Michel Foucault aptly describes archives as "documents of exclusion and monuments to particular configurations of power."⁷⁹ Because the archives are not just sources or neutral repositories of the past, but "technologies of imperial power, conquest, and hegemony", the power relations, whether racial, economic or gendered will always determine what gains more space in the archive and what does not.⁸⁰ Because their project was actually

Southern Rhodesia, with advice and consent of the Legislative Council thereof. See also British Foreign Affairs Office (BFAO), File 137/1942-48, ref 51G, Migrant labor in Southern Rhodesia.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Antoinette Burton (Ed), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fiction and the writing of history*, (Duke University Press), p.7

⁸⁰ Burton, p.7.

predicated upon gender principles advocating for the domestication of women, they produced records which tended to marginalize women.

However, where marginality translated to silences it is to the advantage of any historian of gender that colonial officials were not necessarily gender blind, considering the lengths to which they went to use the archive in their construction of labor migration as a male terrain. For instance, it is true that some records like transit camp records are completely silent about the accommodation and transportation of women or families.⁸¹ Also, in employment censuses there are yawning gaps where there should be entries for women except for the 4000 employed outside urban areas who are recorded under subheading “Native Women”. “Native women” are indigenes while “Native Alien Women” are foreign. Columns for men are filled out with elaborate statistics.⁸² However, I understood these silences as part of the colonial project of constructing migrancy as a male terrain and not necessarily to mean that women were absent. In fact, as I read through such files I was mindful of Michel Rolph Trouillot argument that insofar as archives are concerned, even the “silences speak.”⁸³ Hence, the very records that refer to men as migrant laborers and the transit camp records that speak of provisions for the native, who is invariably male unless followed by the category woman, really tell a story of exclusion which is at the center of my dissertation.⁸⁴

Just like the silences tell the story of the efforts to exclude or relegate them to the periphery, even the relatively limited references to them provide arrows towards women’s marginalization in the migrant stream. Because their primary project was the

⁸¹ NAZ, File S3292/37/5, Migrant labor routes and depots, 1940-1954. See also File S881/288, Native Aliens: Recruitment of labor in Nyasaland by Native Labor Board as Financed by the Colonial Treasury Department, 1942-1963.

⁸¹ NAZ, File S253/402/419, Native aliens: Purchase of Equipment for the expansion of facilities for passage of Nyasaland native labor, 1942-1959.

⁸² File S3287/85/A/76, Southern Rhodesian Government: Census of Population, 1948-1969- Annual Analysis of African Employees by Country of origin.

⁸³ Trouillot, Michel Rolph, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Massachusetts, Beacon Press Books, 1995).

⁸⁴ NAZ, File S3287/85/A/76, Southern Rhodesian Government: Census of Population, 1948-1969- General annual Analysis of African population.

profitable channeling of male labor between the two territories, it is not surprising that where the record relate to women, it is sometimes to clarify that the process was not for them but for men. Ulere transport records for the years 1940 to 1960 show that over ¾ of Malawians it transported to Harare were men, while women constituted less than a quarter.⁸⁵ Also, border reports indicate the numbers of foreign women, among whom Malawians dominated, apprehended at the border for joining the migrant stream. In some correspondences, like the one written by the officer at Forbes Border post to the CNC Salisbury requesting advice on how to quickly repatriate unsheltered, unfed and thirsty women and children, one could understand the plight of migrant women even from their marginalized position in the colonial record.⁸⁶

Also in the major labor agreements between Malawi and Zimbabwe, the conditions and position of women in the colonial mind is most apparent. As part of its bargaining process, the Malawian state always referred to “wives and families left behind.” Records of tax negotiations, remittance reviews and deferred wage systems as well as the clauses pertaining to men’s periodic return home are all couched in a language that incorporates women and families obliged under the agreements to remain in Malawi. The Resident Officer of Malawi based in Zimbabwe and the Governor of Malawi relayed information to Zimbabwe about the conditions of women in rural Malawi as reasons why remittance laws should be implemented by every employer.⁸⁷ The records of the series of labor agreements of the 1940s which culminated in the 1948 Act are also about colonial constructions of a social and economic system neatly compartmentalizing Africans along gender lines, with women being domesticated and men joining the public sphere as migrant workers. They contain special clauses about women, for instance the “permit clause” which is accompanied by a list of cumbersome procedures, in case they had to migrate. Hence, from both the silences and relatively scattered data about Malawian

⁸⁵ NAZ, File2239, Migratory Labor Carried by Southern Rhodesia Government Migrant Labor Transport (Ulere), 1947-60. See also Barnes, “Virgin Territory”, p165

⁸⁶ NAZ, File S1007/8, Office of the Chief Native Commissioner: Repatriation of Native aliens, 1949-1971; Directing Officer, Forbes to NC Salisbury, 6 August, 1949.

⁸⁷ FileS482/171/1/49, Agreements between Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland on double taxation relief for migrants, 1944-1949.

women I could reconstruct a clear, if never complete picture of the intent of colonial officials on both sides of the border to curtail women's migration, with which women had to struggle.

However, even as I benefitted from reading the sources against the grain and picking up on any direct reference to women, I also set out to find alternative evidence. The newspapers including the African Times, the Rhodesia Herald and African Weekly seemed to be the right place to start. For instance, the African Times and the Rhodesia Herald have important articles on labor migration especially the rise of Ulere transport and its token but exceptional effort to assist some female migrants.⁸⁸ The two papers however were official mouthpieces hailing the government's efforts to properly regulate the system. In contrast, the African Weekly proved to be the richest paper insofar as it shifts from official voices to African narratives. From the little notices such as that informing the Malawian community that Mai Tewesa was coming to join her husband in Harare, having finally obtained her required permit, to articles by the popular social observer, pseudo named Tengoliweta, on Malawian urban conditions among others, the newspaper provides a counter narrative to official sources. The most important section is written in Chewa and my exposure to the written and spoken language in the Railway Township in which I grew up made it very easy for me to read. It provides a fascinating view into migrant men and women's daily lives in the colonial city. One could find such articles as that of the Malawian based wife who demanded her husband's assistance to migrate to Harare in 1957. The man was trapped by an indigenous Shona concubine who argued in Chewa, "*Ngati upiteko ukamutenge, inenso sitisiyana*", that is, "if you go there to get your wife, I will go too because I won't be abandoned."⁸⁹ It offers stories of concubines' theft of men's passbooks to prevent them from travelling to bring back their wives; Malawian women's fights with concubines; women's victories against state systems that obstructed their migration;⁹⁰ commentaries on women's welfare and burial

⁸⁸ The Rhodesia Herald, 16 May, 1947. The African Times, 3 June 1947.

⁸⁹ The African Weekly, May, 1957.

⁹⁰ The African Weekly, November, 1957.

associations; outcries against Malawian women's prostitution as well as articles like '*Mabvuto pa Dondo*', that is, Trouble at Dondo.

At Dondo, the police boys select women lacking papers, they beat them and when they are frightened like that the police boys make them fetch water for Sumani's eating house, cook and feed them. Then they confine them together under a tree to await the truck back to Nyasaland. All the time they treat them like *akaporo*/slaves.⁹¹

It is true that the desire to hear the women's voices directly always remains unsatisfied even in such counter-narratives because this newspaper, as public space, was authored and edited by men. Illiterate and regarded as domestic beings, women did not write or make comments in the paper, rather they are written about. Still, the rich nuggets of data the paper provides about women's lives go a long way in helping in my quest to fill in the gaps and raise new questions in the gendered history of migration between Malawi and Zimbabwe.

At this point however, the fact that the making of the archive itself is a historical process whereby the changing events of the times affect the assemblage, storage and hence availability of sources became a major challenge in my work. Indeed, as Antoinette Burton argues, "all archives are figured, that is they have a dynamic relationship not just to the past and the present, but to the fate of regimes, the physical environment, the serendipity of bureaucrats and the care and neglect of archivists."⁹² In the Malawi Archives at Zomba as in the National Archives of Zimbabwe, I encountered the uniform thinning of relevant material on the 1970s decade. I could surmise that the historical changes in Malawi and Zimbabwe had certainly created a gap in the records since, in Malawi, colonialism collapsed in the 1960s with the rise of Kamuzu Banda to power. In Zimbabwe, official concerns with labor migration seemed insignificant in a decade when the liberation war, UDI and economic sanctions affected the economy which had attracted migrant workers. Though urban surveillance and gendered controls in Harare continued, they were more about curbing terrorist infiltration. Thus, I ran into an era of

⁹¹ The African Weekly, 4 January 1961.

⁹² Burton, p.6.

scarcity of data on both ends of the border and even the African Weekly disappears in the 1970s.

Here, I found myself grappling with Antoinette Burton's query concerning the "very possibility of memory without archives."⁹³ With all the limits of the archives, I still needed to find records for "the lost decade." The best that I obtained in Malawi were the series of speeches catalogued as "press releases" from His former Excellency, Ngwazi, Kamuzu Banda. The records reveal the policy continuities and changes concerning labor migration and also women's mobility. Between 1964 and the 1970s, though he did not commit to the prior agreements, Banda allowed the migrants to come and go freely.⁹⁴ He immediately removed restrictions on certified wives of workers so those who had failed to join long migrated husbands could travel, of course after obtaining permits straight at the *Boma*. The records show that singles, divorcees and widows continued to face hierarchies of control until the new registration system of 1973 ended their minority status. These records generated by the changes of the times, helped in my quest to learn more about the women's lives, especially in this otherwise "lost decade."

In Zimbabwe, my prior work as a Masters student in 2000 had directed me to the municipal archives situated in Mbare, Harare, along Remembrance drive. I retraced my steps only to find that the archives are still not catalogued but are open to researchers, of course, after application to the Town Clerk and the Director of Community Services. This archive is rich in internal policies on urban settlement ranging from the 1960 Vagrants law, the NUARAA and FMLA and a plethora of urban by-laws.⁹⁵ It has a wealth of correspondence between the municipality, industrialists and central government about labor stabilization, its advantages and disadvantages and the reluctance of various parties to fully adopt it where Malawians were concerned. It holds records such as the 1951

⁹³ Burton, p7. See also Hamilton, p.9.

⁹⁴ MA, Pam1, 127, Banda's Press releases and Speeches, 1964-1980.

⁹⁵ Harare City Archives (HCA), File RHB3/3/I, Memo: Foreign Migratory Labor Act passed in 1958, implemented in 1962.

amended NUARAA,⁹⁶ whereby both central and local government charge reluctant and recalcitrant employers to make their own choices about stabilization on the understanding that they had to provide all amenities for the wives and children of their workers. I also sampled the laws that affected Malawian women as illegal urban entrepreneurs, that is, the Urban African Farming, Eating House and Marketing by-laws, as well as the Harmful Liquors' Act.⁹⁷ The sources clearly paint the scenario in which Malawian women struggled by throwing into relief the mounting pressures from internal and international migration on social amenities and on the municipality. Even so, the authors of the documents are colonial, white males.

Yet, at this point, I was certain that I had visited all possible archives. But the reality was, of course that, "archives- that is traces of the past collected either intentionally or haphazardly as "evidence"- are by no means limited to official spaces or state repositories."⁹⁸ Because I carried out my interviews in the late afternoons after working in official archives in the mornings, I happened to mention to Mr. Brighton Mwechande, a man of about 70 or so years whose wife I had just interviewed, that I had spent the morning working with written evidence. Mr Mwechande immediately stood up and told me to wait while he got into his house to bring out three related documents, a letter which he wrote to his wife in 1977 and the other written by his employer, Export Leaf Tobacco to help him bring his wife through a safe route in light of nationalist wars, and a marriage registration certificate. These told a story of the new hardships of the period and the continued migration of wives which at least, on the Zimbabwean side was still policed. Because of Mr. Mwechande's generosity, I began to ask for any personal records interviewees might have kept. Many had workbooks because they had hoped to collect

⁹⁶HCA, RHB360/71, Responsibility of Employer to provide Accommodation for African Employees in terms of Part 1 of the Native Urban Areas Registration and Accommodation Act, 50/51.

⁹⁷HCA, File RHB/12(1)49/59, Salisbury Native Areas Farming By-laws, 1949. HCA, File RHB/238/15/49-77: Native Markets and Illegal Vending in Salisbury's locations; Chief Superintendent to Director of African Services, Salisbury, 18 May, 1964. HCA, File RHB/12(2)65, Salisbury African Urban Areas Farming By-laws, 1962. HCA, File RHB/238/15/49-77-Native Markets and Illegal Vending in Salisbury's locations, 149-1977.

HCA, File RHB/12(1)66, City Health Department, African Eating House By-laws, 1966. HCA, File RHB/12(0)40/49-72, African Beer-Halls and The Harmful Liquors Act.

⁹⁸ Burton, p.3. See also Achille Mbembe, p.25.

their deferred wages in Malawi on return. Others shared old pictures and the first passports issued under Banda. The now late Mr. Barnett Mlewa's old work-book shows the remittances sent to Mrs. Ayinesi Mlewa, his wife whose name and those of their children's are entered in the blue booklet as required by the Malawian and Zimbabwean government for regulation purposes. It also shows that the system continued up to the end of the 1960s. Marcelina Mukakiwa's old passport shows the change that came with Banda and a record of her husband and children's names; the frequency of her movement between the two countries and the changing routes in the 1970s liberation war era.⁹⁹ It also helped me to see the transnationality of the new identity based on *dziko*/nation that women participated in constructing to transcend ethnic subdivisions even as they continued to live in Harare. For instance it charges:

Malawian citizens resident abroad should, at the earliest opportunity, register their names and addresses in Malawi or at the nearest Malawi Embassy, legation or consulate; or at the Office of the Resident Malawi Representative...Failure to register may in the period of need or emergency result in difficulty in according to Malawi citizens the assistance and protection to which they are entitled.¹⁰⁰

However, for all their valuable detail, the written documents all lie imbedded within an androcentric discourse that masks and underplays the social realities of migrant women's lives. Even the richest of these documents are either colonial artifacts or reflect male perspectives. As such even where they emerge from the silences, women's words, ideas, ideologies and experiences are mediated through the eyes and ears of masculine chroniclers whose own agendas were shaped by their race, gender and class either as administrators or workers. They leave out women's struggles in the face of the most massive male exodus of the period. The extent to which women found ways to cope and

⁹⁹ Passport of Marcelina Mukakiwa, Ayebe Mwechande, Tavhina Masongera issued in 1973. Letter from Mr. Brighton. S. Mwechande of Mufakose to wife, Mrs. Ayebe Mwechande, 24 March, 1977. Letter from the Manager, Export Leaf Tobacco Co. of Africa to Malawi Government Representative, 25th March 1977 written on behalf of Brighton Mwechande to help bring back his wife through Botswana. (From personal documents and both appear in the appendix section). Marriage Registration certificate of Marcelina Mukakiwa, 16, September 1950; Ayebe Mwechande as obtained in replacement of original, lost in Zimbabwe, dated 21 December 1983. Work books of Barnett Mlewa; Sibola Chisale; Levison Sisamara and Royus Mapundu, issued in 1948, 1949, 1949 and 1954.

¹⁰⁰ Passport courtesy of Marcelina Mukakiwa, Tavhina Masongera of Rugare and Ayebe Mwechande of Mufakose, issued under Banda and indicating the safest routes during the war era.

creatively adapt in Malawi and eventually migrate to Zimbabwe, where their fight continued, remain under represented. Women's own stories on the other hand, while acknowledging their extreme vulnerability in a male dominated and controlled environment, provide evidence of their agency. They relate their proactive struggles and creative adaptation within the context of the officially constructed transnational networks of surveillance.

Oral Evidence

Because this dissertation is especially concerned with Malawian migrant women's lived experiences, their stories are thus pre-eminent. The documentation for critical parts of the study sits primarily on nearly a 100 interviews usually with first generation migrant women and their children born in Harare, but also with Malawian men, indigenous women and men some of whom served as police men in the colonial era. I initially worked with Malawian women in 2001 when I was preparing a paper entitled "The Native Alien Women in the urban History of Southern Rhodesia" for a history workshop at the University of Zimbabwe. I then launched the major field work for this dissertation in July 2008.

The year 2008 was a very difficult one in Zimbabwe because of the political violence and the economic meltdown that brought unprecedented chaos in the whole country. It proved very challenging to approach interviewees, especially in Harare, a city that had voted with a majority for the new political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by Morgan Tsvangirai. If I myself was sometimes concerned that moving around, asking Malawian women and their families questions about their part in Zimbabwean history might make me a target for youths from either ZANU or MDC, the interviewees were more afraid. In this unstable environment when violence was rife in the country, the culture of silence that results from political upheaval and chaos threatened to nullify my

efforts to obtain data because “people protect themselves through silence.”¹⁰¹ It was more so because some women thought I was an undercover ZANU PF or MDC youth leaguer or a political spy.

However, my desire to obtain information was enough incentive for me to risk interview collection in the four oldest locations of Rugare, Mufakose, Highfield and Mbare, even when Chipangano, a brutal force of ZANU youth Leaguers randomly punished urban dwellers. Since my childhood, I had always wanted to know more about Malawian women among whom I was growing up in the Railways location of Rugare. I recall how, as a child of about seven to ten years of age, I had always been fascinated by the women’s very distinct appearance, since they wore specific and similar clothing, the *nyakura*/ a blouse with sleeves peaked at the shoulders, a matching *nsaru*/ cloth tied around the waist reaching the ankles and the matching *mpango*/ headdress, all made of java printed cloth or plain cloth lined with laces. Their language was also different from ours and so were their manners and etiquette. I had always asked many questions and my father told stories about them as we sat around a fire in our backyard roasting corn from our own *madimba* given to us by my mother’s Chewa friend, Mai Naphiri.

The stories he told were also those that circulated among all indigenes in the location; about their magical skills which included overnight flight to and from Malawi in winnowing baskets, to their use of sorcery to prevent theft in their fields, to their strange burial practices where they cleaned up the insides of the deceased before burial. To me, they were so fascinating that I always made it a point to stand at our gate to watch them as they passed by and imagined that they were women from a country that was in the horizon where one could never reach. Because they were in the majority compared to us local people, their children were my friends, who taught me to read and write Chewa. However, growing up, I found nothing in school referring to these women even as my personal interest continued to grow. Hence, while the stories I heard bordered on mythology, to me the women remained a real presence in my life as a Zimbabwean. My

¹⁰¹Isaacman and Isaacman, *Slavery and Beyond*, p.29.

quest to understand their presence has continued to date and where archives cannot bring me in direct contact with their voices, oral accounts can. In fact, “oral accounts flesh out the lives of real people”¹⁰² and they “live in the minds of its people far more than the cracked parchment of officialdom might know.”¹⁰³

Growing up among them gave me an advantage in that I could speak Chewa, their *lingua franca* and I knew them personally especially those who lived in the East section of the Railway Township where I was raised. I therefore did not have trouble locating interviewees in this township and in fact, because they knew me they were sure I was not a political spy. So, I had to begin in this township and first approached my late parents’ friends Mrs. Tavhina Masongera and Mr. Barnet Mlewa. My mother was Mrs. Masongera’s *Atsabwila*/ very close friend. She was able to pick different languages easily and was a fluent Chewa speaker. She also came from a Manyika ethnic group in Zimbabwe which also had a culture of face tattoos for women. Malawian women thought or rather insisted that she was one of them because of her tattoos that were rare among local women. Mr. Mlewa, who is now late, became close friends with my father because they worked together in the Railways. These two people opened the way for me, not just in Rugare but in the other locations where they had many connections. They recommended me to friends in other townships which is how I first met Mrs. Alice Mbalami Kutengo and Mrs. Ndawara on 7th September 2008 and went on to stay with Mrs. Masongera’s daughter in Mbayani, Malawi, for months.

As a result, I enjoyed a very unique insider position, having grown up with these women who regarded me as a daughter and having also learnt their etiquette enough to know how to approach them so that they would be welcoming. As a Hararian, I also knew the demographic composition of the townships, especially that Malawian families occupied most of the houses in the old locations while local people dominated the postcolonial

¹⁰²Isaacman and Isaacman, *Slavery and beyond*, p.26.

¹⁰³ Charles van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985*, (New York, Hill and Young, 1996), p.10.

residential areas. Hence, even without recommendations, I sometimes made random calls from house to house armed with the letter from my advisers which I religiously carried. Very important, even for the women at whose homes I arrived unannounced like that, such as Enifa Njewa and Katesi Chirima of Mufakose, was proper etiquette involving kneeling and greeting them before making my request, and “proper” attire - a long dress and headdress that became my uniform for research. Even when I was in Malawi where I was an outsider from Zimbabwe, and also the younger woman, reverting to their language, etiquette and proper dressing went a long way in creating the relationships conducive to interviews.

However, this is not to say that my outsider status as both a student studying abroad and a non-Malawian did not always raise suspicion in this volatile political environment. Typically, even when I first arrived at Mrs. Yuna Chipoka’s home in Mbare location of Harare with a recommendation from the now late Mrs. Chimwara of Rugare, the Yao woman dismissed my request for an interview saying, “Whose child are you? A-ah, why do you want to know anything about people to who you do not belong?”¹⁰⁴ I only succeeded by switching to Chewa as I reiterated that I was sent by her Yao friend, Mrs. Chimwara. She became more receptive after my explanation that as a student of history, I would capture and preserve her story among other women’s stories that I already had, so that their grandchildren can also learn from their past.

My encounter with Mrs. Chipoka was very illuminating for one reason. Outside the Township of my childhood, my position shifted more to that of an outsider. In fact the interview process became charged with questions of power between me and my interviewees. To gain the upper hand many started by interviewing me rather than the other way round. They located my origin as a Zimbabwean Manyika woman, my parents, which Malawian women I knew and why I was collecting their stories.¹⁰⁵ In one

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Yuna Chipoka, Mbare, 2008

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Gomeza Alice, Rugare, Harare, 2 November, 2008, Interview with Paliza Eneresi, Highfield, 2 September October, 2008. Interview with Masongera Tavhina, Rugare, Harare, 28, December, 2008.

illuminating example, Eneresi Paliza of Highfield welcomed me after establishing that I was both a Chewa speaker and knew Tavhina Masongera and Alice Gomeza of Rugare. She called for a reed mat for me to sit and shared with me details not only about her birth place, village and district of origin, number of children, husband's details and their years of arrival. She walked me through her experiences of poverty in Malawi and her migration as well as life experiences in Harare. Even though I had started by using a questionnaire to guide the conversation, by our next meeting, she was so relaxed that I no longer prompted her with questions. Like others, she too directed me to her Malawian neighbors and pinpointed those who could still speak well, who had a good memory and indicated those too sick or had died recently but had children who could tell me their stories. That is how I met Mrs. Enesi Zagwa and Mrs. Sylvia Kamanga who led the Malawian Women's League in Harare since the 1960s. Because she constantly mentioned them in our conversation, I asked Eneresi Paliza whether I could see the women. She directed me to Mrs. Kamanga, instructing me to look for a house at the corner with *nyandoro*/ a Malawian bean tree planted by the gate.¹⁰⁶ It became one of my strategies thereafter to find the distinct small tree and approach the home where I opened the conversation by identifying the tree, to the delight of my hosts.

I also received indispensable help from interviewees' children and grandchildren who backed me up by expressing how important it was to them for their parents to leave behind their history. For example, Sylvia Kamanga only comfortably opened up after her grandson Edmus Kamanga read the letter from my advisers and told her that, "It's true, this is *muzungu*'s/white man's letter. It says please teach her about why you came from Malawi and how you have lived here. It's important for the schools."¹⁰⁷ In a general pattern, this seemed to dilute the field of tension which threatened to nullify my quest. I had to liaise with grandsons and granddaughters, like Edmus Kamanga in acknowledging that even if I was a university student and a Zimbabwean, the interviewees held the reign of power in our relationship because without them I could never learn what I wanted to

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Kutengo Mbalami, Alice, Highfield, 8 September 2008.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Edmus Kamanga, Highfield, 7 October 2008.

know. In addition, to operate on a plain field, I too had to open up to them about my research plans and progress.

The strategies that worked in Harare also worked in Malawi between April and August 2009. In Malawi, my situation was worse because I had never visited the country before. I had no clue whatsoever how to get to the people. As I too became a migrant to Malawi, Mrs. Masongera's help was indispensable. She offered to accompany me to Blantyre and Zomba as long as I funded the journey. She brought me into her daughter's home at Mbayani in Blantyre where we stayed. Her daughter, Mrs. Nyarai Kumbanga introduced me to many women who had lived in Harare. She walked through the township with me to help me locate interviewees. Also, some women came to Mrs. Kumbanga's home to see me and to talk to me about their own stories. To them, I was an outsider but also Mrs. Masongera's daughter from Zimbabwe, who needed their help. Also, the chain of identification of informants based on other interviewees' recommendations took me as far as Mpondabwino township of Zomba.

As we worked together, navigating the relations of power imbedded in the interview process, I derived great benefit from the wealth of "oral archives of ordinary people" which are "imminently creatable out of personal memories and reflections."¹⁰⁸ The women who offered me a chance to listen to their stories spoke poignantly about what life as wives of migrants and eventually migrants themselves was like. The painful realities captured in Emma James Tembo's account tell a story that no written source could.

He left when I was pregnant with my first child. That child was seven years old when I laid eyes on him again. Meanwhile, he never sent a letter or money, not even a coin. So I joined many in Chikwawa who suffered like that...the girls in our village taunted me too saying, "*mai ukwati wata, tengani wina mwamuna muchite banja*/Mother you are no longer married. Take another husband and make a home." So, then in 1956 I travelled with our cousins, who were returning here, to get my *ukwati* back.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Burton, p.12.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Emma James Tembo, Highfield, 3 September 2008.

Neither could colonial documents capture the harrowing experiences of widows like Agnes Kunjika whose husband migrated and died in Zimbabwe, or how they felt when their guardians - the brothers, uncles and other male members of their families also abandoned them in the villages. Others like Meripa Kongoti told stories of the deep anxiety of daughters-in-law neglected by migrant husbands in patrilineal communities. Nowhere in official records could we come to grips with the pain of such deserted women captured in Julia Marizani's testimony.

Once he left, he forgot about us. I always wondered if my very own husband thought I could maintain life in our homestead like we used to do together. I felt alone, especially when anxiety struck the whole village just before the planting season when we began to ask others for *nkute* /corn meal polenta leftovers or to dry plantains and tubers to grind into meal. Children died then, that was happening in our village. We women did everything, watched children starve, die of hunger and even buried them alone. My first child died because we never had enough to go around. That's when I said enough! Myself, *hinde-e* /yes I was fed up with it all! In 1957, I sent him word that if I cannot come there, our *ukwati*/marriage must end. That's how I came...¹¹⁰

By recounting how they coped, as abandoned women and then struggled for mobility, the women challenge the silences in official records.

Oral accounts also open a new window into women's struggles within a well-orchestrated gendered network of surveillance incorporating white colonial administrators, their own *ankoswe*/ guardians, husbands, headmen and chiefs. Since women mainly adopted hidden forms of resistance and circumvented official channels of migration, it is futile to search for such events in official archives. In fact, clandestine migration can only be retrieved from oral texts which also have the unique power to bring us close to individual and collective memories of the pain and anxiety of flight or the hardships of socio-economic

¹¹⁰ Interview with Julia Marizani, Mbayani Township, 8 May 2009. See also NAM, File NCK6/1/1, Notes on Nyau, Witchcraft and other African customs in Nkotakota District by W. H. J. Rangeley, 1947.

life in an androcentric city. Their “everyday forms of resistance”¹¹¹ and the strategies of survival as wives, divorcees, widows and singles en-route and in the city can best be understood from their own accounts. Theirs is also a shared story of how they pried open the fissures in the surveillance system by bribing *ankoswe*, chiefs and headmen, or even the police in Harare. Even though colonial officials recorded migrant laws, only through accounts such as Alice Gomeza’s can we learn how such laws affected women’s lives.

I was living like a widow...that’s why I pressured my husband and ended up here. I said not even the *Boma*/ District Office or *azungu*/ the white men here or there would stop me and the children from joining him! They said we all had to get *karata zaurendo*/ permits at the *Boma*. The *karata* will only come if the *nkoswe*/ male guardian in the family asked the headman on your behalf. The headman went to the chief who then gave you a letter to the *Boma*. It was “do that and do this” so we wouldn’t leave, yet our *ukwati* was dying before our eyes.¹¹²

In Harare, apart from recording that the women breached urban by-laws and acts, the colonial records could not get at the logistics used, for instance, hiding illegal women, moving them from house to house to avoid inspections; marketing in undesignated points, hiding wares and developing Chewa code words to warn against police raids; their use of sentries in beer brewing venues, setting such ventures beyond the direct gaze of authority and nocturnal brewing among others.

The story which this dissertation seeks to tell is therefore sustainable mainly on the recollections of the actors and their descendants. Only through oral accounts can women’s power in determining the course of their communities’ socio-economic well-being in Harare be clear. Insignificant to the colonial powers and thus ignored in their records, the roles of leading women, known as *anyankungwi*, in the establishment of women’s *mutandizi*/ welfare and *mwariro*/ burial organizations, their renegotiations of language or why and how they elevated Chewa in supra-ethnic settings is clarified in oral accounts. Outside women’s stories, the deliberate expansion of boundaries to transcend

¹¹¹ Terence O Ranger, “Connections between primary resistance movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa”, *Journal of Africa History*, 9, 3, 1968, pp.437-453. Allen Isaacman, “Peasants and rural Social Protest in Africa”, *African studies review*, 33, 2, (1990), pp.1-120.

¹¹² Interview with Alice Gomeza, Rugare, Harare, 2 November 2008.

ethnicity, based upon the concept of *umodzi*/ unity and *dziko*/ nation, would remain in total obscurity.

For all their utility, oral interviews just like official archives are however also marred by inherent silences. Michael Rolph Trouillot's argument about the permeation of "silences" in data collection, apply to oral research as well.¹¹³ In Malawi, I encountered one major problem as some interviewees withheld information as long as I could not pay for it. Though I explained my impecunious position, the belief that I was going to "*guritsa nkani zatuzi kwaazungu wamereka*"/' "to sell our stories to white people in America" and get rich silenced many interviewees. That I had a digital recorder only worsened issues. Yet, even as I offered to jot down notes in my notebook some protested, "*Wandiona ngati ndine mambara? Ulembe nkani zatu upiteko kuazungu koma oguritsa. Ife kumenekuno ndaramazo timazona? Sindifuna kufokotozera mpepo.*" In translation, she said, "You see me as a fool? You want to write down our stories to sell to white people. Will we ourselves ever see the money? No, I do not want to talk for mere wind which I can neither see nor eat."¹¹⁴ Here, that I was regarded as a Zimbabwean exploiter using Malawian women to make money for myself suggests that surrounding these interviews was a set of power relations that affected the production of historical knowledge. Thus, even though my contact, Mrs. Masongera helped, a lot remained outside my reach. Some people simply stated "that was too long ago, I can't recall" or "I am too old to remember all that."

Such encounters were very instructive for several reasons. Firstly, the memory of the past is inextricable from a current political process of "remembering" and "forgetting", or even the current power dynamics between researcher and informant. Secondly, informants are themselves actors who are directly engaged in constructing or retrieving memory in accordance with their present position and needs. While they may remember

¹¹³Trouillot, Michel Rolph, *Silencing the Past*, p.15.

¹¹⁴ I did not even get to the point of recording the name of the woman popularly known as Mama Zimbabwe in Mbayani town of Blantyre.

events about which they are proud, they conveniently “forget” details about which they feel pain or are ashamed or do not want to share with certain people, in this case, me. For instance, those who coped in Harare through prostitution and those who fled home with the help of men in exchange for sexual services preferred not to remember. That is the reason why Mrs. Angwaula Mlepa who later became a respectable wife defensively explained to me, “It’s not like I am proud of having been in that business...” and she would not even name prostitution but “that business.”¹¹⁵ Thirdly, some people were eager to talk but had really forgotten, proving that “memories themselves are not discrete representations stored in a cabinet the contents of which are generally accurate and accessible at will.”¹¹⁶ Then also, cultural considerations created barriers that foreclosed discussion. Moss interviewees preferred to call me *mwananga*/my child. While this made me an insider or close confidante the reference also emphasized the generational gap. *Mwambo*/custom silenced the women since it required that as *mwana*/child, the mothers had to shield me from exposure to harsh truths. I could only receive accounts of less shady deals than say, prostitution. I felt closed out especially as some just said, “you *mwananga* can never understand.” Sometimes I could do nothing but respect their silence. Other times I circumvented the generational barrier by asking for a single song that they used to sing in Harare. Indeed, the songs that they recall provide a detailed interior view of their colonial encounters and also the changes of the 1970s. Their funeral, political and other dance songs offer a rich historical map of their migrant experiences which are at the center of this dissertation.

Also, how people reconstruct, interpret, and use the past is preeminently a political act. In fact, for one reason or another, “oral narratives are necessarily emplotted in a way that life is not”, distorting life whether or not the evidence upon which they are based can be proved correct.¹¹⁷ In addition, the process of remembering is also always projecting the present into the past, since “the past does not exist independently from the present.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Interview with Angwaula Mlepa.Mufakose, 6 February, 2009.

¹¹⁶ Isaacman and Isaacman, *Slavery and Beyond*, p.16.

¹¹⁷ Trouillot, Michel Rolph *Silencing the Past*, p19.

¹¹⁸ Trouillot, Michel Rolph *Silencing the Past*, p19.

While some of my interviewees could not resist embellishing, or presenting a picture of too glorious a past, others referred to the past only to highlight the worsening situation in the present. In one case, Mrs. Chaturuka Mangame whose husband had served as a tailor in a European's factory but also worked on his own account wistfully insisted;

*Hindee, timavhutika kwambiri ntai zatazi/yes, we suffered a lot in those days. But if you look at things now, you would see that only Europeans made this country worth coming to. I was a tailor's wife and my husband was among the few who opened a shop at Gazaland for which he paid license fees to the council. But as soon as that upstart came, he forced us to start cooperatives and so we lost the shop. Just imagine- one time he was selling clothes all over and even going into the farms and mines, the next there was nothing. Mugabe destroyed everything...*¹¹⁹

Many wanted to hear more about who was going to assist them to get out of their present economic quagmire. They found it more relevant to address the deterioration of their lives, than to talk of the past. Many more were suspicious that I was an official agent sent to expose foreigners under the 2008 Citizenship Bill, asking them to either denounce Malawian citizenship and be fully Zimbabwean or take Malawian citizenship and forfeit rights in Zimbabwe.

Even where I overcame such obstacles, the translation and transcription of the accounts I obtained from Chewa to English was another challenge. The act of translating and transcribing is in itself a form of distortion which every historian has to grapple with. In addition, no amount of interview and transcription skill can fully preserve the inflection of tone, the cliques of tongue, the grant, frown or the sad shaking of the head, which speaks volumes about suffering or other poignant memories which otherwise remain unspeakable. Added to this was the challenge of interpreting interviewees' representations of time and distances. One had to be well attuned to their immediate surroundings to understand what urban women meant when they said they travelled to market wares over distances "from here to the city center". Said in Rugare, that would be five km, said in Mufakose, about 10km. One also had to find tangible examples to

¹¹⁹ Interview with Mangame Chaturuka, Davison, Mbare, 21 August 2008.

understand what a migrant woman meant when she said, “I was a girl about this big when I married Ndawara and came to this city.”¹²⁰ One would need to ask, “you mean like your granddaughter there?” Sometimes they measured time in terms of major benchmarks in their lives, for instance, “I came here just after my first child was born” or “I visited home the year Tabita was initiated”,¹²¹ which meant I had to ask their children or grandchildren for birth hierarchies, birthdays and initiation periods to get a sense of chronology. The few who used major events such as Hitler’s war, or the German or Mozambican war, Banda’s or Mugabe’s rise gave a better sense of chronology.

Finally, I faced the thinness of data due to deaths of early migrants, senility and other problems, that is, for the 1940s decade. While I was fortunate to get to talk to some of the most brilliant informants such as Alice Kutengo, Alice Gomeza, Tavhina Masongera and the late Mr. Mlewa, the data became dense as we moved to events of the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s.¹²² In a way therefore, the combination of archival material which is really strong on the 1940s to 1960s, with oral data which is strong on the 1950s to ‘70s is the best strategy. All the same, while I read them with an acute awareness of their shortcomings, the interviews collected in Zimbabwe and Malawi constitute a necessary counter-narrative to official records and bring in the voices of the women which the male chronicled archival sources could never capture.

Structure of the dissertation

The first chapter introduces the central and supporting arguments of this dissertation. It contextualizes the dissertation within the historiography on migrant women and the broader literature on labor migration in Africa. The chapter thus establishes both the prior scholarship upon which this dissertation is built and the inherent silences which it

¹²⁰ Interview with Mama Ndawara, Highfield, 8 September, 2008

¹²¹ Interview with Enifa Njewa, Mufakose, 6 February, 2009.

¹²² Interview with Barnet Mlewa , Rugare, 17 November 2008; Gomeza Alice, Rugare, Harare, 2 November, 2008; Kutengo Mbalami , Alice, Highfield, 8 September 2008.

addresses. It also provides a synoptic historical background of Harare, the main focus of this study and explains why the city and its African locations constitute the spatial focus in this dissertation. It addresses methodological issues, assessing archival and oral sources without which this study would not have been possible.

Four chapters follow the first chapter and as I have stressed earlier in the section on temporal dimensions, even though the work focuses on women's migration over a forty year period, each chapter is organized thematically. It thus follows that because its focus is on women as historical actors, in an environment defined by state controls, the second chapter begins by examining the policies and practices that structured this gendered environment in Malawi. It traces why and how the state instituted and implemented gendered systems of control. It establishes the institution of a male oriented migrant system to better understand women's socio-economic struggles in light of men's exodus. It then examines their migration as one of the major coping mechanisms; their evasion, circumvention and resistance of the system to leave Malawi. While this chapter is about their struggles within their natal country it locates transformations between the 1960s and 1973.

The third chapter shifts attention to their experiences of entry into another field of transnational controls by focusing on their encounters with the Zimbabwean system. Firstly, it examines how and why the colonial government of Zimbabwe facilitated male migration while stifling women's mobility. It traces the different perspectives and tensions between the central state, the local government of Harare and industrialists concerning women's entry into the city and also the common views that allowed compromises between them. It then locates women's entry within the context of a combination of internal and international laws imposed by urban authorities; their struggles for urban space, the strategies they adopted to settle in Harare and their direct clashes with Zimbabwean authorities in the process. The chapter therefore continues to tell the story which started in chapter 2, of women's extreme vulnerability, coping and struggles against the state's networks of controls. Given that before it is possible to fully

explore women's socio-economic lives in Harare, it is necessary to understand their gendered environment not just in Malawi but on entry in Harare, the second chapter builds on the first one.

The fourth chapter examines how these women claimed their own socio-economic space by adopting various economic ventures as coping strategies in a city which denied them access to formal work. It explores their encounters with the hostility of the state, the police and municipal authorities who threatened to stifle their economic ventures. To establish and maintain their coping mechanisms and economic ventures, the women had to fight against a plethora of urban by laws, internal settlement laws and inter-territorial clauses strictly implemented by the police throughout the studied period. Their struggles for survival and resistance against the state gained new significance especially from the 1960s when urban life became more difficult and such ventures became pivotal in their families urban survival.

In the fifth chapter, we shift to the women's construction of ethnic welfare and burial societies as platforms of a new nationalist identity necessary for women's socio-economic survival in Harare. Such societies maximized their urban security by assisting women who lost wares, money, and crops due to the urban police raids or the crop destruction exercise designed to root out urban farming. They helped families facing illness of breadwinners with cash, food and even money to travel back to their villages of origin in case of forced repatriations. They also paid fines when fellow women were arrested for breaking urban by-laws and offered each other capital to rebuild their ventures after police attacks. Burials also represented a significant strategy to cope in a foreign city where migrants were not exempt from death even as they lacked the support of extended family and village communities. In the 1960s, as the rapidly changing socio-economic environment in the city and the volatility of nationalist struggles made these organizations more significant, ethnicity lost its relevance. Unity based on the new concept of *dziko*/nation became the most viable way to promote more effective cooperation in the volatile world of colonial Harare.

Chapter 2: “Nsikana, you are going nowhere!” Malawian women’s fight for international mobility, 1940 to 1973.

From the 1940s, the expansion of colonial capitalism in neighboring territories, including Zimbabwe, spurred a massive migration from Malawi. In this period, the Malawian state signed the 1940, 1942, 1946 provisional agreements and the 1948 Migrants Act in agreement with Zimbabwe, institutionalizing men’s while constraining Malawian women’s migration. In this chapter, I examine how women migrated in light of this restrictive policy implemented through *ankoswe/* household heads, *mafumu/* village headmen, chiefs, policemen and District Commissioners. I make three basic arguments. Firstly, I argue that the colonial state of Malawi implemented this policy to secure a regular income from labor exports while ensuring the growth of the economy. With a weak agrarian economy and limited European investments, male labor exports the colonial administration argued, would benefit both the colonial administration and rural communities. By keeping the majority of women in Malawi, the state expected them to help draw men’s cash remittances, deferred wages and taxation; ensure men’s periodic return, preserve Malawi’s social fabric and constitute the stable rural workforce necessary to maintain peasant livelihoods.

Secondly, I argue that, on the contrary, the system triggered serious rural challenges causing women’s increased migration. Beyond the 1 000 to 2 000 documented wives who migrated legally yearly from 1947, thousands more left through clandestine routes. Contrary to the state’s expectations, the women sought to escape dire poverty resulting from the system. By facilitating men’s migration to the extent of tripling the pre1940s figures, the system eroded family life and hence the gendered division of labor in rural households. Women worked the land, maintained homesteads and raised families, carrying out their own social reproductive tasks as well as those culturally assigned to men. Without the men, women could not provide adequate labor to maintain levels of production necessary for food security. This explains low yields, declining food security; resulting in starvation, malnutrition and death which also affected women whose men

became *matchona*/ lost ones or who failed to post remittances. This situation pushed thousands of neglected wives and mothers, betrothed, divorced, widowed and single women into the migrant stream.

Thirdly, I maintain that women's migration testifies to the fact that Malawian women were not passive victims trapped within a male biased system. Married women took advantage of fissures inherent in the system to negotiate for legal migration with African authorities and husbands. While the state allied with *ankoswe*/household heads, *mafumu*/village headmen, chiefs and policemen to control their mobility, these women worked to win them over. First, wives liaised with husbands to gather supporting documents such as employed husbands' letters of invitation, letters of accommodation from Zimbabwe-based employers, husbands' work book numbers and marriage certificates. Some singles even entered marital arrangements with migrants to obtain such papers. However, they needed *ankoswe*'s approval since, as guardians, *ankoswe* endorsed daughters' marriages before the District Commissioners to get marriage certificates. In addition, daughters needed *ankoswe*'s representation before headmen and chiefs who in turn endorsed requests for permits before submission to the *Boma*/ District Office.

Desperate women bribed *ankoswe* and even the most strict chiefs and headmen. Others threatened husbands with divorce not only to get documents but money and Rhodesian goods like bicycles and coats to oil the palms of these authorities. Still more feigned *musara*/ a fatal mental illness associated with a broken heart due to separation from their husbands. Others threatened adultery, playing upon *ankoswe*'s fears that if women fell pregnant in husbands' absence, as the guardians, *ankoswe* would be fined a cow or its cash equivalent under the 1940s Native Adultery Ordinance. More women simply played one *nkoswe* against the other. However, because many failed to obtain documentation, they fled by night or at dawn along with singles, widows and divorcees who could not even contemplate applying for permits. They tramped with male friends, relatives or husbands through dense and dangerous forests, braving wild animals, the elements and

risking their lives as they traveled to distant exits. While the situation changed for married women in 1966 and for their unmarried counterparts by 1973, throughout the colonial era, they clandestinely fled through *madhobhadhobha*/ illegal recruiters' routes and make their way to Zimbabwe.

Official reasons for gendered controls

From the 1940s, prevailing official perspectives, firmly rooted in economic requirements necessary for the survival of the colonial state, determined the nature of women's struggles for cross border mobility in Malawi. Out of necessity, the state primarily designated migration to Zimbabwe as a male preserve. In order to limit the economic vulnerability associated with labor outflows to Zimbabwe and other parts of the region, the Protectorate government led by a succession of Governors, Native Commissioners and African authorities needed to preserve one stable section of the peasant labor force, that is, women, within their villages. The balance obtained by ensuring that women mainly remained within state boundaries while men migrated was indispensable in a territory which met most of its financial needs from the sale of labor to the developing centers of the region, including Zimbabwe. Ensuring women's stable presence within Malawi had many implications for the backward and forward flows of labor, money as well as the preservation of the social fabric upon which the territory was founded. To an extent, since they were at the center of the families attached to migrant workers, women were also at the core of the whole socio-economic system based on cash remittances, deferred payments, taxation and men's periodic return.

Given their importance in light of the poverty of the territory, the need to balance women's immobility with men's migration was firstly reflected in internal labor movements in Malawi. While it supervised the Protectorate's administration through the Colonial Office in London, the British Crown stressed self-reliance and each colony's responsibility for its economic and financial well-being. Malawi also had to raise its own revenues for administrative and other purposes. As part of the efforts to establish financial autarky, the Protectorate state supported the occupation of thousands of acres of

land by a select group of European entrepreneurs for agrarian ventures. The majority occupied the most suitable lands in the upper and lower Tchiri area and launched various agricultural activities in the Protectorate. In the Tchiri Valley European settlers opened tea and tobacco estates in the Highlands and cotton estates in the lowlands, establishing related industries. They launched cotton processing factories at Port Herald, modern tea and tobacco grading and packaging factories in Blantyre and Tchiri.¹²³ While they displaced thousands of Africans from the land, they also kept some families as tenant workers.

However, a significant part of the labor force was made up of migrant workers who traveled the long distances from the north and central parts of Malawi to work in the Tchiri and other areas. From this point, the Protectorate state found it necessary to institute a gendered division of labor whereby the state helped the new entrepreneurs by recruiting primarily male workers from different regions to work in agrarian centers. Women in turn mainly remained behind to maintain peasant production in rural areas and supplement the low agrarian wages which generally fell below 30 shillings per month. The development of the colonial capitalist logic whereby the ideal “native labor” was male thus characterized labor processes within Malawi. In addition, the entrepreneurs followed the colonial economic rationale that “the labor of the migration of single men is the cheapest available.” By the late 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, the balancing act resulted in the relative exclusion of Malawian women as productive workers in tea and tobacco estates of the Tchiri Highlands; cotton farms in the Lower Tchiri Valley and processing plants.¹²⁴ Women as mothers and daughters mainly remained in the villages and a mere 300 against more than 10 000 adult and juvenile migrant men entered employment.¹²⁵

¹²³ Stephen Samuel Murray, *A Handbook of Nyasaland*, (London, Crown agents for Colonies, 1938), pp.70-78.

¹²⁴ Murray, *A Handbook of Nyasaland*, pp.78.

¹²⁵ MA, Annual Report, Nyasaland Protectorate, 1939.

Just as the agrarian sector emerged as the major employer promoting a male biased internal migration system in Malawi, the highly competitive European settlers in Zimbabwe invested in mining, manufacturing and agricultural industries. In relative terms, Malawi's economy was driven solely by agriculture and its prospects offered less attraction to European and South African based investors since, at this time, it was regarded as lacking in mineral deposits. As late as 1935 Malawi's European community had an investment capacity of less than a ¼ of the Zimbabwean capacity and the economy of Malawi remained extremely poor.¹²⁶ Up to 1940, the largest part of the population survived by small scale farming. In addition, those in agrarian employment earned less than 30 shillings or ½ the Zimbabwean wages.¹²⁷ In those villages where peasant women and their husbands, fathers, sons, daughters and uncles produced cash crops for European exporters, the few "master farmer" families rarely received more than 10 – 15 pounds per annum.¹²⁸ Only by instituting the migrant system could the state ensure the "gainful" employment of thousands of Malawian men who also represented the tax-paying population. As the settler economy in Zimbabwe diversified to include agriculture, mining and manufacturing, the entrepreneurs relied heavily on "single' men's labor", drawing thousands of Malawian migrants. Operating on a pauper's budget, the Malawian state found this to be the most viable way of raising revenue.

Though its institutionalization of men's labor migration was also driven by its mandate to protect the African social fabric, to a large extent the Protectorate state attempted to ensure men's return, tax and other cash remittances by keeping women and other dependents behind. By the 1940s, as men's migration more than doubled the 1903/4, 1920/1 and 1934/5 figures of 6 000, 40 000 and 42 598 respectively, in response to Zimbabwe's war time import substitution industrialization, the Protectorate state's need

¹²⁶Official Yearbook, Digest of statistics in British Africa, in Colin Leys, *European Politics in Southern Rhodesia*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959), p.14.

¹²⁷ Murray, *A Handbook of Nyasaland*, p.79.

¹²⁸ P. T Jerry, "The rise of the African cotton industry in Nyasaland, 1902-1939", *The Nyasaland Journal* vol. xiii, 1, (1959), pp45-90.

for revenue soared.¹²⁹ In this decade, the state invoked the Tax Ordinance amended in 1940 to confirm men's tax obligations. Under the taxation policy African household heads contributed to African Administration through tax payment.¹³⁰ With the Governor at the helm, provincial and district commissioners connected with household and village heads through district chiefs, to consolidate this revenue generating system. In line with Victorian principles whereby women as perpetual minors were exempt from serious financial issues, the state stressed men's exclusive responsibility for taxes as of 1940. In exchange, it ensured their families' access to land, water resources, legal assistance and other privileges of citizenship.

Under this tax system, adult and juvenile male taxpayers increasingly tramped or migrated through the Rhodesia Native Labor Bureau (RNLB), one of the labor recruiting agents established by employers and the colonial state in Zimbabwe. As taxes increased in the 1940s, from the 1900s to 1930s figure of 8 shillings for each wife or single worker to 1 pound, the tax collected in five northern districts in 1941 amounted to 18 379 and yet the total wages earned locally reached merely 8 000 pounds.¹³¹ Apparently more men than previously earned their taxes in Zimbabwe and other parts of the region such as South Africa, with 2/3 of the migrants in the earlier and a 1/3 in the latter. Revealing the grave importance of labor migration in raising the revenue needed for administrative purposes, the state thus charged taxpayers to obtain migrant certificates in their districts in order to track them for taxation. By 1944, the Protectorate government sought to obtain the greatest benefit from the migrant labor relationship with Zimbabwe. In this year it changed the law to allow adult and juvenile migrants to obtain the certificates in any district of Malawi before proceeding to Zimbabwe as long as they showed a current tax payment receipt.¹³² Theoretically, the system was an effective way to collect revenue

¹²⁹NAZ, File S482/136/3/48, Nyasaland labor Recruited for Southern Rhodesia , 1900 - 1948. British Foreign Office (BFAO), File 137/1945-1946, Extent of Inter-territorial Migration in Central Africa by the Central African Secretariat, Salisbury, 5 August, 1946.

¹³⁰Malawi Archives (MA), File LB5/1/1, Native Tax Ordinance- District census and payments, 1941-50.

¹³¹Native Tax Ordinance- District census and payments, 1941-50.

¹³² NAZ, FileS482/171/1/49, Agreements between Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland on double taxation relief for migrants, 1944-1949.

since any men who failed to obtain the certificate would not be eligible for legal employment in Zimbabwe. To ensure success in this financial tracking system, as some men migrated without required documentation, the Protectorate government established the Office of the “Nyasaland Resident Officer” who worked with the Rhodesian Labor Officer in Zimbabwe. Together they identified all Malawian migrant laborers without certificates at different entry points. They issued them with the documents tagging them for tax remission.¹³³ It was with this in mind that Bendasi Arumenda, who first came to Zimbabwe as a male juvenile in 1948 explained that, “the government wouldn’t give women much thought because they weren’t workers or taxpayers. Women had no passes to travel.”¹³⁴

To the Protectorate state, women’s immobility was important insofar as it spurred migrant men to meet the African administration’s tax responsibility ‘in respect of wives left behind.’¹³⁵ The system became congealed around the idea that immobile African women were the anchor of Malawi’s socio-economic survival in the face of escalating male labor migration. On the 19th of December 1947, though the Governor of Malawi stated, “our government will not permit, those women neither accompanying their husbands nor shown as such on their husband’s identification certificates”¹³⁶ to migrate, the state still insisted on generally limiting women’s mobility. This limitation was logical since migrant workers remitted taxes on behalf of wives left behind. The Governor authorized the Labor Commissioner to mail 400 copies of a Government Notice urging Native Department Offices, Post Offices and employers in Zimbabwe to supervise the remission of taxes by Malawian husbands on account of wives.¹³⁷ As the reasoning went, just as single men could become *matchona*, that is, ‘lost ones’ who could not be reprimanded for tax defaults, so would married men if their women had uncontrolled

¹³³ Agreements on double taxation relief, 1944-49.

¹³⁴ Interview with Bendasi Arumenda, Mbare, Harare, 5 August, 2008.

¹³⁵ NAZ, FileS3292/37/3, Payment of taxes by Nyasaland Natives working in Southern Rhodesia, 1940-1951.

¹³⁶ NAZ, File S14/A/1834, Notes on the Migrant Workers Bill, 1947.

¹³⁷ NAM, File LB5/1/1, Native Tax Ordinance- District census and payments, 1941-50: Tax remittance Notice from the Governor to Labor Commissioner, 19 December 1947.

freedom to migrate. To the Protectorate administration, the indigenous term *matchona* for migrants who failed to return home came to represent all potential taxpayers who survived without migrant certificates and could thus not be tracked for tax remissions. Ideally, maintaining wives and families in the villages in Malawi would reduce the incidence of *matchona*, ensuring effective tax collection among migrants.

Reflecting the significance of labor migration and its gendered regulation in raising much needed revenue, the state cooperated with African authorities in all its efforts. From 1946, the governor decreed that, “every migrant native is under obligation to register his name and that of his wife/wives in his Native Authority, Village Headman and District Commissioner’s census records.”¹³⁸ The colonial state of Malawi drew village headmen and district chiefs by awarding them an annual wage of 5 and 10 percent of the total tax they collected respectively. By placing them on the Chief Native Commissioner’s payroll, the European administrators enfolded them in their system of gendered surveillance and gave them the incentive to curtail women’s mobility as much as possible.¹³⁹ Also the system reached down to the household level since by registering and leaving their women behind men ensured the continuity of access to rural resources, especially land. In both matrilineal and patrilineal societies, each family had access to land. Matrilineal Man’anja, Yao, Lomwe and Chewa men settled into their wives homesteads where they obtained such land. Those in polygamous marriages had access to land in different homesteads and villages among their wives’ people. The patrilineal Ngoni, Tonga and Tumbuka brought wives into their homesteads and received adequate land for the number of wives they brought. In both cases, men and wives had only usufruct rights to land under headmen and chiefs. Extant up to the end of Protectorate rule in Malawi, the policy ensured that men would leave their wives behind to avert the loss of entitlements implied in the requirement that headmen and chiefs “delete from district registers names of men who leave their villages and chiefdoms without sign of

¹³⁸ NAM, File LB5/1/1, Native Tax Ordinance, District Census and Payments, 1941-50.

¹³⁹ NAM, File LB5/1/1, Native Tax Ordinance, District Census and Payments 1941-1950. In particular see Minutes of a meeting held at Government House, Nyasaland, 10 March, 1947.

return”, with women being such signs.¹⁴⁰ As such, it was not difficult for the state to invoke customary law to create a hierarchy of control which worked through already existing local structures to institute the male centered migrant system.¹⁴¹ These authorities supervised tax collections through their control of women during men’s absences. Between the 1940s and 1960s, it became an established law that men remitted taxes which Native Authorities collected from each wife in Malawi.

The colonial Governor, District and Provincial Commissioners consolidated such socio-economic policies with several pieces of legislation.¹⁴² While the 1940 to 1946 legislative pieces reiterated that only men obtained certificates authorizing cross border movement, the 1948 Act enforced a system of migrant passbooks permitting men’s migration. To this end, the agreements denied women the migrant certificates and workbooks which authorized adult and juvenile taxpayers to migrate, obtain shelter, medicines, clothing and food en-route. This marked their relative exclusion from the mainstream and spelt efforts to keep them in the villages. Assuming women’s non-migration, the 1940 Convention instituted the clause that every worker had to nominate a wife, sister, mother or betrothed woman to receive monthly remittances. The Convention included a return clause whereby men would also visit them after every three or six months. The 1942 and 1946 Migrant Workers Provisional agreements which superseded the 1940 Convention reasserted the remittance and return clauses “in consideration of native women and families in Nyasaland.”¹⁴³ Between 1944 and 1946 the Malawian government seriously considered establishing a compulsory remittance system. Migrant men would obtain $\frac{3}{4}$ of their wages in colonial Zimbabwe, while employers directly remitted the rest to the state for wives and dependents.¹⁴⁴ While this and the tax obligation on account of wives marked

¹⁴⁰ Minutes, 10 March 1947.

¹⁴¹ Eitne Luibheid, Entry Denied, pp.xxvii.

¹⁴² NAZ, File 482/22/42-48, Ordinances enacted by the Governor of Nyasaland Protectorate in agreement with the Prime Minister of Southern of Southern Rhodesia, with advice and consent of the Legislative Council thereof. In this file see the 1940; 1942 and 1946 Migrant Workers Ordinance and Provisional Agreements; The Migrant Workers Bill, 1947; The Migrant Workers Act, 1948. BFAO, File 137/1942-48, ref 51G, Migrant labor in Southern Rhodesia.

¹⁴³ NAZ, File 482/22/42-48, Ordinances.

¹⁴⁴ BFAO, File 137/1942-1948, Ref. 51C, Office of the Secretary of Native Affairs, Salisbury, 17 July 1946.

women's entry into migrant legislative considerations, it endorsed their status as immobile minorities.

The continued reference to remittances on behalf of women and families in the 1947 Migrant Workers Bill and 1948 Act also represented refusal to accept that many women with *matchona* sons, husbands, brothers and uncles did not benefit from the system.¹⁴⁵ Instead, Malawian legislators argued that the new endorsement of wives' names in husbands' workbooks to allow monthly collections at District and Post Offices would alleviate women's financial problems and probably eradicate the necessity to migrate.¹⁴⁶ Hence, despite debates about the viability of compulsory remittances between employers, state agents in Zimbabwe and Malawi's state representatives from 1947, the remittances clause reappeared in the Act which remained operative into the 1960s. Ideally, the new remittance system set aside ½ of men's wages for their wives and children in Malawi. The reiteration of the system testified to its significance not just for the survival of wives and families for whom the money was intended. It would bring good backward linkages with the internal economy through women's expenditure on food, clothing and other needs or wants in Malawi. From an economist point of view, colonial legislators hoped that women and children would aid the weak economy both by increasing the incentives for men's return to contribute to the protectorate's labor needs and most appropriately spending men's earnings in Malawi. Hence a report on the possibilities of migrant labor stabilization which in turn would have meant the settlement of approximately 140 000 women in Zimbabwe noted, "In Nyasaland, far too much consideration is given to the financial aspect. The government desires the earnings of the native to be circulated within Nyasaland..."¹⁴⁷ Yet, while approximately 150 000 pounds of remittances passed through government channels in 1953, this did not improve the lives of individual peasant families whose average share was less than one pound a month, per family.¹⁴⁸ In addition,

¹⁴⁵NAZ, File S14/A/1834, Notes on the Migrant Workers Bill, 1947.

¹⁴⁶NAZ, FileS482/22/42-48, Ordinances.

¹⁴⁷ BFAO, File 137/1942-1948, Ref. 52C, Special Committee on Migrant Labor Stabilization: Note by Chairman, 14 May 1946.

¹⁴⁸MA, Annual Report on Nyasaland Protectorate, Colonial Office, London, 1953.

not all migrants entered the record for compulsory remittances to wives as long as some employers in colonial Zimbabwe found the significance of monitored or compulsory remittances open to debate. This meant that a certain proportion of employers sympathized with some migrant workers' reluctance to have remittances deducted directly from their wages and did not regulate the system. They preferred that migrant workers determined for themselves whether or not they would remit to wives and children and how much they were ready to remit.

In any case, to maximize the financial benefits which Malawi would derive from migrant labor, the state added the deferred pay system in the 1948 Act. The clause charged employers in colonial Zimbabwe to indiscriminately withhold a fraction of the migrants' wages as deferred wages, in the name of wives and families in Malawi.¹⁴⁹ The clause was predicated upon the sub clause enforcing migrants who left wives, children and relations in Malawi to return home after working in Zimbabwe for two years. This sub-clause was known among migrants as "*chitupa chazaka ziwili*", the two years law which replaced the three to six months return clauses of the 1940 to 1946 Migrant Workers' Agreements. Originally, the Malawian government hoped that by working with the Zimbabwean government to oblige employers to dismiss migrants whose time as indicated in pass books expired, men would return home thereby reducing the compulsion to migrate among wives. Only in person, that is, on their return to Malawi with the expiry of two years would migrant men collect their deferred wages to spend in family upkeep before migrating again. The system however had more benefits for the state than individual men, women and their families. For instance, total deferred pay receipts of about 59 466 pounds in 1956, mostly remained in the state's African Administration coffers since *matchona* did not return to claim it.¹⁵⁰ Unclaimed deferred payments spelt the failure of the Act's "two years law." Hence, while legislation did not always benefit individual families, it reflected the system's necessity in raising finances for administrative purposes. For the wives and other women left behind, the impact of remittances was

¹⁴⁹MA, Annual Report on Nyasaland Protectorate, Colonial Office, London, 1954.

¹⁵⁰MA, Annual Report on Nyasaland Protectorate, Colonial Office, London, 1956.

negligible. Many claimed absence of remittances; uncles, brothers and husbands' total abandonment as factors making their rural existence most untenable, forcing them to migrate.¹⁵¹

Women's decisions to migrate

That many women lost contact with their male relatives and did not benefit much from remittances reflected one area of self-contradiction and hence weakness in state designs to curtail women's migration. Because the state had no real control over them, migrant men stayed away for years, causing divorce, abandonment of wives, of betrothed and widowed women as well as inadequate remittances. Little did the state foresee how the system would expose peasant women to many economic pressures, driving them from their natal homes. Many found it most challenging to singlehandedly undertake their usual tasks as mothers, daughters, in laws, housekeepers, food producers and processors in addition to absent men's roles. Even as the state sought to tie them down in their villages, thousands opted to escape associated economic hardships by following the migratory trail. That their migration assumed significant proportions is revealed by the fact that colonial administrators worked to tighten controlling legislation and to implement it from the 1940s. Ironically, by primarily instituting a male biased migrant system, the state contributed to the disruption of peasant socio-economic life driving many women to migrate.

Throughout pre-colonial Malawi, village communities had followed a gendered work culture established around the smallest unit of production, the *banja*/household. In matrilineal-matrilocal communities, the *banja* included the wife, her dependent children and relations such as her mother and a subordinate husband. Despite being set within the larger *mbumba* matrilineage, that is, the matrilineal homestead within the *mudzi*/village, the members of each *banja* formed a single labor unit. Even in patrilineal-patrilocal

¹⁵¹ The difficulties of getting remittances to wives and families for colonial officials is stressed in (BFAO), File 137/1942-48, Ref. 51G, Migrant labor in Southern Rhodesia.

communities such as the Ngoni and Tonga, members of each *banja* household shared responsibility over two main fields, the *dimba*, plural *madimba*/swamp gardens and *munda* plural *minda*/dry land fields. Each family maintained *madimba* along the banks of rivers such as the Tchiri, Mwanza, Mkombedzi and the Ruo as well as along such lakes as Chilwa and Malombe. From these supplementary fields, wives and husbands planted rice, sweet potatoes, cassava, vegetables, pumpkins and maize to curb hunger at the beginning of the main farming season and to supplement major food supplies in case of drought. Because preparation of *madimba* started sometime between February and April when the flood waters of the rivers and small lakes subsided, the labor needs of the *dimba* and *munda* sometimes clashed creating pressure on the *banja*'s labor supplies. While the *dimba* was much smaller than the average *munda*, it sustained a greater variety of crops. It represented the primary insurance against food shortages resulting from drought. The marshes in which the *dimba* was situated were exceptionally fertile. The annual floods occurring during the main rainy season replenished the marshes with all kinds of mineral and vegetable deposits allowing inter-cropping. The preparation of *dimba* fields was done by men at a time when women would be busy storing up the harvest from *minda* rain fed fields. Men also dominated the preparation of *minda* from August to October. While long established families had less demands on their labor because they had worked their land over many years, new families had to open new *minda*. This was a highly strenuous exercise also undertaken by men. They used axes to cut down trees, bushes and grass which they burned both to clear the land and release fertilizer.

Migration disrupted the pattern whereby, in the past men took care of major aspects of rain fed farming; clearing the land which they broke and ridged by hand before planting. Whilst widows and single mothers in both patrilineal and matrilineal communities lacked the direct support of husbands, they still obtained male assistance. With daughters of marriageable age, widows, single mothers and other women relied on the labor of *akamwini* /sons- in-law under the system known as *chikamwini*. Akamwini worked on *apongozi*'s/ in-laws' fields as part of bride-service and to prove their worth. However, with above 140 000 men and juveniles migrating to colonial Zimbabwe and an additional

45 000 to South Africa by the 1950s, labor arrangements where men occupied certain tasks in food production were irrevocably disrupted. As youths and juveniles joined adult men in the migrant stream, women, including female in laws, had to singlehandedly undertake men's tasks as well as their own. They increasingly lost the time needed for supplementary tasks, including fetching household water and firewood from long distances, foraging for other food stuffs such as *nyika*/water lily bulbs or *kasunika* /a spicy water vegetable, in rivers and lakesides. They could no longer devote adequate time to making pots, salt panning and care for children and the elderly. The absence of men made even food processing and preparation very challenging tasks. That the same situation affected women's lives in other parts of colonized Africa is made clear by Elizabeth Francis contention that, in Nyanza District of Kenya, as men increasingly migrated to work in urban areas and in Tanzania and Zanzibar, "in the 1940s, the loss of male labor began to be felt by women in farm production"¹⁵²

Previously, although women had worked alongside men in *minda* and *madimba*, only men completed the long days from dawn to sunset. Women left the fields early to go and prepare food for *banja* members. They immersed maize or sorghum in water to soften it. They then ground it in mortars using pestles or using a pair of grinding stones. This was labor intensive and time consuming since they had to process and refine the flour using the *lichelo*, a wide and shallow winnowing basket made of reeds. Men had also undertaken house building, repairs, hoe making and supplemented food supplies by fishing and hunting for hippos, elephants and other animals. However by the 1940s, "the exodus of the ambitious and energetic men not only means that women are fully occupied in the fields etc. but also that they have no support to maintain or improve living standards when husbands are away".¹⁵³ Young boys, youths and men had worked with women not just in raising food crops in the rest of Malawi and cotton in the South, but in guarding food crops against birds and marauding animals. With their exodus, women

¹⁵²Elizabeth Francis, *Gender, Migration and Multiple Livelihoods: Cases from Eastern and Southern Africa*, <http://grove.ufl.edu>. p.174. The study draws on material from her book *Making a living: Changing Livelihoods in rural Africa*, (London, Routledge, 2000)

¹⁵³ BFAO, File 137/1944-48, Report on Migrant labor by Special Committee, 5 February 1946.

found it most difficult to guard the crops against birds and they could neither deal with large game. Men and boys had skillfully set traps and hunted down the animals or chased them off. With over 50 % of able bodied Malawian men staying away for years, women's workloads translated into food crisis. Abandoned wives, divorcees, widows and singles confronted gnawing seasonal hunger and starvation despite determined struggles to feed members of the banja household and many looked to the migrant stream for relief.¹⁵⁴ Echoing Serezina Chisoni and many migrant women's testimonies, Agnes Kunjika, a Sena woman who migrated as a widow in 1958 states;

What, what, some women had already gone during Hitler's war! Weren't those the ones who occasionally brought back money and plenty of food..? Hinde-e, that's why I realized that instead of struggling in the village, I must go to find my brothers in Salisbury too. See, I could not produce enough to feed the children and I said to myself, I don't need a husband to know what to do, so I arranged to come. You must understand that when my husband died in 1953, I came back to my brothers with my children...yet except for two elderly ones, all my uncles were in Rhodesia with three of my brothers. The three brothers who had remained also left in 1955 leaving me behind. So you see, I tried all I could, but couldn't work both the munda and the dimba alone. I thought it wise to give all my time to the munda but still failed to produce enough... I was not the only one seeing this because other women too were just like me. Some were single or married but the men of the homesteads had gone. Mine were not the only starving children without fathers or uncles to help, that's why many of us decided to come here...¹⁵⁵

For women whose husbands left them with their in-laws in patrilineal- patrilocal societies such as the Tonga, Ngoni and Tumbuka among others, the situation described above was even worse. Representing thousands of women like her, Meripa Kongoti who joined her husband in Harare in 1956 explains;

You *mwananga*/ my child, might never understand how difficult it was to stay with elderly in-laws when no one knew if husbands would return. Nobody cared if you had a baby or were pregnant. If you did not wake up with the dawn you were in for it! It's you who went to the fields, both in the swamps and in our rain fed fields, it's you who picked vegetables or dug out tubers in the garden, you picked the firewood and fetched water, and mind you our well was as far as from here to

¹⁵⁴MA, Annual report on Nyasaland Protectorate, 1955.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Agnes Kunjika, Mbayani, 13 August, 2009.

Njanike's (3km)! You returned to cook before going back to the fields in the afternoon. It was the same in the evening. You worked everywhere, and could you harvest enough all by yourself, ha-a? Do you see why I left? My husband was the oldest and I was the first daughter in law there. I was young and life was hard. Because people were hungry they said I was lazy. If my husband or his brothers were there or had wives, at least they would have helped with the fields...So I said I must go... I no longer cared about *azungu's*/ white men's rules...I was determined to come here.¹⁵⁶

That the women also had to comply with state policies of agrarian "*malimidwe*", that is soil conservation policies, worsened their workloads. While the efforts started as early as the 1920s in the Southern part of Malawi, by the 1940s *malimidwe* had spread throughout Malawi. Agricultural Officers worked with Chiefs who commanded headmen's compliance and were themselves under Native Commissioners. The colonial state enforced the peasants to follow the ridging system. Ridging, known as *mitumbira* as well as soil heaping known as *matutu* was labor intensive and time consuming compared to flat land planting. From the 1940s, just as the new demands spurred men to migrate, the state worked harder with African authorities. They enforced *mitumbira* and *matutu* as a compulsory system by inflicting heavy punishments on defaulters. Thousands were rounded up throughout Malawi, charged and fined between 30s and/or six months imprisonment. As one scholar noted, up to the 1960s, this primarily affected women, especially wives of migrant laborers.¹⁵⁷ Reflecting increased workloads, some women opted out of labor intensive activities such as cotton production and *madimba* cultivation. To the extent that they dropped out of *madimba* cultivation, they seriously jeopardized their families' food security.

In what became known as *Nkondo Yamitumbira*/war of ridging stretching into the 1960s, a significant proportion of women even those in polygamous marriages, found it almost impossible to overcome the rising pressure. In matrilineal communities, the *banja*/ nuclear household was part of a larger *mudzi*/ village dominated by married sisters, their

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Meripa Kongoti, Mufakose, 20 February, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ Elias Mandala, *Work and control in a peasant economy: A History of the Lower Tchiri Valley 1859-1960*, (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990) p.334.

daughters, aunts and unmarried sons. Each sister had her own family and raised her own crops. According to this system, husbands were foreigners in women's matrilineal homesteads. Polygynous husbands, including village headmen, moved from one *mudzi* to another, visiting wives scattered in different *midzi*. Men's mobility between villages was thus the rule. It was most unlikely that wives in such marriages would cooperate in meeting labor demands in their separate *banjas* and villages. Even with patrilineal-patrilocal communities, the allocation of separate fields for each wife, not to mention the rivalry between wives also reduced the possibility of cooperation. Thus, polygamy did not always mean the pooling of labor resources even as men's exodus disrupted socio-economic life. It most probably raised suspicions as women struggled with each other for visiting men's attention and for scarce cash remittances. Hence, in general terms, left with "less energetic and older men..."¹⁵⁸ the women faced increased, more or less insurmountable work-loads, rising poverty and the food shortages devastating their families. Reflecting the experiences of thousands of peasant women, Julia Marizani recalls these years thus;

Once he left, he forgot about us. I always wondered if my very own husband thought I could maintain life in our homestead like we used to do together. I felt alone, especially when anxiety struck the whole village just before the planting season when we began to ask others for *nkute* /corn meal polenta leftovers or to dry plantains and tubers to grind into meal. Children died then, that was happening in our village. We women did everything, watched children starve, die of hunger and even buried them alone. My first child died because we never had enough to go around. That's when I said enough! Myself, *hinde-e* /yes I was fed up with it all. In 1957, I sent him word that if I cannot come there, our *ukwati*/marriage must end. That's how I came...¹⁵⁹

As reflected in her statement, *nsima* was the staple food among Malawian ethnic peoples as among all Southern Africans. It was consumed with meat, fish or a vegetable relish. However, lack of relish was not considered a serious matter since women foraged for

¹⁵⁸ BFAO, File 137/1942-48 Ref.34A, Labor Migration to the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Julia Marizani, Mbayani Township, 8 May 2009. See also NAM, File NCK6/1/1, Notes on Nyau, Witchcraft and other African customs in Nkotakota District by W. H. J. Wrangley, 1947.

edible locusts, beetles, flying ants, mushrooms, black jack, cassava leaves and other vegetables in the forests and river banks. However, lack of *nsima* spelt starvation such that women begged for scarce *nkute*, that is, *nsima* leftovers from the previous day(s) to feed their starving children. Indeed, this was a general phenomenon in African villages where male migration was the norm. In east Africa, women in Nyanza district faced declined output and their villages became net importers of food in a bid to ward off malnutrition and starvation.¹⁶⁰

Whether showing denial of the truth or not, increased child-deaths coincided with increased witchcraft accusations testifying to the rising tensions in village compounds of Malawi. Selina Kumbanga and Eneresi Paliza remembered that in the 1940s and 1950s, it was difficult to tell if hunger or witchcraft killed children given the coincidence of the two. In the 1950s, Selina left her matrilineal Yao homestead in Balaka while Eneresi left her Chewa village allegedly to escape hunger but also witchcraft. Selina remembered that never before in her life had she experienced such anxiety over witchcraft in her homestead as from the second half of the 1940s.¹⁶¹ Such accusations arose out of the general social anxiety in villages reflecting cultural explanations that poor yields, misfortunes of any kind and especially death resulted from human tempering with the evil occult world. In societies where the cultural world closely interacted with the economic world, certain people were regarded as possessed by the spirit of witch-craft. Apart from the involuntary nature of spirit possession, some allegedly utilized the destructive power of witch craft intentionally. Deep feelings of jealousy, anger and ill will triggered witch-craft. Witches allegedly worked with animals such as the *fisi*/hyena and owls as with other -worldly beings of very short stature known as anapache. These collected human souls causing death, or brought diseases. At night, they magically took sleeping people to work in their fields, or transferred yields from other people's fields to theirs leading to poor harvests and starvation. Witches had the power to enter and leave

¹⁶⁰ Elizabeth Francis, p175.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Selina Kumbanga Highfield 19 September 2008 and Eneresi Paliza, Highfield, 18 October, 2008.

huts during the night despite secured entrances. They had the power to conjure up evil and destroy crops, bring floods and withhold the rains. In Malawi, sometimes witch hunts followed such serious economic and ecological hardships and those who died from drinking a poisonous concoction as part of the hunt were confirmed as witches. Usually those with a better life amidst hardships or who procured personal wealth were suspect. Co-wives and other village residents could also become witches due to jealousy or envy. Witches were fierce and mysterious beings and one needed powerful traditional healers known as Nyahana to curb their attacks. Representing the general belief in witchcraft, Eneresi Paliza vividly rationalized the deaths of her children and her migration thus;

In most homesteads there were hardships and even *nkute* /left-overs from maize meal polenta was scarce *hindee-e/yes*, but there were too many *mfiti*/witches! This happened out of jealousy. See, other women were jealousy of me since my husband was coming to get me and my children and occasionally sent food. So they killed all my children one after the other, they came by night and fed them poisoned food. They started in 1955 when one morning I woke up to find the first one dead with his stomach swollen and neck now twisted at a bizarre angle. All of them died like that. So in 1959, I decided to escape with or without my husband's help because I did not want to raise another child there. ¹⁶²

While some women found witch craft as a plausible explanation for their hardships, such explanations remained inexorably linked to the visible reality of alternate cases of severe dry spells and floods. Floods especially affected the agrarian economy of the Southern parts of Malawi, such as Fort Johnson, Zomba, and Port Herald. Such flooding as occurred in the 1940s inundated the marshes in which peasants had previously intercropped in *madimba* to maintain food security. In 1943, the District of Port Herald was most affected by floods which eliminated a significant proportion of *dimba* cultivation.¹⁶³ Between 1945 and the 1950s intermittent flooding affected food production throughout Southern Malawi and parts of central and northern districts near Lake Malawi. In the best years, *dimba* agriculture was viable for a period below six months, from June to November. However, longer flood periods reduced this production time even further, sometimes eliminating *madimba* altogether. In the years after 1945,

¹⁶² Interview with Eneresi Paliza.

¹⁶³ Mandala, *Work and control*, p.67.

they destroyed *dimba* farming in one locality or another in the South as in areas near Lake Malawi. The intermittent but long flood periods thus reduced *dimba* farming to a secondary undertaking by the 1960s.

The excessive floods were interrupted by equally devastating periods of drought. In 1949, 1953 and 1962, general cases of drought impacted peasant livelihoods throughout Malawi.¹⁶⁴ In these cases, green grass, vegetables and unripe maize withered between January and mid-February, making it necessary for women to travel longer distances in search of food and water.¹⁶⁵ The drought of 1949 resulted in what was known as the Thodi famine in the South. The droughts caused severe food shortages in villages throughout Malawi where women were already struggling to produce enough for their families each year. Floods and droughts and the consequential food crises pushed the already strained women out of their villages and beyond the boundaries of Malawi into Zimbabwe. In explaining how thousands of women like her migrated, Estere Banda who left Muzikuora in 1949 for Zimbabwe stressed the strain of droughts and general starvation exacerbating the failure to maintain swamp gardens in the absence of men.¹⁶⁶ Such crisis affected married and single women alike forcing them to leave their natal homes.

The floods, drought and general starvation affecting peasant lives would have been less devastating had the exodus of men not worsened the situation. To the state which had instituted the system, the whole crisis became a reflection of its “flagrant breach of that ideal of trusteeship of Native races not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.”¹⁶⁷ In regard to the effects of international labor migration amidst ecological challenges, the Governor of the Protectorate observed that, village standards have become markedly low” since “the growing emigration has

¹⁶⁴G.G.S.J. Hadlow, “Memories of serious droughts of 1949 and 1953 in Nyasaland”, *The Nyasaland Journal*, vol. iv., 1, (January 1959), pp.45-80.

¹⁶⁵Hadlow, “Memories of serious droughts”. Also interview with Estere Banda, Rugare, 16 December 2008.

¹⁶⁶Interview with Estere Banda, Rugare, 7th December 2008.

¹⁶⁷ BFAO, File 137/1944-48, Ref 27A, Agreed Record of Proceedings at the First Meeting of the Migrant Labor; Minutes.

brought misery and poverty to thousands of female headed families. The waste of life, happiness, health and wealth is colossal.”¹⁶⁸ Because of the general poverty and starvation, consequential malnutrition-related diseases claimed 5 in every 10 children between infancy and 10 years of age annually between 1941 and 1956. ¹⁶⁹ As the Governor of Malawi queried;

Our weakness is that we have looked upon the migrant native as a bachelor type, and the native has, in very many cases, evaded his family responsibility. Wife desertion has gone on, on a scale which can only be described as wholesale. A serious economic and social position has arisen in Nyasaland.¹⁷⁰

Reflecting another related source of difficulty for Malawian women and the limits of state machinations, Major F.T. Stephens, the Nyasaland Labor Officer resident in Zimbabwe agreed that, “many of the natives become lost in this country: they leave their families in Nyasaland, settle down here with local attachments and don’t go home again...it is breaking up economic and home life in Nyasaland.”¹⁷¹ Even as they attempted to cope with and adapt to their situation in Malawi, many women ultimately responded by taking long, hazardous journeys to the unknown as they traced *matchona* who lived with Shona women in what Malawian women termed *ukwati wamapoto*/informal marriages.¹⁷² A considerable proportion of the 142 000 men who went to Zimbabwe by 1945 became *matchona*. According to the Malawian section of the African Weekly, as late as the 1950s the problem persisted. In this era, the local government of colonial Zimbabwe primarily denied urban access to single Shona women from rural Zimbabwe. Under the 1946 and 1951 Native Urban Areas Registration and

¹⁶⁸ BFAO, File 137/1942-48, Ref 27A, Agreed Record of Proceedings at the First Meeting of the Migrant Labor Committee held at Limbe on 21 March 1946.

¹⁶⁹ Embassy of Malawi, Harare, Mt Pleasant, Tract entitled *Marching From the past to the future: Improving the health and mortality of infants in Malawi*, Ministry of Health, 8 June 1965, p3.

¹⁷⁰ BFAO, File 137/1944-48, Ref B4A, Notes on Migrant Labor which Every Employer in Southern Rhodesia Should Understand.

¹⁷¹ BFAO, File, 137/1944-50, Report on Conference on the Formation of a Native Labor Recruiting Organization, held in Salisbury on 22nd February, 1944.

¹⁷² Interview with Erise Chunga, Rugare, 29 November 2008.

Accommodation Act (NUARAA), such women were illegal.¹⁷³ To some extent, direct marriages to Malawian men or the use of absentee Malawian women's marriage certificates legitimized their claim to urban and other space. On the other spectrum, to salvage their own marriages and claim their betrothed men, brothers, sons and uncles from *ukwati wamapoto*, many Malawian women entered the migrant stream. Erise Chunga and Emma James Tembo from Namwera village of Mangoche and Gaga village of Chikwawa districts respectively recall that like thousands of other women in their situation, they left their villages in 1947 and 1956 respectively to find their *matchona* husbands.¹⁷⁴ Emma explains;

He left when I was pregnant with my first child. That child was seven years old when I saw him again. Meanwhile, he never sent a letter or money, not even a coin. So I joined many in Chikwawa who suffered like that...the girls in our village taunted me too saying, "*mai ukwati wata, tengani wina mwamuna muchite banja*/Mother you are no longer married. Take another husband and make a home." So, then in 1956 I travelled with our cousins, who were returning here, to get my *ukwati* back.¹⁷⁵

Even in the early 1960s, these women risked themselves by migrating illegally through dangerous clandestine routes. Those whose husbands had concubines in Zimbabwe faced men's reluctance to assist them in their intentions to migrate. Even the wives of regular returnees suffered similarly since their husbands collected their marriage certificates from Malawi under the pretext that they were going to "show this to *nzungu* /white employer so we can have *nyumba yaukwati*/marriage accommodation and I'll come and get you."¹⁷⁶ Dating back to the 1940s, Malawian women coined a phrase "*chikara ndirikubwera*", that

¹⁷³File S3615/7/1: The Native Urban Areas Registration and Accommodation Act of 1946, and its Amendment in 1951. See also Teri Barnes, "*We women worked so Hard*". The state generally applied the law whereby only those women whose husbands had been provided with suitable housing by employers in Zimbabwe. In File BFAO, File, 1371942-48, Report on a Conference On the Formation of a Native Labor Recruitment Organization, held in Salisbury on 22nd February, 1944, Major J. Stephens, the Nyasaland labor Officer clearly stated that Nyasaland did not allow female migration unless "the husband's employer tells us that accommodation is available", the Prime Minister of Rhodesia stressed that, Rhodesia did not allow it unless employers provided housing on private property and not in reserves or state land.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Emma James Tembo, Highfield, 3 September 2008. Interview with Erise Chunga, 18 December 2008.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Emma James Tembo, Highfield, 3 September 2008.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Erise Chunga 27 December, 2008.

is, “the practice of stay-here-I am-coming-back-for-you”¹⁷⁷ for this deceptive practice. The African Weekly notes that as wives pressured husbands to help them migrate legally, men faced a dilemma since the Shona concubines adamantly contested this stating in Chewa, “*Ngati upiteko ukamutenge, inenso sitisiyana*”, that is, “if you go there to get your wife, I will go too, I won’t be abandoned.”¹⁷⁸ Other Shona women stole men’s passbooks to make it difficult for them to travel back and forth.¹⁷⁹ Losing the passbook meant forfeiting travel privileges and deferred pay which men received on return to Malawi under the 1948 Act. Also, wishing to keep the relationships secret, men failed to honor promises until wives took initiatives and migrated clandestinely and unexpectedly as in the case of Fanita Nyirenda who testifies;

When I too faced the same problem, we women already knew how to encourage each other. My friends said “go to his *nzungu*” and I came in 1962 because when he spent too many years away, I received news of the other woman too. That was now giving me *musara*/madness. So, I arrived in Salisbury unexpectedly... There was commotion and me and her we shouted, pulled and shoved. *Ndizamugudubuza hinde-e* /I thrashed her, yes before the Compound manager came. I explained that I was the wife with the marriage certificate and he said to her, “you must leave right now!”¹⁸⁰

In this period, the state failed to foresee the serious contradictions inherent in its male biased policies. Its constitution of a male biased migrant labor system created or worsened rural poverty. Even as they tried to cope with it by working harder for longer periods, foraged or begged for food, abandoned *madimba*/swamp gardens to focus on *minda*/rain fed fields, the increasing vulnerabilities propelled many to flee their natal homelands even amidst state controls.

¹⁷⁷ Women’s accounts constantly refer to *matchona*, that is, the lost ones and concubine relations known as *ukwati wamapoto* and *chikara ndirikubwera* which resulted in their abandonment by husbands. Interview with Emma James Tembo, Interview with Erise Chunga. Interview with Katesi Chirima, Mufakose, 6 January 2009. Interview with Musatimute Kufansiyanji, Mbayani Township, 21 May 2009.

¹⁷⁸ The African Weekly, May, 1957.

¹⁷⁹ The African Weekly, November, 1957.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Fanita Nyirenda, Mpondabwino, 13 May 2009.

Migrating within the network of surveillance

While they initially devised coping strategies, wives, widows, divorcees and single women fled their natal homelands in direct opposition to constraints imposed by the government and African authorities at household, village, chiefdom and district levels.

To migrate, the women had to overcome the colonial state system of surveillance designed to ensure the implementation of gendered migrant laws. The laws stipulated that any women who intended to leave Malawi had to obtain approval from a long hierarchy of male authorities which reached up the *Boma*/district office. It was at the *Boma* that they would ultimately receive *karata zaurendo*/migrants' permits.¹⁸¹ While there is no reference in colonial records to the travelling permit until 1947, many women already approached relevant authorities to obtain letters to migrate as early as 1942. Especially wives initially came forward to request permission in fear of permanent banishment from their villages and chiefdoms. They thus carefully persuaded men some of whom were reluctant due to complications arising from their interest in Zimbabwean concubines, to obtain *karata zaukwati*/marriage certificates. The certificate was the first prerequisite towards any woman's acquisition of a travel permit. However, as perpetual minors under customary law, women had to solicit male guardians' support, that is, mothers' brothers in matrilineal societies such as the Chewa and Man'anja or the father and his brothers in patrilineal ones such as the Tonga and Ngoni, to register their marriages. Despite the marriage certificate's significance to women's mobility, the 1948 Act required more documentation to allow a woman to cross the Malawian border. In addition to the marriage registration certificate, migrant women required their husbands' workbook registration numbers and letters of invitation. They also needed *karata yabanja*/husbands' employers' letters, indicating approval of the wife's migration. Combined, these documents disclosed husband's employment and residential addresses in Zimbabwe, as

¹⁸¹While these requirements are spelt out in the 1948 Act, all women invariably referred to the documents in Chewa.

required by the *Boma*.¹⁸² Because *ankoswe*, headmen and chiefs not to mention the *Boma*, only considered cases when the marriage certificate, husband's workbook number, invitation and *karata zabanja* were available, migration was very difficult even for married women.

Reflecting the intersection of dominant gendered perceptions of migration and of power as masculine terrains, the system not only made female mobility questionable but placed it under male representatives. The state worked through already existing hierarchies enhancing or distorting them by increasing men's power over women. As reported, because "the *Boma*/district Office gave too much power to *ankoswe* that even our husbands came last", women could not initiate anything without the representation of *ankoswe*.¹⁸³ Since customary law defined women as perpetual minors and placed significance on the cultural role of *ankoswe*, these male household heads became the first huge obstacle against their mobility. Customarily, it was in *ankoswe's* exclusive jurisdiction to approach village headmen, chiefs and *Bomas* on women's behalf. However, *ankoswe* had vested interests in women's continued presence in their homesteads since they needed their labor power and other socio-economic benefits as men migrated. While some *ankoswe* genuinely attempted to meet their female wards' needs, many others asserted power by obstructing their migration. Especially among the matrilineal Man'anja, Chewa and Yao for instance, many women who obtained all initial documents still failed to migrate legally owing to *ankoswe's* cultural veto power. Many Man'anja women remembered the general frustration among women in Kuntiwa village as *ankoswe* refused to represent them. While some migrated clandestinely as a result, others such as Alice Gomeza waited several years to obtain *ankoswe's* support.¹⁸⁴ Married in 1943, and intending to join her husband in 1944, Alice's *ankoswe*, an elderly man of the homestead, persistently refused to take her to the headman and chief, stating that "Salisbury *ndishatini yoipa*/an evil jungle or immoral place, what parent allows a child to

¹⁸² NAZ, File S14/8/1834, Migrant Workers Bill, 1947.

¹⁸³ Interview with Julia Marizani, Mbayani Township, 8 May 2009

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Alice Gomeza, Rugare, 2 November 2008.

go into a *shatini*?”¹⁸⁵ This gendered perception of colonial Zimbabwe’s capital was prevalent throughout Malawi. To them the city represented a dangerous jungle or an immoral Babylon, where survival was only for the fittest hunters, that is men. Up to the 1970s the most common question for married or single daughters throughout Malawi was, “*iwe muntu wankazi, ufuna upite kuSalisbury? Ufuna umachiteko chiani?*” translated, “You a mere woman, you want to go to Salisbury? For what reason?”¹⁸⁶

Desperate to join husbands, their betrothed men, *matchona* uncles, brothers and sons so as to escape rural poverty, Malawian women thus adopted an array of suitable strategies ranging from negotiation to circumvention. For instance, some Chewa women liaised with their mothers who persuaded their brothers, the said *ankoswe*, to assist them. Some entered Christian marriages in a bid to operate outside the realm of the customary to limit the power of *ankoswe* over their lives. These wedded in mission stations and in the Catholic Church where *karata zaukwati* had nothing to do with *ankoswe*. From here, it was easier to convince *ankoswe* that since they married by Christian rites, they must obey their husbands’ requests to join them in Zimbabwe.¹⁸⁷ Of course such a strategy took time and many women spent two to three years after marriage to eventually obtain travel permits with *ankoswe*’s approval. Most popularly, Man’anja women who migrated between 1949 and the 1950s claim that playing *ankoswe* against each other was the most effective and fastest way to circumvent their power. Those with two or three elderly uncles available mainly adopted this divide and conquer technique. They offered Rhodesian gifts, showing more deference as they persuaded one against the other. Others invoked the Nyasaland Native Adultery Ordinance of 1939 which automatically charged any woman who became pregnant during her husband’s absence as guilty and liable to a fine of a cow or its cash equivalent. With an approximated average of 310 adultery cases per year between 1949 and 1959 in which guardians paid such fines for guilty women

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Alice Gomeza.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Ayinesi Mlewa, Rugare, 17 November 2008. The colonial name for Harare was Salisbury.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Alice Gomeza.

whose minority excluded them from responsibility, some *ankoswe* conceded to women's demands to join husbands.¹⁸⁸

Among the Yao, especially in the 1940s, women's most popular strategies included long drawn-out hunger strikes, suicide threats and withdrawal from normal life in what was generally known as *musara/* mental illness. Carried out with single minded determination, this convinced elders that such women were suffering *kutsverera mntima/burning/broken heart* due to separation from their husbands.¹⁸⁹ Yet many more resorted to bribery and one Yao woman, Twasume Chigwegwere remembered that in the 1950s as more and more women in her village were anxious to escape rural hardships by joining husbands, bribery became central. She migrated in 1956 having experienced difficulties with her only remaining *nkoswe* since 1949. Though her husband visited every two years and provided all documentation, the *nkoswe* stood in Twasume's way. It was in late 1955 when Twasume's husband agreed to give her *nkoswe* a new bicycle and clothes. In 1956, her *nkoswe* surely persuaded the headman and chief to endorse a letter allowing Twasume to travel.¹⁹⁰ While many women found their way around *ankoswe's* power, others were not as fortunate. Stated in another way, these were wives with every initial document, yet *ankoswe* still obstructed them from obtaining travel permits.

Whether they successfully negotiated past *ankoswe's* power or not, women additionally faced the power of headmen who could either overrule or support their appeals as presented by the earlier. As we have already seen, like chiefs, headmen required subjects to exercise their power over as well as to obtain income and other socio-economic benefits. Since headmen like chiefs relied on men's tax remittances "in respect of wives and families left behind",¹⁹¹ they had vested interests in obstructing women's mobility. Among the most unpopular were headmen Chapweteka and Muomba of Mlanje and

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Alice Gomeza. Aaron Osborne, "Africans and customary law in Nyasaland, 1900-1960", Nyasaland Journal, vol. xxi, (1962), pp92-121.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Twasume Chigwegwere, Rugare, 10 November, 2008.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Twasume Chigwegwere.

¹⁹¹ File LB5/1/1, Native Tax Ordinance, District Census and Payments 1941-1950.

Zomba respectively. Many women claimed that both Muomba and Chapweteka appointed themselves head fathers or as Banda would later assign himself, senior *ankoswe* over all women in their huge households, the villages. Because they dismissed most requests to migrate, women could not move up the hierarchy to reach the chiefs and *Boma* for permits. In general most women in the South had to ‘run away’ while others like Mwaiwatu Mavhuto and Musatimute Kufansiyanji of Chapweteka and Muomba respectively, connect headmen’s obstruction of their migration to the disappearance of their first husbands who became *matchona*.¹⁹² Just like women from other parts of Malawi, another Man’anja woman, Luwina Jasi of Kuntiwa’s village in Southern Malawi gives a succinct example of headmen’s repressive power thus;

Kuntiwa was well known for his cruelty. We used to say, Kuntiwa knows nothing more to say than “*nsikana*, (girl) you are going nowhere!” I was there when my *nkoswe* even said to him, “my daughter must join her husband. Isn’t this her home now, where she was born and will return?” Knowing my husband was in Salisbury Kuntiwa said, “I must first talk to her husband”. In 1960 my husband then came...My *nkoswe* went with me and him to reason with Kuntiwa till he said, “*Ndikalembapo* (If I sign), you must never set foot here again ...”¹⁹³

While most of the women I spoke to mainly mentioned difficulties at the hands of *ankoswe* and village headmen, their encounters with chiefs were not very different. Being the highest in the hierarchy of African authorities, chiefs’ endorsements of requests for permits in the form of a message to the *Boma* were highly essential. Although in most cases, once they passed *ankoswe* and headmen successfully chiefs would not reverse decisions, in others chiefs allegedly “showed our oppression by our own people”, as Jessie Maluwa puts it.¹⁹⁴ One chief, Muroro of Port Herald District was notorious for taking bribes of all sorts from desperate women through their *ankoswe*. Approximately between 1948 and 1962, stories about Muroro’s ‘cruel’ treatment of aspiring migrant women circulated as far as Central and Northern Malawi. Muroro required *makasu/hoes*, bicycles, hats, coats, goats or chickens before any case could pass through him

¹⁹²Interview with Mwaiwatu Mavhuto, Mbayani, 30 April 2009. Interview with Musatimute Kufansiyanji, Mbayani, 21 May 2009.

¹⁹³ Interview with Luwina Jasi, Mbayani, 10 July, 2009.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Jessie Maluwa, Rugare, 27 December 2008.

successfully. Since he threatened those who migrated without his approval with permanent banishment from the village or arrest on return, some women in his chiefdom waited to get his approval. Jessie Maluwa particularly experienced Muroro's greed as she applied for her permit between 1955 and 1959. Upon advice from some elderly women in her village, Jessie offered one *kasu* and "a new Rhodesian coat" to Muroro who quickly signed papers forwarding Jessie and her *nkoswe* to the *Boma*. Jessie got her permit to travel in 1960.¹⁹⁵ While not all *ankoswe*, chiefs or headmen took advantage of women's marginality to extort benefits or keep them in their villages, many apparently did so making it necessary for married, single, divorced, widowed and other women to similarly defy these hierarchies.

For single women, illegal migration was the only available option given the absence of any authentic way to obtain permits without husbands to invite and obtain employers' letters for them. Together with deserted or undocumented wives, single women faced the dangers and loneliness of clandestine migration. Considering the illegality of the act and the secrecy surrounding their mobility, such women did not inform anyone of their decisions. They often travelled at dawn, sneaking out sometimes with babies strapped to their backs, with a husband, a male friend, or helper. Such secrecy was necessary in case the information reached *ankoswe*, headmen or chiefs who would try to obstruct the journey. Hence, they left without saying goodbye even to siblings and members of their extended families. Most migrants converged at Blantyre from North, Central and Southern Malawi to enter Mozambique but others chose to travel through Zambia. At times their journeys coincided with the rainy season between October and April and here, lacking shelter and sometimes with suckling babies, women suffered great anxiety as the rains found them in the open. For instance, Estere Banda remembers that having failed to obtain a permit, she and her husband departed secretly. She states, "In February of 1949 we left the homestead in Mzikuora at dawn with our child, Austen, on my back. We were

¹⁹⁵Interview with Jessie Maluwa. Most of my interviewees who came from North, South and Central Malawi between 1949 and 1960 have mentioned the story of Muroro in their accounts despite that he was a Northern chief.

going all the way down to the road to Blantyre near Vipya to get a truck.”¹⁹⁶ However, the rainy season was in the middle and the couple walked for two days on a bushy footpath to the main road in the dark and in the rain with a crying baby. The two had packed a blanket, maize meal for *nsima* and a pot to cook on the way. By the time they got transport to Blantyre they had spent two nights in the rain and could not cook. They survived on nothing more than *masau* /wild berries.¹⁹⁷ They walked in puddles and through wild bushes, foliage and clustered trees made lush by the rains. They did not sleep along the way because they had no shelter from the rains and their blankets and other supplies were soggy and heavy.

Single mothers and widows such as Mbombe Maliki and Agnes Kunjika faced the difficulty of finding helpers who kept secrets well and were going to Zimbabwe. Mbombe left her village with her four months old baby without even telling her own mother because, “she might have told uncle because of the baby.” She walked all the way from Rumpi to a road about 3 days from her village with two boys from her homestead. In 1951, having arranged and charged one of them to maintain her secret plan to search for her betrothed who was her child’s father, they walked to the main road and caught a truck to Blantyre.¹⁹⁸ Not only did women like her risk the long walks, nights spent in the open, the wind, rains and the sun sometimes with babies to care for to evade surveillance. They braved the dangers of encounters with predatory animals on their different routes through Malawi and Mozambique or Zambia. Already, in North, Central and Southern Malawi, lions, leopards and hyenas among other predators terrorized villagers and killed many. Dating back to the 1930s, the annual reports and newspapers recorded the series of attacks on travelers in the villages let alone in the depth of the forests along footpaths. In one case, in 1944, “a lion seized and ate a woman who was traveling with her husband from John’s village, towards Blantyre.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Estere Banda, Rugare, Harare, 16 December 2008.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Estere Banda.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Mbombe Maliki, Rugare, 15 November, 2008.

¹⁹⁹ The Nyasaland Times, September 1944.

Apart from risking their lives in the jungle, they had to move cautiously until they left Malawi for fear that if discovered by other headmen's policemen they would be arrested, detained and forced to go back to their villages. Between 1949 and 1963, headmen Kuntiwa, Namwera and Chief Muroro were notorious for punishing women suspected of migrating illegally with beatings delivered by police men to deter future attempts. As Angwaula Mlepa testifies, it was in this environment that village police men in Namwera;

...beat you up if they found you and suspected you were going to Rhodesia or if someone told them. Especially for us single women; we were just like children in the village. Once, I think someone leaked the news that I was ready to leave with my male friend, they came and took all the single women from the homestead and led us in single file like criminals to Namwera's Kraal, where they questioned us. Even our *ankoswe* were there. The whole day we did not eat or drink and finally they said, "They will not talk? Well, we will beat them all up" and they beat us with cow hide whips on our behinds like children. Yet I ran away still and came here.²⁰⁰

This also explains why wives without permits, divorcees like Angwaula Mlepa and single mothers like Mbombe Maliki sneaked at the break of dawn to trek to main roads through the cover of darkness, rain and fierce forest.

In Blantyre, police surveillance became more sophisticated as it involved stopping women and asking for their travel documents before the police could allow any near the buses heading to the train station in Mozambique's Dondo Junction near Tete. While married wives with travel permits suffered police harassment, illegal migrants would not suffer any less. At Blantyre one woman recalls;

Swarms of police boys in Khakhi uniforms were at the station. They all wore the brown shorts which went down to their knees and a brown short-sleeved *chunika*/tunic with a broad belt in the middle. They had brown flat topped hats. Even though like us, they had no shoes on but everyday rubber sandals, they had no trouble chasing us around. They were so fierce because they could do anything and you never saw their teeth in a smile. The place where the buses were found was called Paurere, there in Blantyre. You can still see the place today with some of the old offices there. The old Muzungo/white man was also there but it was

²⁰⁰ Interview with Angwaula Mlepa, Mufakose, 6 February 2009.

these police boys who watched us and forced us from the buses, using their truncheons so that we had to run a distance away even as other people watched... They grouped us and started looking at our papers saying *chabwino*, *chabwino*/good, good or *mlandu umeneyu*/this is a bad case here. The good ones, we were shoved back to a bus where another police boy waited to recheck as we entered and to guard so no one else except men entered. It was all very frightening just to see how those with *mlandu* were beaten and you could see them running off like unruly children or being headed away by the police. That was very humiliating... It was bad at Blantyre for everyone, *wabwino nawamlandu*/those of good and bad cases.²⁰¹

With such prospects within Malawi, illegal women chose to travel through thickets beyond the gaze of authorities until they entered Mozambique. Here too, they had to move with care especially since they could be mistaken for Mozambican women and arrested by *masupai*/Mozambican policemen or militias. Before the Frelimo war which ended in 1975 had caused mass exodus from villages on their paths, these women and their male friends asked for shelter, food and information from villagers. Mbombe Maliki recalled that at one point she and her male counterparts stayed at Madziamanga Village near Tete.²⁰² However, many women state that from the late 1960s, they passed through deserted, charred villages where “not even a rooster crowed” and had to be very careful since the sight before them told of death.²⁰³ Hence, in this war zone police or military patrols were everywhere and the bush was just as unsafe as the open spaces. In 1968, Lukia Mbeta who had travelled all the way from Nkata Bay in Northern Malawi with two other women and one young man encountered *masupai* near Dondo Junction in Tete area. One afternoon, just as they were finishing their food;

Masupai appeared suddenly, all in dark green. They spoke in Portuguese and then some other local language and then one of them started speaking in Chewa because we did not understand. He said, ‘stand up all of you!’ Then he said, ‘lie down right now, on your stomachs!’ We were frightened and we did what the boy was doing, because they were already beating the boy with wooden rods and came to us too... Then they spoke alone in their language and came back saying, you

²⁰¹ Interview with Katesi Chirima, Mufakose, 6 January 2009.

²⁰² Interview with Mbombe Maliki 16 November, 2008.

²⁰³ Interview with Lukia Mbeta, Mpondabwino, 15 May 2009.

Manyasarandi, why are you everywhere? Next time we see you, we arrest you and you go to prison. We were lucky to get away lightly.²⁰⁴

Because of the dangers of travelling through the jungle in Mozambique many women also tried to pass through main migrants' routes using the train and bus stations at Dondo in Mozambique. However, most women experienced grave disadvantages since they had no legal access to migrant camps en-route and had to spend nights waiting for the train or bus in the open facing more police harassment. To comply with Malawian labor codes and also maintain low labor costs, the Zimbabwean colonial Treasury Department catered for male migrants only. Even when it increased the fleet of trucks on various safe routes and expanded migrant camps along them in the 1940s and '50's, the government excluded women from main camps on the "Mzalanyana- Mrewa – Salisbury route" among others. The route started on the Mozambique- Malawi border at the nearest point to Lilongwe and Angoniland where men congregated for transportation via Pandanjala Mountain and Tete camps, reaching Mt Darwin and then Mrewa in Zimbabwe.²⁰⁵ Migrant men also used the Misale route established in 1954 running from the Zambia-Mozambique border to cater for Northern Malawian migrants. The camp shelters were like military "barracks with huts of corrugated iron and steel accommodating 30 migrant workers each." "Overflow numbers" slept in the open and 'in case of rain, native men can all pack into the shelters"²⁰⁶ Hence, women were always the unconsidered numbers. Instead they slept and cooked in groups in the open with babies strapped on their backs. They coped with and survived rainy seasons, the heat as well as mosquitoes, wild animal attacks and other hazards as they lived like vagrants at Dondo for days before catching the train or buses to Zimbabwe.

Here, each morning, the Malawian police awakened the women, instructing them to gather their luggage, babies and bring their papers. They were forcibly placed in single

²⁰⁴ Lukia Mbeta..

²⁰⁵ NAZ, File S3292/37/5, Migrant labor routes and depots, 1940-1954. See also File S881/288, Native Aliens: Recruitment of labor in Nyasaland by native labor Board as financed by the Colonial Treasury Department, 1942-1963.

²⁰⁶ NAZ, File S253/402/419, Native aliens: Purchase of Equipment for the expansion of facilities for passage of Nyasaland native labor, 1942-1959.

file as the police hurriedly checked their documents such that at times, there was stampeding resulting in serious injuries as women were pushed and shoved by the police.²⁰⁷ In the evening, the *supais* (Mozambican police) also came to check and stamp their documents and these also beat up some women especially those undocumented ones whom the Malawian police had tied together by a single long rope and confined under a nearby baobab tree.²⁰⁸ Women such as Julia Marizani and Berita Bwalo Chiwara remember that while they suffered too, they were better off as documented “destitutes” than the tied women they saw in 1949 and 1959 respectively. Berita vividly remembers;

We reached Dondo in 1959 in the morning and our lorry dropped us there. There was a long rectangular building of pole and mud, thatched with grass in a clearing surrounded by scattered baobab trees. This was the ofosi, (office) where police from Nyasaland worked with those in Portuguese territory. Even if you got the bus or truck all the way from Blantyre or anywhere, it was here that everyone would face serious trouble. The morning I got there, we were dropped right in front of the ofosi and the policeboys marched out of the door looking so fierce that the bunter among us died down and you could see that all of us were very frightened. When the policeboys came, first, they spoke in Chewa asking those with karata to step aside in a line with the boys inspecting each. Those without karata or with inadequate karata were forced to go a distance away under a baobab tree. They beat them on the behinds before tying them together. It happened before our eyes, one person was tied to another and to the next. I wondered how they would look for *masau* and *makuyu* like us in the bush to eat or how they would feed the children or even go to relieve themselves. When one person wanted to go, it meant all of them had to go behind the bush with her. They sat waiting for the truck back to Nyasaland like that and those with babies had difficulty suckling them from the laps in that confined position, ha-a! So, we who had papers left on the train to Rhodesia...That was evil, what happened at Dondo, very evil for us women ha-a!²⁰⁹

In the African Weekly of 1961, a Malawian man published his concern with what he entitled ‘*Mabvuto pa Dondo*’, that is, Trouble at Dondo. Confirming Julia and Berita’s testimonies, he states;

²⁰⁷ Interview with Berita Bwalo Chiwara, Rugare, 10 December 2008. Interview with Julia Marizani, Mbayani Township, 8 May 2009. Informants generally give similar accounts of experiences at Dondo, especially up to the 1960s.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Julia Marizani. Interview with Berita Bwalo Chiwara.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Berita Bwalo Chiwara.

At Dondo, the police boys select women lacking papers, they beat them and when they are frightened like that the police boys make them fetch water for Sumani's eating house, cook and feed them. Then they confine them together under a tree to await the truck back to Nyasaland. All the time they treat them like *akaporo/slaves*.²¹⁰

Sexual exploitation was among the different forms of abuse women suffered in police hands at Dondo Junction. For most Malawian migrant women, the clandestine and stealth way was the best one to avoid such police harassment and abuse. Angwaula Mlepa stresses that many women from Namwera chose to run away with their lovers because;

Everyone knew what happened on the way to Rhodesia in those days. Some women got pregnant on the way because those police boys forced themselves on them. So I was better off running away with a man I liked, wasn't I? He was doing very well as a *madhobhadhobha*/illegal transporter in our village and had a truck too. So I begged him to bring me to Salisbury.²¹¹

Many women found it better to migrate with *madhobhadhobha* commissioned by farmers to illegally recruit labor in Malawian villages, despite stories that they took single women to Zimbabwe for prostitution. It was partly with reference to them that up to the early 1960s the Malawian colonial government stressed that, "any person who induces or assists any native woman to leave the Protectorate without a travelling permit shall be guilty of an offence."²¹²

Migrating in the Kamuzu era

The rise of Kamuzu Banda of the Malawian Congress Party (MCP) in 1964 alleviated the situation for some women. The general elections of 1964 confirmed the position of the new African government, bringing to power the new government whose need for support made it responsive to women's struggles.

²¹⁰ The African Weekly, 4 January 1961.

²¹¹ Interview with Angwaula Mlepa Mufakose, 6th February 2009.

²¹² NAZ, FileS482/22/44-48, Migrant Workers Act, 1948.

In this period, within Malawi and in parts of Southern Africa, nationalists debated the Zimbabwean situation, following the collapse of the so called Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by the Smith regime. In Malawi the debates included whether sanctions against the Smith regime, should include withholding Malawian labor. However, Banda observed that with over 200 000 men in Zimbabwe who would need to be accommodated economically in Malawi, a sudden withdrawal was not acceptable.²¹³ While denouncing the Smith regime which was under Western economic sanctions, the new African government stressed a policy of non-interference with migrant labor. Instead the state sought to make it better for migrant workers and their families. Although men continued to require work books till the late 1960s and the permit system for women remained intact, “all women who are legally married, be it under Christian or customary law must receive permits to migrate with their husbands if they so desire.”²¹⁴ Married women could thus obtain permits more easily under the pretext that “their migration does not mean they cannot support the development of their nation, Malawi...”²¹⁵ The new law made remittances voluntary and assumed that any legal migrant who wanted to return back to Malawi would be welcome.

At this point, Banda’s concessions to women must be understood in the context of his efforts to build up political support by appealing to all previously oppressed groups and ordinary people. Given the volatile situation of the era, the African authorities whose power had been bolstered under colonialism now faced the relative erosion of such power as new men including University Graduates occupied positions in government and in the Legislative Assembly.²¹⁶ However, Banda sought to reassure them while still transforming aspects of their power so as to take the position above all. Hence, Banda declared himself the chief above chiefs and also senior *nkoswe* of all women of Malawi,

²¹³The debates are reflected in MA, Pam1,127, Banda’s speeches and Press releases, 1964-1980.

²¹⁴MA, Pam1,127, Press releases. See also Malawi Information Office (MIO), Acts and Legislation, 1965-83; Malawian Workers Law, August 1966.

²¹⁵MA, Pam 1,127, Press release.

²¹⁶ Rueben Makayiko Chirambo, “Culture, Hegemony and Dictatorship: Song Dance and Politics in Malawi, 1964-1994”, (PhD Thesis, University of Minnesota, 2005), p.67.

be they local or migrant. To understand how this released women from chiefs, headmen and household heads, it is important to stress Banda's explanation that;

Being *nkoswe* to the *mbumba* (all women of the family) means that as a male and no matter how young you are, you are a Responsible Relative...When you say, "they are my *mbumba*" or "she is my *mbumba*" you are admitting a responsibility in law ...All *nkoswe* are responsible in law not only for the well-being but also for the good conduct of their *mbumba*...*nkoswe* is an advocate and a sustainer of his *mbumba*.²¹⁷

Thus with Banda as senior-chief-cum-*nkoswe*, and with his need to maintain power over Malawian women in and outside Malawi given his belief that they were most instrumental and influential in extending his ideologies and support base, he made significant concessions to married women. He charged household *ankoswe* to deal fairly with "my women" and to aid them, otherwise they would face Banda's wrath through his party militias. He encouraged women to carry the information of increased freedom and protection to migrants in Zimbabwe and to receive party cards before travelling. At this time the migration of married women was no longer hampered by reluctant guardians, and neither were chiefs and headmen as powerfully obstructing as before.²¹⁸ Formerly notorious chiefs and headmen such as Muomba, Chapweteka and Kuntiwa among many others seriously took Banda's frequent threats that "I will deal mercilessly with any man who abuses his power over my *mbumba* here in Malawi" and easily signed documents forwarding many wives to the *Boma* to obtain permits.²¹⁹ While Banda insisted on their obtaining permits as before, married women experienced a relaxation in hierarchies of control as the Malawian Women's League (MWL) gained more strength as an arm of the MCP to dilute chiefs, headmen and *ankoswe*'s hold on women. Eneresi Paliza succinctly explains, "When Banda came to power, we became his *mbumba* and even though we gave our *ankoswe*, chiefs and headmen *ulemu* /respect by consulting them, we no longer feared when working with them to get permits. We now obtained permits as easily as we

²¹⁷MA, Pam 1,127, "The Road to Independence-Text of Speeches by his Excellency, Kamuzu Banda, 1964-1972". Banda became the Minister of Women's Affairs by the beginning of the 1970s.

²¹⁸MA,PAM 1, 127, "The road to Independence."

²¹⁹MA, "The road to Independence". See also Reuben Chirambo, p.52.

obtained party cards.”²²⁰As a result, many women whose husbands had worked in Zimbabwe since the 1940s entered the colony between 1964 and 1980.²²¹ Their experiences of travel also changed as some flew to Zimbabwe by plane while others went by road through Kazungula in Zambia and Botswana in relative safety.²²² Except for the dangers associated with the Frelimo/Portuguese and later the Frelimo /Renamo wars as well as the Zimbabwean liberation war, married women’s migration must have peaked in this new, relatively protected era provided by the rising Banda dictatorship.

However, Senior *Nkoswe* Kamuzu did not alleviate single women’s plight even as many still aspired to join betrothed men and experience the adventures of Zimbabwe. For them, the carceral archipelago of surveillance on the Malawian side continued as they suffered the new repression of the regime’s paternalism. Under Banda, unmarried women of all ages had to remain under the constant protective gaze of their senior *nkoswe* with the help of household *ankoswe*, chiefs and headmen as before. In addition to escaping with lovers and *madhobhadhobha* who still operated in Malawi after 1964, single women increasingly attempted to legitimize their mobility through marriages of convenience with migrant men.²²³ They even bribed household *nkoswe* to hasten the process of registering the marriage and patiently waited for ‘husbands’ to send required papers to apply for migrant permits. In this way, many single women enticed unsuspecting men, sometimes deserting them in Zimbabwe.²²⁴ Women such a Maria Fore intentionally pursued the migrant Kachere Fore who was visiting family in Dedza in 1969.²²⁵ As she explains;

Many girls were doing it just to leave the village. I did it because I wanted to go to Salisbury to see the good life people talked about. I made him see me at dances in the villages and even at church... So we had *ukwati* and it was only later that I

²²⁰Interview with Eneresi Paliza 18th October, 2008.

²²¹The figures are quoted in NAM, 1,127, “The road to Independence”.

²²²In addition to oral evidence, informants have generously shared with me personal documents reflecting route information and other aspects of their past such as the letter from B. S. Mwechande to his wife Mrs Mwechande, dated 24 March, 1977 and passports dating back to 1973 belonging to Mrs Mwechande of Mufakose and Marcelina Mukakiwa of Rugare.

²²³Interview with Maria Fore, Rugare, 30 December, 2008.

²²⁴The African Weekly, 14 March 1961.

²²⁵Maria Fore.

became very attached to him *nachikondi*/with love, and now we have nine children...²²⁶

While such cases were too intimate for elderly women to discuss, it might be that to escape the control of Kamuzu Banda, the new senior *nkoswe* and his counterparts, more women migrated in this way up to 1973. In this year, as Banda relied on women as vectors of propaganda and his central supporters who turned households, villages and whole communities in his favor through their songs and dance messages, he recognized their struggle for mobility by inaugurating a new system of supported travels. Allegedly, this was ‘to educate those of my *mbumba* who have missed their chance owing to colonial oppression. Travel to different places will open their eyes even better.’²²⁷ While some were sent to Germany, Britain, Taiwan, Egypt and Israel on government funds from the early 1970s, Banda extended this to admission of single, widowed and divorced women to migrate to and from Zimbabwe. Hence the year 1973, when the Malawi National Identification and Passport system incorporated all adult *mbumba*, recognizing their need for independent travel, migrant women scored their legislative victory. No longer did women need to pander to *ankoswe*, chiefs and headmen for travel permits. They merely needed full details of the village, ethnic group, father’s name, chief and district of origin to approach the *Boma* and apply for a passport. Hence, by 1973/4, transformations in Malawian women’s migration experiences came to include wives as well as widows, divorcees and singles. They uniformly benefited from Banda’s realization that, even with state controls the women would still find ways to migrate and also that he needed their support in consolidating his regime’s power. He thus asserted his regime’s progressive bond with Malawian women based on the assumption that “Malawi is their home, they will come when needed and they will further the work to develop our nation from anywhere...”²²⁸

²²⁶Maria Fore.

²²⁷MA, Pam 1, 127, Speeches of His Excellency, the President Ngwazi Kamuzu Banda in Blantyre, 16 July 1973. See also Reuben Chirambo pp52-120.

²²⁸Speeches of His Excellency, 16 July 1973.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have traced how Malawian women migrated to colonial Zimbabwe within a highly constrained gendered environment. From the 1940s, as men's migration peaked, negatively impacting peasant women's socio-economic existence, the colonial state passed legislation designating inter-territorial mobility as a male preserve. Various clauses in the laws such as the 1940; 1942; 1946 agreements and the 1948 Act reflected the state's gendered perspectives of migration. The state issued migrant certificates and work books to men only thereby authenticating their privileged access to shelter, medication, clothing and transportation en-route to Zimbabwe. In sharp contrast, the state offered very limited access to transportation for select wives. It imposed very difficult procedures so that even married women could hardly obtain travel permits within their districts to qualify as legal migrants. In fact, by negotiating for cash remittances, deferred wages and migrant men's return clauses allegedly for wives and children left behind, the colonial state of Malawi exposed its expectations that women would primarily wait for migrant men in their villages.

I have argued that these expectations were inexorably tied to the state's need to raise income for administrative purposes and maintenance of rural livelihoods. Operating on a pauper's budget, with a poor agrarian economy, the state needed more lucrative sources of income. Migrant labor exports to Zimbabwe offered employment to thousands whom the internal economy could not absorb and promised a steady flow of cash, tax and deferred wage remittances "on behalf of wives left behind." Also, if the wives who were at the core of their peasant families remained, men would have great incentive to return, and occasionally provide valuable labor or spend cash in Malawi. The sedentary women would also maintain the social fabric and constitute a stable labor force in peasant economies. Based on such calculations, it was not illogical for the colonial state to seek to limit women's mobility by co-opting male African authorities, *ankoswe/* household heads, chiefs, *mafumu/* headmen and police details. While single women, widows and divorcees could not even be expected to seek permits and migrate, even married women

had to pass through African authorities, to obtain permits at the *Boma*/District Office. Especially up to 1965, most African authorities denied women access to the migrant stream.

I have stated that contrary to state designs, the exodus of thousands of men irrevocably disrupted peasant women's lives, pushing many into the migrate stream. As men migrated in ever escalating numbers, family life collapsed and so did the gendered division of labor upon which rural households depended. With over 50% of the able bodied men away, women had to undertake both their own tasks and those culturally designated to men. Reeling under increased workloads, many abandoned *madimba* swamp gardens which had occupied a significant place in peasant food security. They also found it hard to produce adequately from rain fed *munda* fields. In the absence of men, women could not effectively deal with alternating cases of flooding and droughts which characterized Malawi. Low yields translated into food crisis, malnutrition related diseases and death. Because, contrary to state expectations, men neither consistently remitted money nor returned home, rural communities faced dire poverty. Even women's initial attempts to cope and adapt to the situation were inadequate and many ultimately chose to take risks in light of the gendered restrictions to join *machona*/ lost relatives or make a new life in Harare.

I also stressed that their desperation spurred them to challenge boundaries of state power embodied in *ankoswe*/household heads, *mafumu*/village headmen, chiefs and policemen whose duty it was to curtail women's mobility. Married women refused to be passive victims trapped in the system but saw possibilities in the weaknesses inherent therein. The state could not ensure that all African Authorities implemented its policies and these women worked to tip the balance to their favor. Apart from liaising with husbands or entering marriages of convenience to obtain supporting documents including marriage certificates, these women worked to get *ankoswe*'s approval. As guardians, *ankoswe* had power to reject or endorse daughters' marriages before the District Commissioners to get marriage certificates and to then represent them before headmen and chiefs who endorsed

requests for permits going to the *Boma*/ District Office. Women bribed *ankoswe* and even the most strict chiefs and headmen. They sourced money and Rhodesian goods like bicycles and coats to oil the palms of these authorities. Some pretended to be fatally heart-broken due to separation from husbands. Others threatened adultery, knowing that as guardians, *ankoswe* feared the colonial law demanding that they pay a cow or its cash equivalent if their daughters fell pregnant in husbands' absence. They even played *ankoswe* against each other. However, because many failed to obtain documentation, they fled by night or at dawn along with singles, widows and divorcees who could never apply for permits under the system. They tramped with male friends, relatives or husbands through dense and dangerous forests to distant exit roads. Though changes occurred from 1966 under Kamuzu Banda, throughout the colonial era, the women clandestinely fled through *madhobhadhobha*/ illegal recruiters' and other routes to enter yet another field of struggle on the Zimbabwean side, as the next chapter will show.

Chapter 3: From the Zimbabwean Border to Harare, 1940-1980

The previous chapter has established that amidst socio-economic hardships and restrictions imposed by the colonial state in Malawi, women fled their natal homes and headed for Zimbabwe. This chapter continues by telling the story of those who entered the colony and proceeded to Harare amidst gendered controls. I make three related arguments. Firstly, I argue that even as they sought to escape poverty and marginality in Malawi, Malawian women experienced more hardships on the Zimbabwean side. Starting from the border, they encountered a seemingly implacable wall of surveillance. Hundreds fell subject to brutal inspections by vicious border agents and policemen deployed by the state to block illegal migrants, cross border traders, cattle rustlers and other “miscreants.” Undocumented wives, widows, divorcees and singles who reached Harare continued to suffer random and brutal police inspections, arbitrary arrests and repatriations at train and bus stations, on streets and in urban homes and lacked legal shelter. Even documented wives needed working husbands in adequate marriage quarters for security.

Secondly, I stress that the difficulties that Malawian women encountered were inevitable in an environment shaped by the colonial state’s socio-economic concerns. As in other parts of the world, the colonial state in Zimbabwe, adopted a gendered “calculated management of life designed to foster only certain populations while other populations were ejected or remained unfostered to the point of death”²²⁹ It entered inter-territorial agreements with Malawi, combining them with internal ones such as the 1946 NUARAA amended in 1951, and the FMLA implemented in 1960 among others to eject Malawian women or stifle their migration. The state found it expensive to maintain migrant workers en-route and in the city, and generally sought to curtail unnecessary migrants - women and children. As part of its agreement with the Malawian colonial state, it financed the construction of transit camps, transport routes and roadways; the provision of buses, trucks and train services to transport migrants from different parts of Malawi. Because the colony generally depended on the labor of thousands of Malawians who worked on

²²⁹ Luibheid, *Entry Denied*, pxiii.

farms and mines but dominated in urban industries, the state had to shelter, feed, clothe and ensure their medical care en-route. For its own part, the municipality also had to construct and maintain transit or arrival infrastructure in Harare. Also, African locations were mainly made up of single men's barracks, dormitories, transit camps and hostels, making it imperative for the city fathers to limit or block women's access. The authorities feared that, if not curtailed, Malawian women would lead to migrant families' permanent domicile, translating to demands for family housing and social amenities, raising population pressure, triggering social unrest, and leading to demands for family wages and land.

Thirdly, in this chapter I argue that Malawian women's presence in Harare amidst such laws and state concerns testified not only to the limits of official power, state laws or authorities' failure to fully control their mobility. Indeed, Malawian women tested the boundaries and fought against a system designed to separate families and cripple their livelihoods. They began by evading border patrols to enter through illegal entry points such as Penhalonga, Mudzi and Mavuradona in Mutare, Mutoko and Darwin to head on to Harare. Others used *madhobhadhobha's* un-policed routes into Harare, or liaised with train workers who hid them in their cabins to bring them to the African townships. Those in married quarters opened their homes to their illegal counterparts. Others established squatter settlements or found space in men's hostels and barracks despite restrictions. They even launched information networks to learn about impending street, squatter settlement and house raids and systematically avoided arrests and repatriations. Many temporarily escaped to back water areas, such as the farms in immediate proximity to Harare, to return when conditions permitted. In this way they tested and challenged the gendered racial boundaries of the city, ensuring their families' domination of early African townships by the 1970s.

The State's Gendered Perspectives

The state's perspectives regarding migrant women's settlement were among the most significant aspects explaining their vulnerabilities on the Zimbabwean side. Driven by the need to maintain the socio-economic status quo necessary for European supremacy, the colonial regime sought to avert "alien" Africans' domicile. While the colony relied on ultra-cheap foreign labor, it needed to strike a balance between maintaining a steady labor flow, and limiting the access of families, that is, the women and their children who would inevitably upset this status quo. Such a policy would also reduce costs of labor and of urban maintenance by ensuring that women remained behind while men constantly returned; remitted taxes, cash and deferred payments to them.

The regime's socio-economic policy therefore reflected a gendered perspective going back to the early years of European penetration in the 1890s. In this decade, the British South Africa Company (BSAC) led the European occupation in high hopes of discovering gold deposits as substantial as those in South Africa. Gradually, Europeans realized that the land between the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers was not a second Egoli (land of gold). The best deposits had been overworked for centuries and were scattered in seams that were difficult to extract. The regime had to extend attention to other sectors, namely agriculture and manufacturing. With over 60% of the land open to European ventures, the rise of settler farming coincided with the BASC withdrawal and the advent of a new settler state.²³⁰ Since the British Crown insisted that like all 20th century colonists, Europeans in Zimbabwe had to support themselves, the settler state faced the daunting task of having to bail out the poorly endowed, initially inept farmers and develop marketing channels. It also struggled with an urban industrial sector which developed too slowly until the 1940s.²³¹

²³⁰The Land Apportionment Act of 1931 and the Land Husbandry Act of 1951 have been well documented in the colonial history of Zimbabwe. Apart from expropriating over ¾ of the land, European settlers forced Africans on rocky, arid, tsetse infested regions. See Colin Leys, *European Politics in Southern Rhodesia*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959), P93. N.H. Wilson, *A white standard of Living for Southern Rhodesia: The two pyramids policy*, (Salisbury, 1933).

²³¹Barnes, *We Women Worked so Hard*", p5.

Central to state support in all these ventures was the provision of cheap African laborers, yet local Africans initially clung to their communal lives despite being squeezed on acutely inadequate, dust bowl land reservations.²³² In addition, some indigenes preferred to seek better wages on the South African mines which created a domino effect whereby the colony faced an insatiable demand for labor. The labor of Malawian migrants became one most significant element necessary for the diversification and growth of the Zimbabwean economy. While the state entered into agreements with Mozambique and Zambia, Malawi therefore represented the biggest single source of labor, providing over half of the necessary male workers.²³³ Zambians primarily concentrated on their very rich copper mines while Mozambicans predominantly drifted to the Rand.²³⁴ Not surprisingly, the BSAC had established the Rhodesia Native Labor Bureau (RNLB) which concentrated most of its labor recruitment efforts in Malawi. The Bureau slowly expanded operations to recruit 6 000, 20 000 and 42 598 in 1903/4, 1920/1 and 1934/5 respectively. By the early 1940s, the recorded figures from Malawi alone reached about 142 000 men while those who went to South Africa were just above 40 000.²³⁵ From the 1940s another employment agency, Urere, supervised by the “NC Salisbury” gained popularity. It transported about 20 000 and 16 000 Malawian men in 1958 and 1959.²³⁶ Although Malawian women outnumbered those from other territories by way over ½, with 1 733 and 1 305 Malawian, and only 100 and 56 Zambian women in 1958

²³² Giovanni Arrighi, “Labor Supplies in Historical Perspective” in Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul, (Eds), *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa*, (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1973), pp.180-234; See also Giovanni Arrighi, “The Political Economy of Rhodesia”, in Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul (Eds), *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa*, (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1973), pp.336-377.

²³³Barnes, *Virgin Territory*, p.166. Barnes, “*We Women Worked So Hard*”, p.5.

²³⁴ For a discussion of Zambians concentration on the Zambian copperbelt see Jane Parpart, *Labor and Capital on the African copper belt*, (Canada, Temple University Press, 1983). For a discussion on Mozambicans propensity to migrate to the Rand see Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity*.

²³⁵BFAO File 137/1942-50, Ref. 27C, Appendix B. Nyasa Migrants in Southern Rhodesia puts the yearly entry figures of Malawians in Zimbabwe at 227 054 in 1941. MA, Colonial Reports, Nyasaland Protectorate for the year 1941 and 1942 place them at 80 000 while the 1947 figure was 84 000 and the 1953 figure is 159 000 with 42 000 in South Africa. Crosby, *The Historical Dictionary of Malawi*, places the figures at 40 000 Malawians working in both Southern Rhodesia and South Africa in 1914 and 100 000 by the 1930s, p65.

²³⁶NAZ, File 2239 Migratory Labor Carried By Southern Rhodesia Government Migrant Labor Transport.

and 1959 respectively, they still constituted far less than a ¼ of the men who travelled on Urere.²³⁷

Some analysts could explain these figures as reflecting women's reservations about mobility, yet we have already seen that many Malawian women fled their *midzi* villages, especially since 1940. Rather, in this decade, as the settler economy reached new levels of growth, generally more than doubling the pre 1940s capacity, the state focused on "single" migrant workers. This was a viable way to reduce costs of maintaining and consolidating migrant camps and routes running all the way from northern to Southern Malawi, with some proceeding across Mozambique, while others traversed Zambia to reach the Zimbabwean side. The RNLB and Urere services both relied largely on state funds to provide coordinated bus, lorry and train services; shelter, medical attention, food, clothing, blankets and other necessities to migrants en-route. This was a costly responsibility falling under the Colonial Treasury Department in liaison with the "NC, Salisbury", heading the state's Native Department based in Harare's Causeway area.

In the 1940s, the Treasury Department contended that: "From a financial point of view, the Treasury is only concerned with accommodating migrant men at our depots..."²³⁸ This was in the wake of its efforts to expand sprawling migrant camps at Blantyre and Muzuzu in Malawi; in Mozambique and in Zimbabwe, running all the way to Harare's Mbare, Highfields and Letombo. Women also had no access into short term camps at Forbes, Nyamapanda, Mukumbura and Mrehwa as well as urban migrants' hostels in Harare.²³⁹ Accommodating migrant women and children, in addition to legitimate workers, would only increase demand for in-camp housing and other supplies as well as transportation. Also, given that some men had to be repatriated in the event of illness, failure to work due to old age or any incapacitation, it was highly logical that the state aimed to avoid costs of whole family repatriations. Limiting women and children's access was thus important in so far as it reduced possible expenses of family

²³⁷File 2239, Migratory Labor.

²³⁸NAZ, File S3292/37/3, Nyasaland Labor: Migrant Labor Routes and Depots, 1940-1954. NAZ, File CNC/S235/425, Food Depots and Migrant Labor Camps, 1949-1958.

²³⁹ NAZ, File CNC/S235/425, Food Depots and migrant labor camps.

repatriations. According to the “NC Salisbury’s” repatriation file covering 1949 to 1971, the NC was inundated by repatriation requests from all sectors, including farms, mines and urban industry.²⁴⁰

Such concerns with expenses were also manifest in the latent fear about the possibility of foreign migrants’ domicile. This fear was most plausible since the colonial state instituted the expropriation of African cattle and land. Constituting never more than 5 percent of the total population in the colony, settlers benefited from the demarcation of about 78 percent of the total settlement and arable land as European. Africans, constituting over 90 percent of the population, occupied less than 30 percent of the total land, in arid, tsetse infested regions. The state sealed this land distribution under the 1931 Land Apportionment Act (LAA), amended in 1941 further reducing the already inadequate African reserves. The LAA also placed all urban space under European jurisdiction, reserving Harare, the administrative and socio-economic center of the colony, for European civilization and prosperity.²⁴¹

With this grossly biased resource distribution, the state was seriously concerned that foreign Africans would seek to become permanently domiciled, raising the African population. Generally, if “alien African” wives and children accompanied their husbands, they would need to secure land and other resources in the already strained African reservations or European areas, surely upsetting the racially biased economic balance. In a series of conferences held between 1944 and 1948 by representatives of the Protectorate of Malawi, the colonial state in Zimbabwe, municipalities, farmers, miners and industrialists, the question of women’s migration always raised the specter of permanent domicile. Reflecting such concerns by the Zimbabwean colonial state, one official asked: “Supposing a Nyasaland native comes down to Salisbury (Harare) or even to as far as Filabusi with his wife, would we allow him to stay?” To which the instructive response

²⁴⁰ NAZ, File S1007/8, Office of the Chief Native Commissioner: Repatriation of Native aliens, 1949-1971.

²⁴¹The Land Apportionment Act of 1931 and the Land Husbandry Act of 1951 have been well documented in the colonial history of Zimbabwe. Apart from expropriating over ¾ of the land, European settlers forced Africans on rocky, arid, tsetse infested regions. See Colin Leys, *European Politics*, P93. N.H. Wilson, *A white standard of Living*, pp.65-70.

was, “No we wouldn’t because resources, especially land, are already inadequate for such a permissive policy. But we may have exceptions, that is, *if* the said native’s employer could provide temporary but approved accommodation on private premises.”²⁴²

The Colonial Labor Officer further clarified this position;

Much as we must depend on their labor, if permitted to bring their womenfolk, the natives of Nyasaland would seek to become domiciled indefinitely. We might soon face another rebellion from our own natives if, under the Land Apportionment Act, we will be obliged to allow their settlement with their families either in native reserves or urban locations where resources are already seriously strained.²⁴³

In urban terms, the inadequacy of land resources amounted to the unavailability of space in overcrowded African locations. From its inception, the city’s development was unashamedly biased towards furnishing the lush European suburbs with lavish brick houses, first class schools, health, sanitary, recreational facilities and communications. Following the South African racial model, European town planners situated Mbare and the other African locations such as Highfield, Mufakose and Rugare between sprawling European suburbs in the north and medium density suburbs for Coloreds and Asians in the south. African locations developed painfully slowly. From 50 corrugated iron, grass thatched huts of 1906 in Mbare, the first African location, another 100 all asbestos arc shaped shelters were added in 1931. Even when Harare obtained city status in 1935, the locations’ development lagged far behind.²⁴⁴

As pressure for urban amenities increased with secondary industrial development between the 1940s and 1950s, (see p.100) the state faced mounting financial difficulties. Just as rural resources were already too inadequate to allow Malawians to bring their wives and children, urban resources were equally too limited. Logically, under the 1940

²⁴² BFAO, File 137/1940-1948, Ref. 52C, Report on Conference on the Formation of a Native Labor Recruitment Organization, Held in Salisbury on the 22nd February, 1944. Salisbury was the colonial name for Harare while Filabusi is a district in the Matebeleland region of Zimbabwe.

²⁴³ File 137/1940-1948, Ref. 52C, Report on Conference, 22nd February, 1944.

²⁴⁴ George Kay and Michael Smout, (Eds), *Salisbury: A Geographical Survey of the Capital of Rhodesia* (Kent, Hodder and Stoughton, 1977) pp.4-5.

Migrants Convention, the 1942 to 1946 Provisional Agreements and the 1948 Migrant Workers Act extant into the 1960s, the state readily obligated employers to allow migrant workers' return to their families at the elapse of specified periods. While the 1940 Convention, just like the 1942 and 1946 Agreements, stressed migrants' return to wives at the elapse of every 6 months, the 1948 Act extended the time to every couple of years. By adopting this return clause, the state saw the possibility of forestalling women's migration. In addition, by agreeing to supervise the remittances of taxes, of a section of the wages and deferred payments for family use, (see chapter 2) the colonial state was not just being philanthropic towards Malawian based families. Neither was it just supporting the Protectorate state in its socio-economic policies. Instead, this was also a big way to remove the need by women to trace men to the city and other parts of the colony. That the state found it highly daunting to accommodate workers and their families at this time was reflected in 1951, when the Treasury Department warned;

This Department's recent experience has impressed upon us the need for caution in implementing African housing plans...So far, the expansion of Highfield Village Settlement and Mabvuku African Location has taken over a million and a half pounds from our coffers. It is understandable that in the interests of capitalist development, we need to join hands with the municipal African Housing and Community Services Department to accommodate our workers, over half of whom come from Nyasaland Protectorate...The Director of Housing has duly reported that those who come down with their wives and children become permanently domiciled here...our departments do not have the finances to assist with family housing, schools, health and sanitary facilities at this rapid rate.²⁴⁵

Such socio-economic implications of foreign African domicile took on a new tone during the era of mass nationalism, beginning in the 1950s, with local Africans increased rural-urban movement. Giovanni Arrighi has emphasized how local African proletarianization was a gradual process reaching its consolidation in the inter war era.²⁴⁶ In this era, their

²⁴⁵NAZ, File S3615/7/1, Responsibility of Employer to provide Accommodation for African Employees in terms of Part 1 of the Native Urban Areas Registration and Accommodation Act, 50/51: Minutes of a meeting held by The Director of the Central Treasury Department, the Head of the municipal Community Services Department and members of the Rhodesian Legislative Council, 19 October 1951.

²⁴⁶ Giovanni Arrighi, "Labor Supplies in Historical Perspective", pp. 180-234 also "The Political Economy of Rhodesia", pp. 336-377.

urbanization also reached a new level as the land in the reserves lost fertility due to overcrowding conditions and soil erosion. By 1951, both men and women fled not just to escape the worsening rural indigence, but the new, labor intensive soil conservation practices known as *nhamo yemakandiwa* (the ridging crisis) in Zimbabwe. Apart from simple cultivation, this involved ridging and soil heaping. In this case, a coincidence of flight from rural Zimbabwe and rural Malawi to Harare created a double influx pressure. As double influx pressure for urban amenities arose, so did urban nationalist protests. How local people voiced their grievances under leaders such as the popular Charles Mzingeli, Dr Joshua Nkomo, James Chikerema and later, Robert Mugabe has already been recorded in history. In light of the double influx pressure and despite financial strains, the state authorized the construction and extension of Dzvivarasekwa and Mabvuku locations between the 1950s and 1971.

Settler leaders such as Prime Minister Garfield Todd also sought to draw in employers to assist. As he reasoned, the beginnings of the double influx pressure and African nationalist protest coincided with the Federation of the Rhodesia and Nyasaland covering 1953 to 1963. Federation was likely to escalate inter territorial mobility, domicile and its associated problems. Given the increase in total African population from 500 000 in the 1890s to 1 970 000 by 1958, domicile would fuel African discontent.²⁴⁷ The state therefore urged that all those women who obtained permits to stabilize with husbands in the urban areas, “can only stay on the private property of their employers or on designated municipal land upon employers’ successful application...”²⁴⁸ They could neither buy land in the city nor in the reserves but had to eventually be repatriated to Malawi. In 1953, the Colonial Prime Minister, Todd, in correspondence with the Federal Prime Minister Roy Welensky added: “Federation has nothing to do with existing labor agreements.” As he argued, Malawi needed “Rhodesian” cooperation in ensuring that her

²⁴⁷J R. T. Wood, *The Welensky Papers*, (Durban Graham Publishing, 1983), p.42.

²⁴⁸ File S3615/7/1, Responsibility of Employer to Provide Accommodation for African Employees.

African men periodically returned to provide labor and maintain families in their own country.²⁴⁹

To ensure the maintenance of families outside the colony, the state passed the 1958 Foreign Migratory Labor Act (FMLA) which was implemented in 1960 in Harare, in 1962 in Mutare and in 1963 in Bulawayo. The FMLA reflected efforts to keep women or families out of major urban areas. Extant until 1980, it denied all new “alien Africans” access to urban areas. “This umbrella Act would discourage new waves of foreign workers from coming down with wives and children to the already overcrowded locations.”²⁵⁰ Since the “NC Salisbury” was responsible for issuing resident certificates (RCs), he generally denied RCs and thus urban access to new migrants who entered after 1960. As an urban Act, the FMLA confirmed that even migrant men had to leave the city with their wives and children in case of any condition making it impossible for them to work.

However, in such a time when nationalist resistance led to the collapse of federation, the entry of unnecessary foreign women and their children was even more unwelcome. With Britain demanding a shift from settler rule towards majority rule in response to African nationalism, the settlers’ fear of a socio-economic, political and spatial “black inundation” or “black peril” revitalized. Even as change arrived in Malawi with the rise of Banda in 1963, the settlers in Zimbabwe adamantly resisted British policy and announced a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). Against UDI, Britain and other European nations imposed economic sanctions on the settler regime. Without export markets, the colony could not obtain foreign currency, nor could it buy building materials and other resources. Strained to the maximum, in 1971, the state abandoned its four locations to the municipality in Harare as in Mutare and Bulawayo.²⁵¹ It halted its housing projects just as thousands of local Africans fled the war from the reserves while

²⁴⁹J R. T. Wood, *The Welensky Papers*, p42. Rhodesia is the colonial name for Zimbabwe and Nyasaland for Malawi.

²⁵⁰Harare City Archive, (HCA), File3/3/I, Memo: Foreign Migratory Labor Act passed in 1958, implemented in 1960.

²⁵¹ HCA, FileRHB/1, African Housing, 1945-1979.

foreign workers fled the farms and mines to seek refuge in Harare. Here, the entry of foreign Africans, especially non-working women and children remained a matter of determined struggles for the city.

Municipal Perspectives

The dominant socio-economic perspectives within local government circles also impinged on women's "struggles for the city." As the leading urban administrator, local government was born on October 26th 1897, with the state's promulgation of the Town Council Act. In this year, Harare came under a municipality staffed by an all-male all-European team of Mayors and Directors who coordinated with native commissioners. Its mandate was the provision of urban services ranging from housing, water supplies, electricity, sewerage, health, fire protection, streets, drainage and lighting, transport and recreational facilities. With its headquarters situated at Town House in the city proper, it opened an African branch in Mbare along Remembrance Drive. Here, its authority was embodied in the person of the African locations' superintendent, appointed by a Town Committee.

From the 1940s, when Malawian women's migration to Zimbabwe reached an unprecedented level (see chapter 2), their entry in Harare raised alarm this African administration department. The Municipality raised several questions, the most pertinent being; whether to accept their settlement or reject it; whether the women were the state, local government or capitalists' responsibility; how they impacted costs of urban maintenance; and finally their legality. As the primary watchdog of urban administration, the city fathers ideally needed thousands of pounds a year to maintain, expand and keep African locations going. Operating on a shoe string budget, they prioritized "single" workers' accommodation at the expense of women and children.

Since, the municipality's African Housing Department was already failing to adequately accommodate the population necessary for the city's development- the workers- it lodged

incessant complaints to central government regarding illegal elements' entry.²⁵² Workers resided between 6 and 10 per room in blocks of filthy, dilapidated barracks and hostels. As some Malawian women, sometimes accompanied by children, entered the city to take residence in male hostels and barracks, they exacerbated such grossly overcrowded conditions. In 1945, the municipal superintendent expressed his worry that: "Council provides locations which are only sufficient for the needs of a quarter of the native population."²⁵³ He despairingly reported that women's influx only magnified the inadequacy of available services citing the "inexplicable filth of communal latrines" which emitted a stench noticeable from as far as 20yards. In Mbare location, each hostel's latrine cum washroom "was one disgusting room with no doors" and was unsuitable for families.²⁵⁴

While central government intervened, as when it built a single native hospital for general purposes, adding to the poorly endowed municipal clinics, such intervention was too inadequate. For example, in the case of the hospital, it lacked "ventilation or air space, and... the sick and dying are packed like sardines..."²⁵⁵ In correspondence with the "NC Salisbury", the superintendent added;

...I must hasten to mention that the city's main labor force comes from Nyasaland... Just recently we have observed that some of them are inveigled into smuggling their women into already overcrowded hostels where they live in shameful conditions...Such illegal elements have no claim upon the municipality. We need not allow them to slowly inundate the city, exerting pressure for housing and recreational facilities given our impecunious standing.²⁵⁶

At this point, it is important to understand that while the city fathers were major urban administrators, between 1940 and 1971 other players also took part in services provision.

²⁵²HCA, File RHB/1, African Housing, 1945-1979. Director Community Services, Salisbury to Township Superintendent, 30 February 1945.

²⁵³HCA, File RHB/1, African Housing, 1945-1979. Location Superintendent to Director Community Services, Salisbury, 8 May 1945.

²⁵⁴HCA, File RHB/1, African Housing, 1945-1979, Report of the Location Superintendent, to the Mayor of Salisbury, June 1945.

²⁵⁵Report of the Location Superintendent, June 1945.

²⁵⁶HCA, File RHB/1, Native Urban Housing, 1945-1979: Superintendent, Salisbury to NC Salisbury, 19 May 1945.

Amidst acrimonious relations over urban African services, the state and some industrialists intervened to construct mainly single barracks and some marriage quarters in their own African locations. In fact, the 1957 Plewmen Commission aptly captured the resulting “disarray of African residential areas” including;

Harari, a Native Urban Area within the limits of the municipal commonage; Mabvuku, a Native Urban Area outside the limits of the municipality, under central government; Highfield, a Native Village Settlement established on land adjacent to the municipal boundary administered by central government...; Rugare, a Rhodesia Railway Native Area on land owned by the Railways outside the area of jurisdiction of the municipality.²⁵⁷

With its own location –Rugare, situated about 2km from the Workington Industrial Site and surrounded by docks and goods yards; by a maze of Railway lines on which goods trains ground their noisy way by day and night, the Rhodesia Railways represented those industrialists who tried to provide for their workers. Opened in the 1940s, first with all asbestos dome shaped barracks called *majarata*, the township developed as brick houses with dome shaped roofs called *musana wennzou* (elephant’s backs) were built in two phases between the 1950s and 1970s.²⁵⁸ Companies such as the Rhodesia Railways followed the same pattern in Bulawayo, Gatooma, Mutare and other towns in the interest of labor stabilization. Labor stabilization, meant the system whereby instead of travelling between work and distant homes, workers would settle with families near the workplace. The fact that other participants besides it contributed to urban services provision, did not mean that council was less burdened. Of course, it is easy to understand how the majority of industrialists who detested costs of stabilization and preferred for it to remain just “a matter to be deliberated upon”²⁵⁹ looked to the city fathers for all services. However, since even those such as the Rhodesia Railways with their own locations could not house all their workers, they joined those insisting on council’s responsibilities to industrialists;

²⁵⁷Report of the Urban African Affairs (Plewmen) Commission, (Salisbury, Government Printers, 1958), p33.

²⁵⁸HAC, File RHB/1 Native Urban Housing, 1945-1979. Attention: The Rhodesia Railway and Rhodesia National Foods locations of Rugare and Mhizhi- Salisbury.

²⁵⁹ BFAO, File 137/1940-1948, Ref. 52C, Report by Special Committee on Migrant Labor Stabilization: May 1946.

We feel that the Municipality could devote thought to the possibilities, as a long term objective, of some more efficacious solution than the perpetuation of this constant journeying to and fro, which involves considerable expenditure of money, waste of time and energy, and loss of efficiency... The city fathers must be aware that the development that we all envision for our territory will not happen without the proper accommodation, in every way, of our workforce.²⁶⁰

Their uproar was appreciable since economic life grew rapidly with import substitution industrialization during the Second World War era. Harare became the center of attraction for internal and foreign capital, with investment focusing on food processing and manufacturing. Beer, flour, oil, soap and textile industries, tobacco processing and cigarette production expanded by thrice the pre 1940s rate. Iron foundries, fertilizer, furniture manufacturers and printing works expanded by double the levels of the pre Second World War era. Secondary industrialization began to take off.²⁶¹

Under such circumstances, the municipality implemented the NUARAA, as promulgated by the state in 1946 and amended in 1951, generally denying access to unmarried women and those whose husbands could no longer work or were in illegal accommodation. Even as local government made provision for a select number of single women who worked for Europeans mainly as house girls, by constructing Cater House in 1950, they excluded Malawian women by issuing resident certificates to working girls only, over 80% of who were local, as Teresa Barnes observed. In her own account, Angwaula Mlepa confirmed: "...But wait now, I can assure you that we rarely got jobs then! It was unheard of for a Nyasa girl to be a wage worker, so municipality did not want us even at Cater House..."²⁶²

Indeed, denying any responsibility for undesirable elements, the municipality confirmed;

²⁶⁰BFAO, File 137/1940-1948, Ref. 52C, Industrialists Appeal Presented to Special Committee on Migrant Labor Stabilization: 14 May 1946.

²⁶¹Barnes, "*We Women Worked so Hard*", p5.

²⁶²Interview with Angwaula Mlepa, Mufakose, 6 February 2009.

Much as Local Government acknowledges its responsibility for the provision of services and facilities for its African residents, only workers qualify. This is the basis upon which the city planned its African housing, so that only persons who are legitimately employed are allocated housing here through applications from employers. Unemployed Africans, vagrants and illegal women have no business here... We have expended more than two thirds of our total budget this year on maintaining and expanding housing, but such illegal elements make our efforts ineffective.²⁶³

Even with the state contributing four locations in addition to seven municipal ones, the general African housing waiting list leapt from 8 000 in 1952 to 14 000 in 1960 and had reached above 20 000 by 1971.²⁶⁴ Under such circumstances, it certainly would have made very little, if any sense, for the city fathers to indiscriminately accommodate Malawian women.

In this decade, women and families' residence also escalated costs of street sweeping, communal bathroom or washroom cleaning and general maintenance. From a place where they needed below ten thousand Rhodesian dollars a year for such purposes, the city fathers needed more because;

...We have to employ more than the standard team of street sweepers and sanitary boys to do their rounds in each location more than three times a week. This means we need additional trucks and fuel each week, otherwise these locations will become a veritable eyesore...Needless to say, we must also employ more home inspectors who enforce standards...Here, you could agree with me that, illegal urban residents are a problem which Council should not have to deal with...²⁶⁵

This was the era when political strains in the colony generally affected urban development. We have already seen the collapse of Federation in 1963 and the Smith regime's UDI which led to the imposition of sanctions by Western countries. The lack of export markets and the failure to raise the foreign exchange needed to buy manufacturing equipage meant that capitalists could neither expand nor maintain production. Many

²⁶³ NAZ, File S3615/7/1, Responsibility of the Employer to provide accommodation for African employees in terms of Part 1 of the Native Urban Areas Registration and Accommodation Act, 20/51, 1951. Meeting of Municipal, industrial and state representatives, 19 October 1951.

²⁶⁴ HCA, File RHB/1, Native Urban Housing, 1945-1979.

²⁶⁵ HCA, File RHB/1, Native Urban Housing, 1945-1979, Director of African Services in a meeting held in Salisbury with the Minister of Internal Affairs, 13 October 1971.

closed down, implying the loss of rates for council, which could hardly sustain housing projects. (see chapter 3) Up to 1980, despite failure to stem the tide, such circumstances impelled both the city fathers and state's attempts to curtail Malawian families' inflows.

Migrant Women and Rhodesian Authorities: Wrangles en-route

In such efforts to curtail Malawian families' inflows, the colonial regime implemented inter-territorial and internal legislation, launching inspections, arrests, detentions and forced repatriations en-route as in the city.

Police surveillance started from the point of entry, as women contended with Border Patrols (BP) whose origins probably dated back to the 1920s. Armed with truncheons and aided by blood hounds notorious for their particular viciousness, African police patrolled the borders. With bases at Mkumbura, Forbes and Nyamapanda in Mt Darwin, Mutare and Mtoko districts respectively, the BP's work involved apprehending cross border thieves, smugglers and marauding bandits, especially cattle rustlers from Mozambique who made incursions onto settler farms and nearby African reserves.²⁶⁶ They operated from posts situated on major inter-national roads and surrounded by tall grasses and trees; furnished with brick-laid shelters for the European Officer directing African policemen. Each post had corrugated iron and grass thatched barracks for African policemen and for male migrants' short term use.

Following the 1948 agreement between the Protectorate and colonial governments of Malawi and Zimbabwe, Border Patrols worked in coordination with the "NC Salisbury" to apprehend and repatriate undocumented women among other "miscreants." The agreement allowed men to obtain travel documents in any district of Malawi, on transit or in Zimbabwe, yet women had to obtain travel permits in their Malawian districts of origin. Insisting that undocumented women had to "remain within the boundaries of the territories in which they habitually reside", one clause in the 1948 Act empowered police

²⁶⁶NAZ, File S1007/8, Office of the Chief Native Commissioner: Repatriation of Native aliens, 1949-1971; Reports, Notices and Correspondence.

details to “arrest, detain and repatriate *on sight* any woman without a travel permit (my emphasis).”²⁶⁷

As such policemen targeted all women, some of whom arrived on vehicles transporting male workers, conducting meticulous examinations to detain undocumented ones. At Forbes, they held them in a thatched shed, without walls, supported on wooden poles. Here, they awaited repatriation or deportation on vehicles coming all the way from Harare. Because such vehicles were not specifically assigned for deportation of illegal women, they were sometimes fully loaded with supplies for migrants in various camps or with male passengers. Their movement was irregular, necessitating detentions of between two and three days or even more. According to Ume Kambalata who travelled from Muzuzu and all the way across Mozambique, “It happened like this; at first we had no knowledge but after we got there (Forbes) we learnt a lasting lesson-you don’t pass through any police post without all your papers.” She continued;

We traveled easily by lorry into Mozambique, paying 30 shillings each to get there. Then it became difficult because we had to walk...After many days in which we slept in some villagers’ homes, we were too tired. That is why we headed for the Tete-Salisbury road to hail lorries that passed by... So like that we put *masherani* (sic. shillings) together to give to the driver. We were afraid at first because it was packed with men, but we soon realized that it was an *Urere* lorry. *Mwananga, ulendo ndikupunzira* (travelling is a learning experience), for sure... That lorry had a metal box (canopy) at the back in which we all climbed. We had no way of seeing outside except through very narrow cracks. It had no windows and the driver closed the back door from outside. We only found that we had arrived at the post of Umtali (Forbes) when the driver opened for us. Two police boys in military uniforms, hats and boots, glowered at us. They wielded batons and led large *magaru opanda nchira* (dogs without tails) on chains. Umh-umh-umh (shaking her head from side to side), you know, those Europeans cut off blood hounds’ tails so they became really wild..! So we saw that and were already very frightened when their policeboys shouted, “Out, out all of you out!”

Some men were already there, passing in single file through the door of an *ofosi* (office), a hut with two doors facing each other. They passed this way and came out the other way with stamped passes. I could see through the door as the African doctors (orderlies) dropped medicines in their mouths... The police worked

²⁶⁷ NAZ, S482/22/47-48, Migrant Workers Act of 1948.

quietly but when it came to us women, those boys were so rude. They said, “Stupid prostitutes, you don’t just come to Rhodesia, you hear?” One even poked me with his baton as we went to another shelter where we all sat on the dirt floor. Other women were already sitting in the dirt too, some with babies, others with their men. All of us, we were guarded by four police boys who held *garu* each by a chain...I wonder why they guarded us because though the shelter was a roof only supported by bare poles, there was a fence surrounding that camp. We stayed there two days with no food, so we were very happy when a lorry arrived all the way from Salisbury to take us back. But then it dumped us at Blantyre...²⁶⁸

Many who initially tried to enter through the posts in the 1940s and ‘50s remember similar brutal encounters with border police. One such woman Twaina Lima stressed her humiliation at their hands at Nyamapanda post of Mtoko District. Having travelled on an Urere lorry along the Tete-Mtoko road with a male friend, John Makeria, they arrived at a border inspection zone.

There were many women there. (Were they all Malawians?) Ummm, I only know that I was in trouble. We were all in trouble. (What do you mean you were all in trouble?) I mean anyone could tell because of the truncheons, the dogs and that grim looking *mzungu*. Those policeboys, (clapping cupped palms) *wamatinyoza* (looked down on us)! They said, “*pfutseki, mfiti* (witches). Why don’t you stay in your own land?” (Did they speak in Chewa?) *Hinde-e* (yes) they said, “*chokani kumudzi kwanu, ndifuna mundipase kalata zanu pamene pano kuti murowe muRhodesia* (Return to your homes. Only those with permits will enter Rhodesia).”²⁶⁹

In response to whether they were beaten, she stated that as women sat under guard, they were safe. Only those who tried any tricks such as sneaking back on to lorries “were beaten like *mfiti* caught red handed.”²⁷⁰

Reflecting such suffering, in 1949 the Directing Officer at Forbes reported to the “NC Salisbury”;

²⁶⁸Interview with Ume Kambalata, Mpondabwino Township, 12 May 2009. Dogs with cut off tails were considered most vicious. Umtali was the colonial name for the border Town in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe currently known as Mutare.

²⁶⁹Interview with Twaina Lima, Mpondabwino Township, 19 May 2009.

²⁷⁰Twaina Lima.

Sir. In response to your inquiry of the 6th inst. I note that weekly, we detain about fifty women who do not carry visitors' permits. Over half of them are coming directly from Nyasaland with their children ... Since we have not put in place a system for immediate repatriation, we are forced to detain them here for days under the most deplorable conditions ... They must await lorries coming down from Salisbury, yet there is hardly any food, water or shelter for them. Please advise.²⁷¹

Comparing the figures for 1949 and 1959 at Forbes substantiates that Malawian women dominated among detainees. The highest available figures were 242 Malawians in August 1949 as compared to 189 in August 1959. Non-Malawians were much fewer in numbers with Mozambicans, Zambians and Tanzanians making up 132; 74; 10 in August 1949, 101; 38 and 2 in August 1959.²⁷² Though they may not be completely representative, the figures not only suggest that more women attempted to enter through the posts in the 1940s but that the difficulties at posts may have driven many towards clandestine routes by 1959.

Evasion was the best way to resist a system subjecting them to indefinite periods in detention in inadequate shelters and with little, if any freedom to search for food or water to drink, firewood to keep warm and even to relieve themselves. Stories warning others of such experiences spread among women in Malawi: "It was from the 1950s, I think, when we women and some men talked or wrote letters to friends saying, when you come to Rhodesia never go through Forbes, Mkumbura or Nyamapanda, but go through Penhalonga, Mavuradona or Mudzi..."²⁷³ Even when tired from walking long distances, hungry, thirsty, beaten by the elements and isolated, they learnt to purposefully stick to clandestine routes. With time, they intentionally mapped out their routes by taking advantage of fissures in the settler system. Many searched for entry points then known as *madhobhadhobha's* stations, with the most popular passing through Penhalonga, Mudzi

²⁷¹ NAZ, File S1007/8, Office of the Chief Native Commissioner: Repatriation of Native aliens, 1949-1971; Directing Officer, Forbes to NC Salisbury, 6 August, 1949.

²⁷² File S1007/8, Office of the Chief Native Commissioner: Repatriation of Native aliens, 1949-1971; Directing Officers' Reports, August 1949 and August 1959.

²⁷³ Interview with Agnes Kunjika.

and Mavuradona in Mutare, Mutoko and Mt Darwin about 10 to 15km from official posts.

Skilled in evading the police, *madhobhadhobha* and their touts worked on commission for labor hungry and hence recalcitrant farmers. They freely transported both men and illegal women to specific farms, reaching as far inland as Mt Fatigue, Pattison and Simon's, less than 3 to 5 km from Harare.²⁷⁴ Instead of regarding women as unnecessary migrants, settler farmers faced an insatiable need for ultra-cheap foreign labor which state backed recruiting agents could hardly meet. Instead of following gender restrictive migrant policies, farmers agreed: "...Nyasa women make a fine and robust workforce on the land alongside their men... Under the existing system, we feel that fewer women than required are coming down when we would use more in the high season."²⁷⁵ With farmers' support, even overzealous African policemen could hardly seal *madhobhadhobha*'s hidden routes. Apart from undocumented wives; widows, divorcees, betrothed and single women who had no way of applying for permits therefore made fully informed recourse to clandestine transportation to farms, from where many eventually proceeded to Harare, the most popular destination.

Making recourse to *madhobhadhobha*'s stations was not the only way to evade, subvert and resist the system. Many women negotiated their way by train from Dondo Junction in Mozambique. This move was far from easy, despite that unlike buses and lorries, trains did not pass through any border post for inspection. They only stopped at major Railway stations and urban areas such as Mutare, Rusape, Headlands and Harare. In the border town of Mutare, regular state police, the British South Africa Police (BSAP) aided border agents. As soon as the train pulled up at the station, they jumped on shouting in Shona

²⁷⁴Interview with Emma James Tembo. Interview with Mary Kadamika, Mufakose, 16 January, 2009. Interview with Yuna Chipoka, Mbare, 15 August, 2008.

²⁷⁵BFAO, File137/1944-1948, Report on Conference on the Formation of a Native Labor Recruitment Organization, held in Salisbury on the 22nd February, 1944.

and Chewa, “show your papers!” They blocked exits, checked carriages and every possible place, deliberately inspecting female passengers.²⁷⁶

In Harare, even as border agents became less visible, Mudzviti’s/ BSAP, Katsekera’s/ municipal and *masekiriti*/ Railways policemen patrolled the station perimeter. Like the state, the municipality was concerned about “undesirable” women’s entry into the city while the Railways Company did not relish being implicated for bringing them into the capital. All three forces had access to train timetables and arrived on the scene to demand information such as destinations and travel permits under the 1948 Act and marriage certificates (MC) under the 1946 and 1951 NUARAA. From 1960, however, even permit and MC holders faced the FMLA insisting that all new migrants, especially women, had to stay outside the 10 miles radius of any designated city.²⁷⁷ Coordinating with the “NC Salisbury”, state police gathered all apprehended illegal women to their central holding cells along Inez Terrace Street near the Railway Station situated close to Fourth Street. Twice each week, when the train entered the station, such inspections and raids resulted in involuntary “repatriations” /deportations.

Notwithstanding, some illegal women negotiated with train employees right from Dondo. For example, in 1958 Agnes Kunjika travelled with her cousin Jaspa Kanda, a migrant train worker who sneaked her into his staff cabin and locked it. That other women also negotiated similarly can be gathered from Agnes’ testimony that Jaspa Kanda brought another woman into the cabin. Together, they travelled safely until they arrived in Harare even as state, municipal and Railway policemen conducted meticulous inspections.²⁷⁸ Agnes told of how, upon arrival in Harare, women quickly ran from the police and lay or crouched behind the African waiting room.²⁷⁹ In the early 1960s, police harassment

²⁷⁶Interview with Serezina Chisoni, Mbayani, 28 May 2009.

²⁷⁷ HCA, File RHB3/3/I, Memo: Foreign Migratory Labor Act passed in 1958, implemented in 1962. The Foreign Migratory Labor Act of 1958 is mentioned in passing in David T Williams, *Malawi: The Politics of Despair*, (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, c 1978), p.155. Arthur Hazzlewood and P.D. Henderson, *Nyasaland, The Economics of Federation*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1960), pp.82-83.

²⁷⁸Interview with Agnes Kunjika.

²⁷⁹ Interview with Agnes Kunjika.

continued as Suwedi Amissi observed. In a 1961 African Weekly article entitled, *Karani kumudzi akazi a Nyasaland* (Stay in your land women of Nyasaland) Amissi wrote;

Bambo Edita (Mr. Editor). What I saw with my own eyes is disgracing for our women from Nyasaland...The train arrived at Salisbury station on Thursday night...Policemen jumped on before it even stopped properly. Others patrolled the whole place. They inspected women for documents, gathering those without the wife's permits...they shoved a group away like criminals. I heard one saying, "these Manyasarande women must be repatriated immediately! ..." ²⁸⁰

Their actions tallied with the requirement under the 1948 Act that: "any policeman or immigration officer may order any *visitor* who has entered without a valid travelling permit to leave the colony (my emphasis)." ²⁸¹ The Act defined men as workers but women as "visitors."

It must have been that the Rhodesian and Mozambican wars of liberation made these women's situation more difficult. In Zimbabwe, escalating nationalist unrest resulted in the passage of the FMLA, Vagrants Act, Law and Order Maintenance Act of 1973 and finally the Emergency regulations Act of 1973. All police Departments could issue curfews and mount random inspections in Harare. ²⁸² The border and main train stations must have been even more severely policed against guerilla incursions from Zambia and Mozambique. Mobility was more suspect and undocumented women could easily be mistaken for guerilla aides, arriving from cross border bases. Under such circumstances, many women began to enter on the longest route through Kazungula in Zambia then through Botswana and from there to Harare, the safest part of the country, as Marcelina Mukakiwa's and Mrs Mwechande's documents show. ²⁸³ Writing on 24 March 1977, Mr. Mwechande found it imperative to carefully instruct;

My wife,

²⁸⁰The African Weekly, 10 September, 1961.

²⁸¹Migrant Workers Act, 1948.

²⁸²The Vagrancy Act empowered the state and local governments to immediately evict African vagrants, miscreants and illegal settlers while the Law and Order Maintenance was also important in dealing with African political agitation as well as any suspect gathering in illegal places.

²⁸³Passport courtesy of Marcelina Mukakiwa of Rugare issued under Banda, it indicates the safest routes during the war era. (See appendix section).

...To come here, follow these instructions carefully. Take a bus to Lilongwe where you must see the resident Zambian High Commissioner who will issue you with a visa to pass through Zambia. Then from there take the bus into Zambia where you take a train from Lusaka to Livingstone. From Livingstone take the bus to Kazungula where you must go on to Botswana. Here, take a bus to the border of Rhodesia and you will come to Bulawayo to catch the train to Salisbury. Please my wife; follow these instructions. The war has made it very dangerous to go through Portuguese territory even though it would have made for a shorter journey.

I am yours

B.S. Mwechande. (*My translation from Chewa: Letter in the appendix section*)²⁸⁴

Wrangles in the city

In the city, the authorities deployed policemen who continued to mount inspections, raids, arrests, detentions and repatriations to deter women's settlement.

Against some scholars logic that "laws designed to control the conduct of women could be evaded merely by crossing over a line on a map"²⁸⁵ that is from one urban jurisdiction to another, the police generally implemented the 1948 Act, NUARAA and FMLA as state acts generally governing urban administration. Dressed in their imposing uniforms, that is, sky blue shirts and navy blue pants; stripped broad waist belts, flat-topped navy blue hats and black boots, municipal policemen worked under the supervision of European inspectors, to mount raids in municipal locations. In Rugare, which represented Employers' locations, the Railways Company deployed its policemen, dressed in Khakhi uniforms and armed with truncheons, to counter illegal elements, under the command of the Compound Inspector. Both railways and municipal policemen coordinated with state police to implement laws curtailing Malawian women's access.

Among these laws, the 1948 Act was the most significant inter territorial piece controlling Malawian women's access. It empowered policeman to repatriate even

²⁸⁴ Letter from Mr. B. S Mwechande of Mufakose to wife, Mrs B S. Mwechande, 24 March, 1977 (from his personal documents, (see appendix section).

²⁸⁵ Barnes, "*We Women Worked So Hard*", p15.

married women on sight.²⁸⁶Of course, compared to singles, widows and divorcees, married women had a better chance of obtaining migrant permits and resident certificates (RCs), authenticating their urban residence. However, the police worked on the premise that all legal migrant women had to hold permits with which they entered Harare and applied for Resident Certificates (RC) from the “NC Salisbury.” With the RCs, they claimed accommodation from the municipal Housing Department which husbands’ employers applied for in advance or from the Companies such as the Railways’ Housing Office. Assuming possible lack of adequate documentation and accommodation, police subjected them, along with singles, divorcees and widows to random raids throughout Harare’s locations.

In the locations, since housing allocation was male biased with men’s hostels and barracks dominating or men holding title to limited family housing, all eligible women had to be legally married to employed husbands. For married women to apply for permits in the first place, they needed husbands’ work books indicating both formal employment and “the place of residence where they would proceed to reside with the head of the family.”²⁸⁷They had to hold husbands’ employers’ letters approving wives migration. Hinged on the same prerequisite, the police also targeted all those in marriage housing whose husbands lost their jobs owing to illness, injury, old age pension or any other incapacitation. Logically, they extended similar treatment to divorcees and widows. Having lost the support of working husbands, they joined singles whose lack of documents rendered them unequivocally illegal.

The support of working husbands was made more apparently necessary by the implementation of the NUARAA, passed down from the Legislative Assembly. Initially passed in 1946 and amended in 1951, the NUARAA confirmed the early 1940s requirement that “all employers of Nyasaland labor who wish to stabilize such labor [had] to provide necessary family accommodation.”²⁸⁸ Despite inherent limitations based

²⁸⁶NAZ, S482/22/47-48, Migrant Workers Act of 1948.

²⁸⁷ NAZ, File S14/8/1834, Migrant Workers Bill, 1947.

²⁸⁸BFAO, File 137/1942-1948, Ref. 52C, Report on Conference, 22nd February, 1944.

on the reality that; “Urban authorities are not well endowed to meet the needs of all interested parties in the event of general stabilization”, it privileged workers and by extension their wives. The 1951 NUARAA decreed: “under section 20/51, the employer is obligated to ensure that every one of his employees permitted to bring down families, has authorized accommodation in the African locations; Company premises or other approved lands.”²⁸⁹Of course, the term “employee” primarily referred to men, who also dominated urban domestic employment as cooks and gardeners.²⁹⁰ In the 1950s, women made up less than 5% of urban workers with locals constituting over ¾ of them.²⁹¹ Without access to employment in their own right, single women, including divorcees and widows or those whose husbands lost capacity for employment could neither obtain nor maintain RCs. As such, the police examined all women to ascertain the currency of their legal status detaining any who lacked husbands or whose husbands were unemployed, were too sick or old to work or even died as well as all those found in single men’s quarters.

With the mandate to implement such laws, on 18 September 1949, from 8am to 12noon the municipality deployed three units to patrol the streets, the *musika* area (main market) near the African Eating House, Njere, and the Hostels going all the way to Magaba area of Mbare. As captured by a writer identified as “Proud resident” in the African Weekly, each unit was led by a Mujoni (a European Officer) on horse-back.

...Illegal vendors at *musika* and all those vagrants who loiter at the African Eating House, Njere, dispersed as soon as they saw *Majoni* with their menacing units of African police boys. The raid was a wide sweeping affair going from *musika* to the singles Hostels near Magaba ... They did not hesitate to stop and question any suspicious elements and ensnared many women along with other criminals... I am happy to note that the police have done us proud and will go on to wipe out such errant characters from our location...²⁹²

²⁸⁹ NAZ, File S3615/7/1 Responsibility of Employers.

²⁹⁰ Barnes, “*We Women Worked so Hard*” p.41.

²⁹¹ Barnes, “*We women worked so Hard*” p.5.

²⁹² The African Weekly, 18 September, 1949.

Not only did the police launch raids in Mbare. Between the 1940s and 1950s, different categories of illegal migrant women encountered the sweeping net of *Mudzviti's*/ state and *masekiriti*/ Railways policemen in Highfield and Rugare. In such random raids, the police rounded them up and led them to state sub police stations. Neither the municipality nor the Railways had Charge Offices to interrogate or holding cells to detain them. Thus, in all these operations, *Mudzviti's* policemen were the ultimate supervisors. The NC authorized their deportation then referred to by the softer term, “repatriation”, to their territory. Locals were merely served eviction orders to the reserves.

If day time raids were exacting, night raids were even worse. In state, municipal or the Railways locations, the police mounted raids on unexpected days “any hour between 6pm and 5am.” Sometimes they awakened residents between 2 and 4am. Fabian Nyon’onya describes one such raid of the late 1950s in the singles hostels of Highfield;

Suddenly, the police were at the door. You just woke up from sleep with the loudest banging on the zinc doors. Then, just outside, you heard the sound of those heavy chains which they used to leash the dogs. It was the most jarring experience because you were forcibly awakened from a deep sleep. Even if you didn’t smuggle any woman in, you just heard your own heart going dhi-dhi-dhi-dhi, like a fast drum beat. Even before you opened, you heard that *Mujoni* giving orders in *chilapalapa* (language made by combining English, Afrikaans, Shona and Ndebele) or *chizungu* (English) to his boys. Then they came. They were shouting as if they must break that door with their voices, “*Mudzviti abwera, Vhura! Vhura!* (State Police, Open Up, Open Up!)”²⁹³

In Rugare, raids were equally sudden and impeccable operations in which;

The police didn’t give you time to become fully awake, dress fully, hide or even think. It was so sudden that you just acted, you know, just rushed and opened the door...You just came face to face with those cruel faces of police-boys and snarling dogs. In those days the Railways liked to recruit very tall and imposing Mavhitori too.²⁹⁴

²⁹³ Interview with Fabian Lusiasi Nyon’onya, Highfield, 30 September, 2008.

²⁹⁴ Interview with Kachenzi Bhandu, Rugare, Harare, 16 December 2008. Mavhitori are a branch of the local Shona ethnic group whose origins are in the Masvingo area of Zimbabwe.

The police violated residents' privacy by conducting sweeping searches, on and under beds, blankets, behind curtains and in clothes boxes, sometimes with a sniffing hound. There was general pandemonium as people screamed, shouted, whistled and talked animatedly, just as dogs barked awakening the whole barrack or hostel. In hostels, with only one stair well which the police guarded, such raids were difficult to escape. Since jumping through windows was out of the question not only because the hostels were four or more floors high, but because of the fear of blood hounds, many were therefore apprehended.

Among the apprehended were singles, divorcees, widows and even legal wives of working men. Extant into the 1970s, the 1946 NUARAA and 1948 Migrant Workers Act made their residence in men's quarters illegal. With each room in the hostels or barracks already occupied by between 6 to 10 men who divided the room into tiny spaces to cook, eat, sleep and store their goods, the illegality of women's occupancy was understandable. Women such as Mary Kadamika who arrived in Harare in 1956, with all required documents could not enjoy even short term residence in the hostels. Like many others, Mary found her husband residing in Chishawasha singles hostel of Mbare. She narrated;

My husband came to meet me at the Salisbury train station and right away, I could tell that he had *mabvuto mntima*, (a troubled heart). But still he said "come with me" and I followed him into the location. Yet when we got to the hostel where he lived he said, "you cannot come in here in broad daylight, people will see and report you, or else you will attract a big *spaktion* (*inspection*) for everyone. All other women and yourself, you will be arrested and then *Katsekera* will return you to Nyasaland." So he only took in *katundu kanga* (my luggage) and came back. We walked towards the main market and sat under a tree, talking about all sorts of things ... All the time, I noticed he kept looking around furtively...It was not until dusk that he said, "come inside..." There were 6 or 8 men I think, living with him and they were Manyasarandi because they spoke Chewa very well. Uh! That room, it was very small but it was everything- the kitchen, bedroom and maybe bathroom. I figured that those men sometimes washed inside the room as it reeked of old sweat... I did not really sleep, not when they were saying so and so's wife or such and such women had been arrested to be taken back home that morning. The police had raided hostels a distance from us and arrested them. The men were saying "maybe we are next, maybe tomorrow..." So early in the morning before the cocks crowed, he took me to another house belonging to a

Yao woman Aenia, the wife of Che Likomba. There, in the married section called Old Bricks, I stayed with her family a while, *hinde-e* (yes) in fear, always in fear because *spaktions* came to married sections too and many women were taken when I was there. But my husband said, “It is better they find you here than in the hostel. Stay here ...”²⁹⁵

While all those apprehended in men’s quarters were arrested, documented women like Mary Kadamika and Yuna Chipoka could hope for leniency if arrested in marriage quarters. Yuna Chipoka joined her husband, James Chipoka in 1959. Her husband’s employer had issued a letter of accommodation. Even when the NC issued her with an RC on the strength of the letter, her husband still lived in the hostels. He therefore rented a room illegally in Western Triangle, a married section of Highfield. A month after her settlement;

Mudzviti’s police raided us at Western Triangle. I was a lodger there. They came to the house in the middle of the night, four policemen with one ferocious hound which looked like it just wanted to pounce. The others were at the next houses and you could hear people screaming and others talking hysterically. Somewhere, you could hear doors banging or opening, dogs barking, police shouting “stop, stop!” and some people running... Myself, I could do nothing because I was unprepared...At our house, they took me, my husband and our landlords. They said, “Manyasarandi you like to break the law. So you, (pointing to me), why are you here? Did Mudzviti (NC) grant you permission?” My husband told me all they said as we walked... We spent the night at the station and paid 1 pound each couple in fines after I produced all my papers. We always kept them within easy reach. I got an eviction order though. It said, if in two weeks my husband’s employers had not found housing, I was to report to the station for repatriation... I saw many women from Nyasaland there...In the morning when I left, *Mudzviti’s* truck was already there, and women were getting in, some were saying goodbye, others were crying, but I was among the lucky...²⁹⁶

Rather than luck, her settlement as a documented wife in the marriage quarters made her illegal residence less apparent. However, for those who lost the support of working husbands due to old age pension, injury or illness, death and finally divorce, the raids were ruthlessly effective. Employers submitted copies of such women’s documents to the “NC Salisbury” for residency annulment and repatriation orders. In case of divorce, the

²⁹⁵Interview with Mary Kadamika, Mufakose, 16 January, 2009.

²⁹⁶Interview with Yuna Chipoka, Mbare, 15 August, 2008.

Nyasaland Resident Officer adjudicated and granted divorce where both parties agreed or the wife committed adultery.²⁹⁷ In all these cases, women had to return to Malawi on specified dead-lines either voluntarily or by deportation.

As a follow up to police raids, between 1949 and 1971, the NC ordered the deportation of hundreds of such women. In 1949, he ordered the repatriation of those such as the widow, Mary, of Old Bricks in Mbare and her child Masanu of Musosola Kraal in Kasungu district of Malawi.²⁹⁸ Among others, in 1955 he authorized the removal of Adisi from Railways premises in Rugare given her husband's blindness.²⁹⁹ In 1956 and 1967 respectively, Katrina Batrett and Mandoka Mwale were among those repatriated following divorce for adultery. Also marked for repatriation in 1967 was Falaise, widow of Kalonga Pagalonga of Msakanbera Kraal in Ncheu District of Malawi.³⁰⁰ In these years, deportation was instrumental for a colonial regime most desperate to counter changes in migrant policies in Malawi under Banda who replaced the colonial state in 1965. (see chapter 2) It was also a time when nationalist protest called for more stringent controls from the settler regime. In this period, the state's implementation of the FMLA against foreign migrants only worsened police surveillance. I have already emphasized how the FMLA defined all women whose husbands had not been in Harare before 1960 as illegal. Singles, including divorcees and widows as well as those who remained in the colony after divorce, husbands' death or loss of jobs could also not reside within the 10 miles radius of Harare. The FMLA coincided with the passage of the 1960 Vagrancy Act empowering policemen to mount daily *spaktions*/inspections between 6pm and 5am. Not surprisingly, between 1967 and 1968 alone, a rough total of about 500 Malawian women were arrested and declared as "destitute" or vagrants to be repatriated from Harare to Malawi.³⁰¹

²⁹⁷Since they wanted to claim old age pensions, injury compensation or other social benefits, the affected parties submitted marriage certificates, permits and RCs to employers.

²⁹⁸NAZ, File S1007/8, Repatriation of Native Aliens.

²⁹⁹NAZ, File S1007/8, Repatriation of Native Aliens.

³⁰⁰NAZ, File S1007/8, Repatriation of Native Aliens.

³⁰¹NAZ, File, S 1007/8, Repatriation of Native Aliens.

Women's Strategies

Amidst such persecution, Malawian women fought back, sometimes victoriously subverting and resisting the system. In their efforts to fight against the system “safe houses” figured prominently. These were the legal homes of fellow Malawian women committed to assisting singles, divorcees, widows and undocumented or un-accommodated wives from the 1940s. Oral evidence suggests that the “safe house” system connected new migrants to established women in married housing. In Malawi or upon entry in Harare, migrant women consulted train employees, lorry drivers or other individuals to source names and addresses of such women.

Paradoxically, “safe houses” were a “well known secret” hidden from the law, yet central to migrant women’s urban survival. Located in respectable marriage quarters and occupied by seemingly law abiding married couples, they were relatively safe temporary homes for illegal women. Their position was unlike that of male quarters which were primary targets of police raids. For this reason, as an un-accommodated wife Mary Kadamika who stayed in Chishawasha singles hostel of Mbare the night of her arrival in Harare in 1956, hastily moved to Aenia Likomba’s marriage home in Old Bricks section. Since 1949 Aenia the wife of Che Likomba was among those committed to accommodate “new women” who “only stayed temporarily until they figured out where they would go next, or how they would secure themselves in Salisbury.”³⁰² Infact, as they awaited the fulfillment by her husband’s employers’ of their written assurance that they would provide adequate housing, Mary preferred for the police to find her in Aenia’s house.³⁰³ We have also seen how, in another case, because she held all required documents and they apprehended her in marriage quarters in Highfield, the police only gave Yuna Chipoka only a pending eviction order even as they deported many.³⁰⁴

³⁰² Interview with Che Likomba, Mbare, 2008.

³⁰³ Interview with Mary Kadamika.

³⁰⁴ Interview with Yuna Chipoka.

The “safe house” network proved most helpful to single migrants and all those whose husbands died, lost the capacity to work or divorced them in Zimbabwe. Representing many others, Angwaula Mlepa travelled with her *madhobhadhobha* lover who brought her to Aenifa Njewa’s home in Mufakose.³⁰⁵ When Mbombe Maliki arrived from Rumpi District as a single mother in the 1950s in the Company of two young men, she also stayed at Tavhina Masongera’s home in Rugare. For its vivid illustration, Mbombe’s story is worth citing at length;

...I was still with Siwela and Nyamazao the night I arrived in this location. I did not have relations to whom I could go, and that made me worry. Both Siwela and Nyamazao were coming back to their work in the Railways. They lived in the men’s barrack on the East side of the compound. They couldn’t take me in even for the night, what man would want to take in a woman with a wailing baby anyway?

I remember being so worried and so tired. We had walked all the way from Harari (Mbare) Bus Terminal where the bus that we had taken at Umtali (Mutare) brought us. My baby was crying all the way and by the time we got here, he was feverish. He was hungry too. He just suckled and suckled until I was sore because there was very little milk coming out. You see, I myself needed to eat properly to produce the milk to feed him. So I had this fear that I would lose my baby because we had nothing, all our money was gone. Can you imagine, it was in July too, so it was a bitterly cold winter in which we walked like that to arrive here that night. When we finally arrived, I was trembling and my feet were swollen. But my mind was just for the baby. He was wailing and I was getting so frustrated that I silently cried myself. But what could I do, there was no turning back, Nyasaland was too far...

When we arrived, the boys brought me to their *mudhadhadha* (barrack) where they let me sit behind the building. Nyamazao said I had to quiet the baby or else police patrols would hear that there was a baby in the barrack. You know, a baby in the male barrack would only mean there was a woman there and that was not good, not good at all. I continued to cry behind that barrack because by then I was stranded and afraid that they would abandon me there. I didn’t know where to go to rest or find food. I felt that sudden tiredness and loss of determination that comes when you don’t really see the end of a daunting challenge. I just felt a deep disappointment because I said, “Is this why I left my mother’s home, to kill my baby and die myself, to be beaten up when those police found me?” So you can imagine it was a relief when Nyamazao came back and said, “get up, we must go before *masekiriti* (sic. security men) come. I will take you where you can spend

³⁰⁵Interview with Angwaula Mlepa, Mufakose, 6 February 2009.

the night but the rest, you figure out for yourself.” It’s not that he was a bad man, *haikona* (no)! He had nowhere to put me and my baby. He was afraid of the raids because no one knew when they would come. He said they may even catch us on the road and we had to remain in the shadows. That is how Nyamazao took me to Amai Tavhina’s home, on the East side of this location.

We came to a line of houses with small yards separated by *nkonde* hedges. Nyamazao just walked to the front door of one and knocked. First a man came out and spoke in a hushed but angry voice saying in Chewa: “*Haikona*(No), Nyama why didn’t you tell her to quiet that wailing baby before coming here? She will draw people’s attention. They will know that someone has arrived.” They talked like that and I felt, like, like, have you ever arrived at a stranger’s home with a burden which you yourself liked to run from? You feel helpless and stupid and guilty. My baby would not be quite...Then a short and stout woman came out, straight to me. I was expecting her to say, “Leave right now with your baby.” But she only said “here, give me that baby. Come in quickly, come.” To the men whom I later learnt was her husband she said, “Why do you grumble? Just bring her in or someone will report us.” So I got in.

When I noticed the man locking the door, that’s when I realized that Nyamazao had left. First I panicked, but then I saw the woman handing the baby to a younger woman and begin to rekindle a fire. It’s funny how intensely grateful I was about everything, the warm fire, the presence of young women of about my age and the food. Just as I was thinking of food for the baby and myself too, another woman came out of the shadows in the far end of the room and started making maize meal porridge. She said, “drink this up first while I feed the baby. Then later you can take *nkute*/ left overs of maize meal polenta.” I think I must have looked like those street waifs you see today. Because I spent too long without food, my throat and stomach were so tender that it was difficult to eat. So I ate painfully while a big tin of water was on the fire. The other woman dipped a cloth in warm water and began to wipe the baby. They gave me the tin and led me to a grass shelter where I bathed. Afterwards, there was not much talk... That night I slept and never stirred even to check my baby. I only saw him again in the morning.

...There were three children, two were this big (indicates with hand that they were about 7 and 9 years old) and the other was a toddler. Then there were three women about my age or slightly older. Then there was that stout woman whom I later knew was amai/mother Tavhina Masongerera. All of us, we lived there, in those two rooms. By day, amai cooked and did the chores outside and the other women went off early. I stayed inside with the baby. He was now quiet because I was now able to suckle him satisfactorily. You know, that house was so small we had to squeeze in with pots, blankets, boxes, hoes and our own items. Baba (the father) and amai used the other room with the three children. Amai told me to think about what to do to make a living and eventually find my own safe place. I

could only live there temporarily. She told me to expect raids and to be ready at all times to move out quickly. She advised me to find one among the men in married housing whose wives had refused to come back after visiting Nyasaland.

So I lived there for months. Of course I hid mostly but sometimes went out with the others to trade or find money because we must eat, *haikona* (no?! isn't it?) The baby must eat and dress, *haikona*? But there was danger because *masekiriti* were all over the compound asking to see documents. They even took men who did not like to work. So, I did not move aimlessly, I did my business, sometimes in male barracks, or other places and went home to sit inside. Especially on holidays, I was afraid to move because those were not safe days... More police boys patrolled at Christmas and New Year's when more people were at beer drinking venues. They searched all areas, even barracks. Before I met and married my husband, I always lived in fear because it happened every day. I was so careful and I was only taken once but by then I was married. At that time, they rounded us all up to the police station where they said "those who are married stand here, those who are not stand there. You will not lie because we have records and we can ask you to go and get your marriage certificates with our officers, so don't waste time lying." To us who had obtained husbands – I married Maliki in 1957, they said "*Manyasarandi* women, you must be respectable, what then are you doing moving around like this lot?" ...We knew that a truck was always coming to pick up women and take them away on Fridays. That's why I was afraid to move about aimlessly.

But we were okay because at home amai knew all that was happening. She and amai Chimwara, Mai Harrison, all these women were well connected. They had people among *masekiriti* and even *kwakampoundi* (at the Compound Inspector's Office). These people were their eyes and ears. They watched listened and came to tell amai, "on such and such a date and time, they will raid the East section but not the North, West or South side." So we knew and amai always moved us to the South where amai Chimwara lived, or to the West side, to Mai Harrison's. We stayed two or so days and came back. Even amai Chimwara and the rest, they brought their women to us too when their sections were being raided. Later, I arranged places so I could move by myself, sometimes to stay in Hostels that were not being raided or in married sections, because we had all the information. It was because of the raids that amai said we must not stay there for good but had to stay in other places too...

That's when I started going with helpful men. The one I got the most help from was aKachikwanja. His wife had left him saying "*kara ndirikubwera* (stay, I will come back) but never came. He waited a year and was now looking for a companion. I saw him at amai's all the time. He seemed to like my baby. So that's how I started spending time at his home. He would take me there and leave me there with the baby and go to work. He always assured me saying: "this is your

home amai, do your house chores. They won't ask you anything because they don't know anything. When anyone asks, say you are my wife of five years and show them this." That was his wife's marriage certificate and all the other karata (documents). I would move about, go to the grocery shop and all was well because they said, "Amai Kachikwanja is here." ...But he did not want to do more, you see, he went to and from Malawi too often. I wanted my own husband and papers with my own name. I did not want to feel afraid or jealousy whenever he went to his wife. So even when I stayed with him I would go with other men. It was like that until I met Maliki.

I stayed for years and no one, not even those policemen knew I was not Amai Kachikwanja. They raided the house and I gave them my papers, I mean the other woman's papers and they believed I was her. Then I learnt that a man could report his legal wife's failure to return after a year. The Nyasaland High Commission Office would try to trace her in Nyasaland and if she refused to come, annul the marriage to allow him to remarry. He refused to do all that. So because of that I still had to see other men in my quest for a husband. You know, even women in that other business (prostitutes) we were looking for husbands, *haikona*?

In the 1950s, I met Maliki because amai introduced me to him. She said, "come to my house at such and such a time, there is someone you must meet. Be presentable". So I knew that maybe someone was looking for a good woman for a wife and I went to her in the East side. Maliki's wife had been gone for over a year now and already the Nyasaland Commissioner had sent for her but she had refused and her marriage had been annulled back in Nyasaland. So then Maliki was going to move into the single quarters. I accepted him and amai made bambo Masongera represent me as my guardian. When we went to the Nyasaland Office he said I was Mbombe Masongera, his sister. I was born in Salisbury but our parents had gone back home and left me with him. The Officer gave us a letter and we went to Mudzviti's where we registered our *ukwati* (marriage). So now you understand? That is why we will never forget those women; they were wise and brave and did a lot for us. Only those who tried to do it alone were caught and taken back because even from the streets, women were taken, those police, they did not wait to consider, they just took... only doing their work. I have been the wife of Maliki since 1962 as you can see here, (referring to her marriage certificate), no one, not even the people on the North side who knew me as Mrs Kachikwanja before, or Kachikwanja himself could raise any case against me. In 1967 when I had my third child, that's when the Railways moved us from *matu rumhu* (two roomed) houses to these four roomed *musana wenzou*. I have given birth to all my children; seen the ZANU people's *toi toi* (street politics) and independence here.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶Interview with Mbombe Maliki, Rugare, 15 November, 2008.

Mbombe Maliki's account reflects the coping mechanisms used by singles, unaccommodated wives and those who lost legal housing due to their loss of working husbands. They moved to senior women's homes temporarily until they could enter unions with abandoned men in marriage housing. Like Mbombe, many referred to their use of documents belonging to absentee wives. They also played the system by relying on fictive guardians to be witnesses of their faked Rhodesian births and their men's payments of lobola so the NC would register them as married and award them with RCs. They thus legalized their urban residence.

Apart from married quarters, many still settled in men's hostels and barracks despite the tight surveillance between the 1940s and the 1970s. In 1949, municipal policemen raided one such hostel in Magaba. This was a Railway Workers' Hostel which the Company rented from the city fathers to accommodate single workers since its location was too small to carry all its employees. Here, Malawians dominated warranting it being called Malawians' hostel. In this hostel;

We men needed our women with us but the law was against that. So, we had to bring them in somehow. They too needed shelter, money, food and chikondi (love) itself. In 1949 the superintendent complained to the Railways about it and the company sent its police occasionally. *Katsekera* also sent his police! But we too had our ways. We had friends in the police; we gave them beer in the Shabeens or beer gardens. We also worked with *Katsekera's* Nyasa police boys. They kept us informed saying, "this week, lay off the women, we are coming on such days between such and such hours" and that was it. So, if we let the women stay we would tell them to go and hide in the *shatini* (bush made of trees and long grass) on the days and before the times of the raids. We gave them food for the whole day and they would come as soon as the raid passed. If it was a night raid, we all went to spend the night in the *shatini*. Some of us even lived with our babies in the hostel but we always cleared out when raids were on the way. That's how we lived with our women.³⁰⁷

Most importantly, the women learnt to read the fissures in the system. They took advantage of disgruntled employers who saw the 1940s announcement that "only a proportion of the labor can be stabilized owing to unavailability of suitable housing, land,

³⁰⁷ Interview with Bendasi Arumenda, Mbare, Harare, 5 August, 2008.

social and health services etc”³⁰⁸ as representing the city fathers failure to assist them. These employers purchased land but could not afford to build. Unlike the Railways, they refused to abide by the requirement of the 1948 Act and NUARAA that they first ensure housing availability before approving wives migration. Because these employers allowed workers to use their own devices, they and their women settled on Company premises without proper housing, sanitary and water facilities. Apart from workers wives, many divorcees, widows and single migrants dwelt in grass thatched pole and mud huts in illegal settlements such as Kwamazai and Pinto’s Quarry on the fringes of Mufakose and Mbare Townships respectively. In 1958, the Municipality reported;

We have opened investigations on the families congregating in illegal structures on the outskirts of Harari/Mbare and Mufakose locations. The land upon which they are settling is under the title of Pinto’s Quarrying Company and Messrs van den Berg and Black’s Ltd. Presumably these are Nyasa families, since both Companies employ mostly Nyasa migrants. We have consulted with the NC Salisbury and he recommends that this breed of irresponsible employers must be ruthlessly curbed before their sprawling shanty towns tarnish our city.³⁰⁹

The cases of Leya Limpi and Rita Kondoni concisely capture Nyasa women’s use of such Company premises. In 1954, Nowa Limpi applied for his employers’ letter approving Leya’s arrival, obtaining it in 1958. Leya got a permit and arrived in Harare where she lacked accommodation since Nowa lived in a singles barrack of Mufakose. Nowa’s employers Messrs van den Berg and Blacks Ltd. permitted him to construct a hut and settle with Leya on their squatter location called Kwamazai.³¹⁰ In 1960, Rita Kondoni also joined Msusa Kondoni, an employee of Pinto and Sons. Although she got a permit based on employers’ letter of accommodation, Rita did not have accommodation since Msusa stayed in a singles hostel in Mbare. The employer allowed Msusa and his wife to join other Malawian families in the fledging Company owned informal settlement, Pinto’s Quarry. Reflecting on their plight at Pinto’s, Rita Kondoni asks;

Can you even think of whole families and all those prostitutes living in pole and mud huts, here in the city? We lived like we were in a rural village, in this city.

³⁰⁸BFAO, File 137/1940-1948, Ref. 52C, Special Committee on Migrant Labor Stabilization, 1946.

³⁰⁹HCA, File RHB/17/1, Illegal settlement: Squatters, vagrants and alien Africans 1949-79. Director of Native Services to Superintendent of Natives, 12 June 1958.

³¹⁰Interview with Leya Limpi, Mbayani, 6 July 2009.

We used water from Mukuvisi River to cook, wash clothes, drink and bath. We made *zvinjausi* (roofless grass shelter) for bathing and used the surrounding bush as toilets, you know what I mean, he-e? All of us women, we wanted to be here. We ourselves, we had to be with our husbands and our children needed their fathers...³¹¹

From their inception, the municipality deployed policemen to “eradicate these ghastly settlements which are hotbeds for all kinds of misc miscreants”.³¹² However, with the passage of the Vagrants Act in 1960, both BSAP and municipal policemen launched incessant raids to arrest the residents. They brought road construction vehicles to raze the structures. However, with information networks firmly established, the women disserted before the police arrived to burn huts, blankets, plastics, clothes and destroy utensils. Rita remembers;

One needed to be in touch with others to get information on time and to gather all that was necessary... A pregnant woman once overslept in the afternoon of a raid and we all ran away but she woke up to the noise of those vehicles, barking dogs and galloping horses. They say she panicked and missed the door... She lost her mind before she found that door! ...From a distance, you could hear police boys shouting with that megaphone in Chewa, “submit yourself to the police, submit now...!” Then dark smoke rose in the sky, with the stench of burning huts, clothes, food and other items. Some people were too shaken after each raid and went to *Katseker*a’s Office to submit. Others fled from the settlement but ourselves, we just went back there, cleared our spaces and started to build again...Many new women joined us too. It went on like that until 1963 or 1964 when they sent mass deportation orders to our husbands’ employers. Then they came in full force to push us out. I myself knew that if I waited, the police would just drive me away from my husband. So when I heard about it from the workers, I packed up and ran to Pattison’s farm, just for a while...³¹³

While some like Leya were fortunate enough to obtain married accommodation before the final showdown, many like Rita fled to farms within Harare’s 4-5 km radius. Those such as Mary Kadamika and Yuna Chipoka who never moved to Pinto’s or Kwamazai eventually adopted this strategy. Along with un-accommodated wives, singles, divorcees, widows and other illegal women, they temporarily moved to Pattison’s and Mt Fatigue in

³¹¹ Interview with Rita Kondoni. Mbayani, 12 July 2009.

³¹² HCA, File RHB/17/1, Illegal settlement.

³¹³ Interview with Rita Kondoni.

Beatrice and Bindura to escape deportation. The “NC Salisbury” aptly observed; “Most of these women run away before we can repatriate them. I suspect that they move to nearby farms...”³¹⁴ Some individual farmers had labor contracts with between 3 to 50 Malawian families with some urban employed husbands visiting weekly, until some obtained housing in the marriage sections of the locations.³¹⁵

In the 1970s however, as the liberation struggle reached even those farms close to Harare, many farmers escaped to South Africa and Britain. Thousands of unemployed women fled to Harare to continue their struggles for the city. Since they could not stem the tide, in 1978, the NC in liaison with the locations superintendent extended the Lodgers Permit to long-established “alien” workers’ families who thus occupied two thirds of available family housing in Mbare, Highfield, Rugare and Mufakose.³¹⁶ As such, Malawian women’s condition in Harare was akin to that of the “un-accommodated female body which while being displaced from the empire/nation negotiations ultimately contests that displacement by imposing itself, re-inscribing itself upon that space”³¹⁷

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined Malawian women’s entry into Zimbabwe, focusing on their those who moved to Harare. I have argued that against official efforts to exclude as many as possible, Malawian women moved into and settled in Harare. While recognizing the economic indispensability of Malawian men as laborers in the colony, the colonial state sought to curtail women’s entry. In agreement with the Malawian Protectorate, the state promulgated a series of legislative pieces the most important of which was the 1948 Migrant Workers Act. In addition to inter-territorial legislation, the regime passed internal urban legislation such as the 1946 Native Urban Areas Registration and Accommodation

³¹⁴NAZ, File S1007/8, Repatriation of Natives, 1949-1971. Report, May 1971.

³¹⁵ BFAO, File 137/1940-1948, Ref. 52C, Special Committee on Migrant Labor Stabilization, 1946.

³¹⁶ HCA, File RHB/17/1, Illegal settlement: Squatters, vagrants and alien Africans 1949-79. See also HCA, File RHB/1, Native Urban Housing, 1945-1979, Director of African Services in a meeting held in Salisbury with the Minister of Internal Affairs, 20 March 1978.

³¹⁷Gayatri Spivak, “Women in difference: Mahasweta Devi’s “Douloti the Bountiful” in Andrew Parker (Ed), *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, (New York, Routledge, 1992), pp.112-13.

Act (NUARRA) amended in 1951, and the 1958 Foreign Migratory Labor Act (FMLA) implemented since 1960.

With these acts, the state aimed to keep down the numbers of foreign migrants and therefore the costs of providing shelter, food, medicines and transportation for migrants' en-route. The state also shared with the municipality the interest in cutting down costs of urban African maintenance. Without adequate family housing, especially since Harare's African locations were dominated by single men's barracks, transit camps and hostels, it was imperative for the state and municipality to control the pace of foreign African urbanization. One significant way to achieve this was the adoption of a gendered organizing principle whereby colonial officials encouraged the urban entry of Malawian men while deterring Malawian women who outstripped other foreign women by over half. In addition, ejecting or reducing women's entry would also forestall Malawian families' urban domicile and keep down labor costs by eliminating the need for family wages.

We have also seen that up to the 1970s, with variations depending on the changing eco-political climate of the colony, the women experienced extreme vulnerability as policemen mounted inspections, detaining them at Mkumbura, Nyamapanda and Forbes border posts of Mt Darwin, Mtoko and Mutare. Along with cross border traders, cattle rustlers and other "miscreants", hundreds of women experienced brutal inspections which only intensified in Harare. Here, undocumented or un-accommodated wives, widows, divorcees and other singles continued to suffer random house to house and street inspections, arrests and involuntary repatriations. In stark contrast, all male migrants easily obtained workbooks and certificates in transit camps, at the border and in Harare to travel safely and quickly legalize their urban access and settlement.

The chapter has also shown that Malawian women were hardly passive victims trapped in a male biased migrant system. Demonstrating their own agency and also the inability of the state to take complete control of their mobility or of the terms of their settlement, they

actively struggled and adamantly resisted their systemic marginalization. They tested, challenged and fought against imposed gendered boundaries running all the way from border posts, and claimed their own place and right to live as families in Harare. Many entered through illegal entry points and followed hidden routes to reach the city. Others worked with knowledgeable men some of whom were illegal recruiters who had the skill to evade police patrols and bring them safely in the city. Many hid in male Railway cabins and thus avoided encounters with the police at major train stations. In Harare, legal wives opened their doors constituting safe houses for their illegal counterparts who lacked housing. Others established squatter settlements, or settled in male barracks and hostels despite restrictions. Together they developed information networks to learn about impending raids and patrols and thereby systematically evaded raids, arrests and involuntary repatriations. Still others periodically fled to nearby farms in the event of incessant urban raids, to return when conditions permitted. By the 1970s, women's "struggles for the city", ensured that their families came to dominate early African locations of Mbare, Rugare, Mufakose and Highfield where they established various socio-economic coping strategies to counter urban hardships, a subject explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: “This is my work, right here!” Malawian women’s economic survival in Harare, 1940-1980.

In Salisbury life was supposed to be easy, *haikona* /isn’t it? But then I saw with my own eyes that my husband and uncles were right. They had always said, “Rhodesia is not a land of easy *nsima*/ corn meal polenta and *nyama*/ meat.” When I came I thought- now I will live well, eat all the good food and dress in the best clothes that my husband could buy. But how, when his wages were so meager that I suffered just like those with no wage to speak of; *katsekera* /the municipality wanted rent, children had to eat and dress, all out of 3pounds and 10 [shillings]? As for *azungo* /whites, they had no work for us. We had to make ends meet for ourselves, we had to earn *ndarama*/ money or face *mavhuto*/serious poverty/trouble here.³¹⁸

I will tell you, this is how things were back then for all of us who had no husbands. I had no *nchito*/ jobs or a husband to give me his wages. For me to get a mere *shereni* [sic. shilling], I had to struggle... That’s why I saw that, if I had to eat a *fisi*/ hyena, I was better off eating a big one and started *nchito* here. As long as it gave me money, even a few shillings to buy food, then it was *nchito*.³¹⁹

In the preceding chapter, we have seen Malawian women’s struggles to enter and settle in the colonial capital, Harare. In this chapter, I continue their story by examining how the women survived economically amidst restrictive laws and strict surveillance. I have chosen the above excerpts from testimonies by a married woman, Tavhina Masongera and her single counterpart Angwaula Mlepa to illustrate three basic propositions. Firstly, I argue that although Malawian women expected to escape the dire socio-economic situation in Malawi by migrating to Harare, they only shifted into a new arena of hardships with which they had to cope. They fled their natal homes only to confront social and economic marginality as African women and foreigners. They migrated into a city officially designated as “white” space into which only necessary Africans, especially male workers, could legally enter. In this city, they had limited opportunity to obtain formal work. Indeed, unlike a few people of mixed race known as “coloreds” and

³¹⁸ Interview with Tavhina Masongera, Rugare, Harare, 28 December, 2008.

³¹⁹ Interview with Angwaula Mlepa, Mufakose, 6 February 2009. “If I had to eat a *fisi* I was better off eating a big one” Angwaula used this proverb to denote that if one has to do something daring or risky in a desperate situation, they had to do it with all their strength. *Fisi* is the Chewa word for Hyena which is regarded as an evil animal used by witches to travel at night, to kill people and consume human flesh. Like other predators, it is strictly not part of human diet. Angwaula’s usage denotes dire desperation.

indigenous Shona women who worked in limited jobs as nannies, Malawian women had no access to employment. In addition, their men earned relatively meager wages which mostly fell below the urban poverty datum line.³²⁰ Even though many employers offered food rations, these too were inadequate being primarily meant for a “single worker.” Both the wages and rations could not sustain urban family reproduction predicated as they were on a policy that constrained women and children’s settlement. While single women, divorcees and widows lacked even those meager wages and rations due to their lack of husbands and unequivocal illegality, wives whose husbands got sick, too elderly to work or lost their jobs faced the same plight.

Secondly, I argue that to counter such economic hardships and the resultant urban poverty Malawian women worked against gendered restrictions to establish various economic ventures. Drawing from a repertoire of long established peasant survival strategies based on their Malawian experiences³²¹, they launched urban farming, growing a wide variety of crops in different seasons in the vast tracts of unoccupied swamps and rain fed land surrounding Mbare, Highfield, Rugare and Mufakose. From these fields they produced enough to feed their families and to engage in cooked and fresh produce marketing which took them all the way to European suburbs. Their determination to survive in the city encouraged them to diversify their economic activities by investing in beer brewing in backyards, alleys, squatter settlements such as Kwamazai and at Pinto’s Quarry, as well as in other clandestine locations along the banks of Mukuvisi River. While urban farming and beer brewing constituted the backbone of their coping strategies, they also engaged in prostitution and *chimbado*, that is, illegal money lending where they offered credit on interest. From these trades, they raised enough food and income to support themselves and their families despite official efforts to stifle their ability to survive in the city.

³²⁰ NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957.

³²¹ I discuss the Malawian strategies in detail on p155-160 and also in chapter 2.

However, as I stress in this chapter, coping alone was not enough to ensure Malawian women economic survival, especially given colonial officials' determination to stifle their activities. The state and municipality regarded the ventures as degrading the city whose identity as the center of European development depended on its distinction from rural/ farm zones. They also viewed the ventures as encouraging the undesirable influx and domicile of Malawian women and families. To retain control, the authorities invoked inter-territorial and internal legislation, deploying policemen to raid fresh and cooked food markets, arrest traders who ventured into European areas, attack and arrest beer brewers, prostitutes and usurers sometimes for deportation. They even obliged such urban employers as the Rhodesia Railways who had their own workers' locations such as Rugare Township to implement urban by-laws and legislation, illegalizing the ventures. To survive in this context and sustain their ventures, they had to go beyond coping to fighting the system.

Even though they were powerless to directly confront urban authorities, they found subterranean ways to fight and resist efforts to cripple their economic lives. For instance, they maintained their urban farms by circumventing Urban Farming by-laws. They evaded state, municipal and company policemen by moving into their fields at dawn, cutting footpaths to start their work by moon and star light throughout the swamps and rain fed soils in the outskirts of their towns. They disguised their implements such as hoes in sacks or bags and sometimes hid them in reeds near their fields to avoid the prying eyes of spies and *mabrakwacha* [sic. black-watchers /policemen]. They returned home with their harvest only in the shadows of dusk. The women also traded in European suburbs and in the locations against Urban Marketing by-laws, hiding their wares in street drainages, in shrubs and bushes, or devising code words to alert each other in case of police patrols. In direct breach of the 1940s Harmful Liquors Act and the African Eating House by-laws, they maintained beer brewing ventures and sold Malawian meals at breweries set beyond the vision of the state. They even brewed and sometimes sold at night, hiding their brew in pits, posting sentries on tree tops, and paying them with food and beer for warning them of patrols. To sustain *chimbado*/usury, the women invoked

African beliefs in witch craft instilling superstitious fear so that clients would easily pay while even policemen would avoid confrontations. Prostitutes liaised with workers to move between their houses, hostels or barracks and with some policemen to avoid raids, arrests and repatriations. By sustaining the ventures popularly known as *mabhindauko emanyasarandi*/ Malawians' ventures, the women challenged the gendered economic and legal structures of the city. They transformed the urban landscape, exposing the inability of the authorities to fully determine the terms of their economic existence.

Migrant Women's Urban Economic Conditions

The difficulties which spurred Malawian women to establish their economic ventures in Harare were a direct result of the gendered restrictions and structures which marginalized them from the formal economy. Among the most common features reflecting the exclusion of women in Harare's earliest African locations was the male domination of housing and of the job market. As was the general policy, responsible authorities in Mbare, Mufakose, Rugare and Highfield, popularly referred to as "*Komboni dzemanyasarandi*" / Malawian people's compounds issued housing mainly in singles hostels and in the limited marriage quarters only in the names of legitimate male workers. Malawian men made up over 50% of the legitimate workers dominating the two storied singles hostels in Mbare, Highfield and Mufakose as well as the arc shaped asbestos dormitories in Rugare.³²² Even in the limited marriage quarters established in these locations by the 1950s, responsible authorities issued family housing in the names of male legitimate workers. Hence, although individual companies such as the Rhodesia Railways and National Foods Limited erected their own settlements, this male biased housing policy reflecting the colonial employment structure in urban areas persisted. Testifying to the prevalence of women's exclusion from wage work, women generally constituted 5% of urban workers.³²³ These were mainly indigenous colored or Shona women who worked in European households as nannies and 117 Shona women employed

³²²File S3287/85/A/76, Southern Rhodesian Government: Census of Population, 1948-1969- General annual Analysis of African population. See also Annual Analysis of African Employees by Country of origin.

³²³ File S3287/85/A/76, Annual Analysis of African Employees by country of origin.

by the British African Tobacco Company in 1956. The urban setting offered very little if any employment opportunities for Malawian women.³²⁴

By 1965, when the Zimbabwean economy could no longer absorb new workers as it entered a stressful period following the regime's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) and the imposition of economic sanctions by the commonwealth countries, women's chances of employment completely disappeared.³²⁵ As a result of the imposed sanctions;

The Rhodesian economy generally declined and urban industry was hard hit as unemployment rose by a phenomenal 10% in 1966...The major problem in the urban environs was that not only had industry's capacity to employ new workers dwindled but employers were forced to reduce costs by adopting the casual labor system, meaning that individual men spent less time at work on temporary contracts and more time as job seekers.³²⁶

Indeed, even the municipality was among the major employers who resorted to the casual labor system so as to avoid costs of maintaining permanent labor. In this environment, when men's employment opportunities were affected, any hopes that the urban sector would eventually open spaces for women's formal work further receded.³²⁷

Malawian women therefore entered an environment in which they virtually had no formal way to survive economically since major recruiters such as the municipality, the Railways, manufacturers and food processors as well as domestic employers did not consider them as potential workers. In fact except for a few local women who worked as nannies, Malawian "house boys" dominated the urban domestic sector where European

³²⁴Teresa Barnes, "*We women Worked so Hard*", *Gender, Urbanization and Social Reproduction in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1930-1956*, (Harare, Baobab Books c1999), p.37.

³²⁵For a discussion of the UDI and the effect of sanctions on the Rhodesian economy see Meredith Martin, *The Past is another country: Rhodesia, UDI to Zimbabwe*, (London, Pan Books, 1980), p98-107. Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, (Alfred Knopf, c1977), pp 385-411. Robert Sutcliffe, *Sanctions against Rhodesia: The economic background*, (London, Africa Bureau, 1966) p11.

³²⁶ Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, pp.395-396.

³²⁷NAZ, File S3287/85/A/76, Southern Rhodesian Government: Census of Population, 1948-1969.

employers considered them more reliable and morally inclined than women.³²⁸ Hence, for single women who needed to contribute to their own upkeep in the Malawian homes in which they took illegal refuge, the absence of employment opportunities represented a very serious challenge. Reflecting many single women's experiences, Pepulani Afiki who stayed in Rugare between 1950 and 1955 stresses the general sense of desperation and helplessness affecting single women.

When we were coming we even thought we might get jobs and earn money. Especially myself, I was sure that I would get something in Salisbury. I had gone to a mission school up to standard two, you see and I knew that I could learn any job. Could I have failed, even to understand instruction for making tea or cooking in some *mzungo*'s/ white man's house? No. Those Shona girls and the men from Nyasaland who were doing it, some had never seen an alphabet letter, they could not even write their own names, I tell you! But there was nothing for us, nothing at all. Only those Mavhitori (local Shona sub-ethnic group) got something in industries or European homes, yet those too were very few...I always felt like a burden because I wasn't contributing to my upkeep and I felt guilty even though the women I stayed with never complained. There was no hope of employment here, not for us foreigners and not for the single girls like us who were not wanted here. So you see, that's why we said we needed to do something even if it meant running away from the police every day. Like the others, the only way for me was to start my own work...³²⁹

In a way reminiscent of the trend in the Basotho city of Maseru and other parts of Africa, where "the lack of employment opportunities in the public and private sectors led women to work in the informal sector",³³⁰ Malawian women had to develop their own economic ventures.

Although both single and married women in different locations of the city lacked employment opportunities, single women's situation was apparently worsened by their illegality, which ensured their unequivocal exclusion from benefits such as food rations. In this system, individual companies in Harare offered food rations to their workers and

³²⁸Teresa Barnes, "We women worked so hard", pp35-40.

³²⁹Interview with Pepulani Afiki, Mbayani Township, 29 April 2009.

³³⁰Phororo, "The Economic Role of Gardens", pp100. Gbadesini, "Farming in the urban environment", pp.105. Maxwell and Samuel Zziwa, *Urban Farming in Africa*. Paul Memon, "Urban agriculture in Kenya", pp.25.

sometimes to documented wives to supplement men's wages. In Rugare and Mufakose-Mhizhi, married women testified to have received weekly rations to supplement husbands' wages yet such privileges did not extend to undocumented wives and single women. Even so, the few eligible wives generally lamented the fact that the rations system did not cater for their children. As the 1957 Urban African Affairs Commission noted, "combined, wives and husbands' rations cannot feed the couple not to mention the children through the week, yet husbands' wages rarely make up for this anomaly".³³¹ Indeed, despite being considered the best employer and most generous company, the Rhodesia Railways rations system as seen through the eyes of Tavhina Masongera left a lot to be desired.

In those days I wondered how those *azungos* thought. I myself thought they were a funny people indeed or they had no understanding at all for our situation or maybe, they were just hard hearted *mfiti*. It was even like they were children of one mother. How could they give food to the men and his wife and yet refuse to think of their children? That was happening everywhere in the city even in Harari (Mbare) where our friends' men were working for the municipality and other employers! They were just like us whose *azungo* were the Railways. That's why everyone complained in the same way, everyone said, "why not just add more for the children?" It was like this, ours gave the man his 2kg maize meal measure, two cups of sugar, salt, a few strips of fresh meat and cabbages each week and also the wife hers. But even when we put them together they would not last four days, because we had children to feed three times a day. Those *mfiti*!³³²

To make matters worse, in the 1950s, while a few husbands like Barnet Mlewa earned 10 pounds as a foreman at the Rhodesia Railways, "most urban workers received 1pound 10 shillings per month when they needed between 7pounds 7s 4d and 12 pounds to support families."³³³ At this time, such wages did not reflect the general 140 percent rise in the

³³¹ NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957.

³³² Interview with Tavhina Masongera.

³³³ NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957. Migrant workbook of Barnet Mlewa Nyamazoma village in Mlanje, 1949-1964. Barnet Mlewa resides in the Railway area of Rugare and has kept his work book from 1949. Barnet's work book is very useful in tracing class differences because he was a foreman and earned higher than prevailing wages. File NAZ, S482/22/47-48, Migrant Workers Act of 1948, In this file the Migrant Work book for Lingisitonya Chiwamba of Chintenje District in Malawi is the only one available and shows wage entries from 1948 to 1964.

urban cost of living.³³⁴ Many African families also had to pay rent of between 2shillings 5d and 5shillings to municipalities and their employers, just as food prices doubled to compound the difficulties associated with inadequate rations.³³⁵ This urban condition was further reflected in the 75% malnutrition rates in 1957.³³⁶ In its survey of the deterioration of urban African conditions in Harare going back to 1950, the 1957 the Urban African Affairs Commission concluded;

As it is, if the single native man can barely sustain himself with earnings from his work, it is puzzling to regard how employers seem to expect those with wives and children to fare on the same wage. The prices of basic commodities like sugar, maize meal, milk, soap, clothing and blankets have risen by more than double their 1950 level. The men's wages must reflect this rising cost of living. A single family consisting of mother, father and at least three children would require 12 pounds 6s 5d to survive each month yet most men earn 1 to 3pounds 10s. Besides the usual food and clothing they must purchase, they must also pay rates for accommodation, health and children's schooling while many have extended family commitments...³³⁷

As occurred among migrant women in urban Zambia, Ghana or Kenya who adopted marketing and prostitution to counter urban hardships, the grim economic environment in colonial Harare drew Malawian women into various economic ventures.³³⁸ Without access to employment, they needed alternative sources of income to ensure survival and the urban social reproduction of their families. Many such women adopted various strategies learnt from their peasant experiences to supplement poor rations and men's wages. Remembering their experiences in the 1950s and early 1960s Enifa Njewa explains;

³³⁴ NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957.

³³⁵ NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957. For a general picture of urban African conditions in this period, see also Teresa Barnes, "*We women Worked so hard*".

³³⁶ NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957.

³³⁷ NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957.

³³⁸ Karen Tranberg Hansen, "The urban Informal Sector as a Developmental Issue: Poor Women and Work in Lusaka, Zambia" Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Urban Anthropology*, no.2, (Summer, 1980), pp.199-221. Sexuality and Prostitution among the Akan in the Gold Coast, 1650-1950", in *Past and Present*, no. 156, (August 1997), pp.144-173. Deborah, "Work and autonomy: Women in Accra", in *American Ethnologist*, vol.5, no. 4, (November, 1978), pp.770-785. White, *The Comforts of Home*."

We were all in the same situation because who wanted to employ any of us? They said *manyasarandi* women are dirty and cannot keep a baby safe even for a while, that's what locals said and they heard it from *azungu* where some of them worked. Some said *manyasarandi* women do not take care of their own homes, how can they care for any *mzungu's* home? They said a lot of lies because *wamatinyozaka* (they looked down on us), ha-a, they talked a lot. So you see, if you had expected that your man would have lots of money or you might even work for *mzungu* and buy food for the children, you learned that there was nothing like that! We were hungry here even when National Foods gave me 2kg maize meal and another to my husband for *nsima*, three to four strips of fresh meat each and some vegetables. National Foods was most stingy because it gave rations every two weeks instead of every week. So you now see why I decided that either I find some way to survive or go back home? Had I not started my own work like my friends, I would have gone back to struggle in my own mother's household. It was not easy especially when you knew that the same nagging hunger was chewing up your children. You already knew that your man's wages would only cover half of your monthly needs and the rations were as good as nothing. Ha-a, *tizaona mavhuto mwananga mumene muno ntai zatazi* (we faced poverty here my child in those days) and especially us *alendo/* migrants whose homes were too far away, we could not escape to reserves like local women.³³⁹

Notwithstanding these hardships, from the 1960s new women entered the urban areas following the introduction of measures allowing married women to migrate under Kamuzu Banda who took over from the colonial regime. By 1973, despite their illegality in Zimbabwe, the new government permitted even single women to travel through safe routes cutting through Zambia and Botswana to Harare.³⁴⁰ In this period however, Zimbabwe's economy declined. Even though individual companies made their own decisions for or against foreign labor stabilization in tandem with municipal and state legislation, many also sought to cut down costs of labor. As we have already seen, the casual labor system leading to a 10 percent decline in real employment in the colony emerged as one cost minimizing strategy among urban employers from the 1960s onwards.³⁴¹ The imposition of sanctions by European countries against the Smith regime's UDI sharpened the imperative to cut costs of labor as production levels dropped

³³⁹Interview with Enifa Njewa, Mufakose, 10 February, 2009.

³⁴⁰MA,Pam1,127, Press release No. 1215/64, 26 July, 1964, Speeches of His Excellency, the President Ngwazi Kamuzu Banda in Blantyre, 16 July 1973.

³⁴¹Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, p.394. Robert Sutcliffe, *Sanctions against Rhodesia: The economic background*, (London, Africa Bureau, 1966) p11.

in the face of dwindling export markets. In addition, between 1966 and 1979, many investors fled just as industrialists closed down in the face of the escalating liberation war. In general, “the Rhodesian economy was in a state of depression at this time”³⁴² and this inevitably affected vulnerable groups such as foreign African families and illegal women. Malawian wives were hardest hit since concomitant with the failure to raise their husbands’ wages to meet the rising cost of living urban employers also withdrew food rations.³⁴³ Starting in the mid-1960s with smaller employers such as Pinto’s Quarry, Gutenberg and Sons and Messrs van Den Berg and Black’s limited for instance, by 1970 even major employers of Malawians had withdrawn food rations.³⁴⁴ In this situation, the women were under the worst pressure to find alternative means of survival.³⁴⁵ As Alice Gomeza explains;

It happened the year I gave birth to my fifth son (1965), so I remember it very well. I thought that *azungu* saw that more of us were following husbands now and there were more mouths to feed especially when they had already been so stingy. So when they told our husbands, “no more rations, only wages”, we waited saying, “they will give us a good increase in wages” yet they did not give us much money still and we realized that we were now in big trouble because though we used to complain about how little the rations were, it was better to have little than nothing, you see? This time no one was safe and many no longer wanted to just sit and be urban women who waited for husbands’ wages. That is when I myself joined the women doing our works here. They were our works because local women frequently went back to farm in the reserves and came back for short periods after harvest and they even called our works *mabhindauko emanyasarande, hinde-e* (Malawian women’s economic activities, yes) because it was us who worked here to survive...³⁴⁶

Women in the Railway location of Rugare reiterated Alice’s statement that between 1965 and 1979 as their economic conditions changed dramatically, most women joined

³⁴²Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia* p. 395.

³⁴³All urban interviewees have reiterated the withdrawal of food rations in between 1960 and 1965. This seems to have been a significant landmark in their memories of the era and coincides with the changes in settler political economy under UDI and the Western sanctions.

³⁴⁴Information of changes in food ration commitments by different Companies was obtained from data compiled from oral interviews whereby informants explained the years when the individual companies they or their husbands’ worked for stopped food rations.

³⁴⁵MA, Pam 1,127, “The Road to Independence-Text of Speeches by his Excellency, Kamuzu Banda, 1964-1972”.

³⁴⁶ Interview with Alice Gomeza, Rugare, 4 November 2008.

mabhidhauko emanyasarandi. By operating as urban farmers, fresh produce marketers and beer brewers, for example, women acknowledged the significance of *mabhindaauko* in countering hunger in their households. As Eninfa Njewa sums it all up;

We women from Nyasaland were the ones who realized the wealth in the surrounding *shatini/* bush and also brought a new kind of beer, *kachasu*. Mazezuru only knew how to make *mase/* opaque beer but they knew us for making the most potent clear beer. We were also the ones who started running with wares on the streets here and beyond. We also had *chimbado/* usury here and it was profitable. When you face hunger in your household, that's what drove you on. We had no reserves to go and farm and bring in maize for *nsima* or goat meat for *ndiwo/* relish like the Shona women. So we said, "*nchito iripo!*" ("let's work!") Then we started our work here all because we had to bring *nsima* and *ndiwo* to our children. We had to do something to help the men, do you see?³⁴⁷

Up to the 1970s, doing something to socially reproduce their families involved adapting survival strategies from their Malawian peasant experiences to their Zimbabwean urban lives. It is to their creative adaptation and establishment of such economic activities popularly known as *mabhidhauko emanyasarandi* that we must now turn.

Mabhindaauko Emanyasarandi in Harare

From the Second World War era, the women who entered colonial Zimbabwe's urban areas from Malawi established various economic activities as part of their struggles to survive in the city. The few wives who legally settled in Harare led the way as they adapted peasant coping mechanisms and economic practices in order to shape the urban environment to their best advantage. Demarcating their own economic spaces in the city, they launched gardens in the swampy outskirts around African locations of Mufakose, Rugare, Highfield and Mbare. In efforts to supplement family food supplies, they claimed *madimba* (swamp gardens) to farm in the dry season and grow *chimanga* (maize), (*mawungu*) pumpkins, *chinangwa* (cassava), *mbatata* (sweet potatoes), *mnzimbe* (sugar cane), *mpunga* (rice) and different types of beans. They devised methods to grow rice successfully by selecting rich water logged swamps or fertile lands along the banks of

³⁴⁷ Interview with Enifa Njewa, 10 February 2009.

Mukuvisi River which cut across the African locations. Others transported water from the river through trenches to their rice paddies or sunk wells to water the crops. Determined to ensure a better life for their children, they utilized the unoccupied swamps and surrounding grasslands laying the initial foundations of a new culture of urban cultivation which has been closely associated with Malawian migrants to this day.³⁴⁸

Hence, as they had done in Malawi between May and October, women devoted time to their urban fields. From September to October each family harvested between twelve and twenty 50 kilogram bags of corn, six to eight bags of rice and different bean crops from *madimba*. They had daily supplies of cassava which unlike other crops, they left in *madimba* to last through the rainy season because their experience had taught them that their type of cassava could not be harvested for storage since it became fatally poisonous if not cooked overnight.³⁴⁹ As Eneresi Paliza recalls, although some Malawian women initially thought agriculture was not for the city, the urban situation compelled many to adopt this mode of survival.³⁵⁰ Indeed, this was not unique to Malawian women in Harare given that in West Africa as in parts of Southern Africa rural to urban migrants launched urban farming in the shanty towns to counter the effects of their lack of employment.³⁵¹ What was unique about Malawian women urban farming is that where women in other regions mainly opened such farms in the post-colonial era, Malawian women commenced urban farming in an era when colonial obsession with social and spatial engineering made it very risk for urban Africans. Many Malawian women had already started in the 1940s,

³⁴⁸The swamps and dry lands are still cultivated by first generation migrant women, their children or grandchildren to who the unofficial usufruct rights on the fields have been handed down. Where additional sections of the location have been made such as in Highfield and where industry has taken over part of the once vacant land, cultivators still make use of the remaining wastelands characterizing urban locations to date. Even today, these are *minda yemanyasarand* (fields of Malawians), although some local people now join urban cultivators. In recent years cases of fights for urban land due to encroachment on other holders' fields demonstrate how important and normal this aspect of urban survival became.

³⁴⁹Interview with Alice Gomeza, Rugare.

³⁵⁰Interview with Eneresi Paliza, Highfield, 2 September 2008.

³⁵¹Phororo, "The Economic Role of Gardedns", p100. Gbadesini, "Farming in the urban environment", pp.105. Maxwell and Samuel Zziwa, *Urban Farming in Africa*. Paul Memon, "Urban agriculture in Kenya", pp.25.

but others like Eneresi, who sometimes went to work with the help of her small children, joined in urban cultivation in 1951. Referring to the 1950s she states;

In those days, Highfield was made up of men's hostels and a few married people's sections but the settlement was not as large as you see it now and it was surrounded by a *shatini* (bush) parts of which were water logged. We women saw that this was very good for *madimba* and would not need any manure. So we encouraged each other saying, "Do you see this land for *madimba*, why should we complain of hunger? We have this *mavhuto* (suffering), so why not make gardens here?" There was plenty of water even far from the river... We agreed that instead of moaning about *mavhuto*, we had to work for our children. We started at 4 or 5am each day and stopped at dusk, farming *ntedza* (peanuts), *chimanga*, *mbatata*, *chinangwa*, *mzimbe* and *mpunga*. We were few at first but many more joined us with time and we all worked in *madimba* there, that's when local people started saying *minda yemanyasarande* (Nyasa people's fields).³⁵²

In this period, working in the *shatini* opened new possibilities for undocumented women and singles who sought to remain hidden from the gaze of the state. Single and hence illegal, such women left their homes of refuge and illegal settlements such as Kwamazai and Pinto's Quarry at the break of dawn to both earn their living and escape constant police harassment.³⁵³ Their lack of employment and husbands on whom to depend made it even more imperative for them to join farming activities just as the women in whose households they resided.³⁵⁴ Thus, urban swamp and riverside gardening proved to be highly rewarding work for both married and single women who met in their fields and shared seeds, ideas and moral support. Except for a few such as mother of Doreen and mother of Christmas, a Manyika and Zezuru woman, local women detested urban agricultural activities arguing that "urban gardens are for *manyasarande* with no rural homes to go back and farm."³⁵⁵ They returned to rural areas every rainy season to cultivate their lands and harvest while urban based migrant women brought their village skills into the urban setting and derived great benefits from them. As Eneresi Paliza observes;

³⁵² Interview with Eneresi Paliza.

³⁵³ Interview with Angwaula Mlepa. Interview with Maud Mapundu, Mbare, 1 August 2008.

³⁵⁴ Interview with Mbombe Maliki, Rugare, 18 December 2008.

³⁵⁵ Interview with Esteri Banda, Rugare, 7 December 2008.

Once we begun we always had food in the house. We cooked *chinangwa*, *mbatata*, green *chimanga* from August and we had dried roasted *chimanga* from September and made *ufa* (corn flour) for *nsima*. For relish we had pumpkin and cassava leaves which we cooked with *sinjiro* (butter made from unroasted peanuts). We even sold some and as long as we fed our families we ignored *mazezuru*'s (local people) derisive taunts. So you see, no longer did we wait impatiently for rations or struggle to get to the next ration and anyway they finally stopped our rations and we only worked harder!³⁵⁶

By the 1970s women worked harder, taking on more rain fed fields in the outskirts and open lands around their Townships. Whereas Malawian women had begun by focusing on *madimba*, taking on *mpahla* (rain fed fields) allowed them to fully utilize the land resources around them. They thus diversified and expanded their activities by claiming *madimba* in previously unclaimed swampy grasslands for the dry season and *mpahla* (rain season fields), turning surrounding lands into a continuous panorama of different crops. In the Railway location of Rugare, Malawian women claimed the wide expanse of richly fertile land surrounding the railways for rain fed fields just as individual cultivators occupied the whole swamp land to the North through which Mukuvisi River passed. In Highfield, they occupied the whole land where industries such as the Juice producing factory, Schwepps, Dunlop and PG Timbers and residential sections such as Jerusalem, Western Triangle and New Canaan now stand, transforming the vacant dry lands into rainy season fields. In Mufakose, migrant women also scrambled for land in the surrounding wastelands, going as further afield as the land near Faison's area and present day Marimba Park. They skillfully utilized their peasant skills to select suitable land for different agricultural seasons and crops, cultivating swamp lands from May for harvesting in September and October. In this way they avoided water logging with the onset of the rainy season by November. On the other hand, *mpahla* was for rainy season production only. Skillfully balancing the rainy and dry seasons in land selection and usage, they provided vegetables, green and dried maize, rice, peanuts, cassava, beans, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, sugar cane and bananas for their families throughout the year. As rain season farming rose in importance and more women scrambled for land, by the

³⁵⁶ Eneresi Paliza.

1970s, even *mpahla* land near the locations became scarce forcing many to look further afield to the land now occupied by new parts of Kambuzuma location which was also near Faison's plot.³⁵⁷ Remembering their scramble for land Raiza Chimwara states;

It was time for *mabhindauko* everywhere, in Mbare, Mufakose, Highfield and even here in Rugare, we knew how to do *mabhidhauko*. Everyone knew that farming was the head of all *mabhindauko* and no one but us *manyasarande* dared to claim land around these parts. It was vacant land and we had worked the land in Nyasaland since we were girls...So here we became serious with work because we wanted to bring *nsima* and *ndiwo* to our children. We bought *makasu* (hoes) from local traders who came from the reserves here and began to take more open lands. In the 1960s, some women still thought this was not right for city life. But with the hunger, many wanted *madimba* and *mpahla* too so that in the 1970s we were scrambling for them. It was those who went first who got most and the best...At that time, we harvested from *madimba* from August and from *mpahla* from April ...³⁵⁸

In their expansion of agrarian activities they derived advantage from the installation of grinding mills by European millers within walking distance from the locations, that is, at Faison's and Baxter's in 1970.³⁵⁹ Whereas women had purchased mortars and pestles to pound maize and other products; and winnowing baskets known as *lichelo* for manual processing from African traders who came from reserves, no longer did they need to perform the cumbersome processing tasks. It cost less than a dollar to grind a bag of maize into *ufa* for *nsima* at Faison's or Baxter's in 1974.³⁶⁰

To earn income to support themselves and their children, Malawian women also marketed surplus maize, pumpkins, pumpkin and cassava leaves, beans and other products from *madimba* on street corners in Rugare, Highfield, Mbare and Mufakose locations. Since the only African market was based in Mbare, up to the 1970 their activities benefited from the absence of large sources of supplies for the growing urban population. Married women particularly worked in streets or from house to house with baskets full of products. However such marketing strategies were more difficult for

³⁵⁷ Eneresi Paliza. Alice Gomeza.

³⁵⁸ Interview with Raiza Chimwara, Rugare, 9 December, 2008.

³⁵⁹ Esteri Banda. Eneresi Paliza.

³⁶⁰ Alice Gomeza.

singles given their illegal status. As Angwaula Mlepa stressed, as a single and hence illegal woman, she spread the word and invited prospective buyers to *madimba* where she marketed her wares while others traded in the illegal settlement, Kwamazai, on the outskirts of Mufakose.³⁶¹ It was partly in reference to these activities that the municipality of Harare stressed that these illegal settlements were “a hub for all miscreants, illegal natives and traders.”³⁶² The industrial sites located less than 5km from the locations, were also relatively safe marketing spaces for single marketers. To begin work under cover of darkness, the women started preparations for marketing at dawn. As Angwaula Mlepa explains;

You all went out at dawn, like thieves and in moon light, you dug out cassava and sweet potatoes, washed them, collected maize and lit cooking fires. You then left as the sun started to rise and went to the industries to be there by tea time with baskets of wares for sale to workers because at that time, *katsekera's* and even *dzviti's* police would rarely be at the industrial sites because they will be moving in the locations...In the 1950s, we sold a cob of corn for 1shilling, three big cassava or sweet potatoes cost 2shillings...We made between 1 and 2pounds on good days and were far better off than the workers we sold to.³⁶³

To obtain such high profits, others dared to walk further into the European suburbs such as Melboreign, Mt Pleasant and Waterfalls among others where they traded. Apparently, Malawian women were among the “female traders who illegally display an endless variety of fresh produce at shopping centers in the European residential areas”, as the Superintendent of Harare noted in 1964.³⁶⁴ As he stresses;

I am concerned that illegal native marketers are now trespassing into European suburbs and would like to urge that our European residents must not in any way encourage such activities...At first I received complaints against these women from as far as Melboreign but now it seems that the very same residents now relish the fact that they bring to them the best fresh produce. I think most of them come from Harari and Highfield Village Settlement... My suggestion is that,

³⁶¹ Angwaula Mlepa.

³⁶² HCA, File RHB/17/1, Illegal settlement: Squatters, vagrants and alien Africans 1949-79.

³⁶³ Angwaula Mlepa.

³⁶⁴ HCA, File RHB/238/15/49-77: Native Markets and Illegal Vending in Salisbury's locations; Chief Superintendent to Director of African Services, Salisbury, 18 May, 1964

heretofore we must dispatch more police patrols to curb this activity before it becomes rooted among native women and the Europeans alike.³⁶⁵

Those women who chose to walk all the way to European suburbs in contravention of segregation laws found the European market most lucrative. Many migrant women that I spoke to thus confirmed the above concerns by the municipal authorities as they claimed, like Eneresi Paliza that;

We got the best prices from the Europeans for our wares. They wanted good produce and we took the best for them because they had more money and were willing to pay. So we just asked for higher prices. I mean, until the 1960s, when trading in the location a cob of fresh maize cost 1 to 3 shillings but in European areas it was 5 to 7 shillings. They liked to know that we had taken it straight from the gardens the very same day. You could make 10 pounds in one day there. So you see, that's how we were surviving, we sold in the locations but went into the suburbs too. Even though we sometimes encountered the police, this did not happen too frequently to discourage us and anyway we did not go there every day. You know, those European were an organized people and if they liked what you brought they all said, "when can you bring me more" and you just gave them the same day, say Tuesday or Wednesday. Or you yourself asked "when can I bring more" and they said this or that day and you tried to coordinate like that. Even when the police caught you on such days you said, I have been sent to get these by baas so and so and they would easily let you go. That's how we began to see a change in our lives and there was always food in the house and meat too because we were working.³⁶⁶

Despite the fact that they had limited legal markets, apart from the main *musika* at Mbare and a few others constructed in each location from 1970, street vending within the Townships and in European suburbs was therefore among the most important aspects of *mabhidhauko emanyasarandi*.

In addition, like other urban migrant women on the Rand, in urban Zambia, Belgian Congo and Nairobi, who adapted beer brewing as one of the most popular modes of survival, Malawian women also launched beer brewing ventures in Harare.³⁶⁷ To these

³⁶⁵Chief Superintendent to Director of African Services, Salisbury, 18 May, 1964.

³⁶⁶Eneresi Paliza.

³⁶⁷Janet. M. Bujra, "Women Entrepreneurs of Early Nairobi" in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, (1975), pp. 213-234. George Chauncey, "The Locus of Reproduction: Women's Labor in the

women, beer brewing was amongst the fastest ways to improve family lives. Women invested their time in gathering firewood from surrounding woodlands and nearby hills to brew beer in the locations. Others worked in illegal spaces such as Pinto's Quarry and Kwamazai, especially before their demolition in the early 1960s.³⁶⁸ In 1949, Mary Kadamika started a flourishing brewery in Kwamazai where she joined brewers of *chiseven days* and *chikokiyana* using water, corn meal and sorghum fermenting powder.³⁶⁹ Since *chiseven days* took a whole week to mature, they started brewing on Sundays so that they had supplies beginning the next Saturday. However, in order to have daily supplies, they adapted another common brand of opaque beer called *chikokiyana* to their entrepreneurial needs. *Chikokiyana* only took a day to mature.³⁷⁰ Hence, during the week, *chikokiyana* which women sold more cheaply kept them in business. While *chiseven days* cost 10 shillings a *jomupi* (large cup) between 1940 and 1949, *chikokiyana* was only 5 shillings.³⁷¹ By 1956, the price of *chiseven days* increased to 12 shillings a *jomupi* and *chikokiyana* remained at 5 shillings.³⁷² By the 1970s, a *jomupi* of *chiseven days* could fetch up to a dollar as *chikokiyana* fetched half the price. As Mary Kadamika explained, over the weekends when *chiseven days* was on sale, those who could not afford it purchased the daily brew, *chikokiyana*.³⁷³

Other women preferred to adapt the most potent uniquely Malawian brew to their urban activities to get a competitive advantage over local brewers and municipal beer-gardens in the locations. Indeed, *chiseven days* and *chikokiyana* were brands which local women and some men also brewed but only Malawian women had the skills required to make *kachasu*, a clear beer which they made from boiling precise amounts of fermented fruits,

Zambian Copperbelt 1927-1953", in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.7, no.2, (1981), pp. 135-164. Nancy Rose Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumbura's Foyer Social, 1946-1960", in *Signs*, vol. 15, no.3, (1990), pp.447-474. Philip Bonner, "African urbanization on the Rand between the 1930s and 1960s: Its social character and Political consequences", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21, 1, (1995), p.128.

³⁶⁸ HCA, File RHB/17/1, Illegal settlement: Squatters, vagrants and alien Africans 1949-79.

³⁶⁹ Mary Kadamika

³⁷⁰ Mary Kadamika.

³⁷¹ Mary Kadamika.

³⁷² Alice Mbalami Kutengo, Highfield, 8 September 2008. Maud Mapundu.

³⁷³ Mary Kadamika.

sugar and yeast or any other fermenting agent. One needed large supplies of firewood, a large drum in which to pour water and add carefully selected ingredients before tightly sealing the opening with a plastic. They made a small hole on the side of the drum and sealed a thin pipe through it to bring steam and condense it into another drum located a distance from the slow burning fire. This was the potent clear beer which many consumers preferred since it was stronger than *chiseven days* or *chikokiyana*. Since it was a slow brew which was highly time, labor and resource consuming, it cost between 20 and 25 shillings a large cup between 1956 and 1960 and about 2 dollars in the 1970s.³⁷⁴ As Alice Kutengo states;

Customers drank outside our homes or in them since until the late 1940s beer gardens were in central Salisbury and were for Europeans. My *kachasu* was good because I used enough *masau* (a sour local fruit) and vegetables. Many customers brought containers to buy at 20 shillings in the 1950s and up to 2 dollars a *jomupi* by the 1970s. That is how we made it possible to live and educate all the children. Mind you, I had five children to feed already in the 1960s and eight altogether by the 1970s. Me and my husband we said we must clothe and educate each and every one of them, so I worked like that to help the family. I sold everything from the backyard shade my husband built, that's why Alice Mbalami Kutengo's was a popular place throughout Highfield for all Manyasarande and some local men too!³⁷⁵

By selling "everything" Alice meant Malawian dishes of dried *nsomba* and *chinangwa* (fish and cassava), pumpkin and cassava leaves, dried meat in *sinjiro*, and fermented corn meal polenta which she sold in her "*candina*" (sic canteen) along with the beer. It was because few Malawian women combined beer brewing and the canteen business that Alice was very popular in Highfields.³⁷⁶ While she made up to 8 pounds on good weeks in the 1950s, by the 1960s she made about 10 pounds weekly and by 1970 she earned 50 Rhodesian dollars or more each month. Since this was among the most lucrative businesses, those who distinguished themselves by brewing the Malawian brand, *kachasu*

³⁷⁴ Alice Mbalami Kutengo.

³⁷⁵ Alice Mbalami Kutengo.

³⁷⁶ Alice Mbalami Kutengo.

and food rose in class terms as they could afford education, clothes, shoes and food for themselves and their families.³⁷⁷

Interestingly, in 1956 the municipal authorities in Harare stressed that beer brewing was intricately linked with other urban ills such as illegal settlements and prostitution. As the Superintendent of Mbare location observed;

As we work on eradicating illegal settlements in our city, it helps to bear in mind that they are not only sprouting due to housing inadequacies in our African locations. If Pinto's Quarry is anything to go by, it has been reported to me that even legally settled women move from the location to join illegal women so that they can brew and sell liquor to hordes of drunkards including prostitutes who have settled there.³⁷⁸

That some Malawian women found prostitution a necessary engagement is not surprising considering the already noted lack of employment opportunities for single women whose illegality also made marketing highly risky. Indeed, young women, divorcees and single mothers who took refuge in senior women's homes such as Tavhina Masongera and Enifa Njewa's practiced prostitution to contribute to their own upkeep and assuage feelings of helplessness in the city.³⁷⁹ Many practiced a more respectable kind of prostitution in senior women's homes and the men sometimes took them to their homes for days or weeks, given the absence of wives who failed to adjust to life in Harare. Replicating the case of migrant women in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, some single Malawian women later settled down, many initially made a living from the payments for sexual services by single or married men.³⁸⁰ Capturing the significance of prostitution as an economic activity among them, Angwaula Mlepa explains;

Really, I do not take much pride in that business and even my grandchildren know that I do not wish anyone's child to find themselves in the same situation...We had no money and lived in other kind women's homes. We needed clothes, food and blankets of course and the child I left with my mother needed support. Where

³⁷⁷ Alice Mbalami Kutengo.

³⁷⁸ HCA, File RHB/12(0)40/49-72, African Beer-Halls, Beer sales, Management and Legislation, 1949-1972. "Note on Illegal Brewing in the locations", Superintendent to Director of Community Services, 4 February 1956.

³⁷⁹ Tavhina Masongera. Enifa Njewa.

³⁸⁰ Mbombe Maliki. Angwaula Mlepa. See Luise White, *The Comforts of Home*.

would a *munyasarandi* woman find money if she did not have a husband to give her from his wages? Taking men in was a matter of serious *mavhuto* (suffering). It was not about loose morals or lack of self-respect. Trading was good but not with the police looking for you all the time. To get even a *shereni* to survive, you suffered and that's what we were doing in that business, we were suffering because, any men who had money could just lay his hands on you and get away with it. You wanted the money and it was good money, sometimes 20shillings from one customer and in the 1970s 2 dollars for just an encounter. So no matter how much you detested being handled by strangers you wanted *ndarama*, you see, life was expensive here and so many good women entertained men because they had the money...Once I met the one who cared enough for me I said, *magwira nchito Mulungu* (thank you God) and moved out of that business for good!³⁸¹

Nevertheless, these women were able to bring food into their homes of refuge and to remit money to Malawi. Even those who carried out affairs in venues such as Kwamazai and Pinto's Quarry; in beer brewing arenas or surrounding bushes and hostels worked for a living. Despite stigmatization from local and fellow Malawian women who saw them as potential threats, Enifa Njewa insisted that "these prostitutes were women just like us. Their position was only worse if you consider that they were so alone and hence were most desperate."³⁸² It is apparent that senior women risked providing illegal accommodation for them against municipal regulations because they brought food, money and clothing and "could be relied upon if something requiring quick money happened in the house."³⁸³ In any case, prostitutes "always dressed respectably", although some respectable wives such as Kefirida Yoramu of Mufakose recalls how '*watipatsa manyazi*', that is, 'they humiliated us.'³⁸⁴ By exchanging sexual favors for money, prostitutes threatened the essence of Malawian womanhood which was based on "*mwambo waulemu*" translated "laws of moral respectability."³⁸⁵ As late as 1964, a Malawian correspondent to the African weekly wrote in an editorial entitled *Ulemu uli woperewera kwaakazi a Nyasarandi* (respectability has been eroded among Nyasa women) boldly stating;

³⁸¹ Angwaula Mlepa.

³⁸² Enifa Njewa.

³⁸³ Enifa Njewa.

³⁸⁴ Interview with Kefirida Yoramu, Mufakose, 5 January 2009.

³⁸⁵ Kefirida Yoramu.

Yes, those Nyasa women who come down here illegally are very strong. But it is disheartening to see how most of them make a living by prostitution. They can afford the best clothes such that you would never know if you were talking to *mahure* (prostitutes) by just looking at them. It is well that unattached girls and women should all stay back in the villages or else, seeing how well these shameful ones are doing; our wives might become prostitutes too. I am concerned that we are having more and more of such women these days and respect is being eroded among all women from Nyasaland.³⁸⁶

As long as their urban employment opportunities remained limited, prostitution among Malawian women continued to raise concern despite being one of the ways in which some established themselves in the city, launching other enterprises such as *chimbado*.

Chimbado was a Malawian women's venture which seems to have no parallel in African colonial history so far. In this trade, starting in the 1940s as individuals and by the 1960s as groups, Malawian women advanced interest loans to local and Malawian people given the inadequacy of wages in colonial Zimbabwe. Urban authorities classified *chimbado* among "increasing illegal activities among women who swindle poor men of their money by the most underhand means."³⁸⁷ However, though mine and farm employers advanced loans to their workers to tie them to their jobs, *chimbado* was important in urban areas because employers did not have similar credit facilities. In an environment in which the cost of living outstripped men's wages; unemployment levels were at 10% in the 1960s and food rations had been cut off, men and women needed such borrowing services.³⁸⁸ In Rugare, Highfield, Mbare and Mufakose in the 1950s, individual lenders emerged from among brewers, marketers, prostitutes and urban gardeners. In a typical example, in 1954 Estere Banda put her savings from fresh produce marketing into money lending. As she explains;

When you wanted to start you did so slowly to see if it would be alright. So first I loaned a shilling to my own husband who wanted it for something. He agreed to pay me back with 1pence on top. Some had different systems at the time. They wanted half to half, you know, half a shilling interest if you borrow a shilling. For

³⁸⁶ The African Weekly, 14th August 1964.

³⁸⁷ The African Weekly, 28 September, 1953.

³⁸⁸ Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, p.394.

me, my husband then began to bring his friends too. They had to pay at the end of the month and they always needed more loans and paid up on time to be on my good side.³⁸⁹

In explaining her own experience with *chimbado*, Angwaula Mlepa captures the reasoning behind many women's entry into this typical Malawian women's money trade. Beer brewers, marketers and prostitutes all noticed that they could continue their various trades while investing and earning more from *chimbado*. Angwaula states;

When I began *chimbado* it was already 1966 or 1967. At that time many women were doing it, they would start small but grow. They were even coming together in groups now to make more money. But I wanted to start alone and when I did I realized that I could survive from this. This was a risky business though because some people would refuse to pay. I was good for it because I was already tough since I learnt to defend my interests both with my voice and hands having been beaten, or denied payment in that other business (prostitution).³⁹⁰

While Angwaula states that her lending became more secure after she joined a group in 1968, her experiences reveal the risky measures that women adopted to evade destitution even in the 1970s.³⁹¹ Apart from the general risks, women's establishment of *mabhindauko* was not a simple matter given the need to navigate the highly repressive urban authorities even in Company locations such as Rugare. At this point, it is appropriate to shift our focus to their struggles against such authorities.

Urban Authorities against Mabhindauko

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the promulgation and enforcement of African Administration policies in urban areas was a joint act of the state, municipalities and other urban authorities. Between 1940 and 1980, Malawian women had to contend with the state and municipal authorities' attitudes against their various economic activities. While the state's attitude can be seen in its passage of laws such as the Vagrancy and the

³⁸⁹ Estere Banda.

³⁹⁰ Angwaula Mlepa.

³⁹¹ Angwaula Mlepa.

Law and Order Maintenance as well as the Harmful Liquors Act, the municipality added a litany of urban by laws against women's economic ventures. It appointed an army of policemen popularly called *katsekeras*' police boys to work in cooperation with state policemen under *majoni* (white sergeants) in all African locations.

Among the activities that particularly ignited municipal ire was the expansion of Malawian women's urban farming which threatened to blur the lines between rural and urban life. Although women claimed that their operations in Mbare, Highfield, Mufakose and Rugare were limited in the 1940s, the municipality and the colonial state already laid emphasis against such *mabhidhauko*. In agreement with the state, the municipality promulgated general by-laws addressing African urban farming. In September 1949, the Minister of Internal Affairs addressed the issue of urban farming in response to the municipal Director of Native Services thus, "The government will actively support the Municipality in the proposed enactment of by-laws against this development. I reiterate that if there are no laws at local government level to deal with this, women will soon create native reserves within the city defeating the whole concept of urbanity."³⁹² In the same year, the municipality enacted Urban Farming by-laws prohibiting urban farming in location outskirts or in yards around marriage quarters of all African locations. Under section 3(a) of the 1949 by-laws, the municipality of Harare generally stated that in order "to maintain the urban environs as distinct from reserves and farms, native residents in the locations' marriage sections may only cultivate flowers within their yards..."³⁹³ While vegetables "which do not grow above knee level may be grown, crops such as maize and sugar cane are hereby prohibited. Any farming activities outside the homes are strictly prohibited."³⁹⁴

However, neither the state nor the municipality of Harare promptly enforced the bylaws or educated the public about them. As can be assumed, despite taking notice of the

³⁹² HCA, File RHB/12(1)49-59, Salisbury Native Areas Farming by-laws, 1949, Note from the Minister of Interior Affairs to Director, Community Services Department, 22 January, 1949.

³⁹³ HCA, File RHB/12(1)49-59, Salisbury Native Areas Farming by-laws, 1949: Prohibitions-section 3(a).

³⁹⁴ Salisbury Native Areas Farming by-laws, 1949: Prohibitions- section 3(a)/1.

possibility of the rising problem, the responsible authorities found implementation unnecessary in this period since relatively fewer women participated in urban farming. Despite that the by-laws clearly spelt out that “defaulters, who plant prohibited crops in their homes or venture beyond them for the same will face 3 to 6 months imprisonment and/or a fine of up to 4 pounds”, Malawian women were initially unaffected by the laws owing to non-implementation or non-dissemination.³⁹⁵ Nambewu Arumenda succinctly captures the general lack of implementation of the written piece of legislation in Rugare, Mbare, Mufakose and Highfield when she explains;

When we started in the 1940s, no one said anything to us. If it was said anywhere we should have heard it. We cultivated in the open swamps and the government said nothing, after all, we were not doing any harm. So we worked freely. Even in the 1950s, you just took your *kasu* and went to work. No one came against you. The trouble started in the 1960s because the government was not leaving us alone anymore. There was news everywhere that police boys were arresting women because *Katsekera* was angry with us for planting in his city, but we could not just stop. We still went in groups around 4am hiding *makasu* (hoes) in sacks...³⁹⁶

The legal situation thus changed from the 1960s. At this time, as the state and municipal authorities reeled under the burden of rising costs of African accommodation and socio-economic amenities in Harare as in other cities, the state passed the Vagrants Act of 1960, reenacted in 1973 and the Law and Order Maintenance Act of 1973. While the Vagrancy law generally dealt with anyone who fell under the definition of vagrancy, that is, unemployed men, women, illegal traders and so-called miscreants, it coincided with efforts to reduce native alien access into the city as reflected in the implementation of the Foreign Migratory Labor Act (FMLA) of 1962. Put together, the laws empowered the local governments, the state and their police forces to implement various by laws which had hitherto been lying dormant. In this period, the Harare municipality re-enacted the Urban African Farming by-laws, arguing that;

³⁹⁵Salisbury Native Areas Farming by-laws, 1949, Fines and Charges-section 3(a)/2

³⁹⁶Interview with Nambewu Arumenda, Mbare, 5 August, 2008. While Nyasa women and the general urban population referred to the municipal authority as *Katsekera*, they also referred to the Native Commissioners and state authorities as *Mudzviti*. The terms denoted African people’s perceptions of the power of these institutions as they referred to feared authority figures.

Native women, particularly those of alien origin resident in the locations have no sense of propriety at all and have not taken heed of our earlier prohibition. A drive around Harari Township will show that the women have planted maize fields, sugar cane and various crops which would be typically seen on a farm or reserve. We have also seen this in other locations such as Rugare, Highfield and Mufakose.³⁹⁷

Under the 1962 law, “All Africans resident in the locations must be aware that the municipality is empowered to arrest any individual or group which contravenes urban farming by-laws in any part of the city.”³⁹⁸ Charges would range between “6 to 8 pounds for first time offenders and up to 20 pounds for repeat offenders, and/or imprisonment for 6months.”³⁹⁹ As stated, “No regular worker has time to engage in urban farming at that scale. If the Africans are keen to farm, they must go back to the reserves and native aliens must indeed return to Nyasaland...where there is ample land in their villages.”⁴⁰⁰

The prohibition also made sense in that keeping maize and other major food products to reserves and farms ensured a market for settler farmers who sold through the Farmers’ Co-op and National Foods distributors in Harare. Malawian women recalled that a general state of fear thus set in among them as rumors spread about the deportation of women whom the police way laid on footpaths to and from *madimba*.⁴⁰¹ As knowledge about the by-laws spread, women also confronted husbands who attempted to prevent them in fear of deportation. This created tensions in the households as women found ways to either persuade or evade their own husbands. Illustrating this predicament is the case of Angwaula Mlepa who joined Nyasa women’s agrarian work soon after marrying Malume Mlepa in the 1960s. As she reminisces;

It was all because of the fear that came from the new laws that my husband tried to stop my work. He heard those stories from as far as Highfield that women were being deported straight from their fields with mud and *makasu* and all! The stories spread especially between 1967 and 1970. So he always said, “You must stop this

³⁹⁷HCA, File RHB/12(2)60-79, Salisbury African Urban Areas Farming by-laws, 1962.

³⁹⁸African Urban Areas Farming by-laws, 1962.

³⁹⁹African Urban Areas Farming by-laws, 1962.

⁴⁰⁰African Urban Areas Farming by-laws, 1962.

⁴⁰¹Nambewu Arumenda.

or they will get you! Stay home and take care of the house and children.” Later on, to alleviate his worry I stayed home when he was there but as soon as he left f states, like Angwaula, she complied but as soon as he left for work she also took her *kasu*, hid it in a sack, went to work and returned before his return.⁴⁰² Revealing most women’s predicament, as both women harvested fresh or work, I carried the baby on my back and led the toddler by the hand to my work, with my *kasu* in a cloth. I returned just before he came back from work, we all had to eat.⁴⁰³

Similarly, from 1971 Juliana Odiro Bihari’s husband also prohibited her. However as she states, like Angwaula, she complied but as soon as he left for work she also took her *kasu*, hid it in a sack, went to work and returned before his return.⁴⁰⁴ Revealing most women’s predicament, as both women harvested fresh produce they lied that these were gifts from friends.⁴⁰⁵ According to Juliana;

My husband forgot that the family depended on it. I was the one in the forefront when it came to food in the kitchen. So I had to lie to him that my friends gave me fresh produce from their *madimba* until one day as he was enjoying beans and *nsima* he said, “if others are giving you all this, then go but please be careful.” Still I had to sneak to and from the fields in fear of spies and police. You know *Ndzviti* (*state*) and *Katsekera* had police spies and some local people also reported us. So you can see that even harvesting was the most painful part because we had so much to bring in stealthily. Sometimes we brought the harvest near home but hid it in the bush to bring it in at night until we finished.⁴⁰⁶

Under the amended NUARRA of 1951, the state and municipality had permitted willing employers to construct locations on their own land but insisted that they follow municipal regulations in doing so. As such, even in the National Foods section of Mufakose called *Mhizhi* and in the Railway Township of *Rugare*, Malawian women had to operate more stealthily given that in addition to state police, company policemen made regular patrols. Indeed, as late as 1965, the General Manager of the Rhodesia Railways John Avery confirmed the company’s active support of the by-laws thus, “In response to your question as to the situation concerning Africans urban farming in our location, I must

⁴⁰² Interview with Juliana Odiro Bihari, Highfield, 11 September 2008.

⁴⁰³ Angwaula Mlepa.

⁴⁰⁴ Interview with Juliana Odiro Bihari, Highfield, 11 September 2008.

⁴⁰⁵ Juliana Odiro Bihari. Angwaula Mlepa.

⁴⁰⁶ Juliana Odiro Bihari.

stress that the problem is indeed one which we confront. We have since deployed more police boys and have enlisted the (Rhodesian Republic Police) RRP's support..."⁴⁰⁷

In July 1966, the Rhodesia Railways compound inspector nicknamed Garu (Dog) Marandido sent 'police boys' who spent four to six weeks slashing crops around Rugare.⁴⁰⁸ This was in line with municipal action whereby in 1965 and again in 1966 it deployed 'police boys' in Mbare, Mufakose and Highfield to slash crops in the *madimba* and *mpahla* fields. However, the authorities took such decisive action intermittently and the resilient women were quick to take advantage of the knowledge to encourage each other to replant in new seasons or soon after slashing if the season still permitted. However, in the 1970s the municipality's orders for the destruction of crops became more frequent allegedly since, "*magandanga* might start hiding in these fields."⁴⁰⁹

Whether this was true or not, the women felt grieved by the loss of their crops and a spirit of resistance set in. In Rugare, following the 1974 destruction of *mpahla* months after that of *madimba* fields, women came together at Tavhina Masongera's home to consider their course of action.⁴¹⁰ Finally, in the first week of March, they agreed to collect as many corn and sugar cane stalks as possible. After days of collection and hiding them in heaps in the nearby bushes, one night which they termed *tsiku rankondo* (the night of attack) they took the stalks and scattered them around the compound inspector's office in protest.⁴¹¹ As Erise Chunga laughingly recalls;

He-he-he, (laughing) they had played with *manysarandi hinde-e/* Nyasa women, yes and we gave it to them like *manysarandi*. They did not like litter and they had

⁴⁰⁷ HCA, File RHB/ 12(2)60-79, Salisbury African Urban Areas Farming by-laws, 1962, Correspondence from John Avery of the Rhodesia Railways to the Chief Superintendent, Salisbury, 12 December 1965.

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Erise Chunga, Rugare, 29 November, 2008.

⁴⁰⁹ Erise Chunga. While they had already been concerned with the connection between crop cultivation which increased the tall vegetation and foliage in which criminals hid and from which they carried out ambushes in the locations, from the second half of the 1970s when the largest Petrol tanks at Shell Company in Harare were bombed by African liberation fighters (*magandanga*), authorities allegedly tightened efforts against urban farming claiming that if maize, sugar cane and banana groves became part of the urban landscape, this might facilitate guerilla infiltration.

⁴¹⁰ Tavhina Masongera.

⁴¹¹ Tavhina Masongera.

always regarded us as dirty so there! That was our children's food, our wages and security that those heartless Zezuru police boys slashed again and again! *Hinde-e*, we did it like *mfiti* (witches) deep at night when everyone was asleep and the location very quiet. We even emptied trash bins around the premises. Then they had real work to do, cleaning it up. They just woke up and found litter all over the yard. We went to watch the next morning, innocently asking, "Who did this, he-e, who did such a thing?" shaking our heads. The Compound inspector angrily walked back and forth, looking up then down and shaking his head, as the boys worked.⁴¹²

What made the destruction of crops between 1974 and 1980 most painful was that it was done just before the crops fully matured.⁴¹³ In Highfield, situated less than 5km from Mufakose and from Rugare, the 1975 crop slashing spurred other forms of resistance, as women consulted with each other at Canaan section and agreed to follow the example initially set by Mufakose women that February.⁴¹⁴ In March they did not only plant *chimanga*/ corn in their yards by night like their Mufakose sisters but at the back of Katsekera's offices near C. J. (a recreational hall). According to Eneresi Paliza;

We did it in the dead of night and waited for weeks. Then the police came to us about the maize in our yards but we answered – as we had agreed, "But you have maize growing in your own yard. You want *nsima*/ maize meal polenta and so do we." Sometimes we saw them coming on the road and we sent children to tell others to hide. So we hid saying, they have always done it and today they will slash it themselves. And then they slashed the maize at their offices and wanted us to do the same. I did not, but some became afraid and slashed theirs. I merely went on a journey to Simon's Farm and came back to find my *chimanga* still standing in my yard.⁴¹⁵

Not only was women's defiance against draconian municipal and state laws revealed in their agricultural activities. The women needed to occasionally market their crops while others made marketing a regular economic activity. Dating back to the 1940s, the municipality associated what it called "illegal vending" with vagrancy and undesirable

⁴¹²Erise Chunga.

⁴¹³ Eneresi Paliza.

⁴¹⁴At this time women in Highfields were aware of events going on in Mufakose given that the locations were within walking distance of each other. In Mufakose, women had initiated the planting of corn in their own yards, breaching the law even though they knew it was illegal and had travelled or hidden from the police who demanded that they slash it. In Highfields, the women took this form of protest a step further by planting around the offices of the municipal authorities as well as in their yards.

⁴¹⁵ Eneresi Paliza.

urban dwellers. While Mbare Musika was the only legal Market available up to 1970, the stalls that the municipality installed were too few to cater for the needs of the women. Understandably, the limited size was meant to ensure that the municipality would not encourage too many unemployed people to seek survival from the Market. However, Africans had to walk the 5 km distance which separated the locations to reach Mbare where they bought fresh produce and other needs. In this environment, where the only designated legal space was Mbare Market, illegal vending was bound to develop and Malawian women were among the leading participants. However, in 1949 the Municipality passed by laws against illegal vending, and reenacted the laws in 1958 and again in 1965.⁴¹⁶ In 1966, the Superintendent of Harare's statement about illegal marketing in the locations summarized the concerns behind the by-laws thus;

Nothing short of ruthless enforcement of the Vagrants Clause and the marketing by-laws would educate the African woman that vending is only permitted in the designated market. Of course, any eligible person would have to apply for a permit and obtain a stall number for Harari Market. All those who cannot obtain the said stalls must not be allowed to vend in the city or we will soon have to contend with mounds of litter, disease and disorder ...⁴¹⁷

Under the by-laws, "the state, municipal police or any other responsible authorities will arrest anyone charged with illegal vending. All offenders will be obliged to pay a fine of 10 dollars. Repeat offenders will be charged 20 dollars and/or imprisonment for 6 months."⁴¹⁸ Hence, enforcement of the bylaws began in the 1950s but increased from the 1960s as the colonial regime faced the challenges of the so called "double influx pressure" in the urban environs as Malawian women's migration coincided with the rising rural-urban migration. In this environment, all vendors outside the designated area were illegal and also vagrants to be evicted or deported. With state support, the

⁴¹⁶ HCA, File RHB/238/15/49-77-Native Markets and Illegal Vending in Salisbury's locations, 149-1977; See; "Marketing by laws of 1949"; "Native Marketing by laws amendment, 1958"; "Salisbury African Marketing by-laws of 1965."

⁴¹⁷ HCA, File RHB/238/15/49-77-Native Markets and Illegal Vending in Salisbury's locations, 1949-1977; Minutes of a meeting of Municipal Board of Directors, 23 March, 1966.

⁴¹⁸ HCA, File RHB/238/15/49-77, Salisbury African Marketing by laws of 1965, section 2(a)/1.

municipality unleashed a legion of Shona ‘police boys’ who harassed street traders. Throughout the 1960s for instance, as Nambewu Arumenda states;

Katsekera’s police boys seized all our wares and divided them among themselves. This happened even in the 1950s but I think there were more police now in the 1960s because you saw them on every street, everywhere. At this time, we really saw how *mazezuru* police boys were cruel. Trading was not for fun you see, we were working for our children so that they would have food, go to school and have good clothes to be well received among others. But these boys were ignorant upstarts, and insulted us. We just kept silent, what else could we do.⁴¹⁹

As the problem persisted, as late as 1975, the Director of Community Services noted the need to “provide adequate amenities for traders. In other words, if we increase designated markets in the locations then we can have less illegal vending.”⁴²⁰ It was partly in response to this sound reasoning that the municipality and responsible companies such as the Rhodesia Railways installed new markets in their locations. Highfield’s market with twenty stalls became the second largest in Harare while Mufakose and Rugare’s stalls only accommodated ten marketers each. The marketers had to obtain permits with stall numbers and paid a dollar monthly. Despite these additions, the designated spaces remained too few and many women thus continued to trade illegally and police boys, also called *mabrawacha* (sic. black watchers) ruthlessly raided street vendors and even those who worked in industrial zones. In addition to the ordinary by laws, *mabrawacha* enforced the City Health Department’s African Eating House by-laws of 1966 which stressed that except for designated African restaurants, then called Eating Houses, all other vendors of cooked food in all Harare’s locations were illegal. The Department licensed all legal proprietors obliging them to comply with hygiene and cleanliness standards in food handling. It fined illegal vendors 20 to 30 dollars and/or imprisonment; seizure of utensils and eviction or deportation for repeat offenders.⁴²¹ Hence, throughout the 1960s, Malawian women vendors of fresh produce and cooked food operated in a

⁴¹⁹Nambewu Arumenda.

⁴²⁰HCA, File RHB/238/15/49-77, Native Markets and Illegal Vending in Salisbury’s locations; Minutes of a meeting of Municipal Board of Directors, 13 August 1975.

⁴²¹ HCA, File RHB/12(1) 66, City Health Department, African Eating Houses by-laws, 1966.

constrained environment in constant fear of *mabrawacha* and *majoni*. Eneresi Paliza remembered how as late as 1975 she and her friends encountered *mabrawacha*.

They always took all our boiled cassava, corn and sweet potatoes and ate as they went. That day, we had just arrived in the industrial area and there they were with their *sjamboks*. If we had seen them earlier we would have run into the alley. But that day we were too late and they got us. When that happened, you would lose a whole day's earnings because you can't go back to get cassava, sweet potatoes and maize to cook and bring the same day... It was better if you were caught as a group because then others shared the loss, but then once I was arrested but my friends ran away. We had just a few sweet potatoes left and we were at the gate of Sugar Refinery Company. The police boys got me again here and ate the remaining sweet potatoes first and then said, "we have caught you before he-e? But you still come. Now we will take you to *ndviti's* himself and there you will be forced back to your village in Nyasaland. Let's see who is wise." Another one then said, "Listen, instead of us doing that give us all the money you made today and we will let you go. So I did that and they said it was the fine, all my money!"⁴²²

Hence women adopted various ways to avoid unexpected raids and survive in business. For example, industrial vendors of cooked food paid the police boys who were assigned to patrol their particular market areas once a week so that they paid a blind eye. Others made friends with the police boys by being generous with their food. Many street vendors marketed near drains or bushes to hide their wares while others used nearby homes belonging to fellow Malawians and displayed only part of their goods.⁴²³ They also established Chewa code phrases such as "*tawani mabrawacha amwera!*" - meaning "run, black watchers are here!" or "*magwidwa amai!*" translated "you are being arrested mother!"⁴²⁴ Eneresi Paliza illustrates the Highfield situation thus;

⁴²²Eneresi Paliza.

⁴²³ Eneresi Paliza. The same account is replicated in life histories of other Malawian women I have interviewed between 2008 and 2009.

⁴²⁴ Eneresi Paliza. Alice Gomeza.

In those days, when I wasn't trading in the industrial or European areas, I traded in the locations and blended easily with women from Nyasaland. We all knew how to position ourselves to see and get news quickly or communicate in an emergency...On Main Street from CJ center, as soon as the police arrived, from one end of the street to the other Nyasa women and girls suddenly removed wares shouting, "*tawani mabrakwacha!*" while others said "*magwidwa amai!*" Boys whistled the alarm too. By the time the police arrived, many of us just strolled around with hands behind our backs and others had entered friends' homes or hid wares in bushes or drains. You see, it was different in the location than in the industrial areas because here there would always be a *mujoni* on horseback and you could never get the chance to give a policeman something so they would leave you alone, they feared the *mujoni*.⁴²⁵

Up to the end of the colonial era in Zimbabwe, Malawian women continued to defy the Marketing and Eating House bye-laws. Instead of ordering from African and European farmers at Mbare wholesale section of the African market as legal retailers were expected to, they obtained the wares mainly in their *madimba*, marketed both fresh and cooked food without permits and outside designated areas.

The same women experienced the contradictions of high profits and incessant police raids in their ventures as beer brewers. While some initially operated in their marriage houses in the late 1940s in Mbare and Highfield and in the 1950s in Rugare and Mufakose, this involved investment in the construction of backyard 'kitchens' or breweries. Those such as Alice Mbalami Kutengo who also marketed meals for mainly Malawian consumers, thus breached both the African Eating House by-laws and the Harmful Liquors Act.⁴²⁶ Although it dated back to 1940s, the Harmful Liquors Act was re-enacted in 1965 as illegal brewing reached new proportions. It defined African brews as hazardous to health due to unhygienic brewing processes and lack of scientific determination of alcohol content. Penalties for breaching this law included imprisonment for up to a year or a 30 dollars fine, and /or eviction.⁴²⁷ The only aspects that differed from the 1949 Act are the

⁴²⁵ Eneresi Paliza.

⁴²⁶ HCA, File RHB/12(0)40/49-72, African Beer-Halls, Beer sales, Management and Legislation, 1949-1972. References to the Harmful Liquors Act passed by the state in relationship to Municipal concerns and their beer-hall business are in the same file.

⁴²⁷ HCA, File RHB/12(0)40/49-72, African Beer-Halls.

penalties which were 10 pounds and 6 months imprisonment.⁴²⁸ The Act made sense in light of municipal construction of beer gardens in African location between 1949 and 1971. The city fathers set up the first beer garden Mapitikoti near Mai Musodzi Hall in Mbare in late 1949. In the 1950s, Matererini, Machembere and Mukombe were set up in different sections of the location. The municipality constructed two beer gardens in Highfield near CJ center and near Mazigo stadium. In Rugare, the Railway Company assigned land for the only beer garden in its location to the Municipality.⁴²⁹ All urban beer gardens thus fell under the jurisdiction of what became known as Harare City Marketing, a division of the Harare City Council. In 1949, the Director of the City Marketing Division explained that;

The construction of native beer gardens is by no means a waste of resources. We should move further to other African locations in close co-operation with responsible authorities therein. I have sounded the Rhodesia Railways on the issue and they are enthusiastic to have us provide this form of recreation for their workers in their currently expanding location...Beer profits will go a long way towards costs of urban African Administration...⁴³⁰

The expected profits would only be maximized by eliminating competition from illegal brewers hence the passage of Liquor Acts in 1949 and 1965.⁴³¹ While the competition from the beer gardens did not seem great to Malawian and other beer brewers in the 1950s by the 1960s when more beer gardens sold opaque beer, illegal opaque beers such as *chiseven days* and *chikokiyana* lost some of the market.⁴³² Notwithstanding, women adjusted to market changes and developed ways to evade the police as they concentrated more on the unrivalled brand, *kachasu*. They dug deep pits in their makeshift breweries, wide enough to fit a medium sized drum of *kachasu*, placing thick boards on top before restoring the soil and placing firewood, a sitting mat or a table in concealment.⁴³³ They

⁴²⁸HCA, File RHB/12(0)40/49-72, African Beer-Halls.

⁴²⁹ HCA, File RHB/12(0)40/49-72, African Beer-Halls.

⁴³⁰HCA, File RHB/12(0)40/49-72, African Beer-Halls.

⁴³¹ Some of these aspects are covered in Ireen Mudeka, "Marxist Theory and the Informal Sector in the urban history of Southern Rhodesia: The case of Umtali Town, 1940-1980", (MA Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1999).

⁴³² Alice Mbalami Kutengo.

⁴³³ Interview with Katesi Chirima, Mufakose, Harare, 6th January 2009. Maud Mapundu.

even posted sentries who earned a *jomupi* of *kachasu* for alerting brewers to quickly hide their brew. Perched on trees or other high land, sentries whistled sharply or called out, “*mavhuto pamowa!*” that is, “trouble in the brewery!”⁴³⁴ In addition, others found nocturnal marketing in their backyards safer with clients arriving from around 10pm. At dawn clients left only to return at night. As Katesi Chirima explains, she carried on like this until the late 1960s when the police raided her. While she got away with a 30 dollars fine which took half her beer earnings for the month, she was issued with an order to stop her activities or face deportation to Malawi.⁴³⁵

In fear of similar consequences women joined brewers who operated from venues like Pinto’s Quarry and Kwamazai where illegal women traded, prostituted, gambled and drank. However, as Maud Mapundu lamented, “our hideouts were not as good as we had hoped because *katsekeras*’ police boys raided daily and we were running out of business. So in 1962 or ’63 when they finally demolished the compound at Pinto’s, we were ready to find another place...”⁴³⁶ In this period, Kwamazai was also demolished by the city fathers who claimed that such settlements were hotbeds of illegality and between 1965 and the 1970s many brewers moved into the surrounding bushy areas or to the banks of Mukuvisi River which cut through Rugare, Mufakose, Highfields and Harari. As Maud Mapundu who moved to this site in 1966 claims, they made considerable profits of up to 60 dollars a month or more. The sites were out of *katsekeras*’ or state and company police’s way and sentries worked more efficiently because of bush cover and they climbed on much taller trees and boulders.⁴³⁷ Brewers got to know ‘evil’ from ‘good’ policemen and so knew when to or not to hide.⁴³⁸ For its illustration, Alice Mbalami Kutengo’s reminiscence of events in the 1970s is worth quoting at length;

⁴³⁴ Katesi Chirima.

⁴³⁵ Katesi Chirima.

⁴³⁶ Maud Mapundu. The demolition of the two settlements is documented in HCA, File RHB/17/1, Illegal settlement: Squatters, vagrants and alien Africans 1949-79.

⁴³⁷ Maud Mapundu.

⁴³⁸ Maud Mapundu..

We brewed by night so you would be sure to see us by the line of fires stretching along the River deep at night. In those days we slept very little because we said *nkope zimapatsa njara* (sleep brings hunger). We sold every day as our boys watched to warn us when *katsekera's* and *mudzviti's* bad boys approached... We hid all we could and ran off ... But sometimes they caught us by surprise and here one had to have a sweet tongue. These were mere boys with milk on their noses after all and sweet talk in a mixture of Shona and Chewa was a powerful weapon when dealing with the likes of them. One such day, everyone ran except me because I wasn't feeling very alert having been up till very late the previous night. So then, the police boy said, "now mother, you are in very serious trouble, do you know that? Doesn't your husband work? Do you want to be repatriated back to Nyasaland?" I replied, "You are wise my son so you know, I your mother already committed a greater crime in having many children who must eat. My husband earns very little and this is my work, right here, I work very hard at it because my family lives by it!"⁴³⁹

With that, Alice took a *jomupi* full of *kachasu*, and a plate of dried beef in hot *sinjiro* sauce and humbly offered the "boys" who left after ordering her to vacate the area immediately.⁴⁴⁰ Eventually they became her friends, informing her about impending patrols while consuming free beer and food. However, Maud Mapundu insists that other police boys were so strict that they became spiteful when women evaded them and used sticks to beat down food pots and beer drums, spilling the contents. She adds;

The cruel ones brought buckets of night soil, you know at the time we did not have the proper toilets but used buckets. Each dawn night soil boys would collect the buckets where we left them by our doors to discard the night soil somewhere in the swamps. So these police boys managed to get a bucket each and hid them somewhere in preparation for raids. When we evaded them, they poured 'night soil' into the brew to fix us, but after they left we still sold the opaque beer because no one would realize it had night soil and we needed income. If it was *kachasu* in which they poured night soil, it was a bit tricky because this was a clear beer, so we kept it till the night so people drank without seeing the contents. I tell you, if dirt kills people, many should have died then.⁴⁴¹

Significantly, Malawian women's stories of illegal brewing and struggles with the colonial police indicate the inexorable linkages between beer brewing and prostitution. Single and divorced women who constituted the majority of prostitutes had no access to

⁴³⁹ Interview with Alice Mbalami Kutengo, Highfield, 8 September 2008.

⁴⁴⁰ Alice Mbalami Kutengo.

⁴⁴¹ Maud Mapundu.

housing and operated in illegal spaces which included beer brewing venues. In addition, desperate for a place to live and for cash, they worked in singles hostels despite that up to ten men resided in each room. Empowered by Acts such as the 1960 Vagrants Act amended in 1973 and the FMLA of 1962 which labeled single women and more so African alien prostitutes as undesirable elements, the police raided hostels to flush out prostitutes. They also rounded up these undesirable migrant women from beer halls, *kachasu* brewing and *njuga* (gambling) venues. Up to the 1970s, with the endorsement by the Superintendent and the Native Commissioner of the then Salisbury, such women were “repatriated.”⁴⁴² Informants recalled these raids, arrests and deportations which forced many to move to farms. As Mbombe Maliki recalled, her friend Viano Nkwaura from Chisenga Kraal of Chintenze was caught in one such raid in the location of Rugare by company police who worked with state police for this purpose.⁴⁴³ As Mbombe states;

It was a holiday and those were not safe days for women in that kind of work. More of *katsekera* and *mudzviti*'s police patrolled at Christmas and New Year's when more people were at beer drinking venues. They searched all areas even hostels. Before I met and married my husband, I always lived in fear because it happened every day. It didn't matter whether you were in Mbare, Mufakose, Highfield or even Rugare because the laws were the same. Sometimes they rounded you all up to the police station where they said “those who are married stand here, those who are not stand there. You will not lie because we have records and we can ask you to go and get your marriage certificates with our officers, so don't waste time lying.” To us who had obtained husbands – I married Maliki in 1966, they said “*Manyasarandi* women, you must be respectable, what then are you doing moving around like this lot?” To the others they said, “You are *mfiti*, you prevent men from enjoying their holidays, they kill each other because of you. Why don't you stick to one man he-e?” It was like that, they really hated them all, I mean even local women whom they sent to the reserves. But they had more to say to *manyasarande* like, “How can you come all that way to create trouble in our locations?” So they sent them to Nyasaland. We knew that a truck was always coming to pick up these women and take them away on Fridays. That is why I was always afraid to move about aimlessly before I married.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴²NAZ, File S1007/8, Repatriation of Native aliens, 1947-1971.

⁴⁴³ Mbombe Maliki.

⁴⁴⁴ Mbombe Maliki.

To defend themselves, the women became adept fighters in violent encounters not only with men or other prostitutes but with the police, using knives and stones.⁴⁴⁵ However, many moved around from place to place to avoid discovery and arrest, while others chose clients with married housing whose wives were absent.⁴⁴⁶ Many more attempted to blend into Malawian society to avoid police harassment by dressing very respectably in Malawian clothes such as the *nyakura* and *nsaru*.⁴⁴⁷ In addition, some became involved with leading police boys such as Roy Mabhena, an Ndebele man who was known throughout Mufakose for releasing such women in exchange for sexual favors.⁴⁴⁸

Just as some women devised ways to protect ventures such as prostitution, others also sought to perpetuate yet another illegal activity, *chimbado*. While colonial authorities regarded *chimbado* as extortion, to Malawian women it was just another economic strategy whereby they charged interest of up to a half of the money lent such that for a dollar they earned fifty cents and below.⁴⁴⁹ However, since the 1940s, interest lenders not only encountered risks such as default on payments especially as they began to lend indiscriminately to Malawian and local people, but faced police harassment. As Raiza Chimwara of Rugare explains, “at the time, people were suffering and needed loans yet because of that suffering, it was also tough to get loans back and some reported us to the police.” Thus as in other locations where women set up similar groups, in Rugare they agreed to work together to ensure debt recovery starting in 1966.⁴⁵⁰ Hence, they put their money together and the literate members such as Mbombe Maliki recorded names against money invested by each woman while seniors kept the cash and controlled the actual lending. In all my discussions with the women in the locations, they have similarly stressed that it was common practice for senior women in the business to insist that borrowers make a vow of repayment while holding a black cloth covering a charm. As a

⁴⁴⁵ Mbombe Maliki.

⁴⁴⁶ Mbombe Maliki.

⁴⁴⁷ Mbombe Maliki.

⁴⁴⁸ Mbombe Maliki.

⁴⁴⁹ Raiza Chimwara.

⁴⁵⁰ Raiza Chimwara.

result, borrowers developed a superstitious impulsion to pay suspecting lenders of using *muti* (sorcery) to punish defaulters.⁴⁵¹

By 1975 rumor, including the popular one about lenders' use of dried hands cut from old women's corpses in Malawi to punish defaulters, gained a life of its own in Highfields and Rugare. Some believed that lenders had power to travel in a winnowing basket (*lichelo*) over night to and from Malawi to get money charms, leading to defaulters' misfortunes such as death or extreme poverty.⁴⁵² Some defaulting borrowers reported to the police in hopes that lenders arrests would prevent the use of charms. In general the police started to harass suspected interest money lenders. In 1971 police arrested money lenders in Rugare following a borrower's report, they however lacked evidence and the women insisted that they knew nothing about the business. As Alice Gomeza recalls;

The police were in the habit of harassing us unexpectedly. I think they hoped to find us counting money, preparing *muti* or something. So it was like this especially from the 1960s when we began to come together in groups here. They continued to do this coming to the homes of members even in the 1970s. I recall one incident that ended up being very funny. The police boys came and took me and I did not realize they had taken some of my friends too including Mbombe Maliki. They brought us to the station and my, my, we were frightened when we met each other at the station. There were no benches there so we sat on the floor and looked at each other not knowing what was coming. Then the chief police boy came in to question us saying, "are you the *manyasarande* women who have been stealing from others in the location, using *muti* to force people to pay more than they borrow, he-e, one of you, speak up!" I looked at him from where I sat and saw that he was just another boy among the others and I told him directly that I did not know what he was talking about, in Shona too. He then asked the boy who arrested us to prove his charges and he couldn't. So the chief police boy said, "You must be careful what you do, these are under the Railways; let the women go now!" How could these boys arrest us when like everyone else they had financial needs and also came to us for free loans? Yet when the people who had

⁴⁵¹Raiza Chimwara. Katesi Chirima. Maud Mapundu. Esteri Banda. Alice Mbalami Kutengo.

⁴⁵²Raiza Chimwara. Interview with Simon Samatenga, Harari, July 27 2008. Among others, the Manyika man, Simon, confirms the widespread belief that money lenders ensured the repayment of interest loans through sorcery and insists that, "otherwise how else could mere women engage in such a business in those days?"

reported us heard we were safe and sound they just said, “It’s true, these *manyasarande* women have *muti*.”⁴⁵³

In this way, Malawian women worked hard and valiantly resisted official efforts to stifle not only *chimbado* but other aspects of *mabhindauko* (Malawians’ ventures) such as *kachasu* brewing, urban farming and fresh produce marketing. In direct opposition to the state, municipality and some employers, they forever transformed the urban landscape, claiming economic space and reshaping it in ways that allowed them to survive and reproduce their families.

Conclusion

In a bid to understand how migrant women survived economically in colonial Harare, this chapter examined their efforts to establish a multiplicity of economic strategies in various locations of the city. I have stressed that between 1940 and 1980 wives, divorcees, widows and single women entered the city and confronted the realities of their marginalization in a male dominated political economy. Forcing them to abandon their high hopes of a ready-made better life, these women differently experienced chronic hunger, financial deprivation, poverty and the general insecurity associated with their peripheral position. In this general state of economic marginality, marked by their general formal unemployment, husbands’ meager wages, inadequate food rations and other vulnerabilities, Malawian women needed to and to survive on their own account and to ensure the social reproduction of their families, that is, the perpetuation of their families’ livelihoods.

I also emphasized how the women adopted a multiplicity of economic activities partly based on their peasant survival strategies in Malawi as a way to cope and adapt to the urban vagaries in Harare. They adapted the farming concept whereby, they fully utilized land in different ecological zones to be able to cultivate and produce food throughout the year. Urban women took over the vast expanses of land surrounding the locations for

⁴⁵³Alice Gomeza.

both *mpahla* and *madimba*. *Mpahla* was land in which the *munda* (field) depended on rain to flourish whereas *madimba*, where swamp land fields which had to be cultivated in the dry season to avoid water logging. In *madimba* women sunk wells, dug tunnels which transported water in a regulated manner to reach rice paddies, maize, beans, cassava, sweet potatoes and other crops. Malawian women's *mabhindauko* also included cooked and fresh produce marketing, *chimbadzol* usury, prostitution and the production and marketing of three brands of African beer, *chiseven days*, *chikokiyana* and *kachasu*.

I have shown that not only did they need to launch their economic activities in order to survive, but they had to defend these *mabhindauko* against urban authorities who enforced the marketing, farming and other by-laws in combination with inter-territorial laws. In addition, the state passed and enforced a litany of Acts the most significant of which was the Harmful Liquors Act. Initially passed in 1949 and amended in 1965 as the beer industry expanded, the Act covered the colony as a whole prohibiting African brewing except in reserves. Throughout this period, Nyasa women evaded, resisted and subverted the laws, maintaining their economic activities against police raids, arrests, harassment and seizure of wares among others. They adopted various methods ranging from hiding wares, hoes in sacks and cloths, working at dawn, brewing and selling at night, working in marginal locations such as the Mukuvisi River banks, devising Chewa code phrases to alert each other and posting sentries to detect police patrols. In Harare, as they supported teach other to develop their *mabhindauko* they eventually developed a new concept of being Malawian, a subject which I fully explore in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: “*Wadziko limozi*”: Malawian women’s organizations, 1940-1980.

The previous chapter traced Malawian women’s struggles for socio-economic survival in Harare amidst official restrictions. This chapter shifts to their establishment of welfare and burial organizations in the city and particularly seeks to understand why and how they constructed them. It argues that Malawian women established burial and welfare associations to secure their own, their families’ and communities’ socio-economic existence in Harare. To them, welfare and burial associations represented a significant mechanism for their social and economic self-preservation amidst hardships worsened by the 1960s economic decline. In this environment, married, unmarried, divorced or widowed women shared some common experiences which encouraged cooperation. All women had no access to housing except as wives of workers, and even wives lost such privileges with divorce, widowhood or husbands’ failure to work for any reason. While unmarried women had no husbands’ wages or rations, wives also faced men’s starvation wages and rations, unemployment and death. To such women, “solidarity was not about the absence of differences but about choosing to make those differences less important in order to deal with more imminent matters.”⁴⁵⁴ Through welfare associations women pooled cash to pay fines for arrested members, to resuscitate businesses after police raids, to help repatriated members travel safely, and to care for sick members, families of laid off workers, widowed and divorced women. Burial organizations cared for the bereaved, funded wakes, purchased the deceased’s apparel, transported mourners to burial grounds and paid for burial permits. To these women, associations provided friendship, companionship and the kinship necessary for survival away from natal homes and in the hostile, unstable world of colonial Harare.

These associations also constituted forums upon which Malawian women reconstructed their identities in ways that enabled them to cooperate more effectively within changing economic contexts. Emerging from widely diverging districts and villages, representing

⁴⁵⁴ Rebekah Lee, *African Women and Apartheid: Migration and Settlement in Urban South Africa*, (South Africa, I.B Tauris, 2009), p.145.

ethnicities such as the Ngoni, Tonga, Tumbuka, Nsenga, Yao, Lomwe, Gomani, Nkonde and Chewa, these women commenced by constructing ethnic associations between the 1940s and 1950s. Representing the significance of ethnicity in their self-perceptions at this time, ethnic leaders emerged to launch *mutandizi/* welfare and *mwariro/* burial associations named appropriately to attract specific ethnic groups. From the 1960s however, the women shifted their focus from ethnic solidarity as ethnic associations died down, shed their ethnic identities to incorporate a mixed membership of Malawians or were overtaken by new national oriented associations. Such transformations represented the emergence of new self-perceptions and women's role in forging a new Malawian identity which allowed even men to join such associations by the end of the 1970s.

These transformations were partly a result of the 1960s and '70s economic changes which shook the very base of the colonial structures in Zimbabwe. However, that the shift occurred during the height of African nationalism is most significant. In Zimbabwe, the rise of African nationalism in the 1960s emphasizing national solidarity among Africans against the colonial regime converged with the triumph of Malawian struggles for self-rule. Following the defeat of the colonial state in the mid-1960s due to nationalist leaders diplomatic lobbying in the West and internal pressure from men and women based in Malawi, Banda's Malawian Congress Party (MCP) rose to power. In a bid to build a cohesive nation from a people who had regarded themselves as separate ethnicities and had limited interaction across districts throughout the colonial era, the new government encouraged them to emphasize their identity as members of one *dziko/* nation. That people still moved between Malawi and Zimbabwe meant the development of, "new networks between country of origin and migrant communities enabling trans-national flows of ideas", to quote Julissa Pena's observation of similar experiences among Latinos in USA.⁴⁵⁵ At this time, some women who had been exposed to the ideas of the newly formed Malawian Women's League (MWL), a branch of Banda's MCP chose to join husbands and relatives in Harare. These helped transmit ideas among women whose

⁴⁵⁵ Julissa Pena, "Transnational Identity" <http://www.latinocountercultures.wordpress.com>, (March 24th, 2011), p8.

families had become domiciled in the city. In this euphoric period shaped by new ideas and changes in Malawi, migrant women established new organizations based on the concept of *dziko*. By articulating a common sense of identity through their new associations, women impacted their communities and the social landscape of the city.

Why Malawian women's associations?

From the 1940s, Malawian women initiated welfare and burial societies in the African locations to secure themselves against urban poverty exacerbated by their exclusion from formal employment, the stifling of their informal works, men's meager wages and the uncertainty associated with men's loss of jobs due to old age, illness, injury and redundancy in a declining economy. Indeed, Malawian women were not the only ones who recognized the importance of such associations in providing the security necessary for survival in colonial Africa. As early as 1900, migrant men in Southern Africa had constituted labor clubs which scholars such as Rebekah Lee and Tsuneo Yoshikuni regard as the early beginnings of worker consciousness. While such clubs and welfarist societies had given way to male dominated trade unions by the 1940s, their formation had been predicated upon the need for security among the workers. The clubs bargained with employers in South Africa as in Zimbabwe. They represented early efforts to negotiate for better wages, working and living conditions among other issues. They also provided friendships and unity among workers who came from a variety of countries and social backgrounds.⁴⁵⁶ From the 1940s however, as the trade union movement gained significance, women who stood outside the system developed their own associations which, according to Rebekah Lee's study of South Africa, were "a phenomenon inexorably tied to their increased migrancy..."⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ Rebekah Lee, *African Women and Apartheid: Migration and Settlement in Urban South Africa*, (South Africa, I.B Tauris, 2009), p.137. Yoshikuni Tsuneo, *Urban African Experiences in Colonial Zimbabwe: A Social History of Harare*, African Books Collectives, 2007.

⁴⁵⁷ Rebekah Lee, *African Women and Apartheid: Migration and Settlement* p.137

While women in apartheid urban South Africa's Kayelitsha Township and Sierra Leone's Free Town formed their own welfare and burial associations, theirs were constructed within the context of internal rural-urban migration. In contrast, Malawian women had to create *mutandizi*/ welfare and burial associations as transnationally controlled agents in a foreign city, Harare. Among the many societies they established in the African townships to provide themselves with protection, shelter, economic support, sisterhood, friendship and fictive kinship were *Tikumbuke* of Mufakose, *Rekani Kurira*, *Ayao* and *Alomwe* of Rugare, the Man'anja's *Nkokwe* Society of Old Highfield and *Kusunza* of Mbare.⁴⁵⁸ These were but a few examples of the many organizations through which women sought to "to discuss issues, especially how to protect and look out for each other as *alendo*/ migrants" so as "to ensure that no one among us would lack a roof over their head even if only temporarily and no one amidst us slept on an empty stomach or was unduly arrested. That's why we went when others called, "*bwerani titandizane muRhodesia* (come lets help each other in Rhodesia.)""⁴⁵⁹ Given their significance as part of migrant women's coping strategies, between the 1940s and 1950s, it became an urban cultural expectation that every reasonable woman had to be affiliated with one organization or another.

In all these associations that emerged in Harare from 1940, a general pattern in which married women initiated and led the organizations also emerged. Single, widowed and divorced women clustered around them because they represented the legal face of their organization in a city where lack of husbands was associated with vagrancy. Their capacity to maintain widespread networks of information on impending house raids, inspections and arrests made them the protectors of their communities and hence the title *anyankugwi*/ instructors/leaders. In a way similar to that of welfare associations in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown where women clustered around their female "chief" and instructed each other on how to survive,⁴⁶⁰ in their associations, Malawian women looked

⁴⁵⁸ Tavhina Masongera. Alice Gomeza.

⁴⁵⁹ Chimwara Raiza.

⁴⁶⁰ Knorr Jacqueline, "Female Secret Societies and Their Impact on Ethnic and Trans-ethnic Identities", pp.80-95.

up to *anyankungwi* to quickly learn about urban laws. *Anyankungwi* gathered and disseminated information about how single women could evade police harassment, circumvent the system or legitimize their residency. Their leadership and command of information ensured their ability to hide and thus aid illegal women to evade impending raids and repatriations, and to make marriage matches in the city. Through the associations, they discussed and directed single women to men in marriage housing whose wives had returned to Malawi and refused to return. It was also in such forums that women made plans and found fictive kinsmen to marry off the illegal women on the pretenses that the women were born in Harare. The men would assume the position of brothers to whom parents left the women on return to Malawi. In an environment where marriage was the best way to obtain housing, legality and general even if fragile social security, *mutandizi* societies' functions were highly relevant.

Associations shielded not only singles, divorcees and widows. It was equally imperative for documented wives whose marital identity was not set in stone but was prone to changes, to organize fellow women for their own moral, social and logistical support. As we observed in foregoing chapters, under such laws, women generally faced constrained access to urban space in the sense that the authorities mainly constructed singles hostels for men's exclusive occupation, while allocating married accommodation in the names of working men. Only wives who held migrant permits and were shown on men's work books as having accompanied husbands could enjoy a relatively high level of security. However, under the urban laws of Harare and the 1948 inter-territorial agreement which remained extant till the late 1960s, married women could easily slip into illegality because divorcees and widows lost their legal status when they lost their working husbands.⁴⁶¹ Like singles, they lacked housing entitlements and were therefore earmarked for involuntary repatriation back to Malawi. In cases where women lost the support of working husbands due to old age pension, injury, illness, death, or men's retrenchments as in the 1960s when the economy declined (see below), employers collaborated with the

⁴⁶¹ NAZ, File S14/A/1834, Notes on the Migrant Workers Bill, 1947.

“NC Salisbury”/Native Commissioner of Salisbury to annul family residency and issue repatriation orders.⁴⁶²

However, repatriation was not just a matter of official decision since some women made choices with their men to leave the colony to return to villages in Malawi because the male bread winner was no longer working. As one official succinctly put it, “in some cases where men are too old to work, are seriously injured or suffering from debilitating diseases, they and their women folk prefer to travel home with their children to spend the rest of their days amongst their own people...”⁴⁶³ This implies that urban insecurity for migrant women was more general than isolated to certain social groups. Married women always faced the reality that their circumstances could change unexpectedly and they too could be arrested or repatriated. In short, they too would need support from others, regardless of their marital or legal position, hence their reference to the Chewa proverb, “*chaona munzako chapita mawa chirikwaiwe*/ the predicament your neighbor is in today leaves them but is yours tomorrow.”

In fact, wives of sick, injured, elderly or even deceased men suffered significantly since they were under the maternal and cultural obligation to ensure food security on a daily basis in their households. This occurred in the cases of widows such as Mary of Old Bricks in Mbare who came from Musosola Kraal in Kasungu district and Falaise, widow of Kalonga Pagalonga of Msakanbera Kraal in Ncheu district of Malawi. They had to support families pending repatriation and were officially declared as “destitute” as the NC Salisbury’s report shows. Alongside divorcees and wives of retired men, not only did these “destitute” women have to sustain families but had to obtain funds to be able to reach their villages of origin.⁴⁶⁴ To do so, they needed the aid of *mutandizi* associations since former employers of their husbands collaborated with the state to repatriate them to

⁴⁶² Since they wanted to claim old age pensions, injury compensation or other social benefits, the affected parties submitted marriage certificates, permits and registration certificates to employers.

⁴⁶³ File 137/1944-1948 Ref 81A, Report on Health and Mortality among migrants, 1939-1945.

⁴⁶⁴ NAZ, File S1007/8, Office of the Chief Native Commissioner: Repatriation of Native aliens, 1949-1971; Reports, notices and correspondence.

what they considered the “nearest point to their village of origin.” This terminology was open to a wide range of interpretations and implies that the repatriates were left not in their villages but anywhere as long as the officials considered it “nearest.” Most were dumped at Blantyre Town or anywhere from several kilometers to a week’s or a month’s journey from their villages of origin. It was because of such vulnerabilities built in the system that the women needed financial and other support even from the singles, who raised their own incomes in their economic ventures. Associations came in handy in that the women pooled funds to ensure that such families completed the journey right into the village. As Narita Milinyu testifies,

At that time, Rhodesia was just a place of work. Our home was where our people were, back in Nyasaland. I knew that if my husband pensioned, lost the job, got sick or died, I would want to return home. So, I needed to cooperate with fellow women for assistance. Myself, I joined Aman’anja’s *Nkokwe* society because then I was sure that our association would help as long as I contributed in helping others...What I liked best about *Nkokwe* society was that the rule we followed never said, “You are only one member”, but said, “a woman represented all her immediate family.” So, that is why my family got help to travel back in 1959 when my husband got really sick.⁴⁶⁵

Apart from extenuating circumstances, it was acceptable among the associations to help even those whose families sought repatriation simply because as one official observed, “...the party [family] naturally became homesick after a time, while there will also be anxiety about interests left behind so that sooner or later, the family will be found on their return journey to Nyasaland... they may desire to drop back into village life permanently...”⁴⁶⁶

However, voluntary or forced repatriations were ongoing throughout the colonial era, so that just as others left the city, many more remained behind and needed the support of welfare associations to cope with their exclusion from formal employment. While Malawian men constituted over half of the urban workforce, Malawian women were not

⁴⁶⁵ Interview with Narita Milinyu, Mpondabwino, Malawi, 17 August, 2009.

⁴⁶⁶ BFAO, File 137/1944-1948/ ref: 86C, Central African Council; Report by Special Committee on Migrant Labor, 1945.

represented among the 5 percent constituting the total number of women in urban formal employment.⁴⁶⁷ Though this exclusion from formal work mainly affected singles, divorced and widowed women who lacked husbands to earn a family wage on their behalf, married women could hardly survive with their families on an average of twenty shillings to one pound ten shillings per month earned by their husbands. The majority earned below the required urban family wage of between 7 pounds 7 shillings 4 pence, and 12 pounds in the second half of the 1950s.⁴⁶⁸ Between the 1960s and 1970s, the urban cost of living further escalated by over 100 percent of the 1950s level.⁴⁶⁹ In this scenario, urban women needed welfare associations because,

The money that the men earned was too, too little and then we could not get jobs for ourselves like you can do nowadays. We found that through our *mutandizi* societies we got help with funds when needed... We started small but many others joined when they saw how this was helping us... Sometimes we just brought food for those of us in *mavhuto/* dire straits. That is why even us married women, we organized and ended up having many organizations here because we all wanted *chitukuko mumabanja, hinde-e/* better lives for our families, yes.⁴⁷⁰

That married women took the lead as *anyankungwi* in constituting women's welfare organizations was a direct testimony to the fact that they too realized the need for assistance in maintaining their families in the face of inadequate wages and poor food rations. Even when employers such as Gutenberg and Sons, Rhodesia Railways, Rhodesia Spinners, Farmers Coop and National Foods Limited issued vegetables, meat, sugar, cooking oil, salt and corn meal weekly or at most, fortnightly to supplement poor wages up to the 1950s, these too were a mere token. As such associations leaders needed members who could bring in subscriptions of food and cash when required, who would also fill subordinate but indispensable positions such as keeping check on the welfare of

⁴⁶⁷Barnes, "We Women Worked so Hard", p5.

⁴⁶⁸ NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957. Migrant workbook of Barnet Mlewa Nyamazoma village in Mlanje, 1949-1964. Barnet Mlewa resides in the Railway area of Rugare and has kept his work book from 1949. Barnet's work book is very useful in tracing class differences because he was a foreman and earned higher than prevailing wages. File NAZ, S482/22/47-48, Migrant Workers Act of 1948, In this file the Migrant Work book for Lingisitonya Chiwamba of Chintenje District in Malawi is the only one available and shows wage entries from 1948 to 1964.

⁴⁶⁹ Robert Sutcliffe, *Sanctions against Rhodesia: The economic background*, (London, Africa Bureau, 1966) p67.

⁴⁷⁰ Anelia Banda, Rugare 8; 12 December, 2008.

members, caring for their sick by cooking, house cleaning and clothes washing among other tasks.

As the most vulnerable and subordinate however, the single women among whom we may add divorced and widowed women were in dire need of support, friendship and the protection afforded by the associations. Infact, the associations partly emerged as arenas for providing shelter, food and respite from the police and for finding ways by which illegal women from different backgrounds could beat the restrictive system of Harare. From the inception of these associations in the 1940s, those women who arrived in Harare as singles increased their chances of survival in the city by quickly connecting with others through these welfare associations. They obtained a relatively higher degree of safety since as leaders,

Anyankugwi took nothing for granted but taught us to be always ready to move from one house to another in case of *spaktions* [sic. inspections/raids]. I myself lived in many houses, sometimes spending a night, sometimes two days or a week. In all these houses, workers' wives – all of them members of *Tikumbuke* led by *amai*/ mother Enifa Njewa took me in and I was not the only one there... These homes were scattered in various sections of the location so that if one section was being raided, we hid in another... Many of us lived like that until *anyankungwi* found a man who wanted a woman to marry. The system worked well because, *abambo anarikuyembekeza akazi aulemu, akumuzi*/ the men were always waiting for respectable women from Nyasaland.” So when we arrived, we met with the others because *amai* Enifa Njewa and *amai* Katesi Chirima would say to us – “you must meet with others if you are to get help”. It was at our meetings that I learned that we single women needed those men in married housing who other women were neglecting to return to Nyasaland. I even accepted the advice to pretend that *bambo* /Mr. Peduru was my uncle so he could marry me off for me to become a legal wife permitted to live in the city... That is also how I myself first heard about Mlepa, whom I later met and he became my husband... So you see, that's also what helped me to move out of *that other business* (prostitution), I got safely married... When we as *Tikumbuke* met, we did not just talk like *eish, iya*, life is hard, but how do we survive. We would help each other with money, food and support for the sick and for those who wanted to return to Nyasaland... On the best days, we sometimes brought in beer, drank together, danced and socialized like that, us singles and the workers' wives who led us. Even when some things went wrong, we always found a way to talk and talk until everything was alright and we were like that - sisters, mothers, aunts and friends ...

As Rebekah Lee who examined women's associations in South Africa's Kayelitsha explains, under apartheid women first and foremost sought to aid each other as blacks before they nit picked on their social and marital differences.⁴⁷¹ It followed that among Malawians, the needs of the time superseded marital and social differences too. Just as married women needed support even of singles in a fragile environment, the singles needed their knowledge, urban wisdom, friendship and motherhood. In a way harkening back to a long established tradition where despite power differences and possibilities of exploitation of one group by another or even of friction, junior members deferred to senior members while the latter protected the juniors, Malawian women co-existed in the associations. With the concept of well-being emphasizing cooperation, motherhood or sisterhood as not only biological but communal, the women were at once wives, mothers, sisters, and friends who could easily exchange positions as married, widowed, divorced and hence singles.⁴⁷² Their solidarity, to quote Rebekah Lee was never "about the absence of difference but about choosing to make those differences less important in order to deal with imminent matters."⁴⁷³ Cooperation was viable because both married and unmarried women benefited by equally pooling resources, distributing them and obtaining assistance in cash and kind. According to Tavhina Masongera whose husband worked for the Rhodesia Railways Company up to the 1970s:

We started by trusting that our husbands would support us with their wages and rations – but that was before we learnt the truth for ourselves. When we settled, we learnt that their employers gave inadequate food to the man and his wife. We got cabbages, a portion of meat, sugar, salt and corn meal which was not even enough for the two of us in a week, so how about our children? That was why we said, whether we are married or not, we must organize everyone so that we can help each other here. We started the organizations because we wanted to get as much as we could for those of us in need. We devised a system where each month, we women brought any food stuffs, even corn meal, beans, oil and all we could manage. We also called for those with cash, so that some would say, I could bring this and that food, while others said I cannot bring food but I have a shilling or a pound. We sent our young women to see who was in real trouble and we took

⁴⁷¹ Rebekah Lee, *African Women and Apartheid: Migration and Settlement*, p139.

⁴⁷² NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957.

⁴⁷³ Rebekah Lee, *African Women and Apartheid: Migration and Settlement*, p139.

what was available and gave it to them. You would be surprised how our daughters, I mean the single women in our group - helped even us with money from their trades and food from their fields. And anyway, when we started, we had no luxury to hate someone because they were not married; we too could lose husbands one way or another. We always said, if we had differences among us, let's sit down and talk, and talk again and again until we agreed.⁴⁷⁴

It is possible to downplay the relevance of welfare organizations in Harare given that women derived a significant proportion of their own and their families' sustenance from their *mabhindauko*/economic activities, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, associations offered security even for women's informal trades in a city where they faced constant police harassment and lost their wares. Associations helped diversify their field of security in the context of constant threats from municipal and state police against all the women's ventures. For illegal migrants, it was highly difficult to operate their informal trades given the strict surveillance in urban locations under the aforementioned urban and immigration laws, that is, the NUARAA, the 1948 Migrant Act and FMLA. Without housing and subjected to random house and street inspections, arrests and repatriations under this combination of laws, illegal women who included singles and those who lost working husbands' protection due to death, divorce or loss of jobs, found it very difficult to operate. All the women, legal wives included, faced additional urban by laws against beer brewing, produce marketing, urban farming and prostitution (see chapter 4). They were prone to arrest, payment of fines and deportation. Generally, as urban farmers they occasionally lost their crops as municipal, state and company policemen slashed them. They lost wares such as beer or fresh produce which policemen seized or destroyed. Sometimes they even lost the cash that they earned from such activities.

In short, though the operations were highly lucrative, they were very risky. Entrepreneurial women needed a cushion to fall back on in times of distress. Their welfare associations and economic ventures were mutually constitutive and symbiotically supportive. By this I mean part of the money and food stuffs from their economic

⁴⁷⁴ Interview with Tavhina Masongera.

activities went towards the welfare pools to aid those in need. On the other hand, the resources that women pooled also went towards resuscitating these trades following police attacks. Hence when they brought in some of their products as well as some of their hard earned cash as contributions to help others, they invested in the associations in case of future trouble. Katesi Chirima of Mufakose succinctly explains,

When I agreed to work with Enifa Njewa, it was in 1954. What made me ready to work with her was that I was losing a lot due to police raids on my beer brewing venture and once, she and her associates bailed me out. At that time I lost all my daily earnings because they said, “If you don’t give us the money, we will take you away to be deported.” It was either you gave up your money or were arrested. So I realized that I could secure myself through the association. So, it was good because when real trouble struck, you would only go to the association and cry for help. Then fellow women would give you goods and money so that you would restart your business or pay fines. You could even travel back to Nyasaland if ordered to leave. That is why our association *Tikumbuke*, became popular. There were others too, like Shire or Angoni society.⁴⁷⁵

Among these associations were also those for *mwariro*/ funerals. Not only among Malawian migrants, but throughout urban Southern Africa and West Africa, “women were from the outset centrally placed in burial societies’ rapid rise to prominence.”⁴⁷⁶ For Malawian women who established burial societies to exclusively deal with death and burials in Harare’s African locations, participation in a burial society was seen as a financial manifestation of women’s primary role in traditional funerals through mourning and involvement in burial rites. In many African cultures women occupied an important place in the most final and hence important human reality, death. Death was not just the time of physical departure from this world, but a very important, sacred and highly significant, though harrowing event. Death was a journey to a higher spiritual realm surrounded by special ceremonies, cultural rituals and spiritual performances to celebrate the physical life and the contributions made by the deceased, as well as to incorporate the

⁴⁷⁵ Interview with Katesi Chirima, Mufakose, Harare, 6th January 2009.

⁴⁷⁶Rebekah Lee, *African Women and Apartheid: Migration and Settlement in Urban South Africa*, p.137. Knorr Jacqueline, “Female Secret Societies and Their Impact on Ethnic and Trans-ethnic Identities”, pp.80-95. Yoshikuni Tsuneo, *Urban African Experiences in Colonial Zimbabwe*.

immortal spirit into the ancestral assembly where it would intercede, guide and bless the living. In African culture, the ancestral assembly consisted of the spirits of departed blood members of the clan, both male and female dating back into the unknown beginnings of clan existence. The founding fathers/ mothers of the clan were the most significant in the hierarchy of power in the spiritual underworld and all rituals including burials were performed to inform and receive the guidance and acceptance of the burial by the hierarchies in this assembly. The assembly accepted or rejected the spirit of the newly departed depending on appropriateness of burial rites performed and nature of death. Also, it is still believed among Africans that this ancestral assembly can see whether a person died of natural causes and whether the deceased body is treated with befitting respect and adequate rituals. Murder or suicide as well as improper burials lead to ancestral spirits' rejection of the soul of the deceased which thus enters a realm of perpetual restlessness from which it haunts or kills more of the living. As Erise Chunga who founded *Ayao Burial Society* in Rugare explains,

We had to cover every aspect of burial rites, from the wake to the actual burial. People had to gather for the wake but needed to eat and drink to remain with you through the process. We women had to find the food and brew large quantities of beer as well as make sure everything was in order. You know that we Ayao generally hold that the soul of one who did not sleep in the ways of his people is still the most dangerous scourge any family in any *mutundu*/clan/ethnic group can face? It murders, steals wealth and can cause inexpressible suffering requiring ancestral cleansing ceremonies. That is a major reason why we women said, we must come together to be able to avoid disrespect or improper burials which will kill us and our offspring in this foreign land and which will go on to affect our people in Nyasaland. So we were aware that the spirit has no limits; it's all seeing and goes everywhere, any time. That is why many burials started in the 1940s so that in 1950 or so, we had so many of them here... Women from each *mutundu* (ethnicity) started several of their own. We had to do things right even in the city. Each Yao woman who joined us brought what they could - oil, meat, maize meal, beer, money, cloth, pots and dishes to use. Others came to cook and wash the dishes throughout the wake. That was our work.⁴⁷⁷

In most ethnic groups of Malawi as in most Southern African countries, women had and still have to provide and prepare food, beer as well as befitting entertainment to ensure a

⁴⁷⁷Erise Chunga, Rugare, Harare, 27th December 2008.

successful three to five days' wake which mark proper burial. Even in the colonial city, funerals were therefore expensive because mourners had to eat; the dead had to be covered with new blankets after being dressed in a white shroud sewn by women. Importantly, in the urban context, they had to buy coffins and graves in designated municipal burial grounds. As such, women also established burial organizations to raise money to meet all appropriate requirements for respectful burials. Since they were away from their extended families and village networks, migrant women had no choice but to place great emphasis on burial organizations to secure support. Within Malawi, death was taken as a source of bereavement not just for the immediate family, but for the whole clan and village. Food, beer and assistance came from various directions and so did moral support, entertainment and other assistance. In the city, women's associations took on this task as, the younger and mostly unmarried women took care of the physical tasks such as cooking, washing dishes, fetching water and firewood. While senior women sewed the shrouds of the dead and prepared ritual herbs to cleanse everything including the people in the bereaved household soon after burial to chase the spirit of death, it was the junior women or single daughters who did the actual cleansing work. As migrants who were uprooted from their ethnic and village communities, not to mention families of origin, the women needed these associations for social, emotional and economic support.

Indeed, for them the support was necessary because death was an inevitable almost everyday reality for migrants' communities in urban locations. As captured in their common idiom that "there is no land without a grave" meaning wherever one went, death was there too, the urban locations did not insulate their families from danger and death. For instance, apart from children's and their own death, in Harare women confronted great anxiety over the safety of their husbands whose working conditions left a lot to be desired. Employment in urban factories exposed the so called "native alien workers" to the most dangerous and strenuous jobs as well as machinery. Under the color bar system, the best paid and less onerous were "white jobs." Indigenous Africans in Zimbabwe also worked as "tea boys", office cleaners, clerks, and messengers, leaving night soil (sewage), road making and railways work involving manually lifting iron railings and

loading freight trains to foreign workers who earned names such as *mateera njanji*/railway line followers and *matanyera*/excreta handlers. Railways official records corroborate workers accounts that a day's work involved hours of lifting 50 to 80 kg loads per man including machines, timber and railway lines.⁴⁷⁸ In 1958 a Railway Personnel Officer recorded that, "our alien workers in Manual Work B section are increasingly becoming riotous since no one has responded to their query that their work is too heavy."⁴⁷⁹ Not surprisingly, in 1960 a Malawian man Soza Tembo from this section complained about chest pains and a "lacerated right leg, cut forehead and broken thumb."⁴⁸⁰ Another, "Linkson of the Chewa tribe of Dowa District died from a chest injury when a railway length twisted and fell on him as they tried to move it from the Blacksmith's Shop to the Stock Yard."⁴⁸¹ The highest death cases, reaching an average of 4 a month occurred in "Manual Work B section" where non-indigenes did "the heaviest work."⁴⁸² Others died more slowly as a result of unattended chronic injuries. Indeed, among the women who were repatriated from the Railways location between the 1950s and 1960s were widows of deceased workers.⁴⁸³ If this was their plight in the Railways Company which was taken as the best urban employer, then the situation must have been worse in other less responsible companies. The wives of workers thus needed burial associations amidst such anxiety, to meet the burial needs of their loved ones in case of death.

Whenever a man died, we knew the family needed help in burials and to go home to Nyasaland with the deceased's personal belongings as custom demanded. We were always there to support each other so that the darkness lifted a bit, yes it did. Everyone brought food of any type including beer, money, anything, whatever they could afford. Didn't we all expect such support? This became the rule by

⁴⁷⁸ National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), Mutare, Personnel File go as far back as the 1930s and forward as the 1980s. I collected this data in 2000 for a paper on migration that I prepared for the Economic history departmental seminar series (University of Zimbabwe) and have kept the notebook to date. The files are located in a large outbuilding on Melsetter Road just across the Railways' Mutare Offices and on the side of the Mutare Railway Station. When I used them, they were uncared for and layered with dust, but are an unused wealth of data for historians of Railway labor.

⁴⁷⁹ NRZ, File 16/50-58, Memorandum, Area Personnel Officer, Control Unit, 25 August 1958.

⁴⁸⁰ NRZ, File 180895/Soza Tembo, 27/07/ 195to 29/08/80.

⁴⁸¹ NRZ, File 180038/John Linkson, 18 June 1952 to 30July 1969.

⁴⁸² NRZ, File 1029/Manual Workers B Section, Ref: 2026535/103, 1952-1969.

⁴⁸³ NAZ, File S1007/8, Repatriation of Native Aliens.

which we formed our burial society that, everyone brought something, anything at all, and would be sure to get similar help when needed.⁴⁸⁴

Women therefore placed primary significance on proper burials of immediate families of those who joined burial societies. Even into the 1960s and 1970s, societies provided all necessary apparel for the deceased, including flowers, transportation to graveyards and the grave site fees required by the city fathers. Like elsewhere in Southern and West Africa, the colonial authorities paid little attention to the significance of women's welfare and burial societies.⁴⁸⁵ However, in Harare, even in death, the municipality's social engineering ensured that it set aside separate burial grounds for whites, coloreds and blacks going as far back as the 1900.⁴⁸⁶ From the 1940s women's associations needed to raise money to pay for burial permits so as to legally bury their dead at the African Cemetery located at Warren Hills in the West of the city. The women thus had to immediately notify the municipality of deaths and to pay between 10 shillings and several pounds. Married women took care of such notification or relied on male members of the bereaved household to liaise with the municipality. Apparently, death was not a matter in which the city fathers inquired about legality given the concern that bodies should not be dumped randomly but be disposed of as befitting of a modern colonial city. This was therefore an important expense that women needed to cover to ensure that they, their children and husbands as well as friends would be buried properly even away from extended and rural support networks based in Malawi.

Organizational Structure, Operations and Identity

Even as Malawian women's organizations were important networks of social, emotional and economic support, they were also vehicles of identity construction, a process in which women occupied a central place. That between the 1940s and 1960s, their associations were structured along ethnic lines testifies to their self-perceptions as ethnic

⁴⁸⁴ Alice Mbalami Kutengo, Highfield, Harare, 7th September 2008.

⁴⁸⁵ Ayinesi Mlewa. Yuna Chipoka, Mbare. Alice Mbalami Kutengo. Rebekah Lee, *African Women and Apartheid: Migration and Settlement*. Yoshikuni, *Urban Africa Experiences*. Jacqueline, "Female Secret Societies and Their Impact on Ethnic and Trans-ethnic Identities."

⁴⁸⁶ Yoshikuni, *Urban Africa Experiences*, p.156.

peoples even as they came from the same colonial territory. Many scholars have argued that ethnicity in Africa was a product of the colonial desire to compartmentalize Africans into comprehensive, manageable groups whose ethnic specificity eliminated unity against the colonial establishment.⁴⁸⁷ In my discussion with them, Malawian women indeed stated that rarely did they interact across ethnic districts or villages in Malawi. As such, they took on their pre migration ethnic identities with which they were familiar and used them to construct their own associations. Men's work clubs of the pre1920s in Zimbabwe, women's associations of the apartheid era in South Africa and of the colonial era in Sierra Leone also focused primarily on ethnicity in their solidarity.⁴⁸⁸ As one could surmise, ethnic cooperation eliminated the complications and friction possibly arising from linguistic and customary differences and was the central way through which migrant women viewed themselves and each other up to the 1960s.

Testify to the dominance of ethnicity in their identity perceptions, prior to the 1960s, all ethnic groups including the Tonga, Tumbuka, Nsenga, Man'anja, Lomwe, Gomani, Sena, Yao and many others in Rugare, Mufakose, Highfield and Mbare had their own leaders. To represent each group leaders for whom we will use the Chewa term *anyankugwi*, launched ethnic burial and welfare associations, effectively rallying together women from their ethnic groups. They opened the doors into ethnic *mutandizi* /welfare and *mwariro* / burial societies for singles, widows, divorcees and those wives who lacked proper marriage housing. By identifying associations and hence themselves according to their

⁴⁸⁷ Leroy Vail, (ed), *The Creation of Tribalism in Africa*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991). Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (eds), *The invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, University Press, 1992). Bill Bravman, *Making Ethnic Ways: Communities and their transformation in Taita, Kenya, 1800-1952*, (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 1998). Sandra Green, *Gender, Ethnicity and Social Change on the Upper Slave Coast*, (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 1996). Atsuko Matsuko and John Sorenson, *Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in an African Diaspora*, (Toronto, University of Toronto, 2001), p.16.

⁴⁸⁸ Rebekah Lee, *African Women and Apartheid: Migration and Settlement*. Yoshikuni, *Urban Africa Experiences*. Jacqueline, "Female Secret Societies and Their Impact on Ethnic and Trans-ethnic Identities." Yoshikuni, *Urban Africa Experiences*. Jacqueline, "Female Secret Societies and Their Impact on Ethnic and Trans-ethnic Identities."

mutundu /ethnicity giving such organizations ethnic names, leading women could attract the appropriate ethnic membership. To appeal to the required membership, leaders such as Enifa Njewa, Twasume Chigwegwere, Ayinesi Mlewa, Loda Dhaka and Lukia Mbeta among others gave their *mutandizi*/welfare associations names such as *Tikumbuke Achewa*, *Ayao*, *Alomwe*, the Man'anja's *Nkokwe* Society of Old Highfield and the Sena's *Kusunza* of Mbare Township respectively.⁴⁸⁹

Even so, the significance of ethnic identities among the women did not necessarily mean all women from one ethnicity congregated in one organization. Probably due to other ways of perceiving the collective as well as individual self, each ethnic group could be further divided into various organizations in each township. This was especially the case with burial organizations which were separate from welfare associations. While the women did not readily volunteer such information, it was most probably because of differences in how and when to pool resources and how much to pool and how many times as well as about distribution, selection of beneficiaries and leadership squabbles that each group established multiple associations. For example, Erise Chunga's *Ayao Burial Society* established by the 1950s was popular and yet just one among several Yao burial organizations in the Railway location of Rugare. Others separated themselves by identifying with place of origin as was the case with *Ayao a Port Herald* and *Ayao a Balaka*. While Erise stressed that hers was among those burial societies aimed at incorporating all Yao regardless of village or chiefdom of origin, *Ayao a Balaka* and *Ayao a Port Herald* still reflected that the organizations were for the Yao but only from Balaka and Port Herald districts.⁴⁹⁰ Similarly, in Old Highfield, while Agomani also known generally affiliated with *Agomani Burial* society launched by Hlekwise Ngandu since 1954, other societies including *Agomani ya Nkata Bay* led by Rebecca Marongwe Chirwa also flourished. By its name, Chirwa's *Agomani ya Nkata Bay* specified that its

⁴⁸⁹ Enifa Njewa. Ayinesi Mlewa. Twasume Chigwegwere. See also Loda Dhaka, Highfield, 11 September 2008 and

Lukia Mbeta, Mbare, 18 August, 2008.

⁴⁹⁰ Interview with Erise Chunga.

members must preferably be from the Gomani ethnic group of Nkata Bay of Malawi.⁴⁹¹ The women exercised the power to name in order to organize their associations in ways that gave them a sense of control probably in the midst of possible competition from fellow Yao organizations.

Naming also helped in that the women advertised and hence attracted even new arrivals not just from specific ethnicities but locations in Malawi. The names for *mwariro*/burial and *mutandizi*/welfare associations were particularly attractive in that they effectively delivered messages of hope to lonely, troubled and oppressed migrant women. For instance, Tavhina Masongera's welfare association was known as *Rekani Kurira* since its inception between the late 1940s and early 1950s. The name *Rekani Kurira* is not only Chewa but instructs its membership that, "do not cry" or "be comforted." In association with friends in married housing in the Railway Township of Rugare such as the late Ndaipa Gama and Musatimute Kufansiyanji, Tavhina Masongera launched this association, initially by sheltering single Chewa women coming straight from Malawi. These obtained her home address from male workers and fellow women, either in their villages or upon arriving at the train or bus stations in Harare who knew of this association of comfort, friendship and support. Tavhina explains.

*As Rekani Kurira, we became well known for helping fellow women such that even men who worked for the Railways brought to us those Chewa women they found wandering helplessly near the train station. Some women though were clever enough to arrange to travel with Chewa men all the way to our doorsteps. I remember that many did so, and one in particular was Mfitinonansi Tiferanji whom the late Pepulani Kachenzi brought here, and she became the wife of my husband's friend Dauti Tiferanji who has also passed away. Then there was that daughter of mine, who is in the Old four roomed section here, that wife of Maliki brought to me by Nyamazao, he too is now late. That one, (shaking her head) he used to bring many Chewa women here straight from home...So we were saying to them, "be comforted, we will help each other", that's why we called ourselves *Rekani Kurira*.⁴⁹²*

⁴⁹¹ Interview with Rebecca Marongwe Chirwa, Highfled, Harare, 12 September 2008.

⁴⁹² Interview with Tavhina Masongera, Rugare, Harare, 28 December, 2008.

It is interesting to note that male workers clubs that emerged in the pre 1920s on mines of the Rand and Zimbabwe had a somewhat similar provision where they readily accommodated newcomers in a migratory chain, until newcomers could stand on their own feet.⁴⁹³ Among women in Harare, newcomers contributed funds into the common pool of associations by immediately engaging in various illegal trades in the city. Similarly, Loda Dhaka, a Man'anja woman also launched *Nkokwe* society, choosing the Man'anja term which literally means "central granary" to denote that Man'anja people in need would get help by pooling resources. Given the traditional significance of the granary in Man'anja women's cultural duty of ensuring food security for their households, Loda Dhaka chose the name to attract members to the possibility of, not just companionship but financial, food and other assistance in the city.⁴⁹⁴ This did not necessarily mean that the women were adopting the associations' idea from rural antecedents in Malawi. In rural Malawi no such associations existed since at this time and like elsewhere in rural Africa, the village was always one large ready-made communal society which set aside differences to cooperate in times of need. While recognizing the practical utility of all these associations, the examples of *Rekani Kurira* and *Nkokwe* Society on one hand and *Ayao* and *Agomani mwariro*/funeral societies on the other, suffice to illuminate the great attention that women paid to ethnicity in the 1940s and 1950s era.

Even so, adopting ethnicity as a central organizing principle however narrowed the membership base. For example, despite its popularity, *Rekani Kurira* of Rugare had a Chewa membership of between 60 and 100 women approximately representing an equal number of families in the 1950s. Having started as a spontaneous unit of between three and six women who met at Tavhina's home to help illegal and other Chewa women, the association grew as word about it spread among incoming and already established Chewa

⁴⁹³ Rebekah Lee, *African Women and Apartheid: Migration and Settlement*, p. 139. Yoshikuni, *Urban Africa Experiences*, p.167.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with Loda Dhaka, Highfield, Harare, 11 September 2008.

people.⁴⁹⁵ Even as women and some men talked about the associations at communal water taps, in their homes and grocery stores in the locations as on routes from Malawi, and at train and bus stations making them very popular, their membership remained relatively small. As long as ethnicity was the organizing principle, migrants were fragmented in such associations. Each ethnic group was further subdivided given that there were many associations representing each ethnicity. In Mufakose, among many other Chewa organizations, Enifa Njewa's *Tikumbuke* had less than 100 members representing an equivalent number of families by 1960.⁴⁹⁶ As Katesi Chirima who joined the association in 1952 stated, "When I joined *Tikumbuke* in 1952 we were about 50 or so but in 1960, when my sister came to me from Nyasaland, we were about 80 or so."⁴⁹⁷

Even *mwariro*/burial associations were characterized by a small membership due primarily to the ethnocentric focus. Noting the significance of ethnicity in his correspondence in the *African Weekly* of 1959, Tengoliweta stated, "*mbali ndimbali* (ethnicity by ethnicity), women in Salisbury are handling *mwariro*/funerals, the most painful experience that *alendo*/migrants must suffer in this country. *Mbali ndimbali*, they give each other a shoulder to lean on ...In well organized groups of fifties to 80s, they come together in solidarity to confront death..."⁴⁹⁸ Indeed, Erise Chunga's *Ayao Burial Society* of Rugare consisted of less than 100 *Ayao* members representing the same number of families, while other *Yao* women joined several alternative associations including either *Ayao a Port Herald* and *Ayao a Balaka* burial societies.⁴⁹⁹ The same ethnic limitation in membership figures also meant that societies like Hlekwise Ngandu's *Agomani* burial group also did not go beyond membership of 100 women, representing their families.⁵⁰⁰ From my discussions with different women in all four African locations dominated by Malawian people, it became apparent that through the 1950s it was the general trend that ethnic fragmentation limited the figures below 100, with one ethnic

⁴⁹⁵ Tavhina Masongera.

⁴⁹⁶ Enifa Njewa. Also Katesi Chirima.

⁴⁹⁷ Katesi Chirima.

⁴⁹⁸ *The African Weekly*, 19 August 1959

⁴⁹⁹ Erise Chunga.

⁵⁰⁰ Interview with Hlekwise Ngandu, Highfield, Harare, 11th September, 2008.

group having five to ten separate burial societies with which women affiliated depending on how well they cared for members, their level of fraternity and popularity.⁵⁰¹

While ethnicity seemed to narrow membership and fragment the migrants in Harare before 1960, it had its own advantages. At this time limited membership made issues less complicated and management relatively easier. Leaders could track members and take notice of who contributed consistently, how much, when and who needed aid as well as who received assistance in cash or kind. According to the remaining early associations' leaders and some of the affiliates, it is apparent that the women, including leaders who attended mission schools, only went as far as sub A or B. This meant that a few women like Tavhina Masongera, Erise Chunga and Hlekwise Ngandu had attended school to the first and second grade at primary level. A few of the younger women had only attended school to Standard one and two, that is, the third and fourth grade respectively.⁵⁰² Managing organizations with a membership larger than 100 would have proved most challenging for these women given the need to coordinate contributions, to identify and even record those in dire straits and relay information sometimes through letters to members. Some level of literacy was also necessary since, for both *mutandizi* and *mwariro* societies, as problems and death occurred, women needed to collect contributions in cash and kind. With each burial issue, selected women moved into members' homes to collect maize meal, cooking oil, salt, vegetables, beer and cash, that is, "anything between 30 and 40 shillings per woman."⁵⁰³ All contributors had to be noted and writing or memorizing was the best way to do so. Hence, with the limited literacy rates, the relatively small the numbers of ethnic members in associations the more manageable they were.

Low numbers may also have helped them maintain a low profile necessary for illegal women to convene in relative safety. For instance, representing many other associations

⁵⁰¹ Enifa Njewa. Katesi Chirima. Hlekwise Ngandu.

⁵⁰² This is based upon data I collected in each interview about level of education. Most women did not even attend school and the few who did not go beyond standard 2.

⁵⁰³ Fatiota Mlosi, Rugare 12 December 2008.

Enifa Njewa's *Tikumbuke Achewa* of Mufakose initially met in her home in the late afternoons because the numbers were small enough to sit in the backyard from where they scattered quickly in case of raids.⁵⁰⁴ Rekani Kurira members however met in the outskirts of the Railway location along the banks of Mukuvisi River under cover of foliage, grass and thorn trees. Here they could talk freely, drink beer obtained in illegal breweries along the river, sing and dance with a measure of safety.⁵⁰⁵

Most importantly at this time, associations' ethnic orientation simplified matters for them by aligning women with the same linguistic or cultural origin. In 1957 Tengoliweta noted in the *African Weekly* that Malawian women's associations developed "*mbali ndimbali*," that is, as defined by ethnic, linguistic and therefore cultural subdivisions.⁵⁰⁶ We have already seen how associations carried not just ethnic specific names but also had district labels, for instance, *Ayao a Balaka* and *Ayao a Port Herald*. Indeed, while the Chewa allegedly dominated the urban locations at almost 50 percent, the Gomani/Ngoni, Sena, Man'anja, Tumbuka, Nkonde, Lomwe and Ayao among many others also claimed urban space and clung to their own languages.⁵⁰⁷ Working men mingled closely in the work places where employers addressed all of them using *chilapalapa*, an improvised language made up of local Shona and Ndebele languages of Zimbabwe, Chewa of Malawi, English and Afrikaans, but women had not yet embraced a uniting language despite exposure to dominant languages like Chewa.

Indeed, very few scholars who focus on identity among migrants in Africa have examined the significance of language in people's renegotiations or preservation of the self in specific locations. Africanist anthropologists such as Barbara Meiers and Andre Tabouret-Keller, whose focus is West Africa, have stressed that indeed, ethnic identities

⁵⁰⁴ Enifa Njewa.

⁵⁰⁵ Tavhina Masongera.

⁵⁰⁶ *African Weekly*, 17 April 1957.

⁵⁰⁷ A survey of Harare's earliest townships show that among migrants from Malawi the Chewa dominated which is also the reason why Chewa became the lingua Franca among them in the city.

are either preserved or transformed through language.⁵⁰⁸ Without linguistic flexibility, women could not venture outside their ethnic associations and cultures. Ethnicity thus remained at the core of Malawian women's identities in the 1940s and 1950s townships of Harare.

When I arrived here, there was nobody from my family to help ... So I as Mlomwe needed other Alomwe who understood me. We would all speak the same language, Chilomwe. So I joined Ayinesi Mlewa's Alomwe society here in this location in 1955 just a few months following my arrival... We did this so we would be better able to follow our own *mabwalo*/customs.⁵⁰⁹

Through the 1940s and 1950s therefore, all associations, be they burial or welfare developed in such a way that as people of the same *mtundu*/ethnicity joined each other, they reaffirmed what Julissa Pena terms "pre-migration ethnic identities."⁵¹⁰

The supra ethnic era

From the 1960s however, a number of factors converged to influence Malawian women's reorganization of their associations to emphasize national rather than ethnic cohesion. That they chose to shift from ethnic organizations and hence self-perceptions at this time reflects the contention that, "the value of ethnicity is variable and ethnicity as a social construct can be stressed or minimized depending on how useful it is in the situation at hand."⁵¹¹ For Malawian women, the situation at hand included the drastic economic decline caused by the nationalist war in Zimbabwe. In Malawi too, this was the peak of a national consciousness as the newly independent government led by Banda's Malawian Congress Party (MCP) superseded the colonial regime. For Malawian women, the situation in both Zimbabwe and Malawi combined to encourage renegotiation of their interactions, their organizations and hence their self-perceptions as migrants. Indeed, as Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson's contend, "migrant communities structure their

⁵⁰⁸ Andre Tabouret-Keller, "Language use in relation to the growth of towns in West Africa: A survey" in *International Migration Review*, vol. 5 No. 2, (1971), p10. Barbara Meier "Migrant women's associations in Ghana: the case of female chief and female chain migration", in Jacqueline Knorr and Barbara Meier, *Women and Migration: Anthropological perspectives*, (New York, St Martin Press, 2000), pp.181-196.

⁵⁰⁹ Fatiota Mlosi, Rugare 12 December 2008.

⁵¹⁰ Julissa Pena, "Transnational Identity" <http://www.latinocountercultures.wordpress.com>, (March 24th, 2011), p8. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London, Verso, 1992), p.89.

⁵¹¹ Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson, *Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in an African Diaspora*, (Toronto, University of Toronto, 2001), p.16.

identities in relation to the socio-political or economic transformations in both the home country and the host nation.”⁵¹² In coincidence with escalating internal socio-political and economic challenges in Zimbabwe and nationalist changes in Malawi, ethnicity lost its primacy and Malawian women had to adopt new organizations that were meaningful and usable in this era of rapid change.

The factors necessitating change in women’s associations were therefore transnational insofar as they were based in Zimbabwean and Malawian historical circumstances. In Zimbabwe, the rise of African nationalism articulated in the desire by the African majority to obtain self-rule and oust the colonial regime did not only give rise to the ideology of unity enabling the reimagining of community that went beyond villages or ethnicity. Despite that the major ethnic groups in the country, the Ndebele and Shona had their own differences which led to the formation of two nationalist parties, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) in the 1950s, in the 1960s they spoke the same language of majority rule, universal suffrage and national independence. In their purpose to eliminate the colonial regime, they worked in different locations of the country in a struggle in which national freedom was at the forefront. At this point, though ethnicity did not completely disappear, it temporarily lost its utility given that in the larger goals of the nationalist drive, the primary enemy was the colonial regime. By 1966, the ensuing nationalist struggles had deteriorated into warfare in rural zones and incessant protests in urban areas such as Harare. In the city, Africans demonstrated against unequal distribution of political power, voting rights, land rights, starvation wages, and unequal access to education among others. Though internal schisms remained, African communities especially united under leaders of major nationalist parties, ZANU and ZAPU such as Tongogara, Chikerema, Nkomo, Mugabe and others.

⁵¹² Atsuko Matsauko and John Sorenson, *Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community* p.8.

In Malawi, Malawian men and women launched attacks on strategic centers of European development including airports and resisted European agricultural and labor intensive environmental conservation policies in rural areas since the 1940s.⁵¹³ Affiliating with several parties, the most important of which was the MCP, they also supported the major diplomatic war that the leading nationalists who came to include Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda waged on European forums such as the United Nations. Internal demonstrations reflecting the awareness of the racial imbalances in education, employment, land distribution among many injustices did not only involve male elites and workers, but peasant women who suffered under the cumbersome land husbandry policies and gendered restrictions imposed by the state. Like their counterparts in Zimbabwe, they also regarded the introduction of Federation of Nyasaland and Rhodesia in 1953 as disregarding their need for independence and entrenching European domination regionally as in Malawi.⁵¹⁴ Many women joined the ranks of the Malawian Women's League, a branch of the MCP led by the woman Rose Chibambo and formed between 1959 and 1960, to participate in demonstrations for the release of leading male politicians whom the colonial regime imprisoned in the second largest city of Zimbabwe, Bulawayo.⁵¹⁵ In Malawi, while the diplomatic war and internal demonstrations by women and men against the system resulted in the collapse of the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1963, and the victory of Banda's MCP by 1964, in Zimbabwe it resulted in the rise of settler counter nationalism and full blown warfare.

ZANU PF and ZAPU developed guerilla units trained across the borders in guerilla based established in Zambia and Mozambique. In 1966, the guerillas infiltrated the country and launched their first attacks on European establishments such as the farms and mines. From the second half of the 1960s, the war affected every aspect of life in the country and even derailed the urban economy affecting Africans, the most vulnerable of whom were

⁵¹³ Joey Powers, *Political culture and Nationalism in Malawi: Building Kwacha*, (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2010), p119-120.

⁵¹⁴ In this federation, Rhodesia and Nyasaland would have a federal government to run affairs and also territorial governments. It was designed to strengthen settler power in these territories involved.

⁵¹⁵ Joey Powers, *Political culture and Nationalism in Malawi*, p.120.

migrant women and their families. The attacks were fueled by the colonial regime's refusal to adhere to diplomatic advice from Britain and the United Nations which advocated majority rule. In this period, the colonial regime declared itself independent from the West and decided to fight for its own "nation." The decision entailed channeling all available resources towards defeating the guerilla fighters, raising its war expenditure from 500 000 Rhodesian dollars in 1967 to between 800 000 and a million dollars a month between 1973 and 1978. Economic productivity declined as major companies such as the Rhodesia Railways lost more than a million Rhodesian Dollars per year between 1967 and 1975, while the Farmers Co-op, a major agricultural industry in Harare lost over 600 000 Rhodesian dollars in 1976.⁵¹⁶

That the European community of nations slapped the settler regime with economic sanctions from 1965 only worsened matters for this besieged regime.⁵¹⁷ This explains why manufacturing capacity plunged to 27 percent of the 1950s era in 1971.⁵¹⁸ Light industry dropped from 7.6 percent of 1966 to 2.8 percent by 1978 and heavy industry from 7.5 percent to 3.1 percent.⁵¹⁹ The closure of import sources under sanctions meant that industrialists could not obtain machinery, spare parts and raw materials. Industrialists could not even obtain adequate supplies of foreign exchange due to the closure of export markets. As the crisis pushed many entrepreneurs and investors to safety in neighboring South Africa and to Britain, many breadwinners became unemployed, leaving migrant wives without the security of wages or the housing tied to their husbands' status as workers. In this environment, unemployment reached 10 percent in 1966 and nearly 20

⁵¹⁶ Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock, "*Rhodesians Never Die*" *War and Political Change on White Rhodesia, c1970-1980*, (Harare, Baobab Books, 1983), p227.

⁵¹⁷ See chapter 4.

⁵¹⁸ As part of its decolonization diplomacy, Britain had appealed to the United Nations to apply sanctions on the Smith regime three years after its own separate imposition in 1965. However, even with the UN member states collaborating with Britain to cause an economic recession which as hoped would slide the colony into African as well as intra settler civil disorder, the settlers demonstrated commend For a discussion of the UDI and the effect of sanctions on the Rhodesian economy see Meredith Martin, *The Past is another country: Rhodesia, UDI to Zimbabwe*, (London, Pan Books, 1980), p98.

⁵¹⁹ Robert Sutcliffe, *Sanctions against Rhodesia: The economic background*, (London, Africa Bureau, 1966) p11. Evelyn S Pangeti, "Economy under Siege: Sanctions and the Manufacturing Sector, 1965-1979", in Alois S. Mlambo, Ian Phimister and Evelyn Pangeti, *A History of Manufacturing in Zimbabwe, 1890-1995*, (Harare, University Of Zimbabwe Publications, 2000), p51-80.

percent by 1976.⁵²⁰ Also between 1966 and the 1970s, both small employers such as Gutenberg and Sons Limited, Pinto and Sons, Rhodesian Spinners and major ones like the Rhodesia Railways, British Africa Tobacco, National Foods Limited and Farmers Co-op withdrew food rations. Though, like wages, rations had always been meager, most of the women I spoke to stated that it was better to have inadequate rations than none. In addition, formally unemployed migrant women who resorted to informal economic arenas for survival therefore faced contracting markets. The whole situation was so chaotic that it propelled women to reinvent their communities in a bid to secure their livelihoods. Central to their efforts was the construction of broad based nationally cohesive organizations which also were the vehicles through which they shed their ethnic in favor of a more nationally oriented identity. As I will show below, new challenges called for the broad based social formations which in turn promoted new identity constructs.

Broad based associations were especially necessary in a context when the possibilities for social tensions increased due to the coincidence of economic decline and the increased rural to urban refugee influx triggered by the nationalist struggle. As thousands fled to Harare, the unbearable pressure on urban social amenities forced the state and municipalities to implement new laws such as the Foreign Migratory Labor Act (FMLA) of 1960; the Vagrants Act (VA) of 1960, and the Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA) of 1973 among others, to institute a strict curfew in Harare. Malawian women needed to find new, viable ways to successfully survive within this highly volatile environment. They constituted new national associations to fight the VA which declared them alongside rural-urban squatters and laid-off men as illegal; the FMLA which explicitly denied access to all illegal migrants and those who arrived after 1960, and LOMA which affected even their informal economic ventures. Random street inspections, raids, arrests and repatriations became most acute with the highest figure of 600 women being declared “destitute” by the Chief Native Commissioner of Harare and

⁵²⁰ Robert Sutcliffe, *Sanctions against Rhodesia*, p56.

forcibly repatriated through Botswana and Zambia's Kazungula back to Malawi between 1970 and 1971.⁵²¹

Necessity therefore became the mother of invention, as women constructed cross ethnic associations to suit both the economic needs of their time and nationalist requirements of the era. Nambewu Arumenda of Mbare spoke on behalf of all migrant women when she explained,

When real trouble in this city started, it was in the 1960s...the government was not leaving us alone even for a moment...Because everyone was not safe, more women needed support... So our associations could no longer be according to *mtundu*/ethnicity because we thought these would leave out many from our *dziko*/country who needed help or could offer help...⁵²²

In their study of the Chikunda trans-frontier men in Southern Africa, the Isaacmans made a very important observation that in an unstable world, people constantly change identities to suit prevailing conditions and survive. They note that “just as there were compelling reasons for slaves and refugees, who were coming from diverse places and who experienced insecurity to become Chikunda, so there were powerful countervailing forces to discard their new, emerging identity.”⁵²³ Similarly, nationalist upheaval in Zimbabwe created the economic hardships that dramatically exacerbated Malawian women's vulnerabilities in Harare, making it highly necessary for them to unite beyond fragmented ethnic identities. In ways that facilitated the shedding of suddenly less useful ethnic identities, the women began a process of renegotiation involving new formations of welfare and burial associations in Harare. The women needed larger more inclusive associations to increase the financial base so as to help more women by paying police fines and funding their forced repatriations so that they arrived in their villages safely. They needed more cohesive units to protect each other from raids in streets as in their homes and to accommodate each other in case of new arrivals, divorce, widow hood or

⁵²¹ NAZ, File S1007/8, Repatriation of Native Aliens.

⁵²² Nambewu Arumenda.

⁵²³ Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Slavery and Beyond*, p12.

husbands' increasing loss of jobs in this uncertain environment where such loss translated to loss of urban space for the whole family.

At the same time, the transformations testified to the reality that though some never returned to Malawi, migrant women and their families were not immune to new trends, ideologies and transformations in Malawi. Indeed, as Matsuoka and Sorenson note in their study of the Oromo people in Canada, "African migrants typically driven by their activist formations receive information or insistently connect with their territory in the sense that they devote time, or even funds to participate in the politics of their natal territory."⁵²⁴ In their case, just as the vulnerabilities in Zimbabwe made them seek to maintain a hold, be it mental or actual, on their place in Malawi in case of future return, they were eager to identify with and adopt new concepts from their homeland. From 1966, when Banda's MCP led government came to power, like all national leaders in newly independent Africa, he engaged in a nation building process in which he called for the people to identify themselves as members of a national group rather than as members of ethnic groups. From his rise to power in 1964/5, Kamuzu Banda and his MCP denounced ethnicity to rally the support of all Malawians including migrant populations in Zimbabwe, whose return the MCP expected.⁵²⁵ In its nationalist propaganda, the party emphasized the concept of *dziko limozil* one nation. It is not a mere coincidence that Malawian women in Harare reshaped their associations to reflect the shift in their own identities with the collapse of colonial rule in Malawi and Banda's nation building drive.

In this period of high nationalism, Banda's government took seriously its part in promoting national consciousness and worked with migrants in Zimbabwe through the Office of the Malawian High Commissioner based in Mt Pleasant, Harare.⁵²⁶ Because a nation is not necessarily a territorially bounded place but is also made up of people who

⁵²⁴ Matsuoka and Sorenson, *Ghosts and Shadows*, p7.

⁵²⁵ MA, Press release 2076/64, Speech by his Excellency the Prime Minister Kamuzu Banda, Blantyre, Thursday 24th December, 1964.

⁵²⁶ File 1022/A, Malawi Office, Harare, Economic and political conditions of Malawians in Zimbabwe, 1966-1991.

identify with each other based on common territory, Malawian women engaged in what Benedict Anderson terms, “long distance nationalism.”⁵²⁷ Suffice at this point to note that migrant women’s transnational participation in this construction of a wider Malawian identity transcending ethnicity reflected experiences of other migrants in Africa and the world. While the Oromo migrants in Canada constituted associations which drew inspiration from their Oromo counterparts’ struggles and victories in Ethiopia,⁵²⁸ Kurdish women also instituted associations to relate and influence events for their nation in Turkey.⁵²⁹ Also to demonstrate that “migrant women have set up their own organizations to reflect but also engage with national politics in their countries of origin” Annie Phizackela, Rosemary Sales and Eleonore Kofman have examined how Algerian women in France formed national organizations such as the *Movement des Femmes Algeriennes* in 1990 which maintained ties with Algeria.⁵³⁰ Malawian women’s refashioning of their identities and their social formations to promote national consciousness and be part of *mbumba yaNgwazi*/female members of Banda’s national family was thus not strange.

The women maintained contact with the Malawi Office located in Mount Pleasant of Harare, through the MCP Women’s League. A League branch had been opened under the initiative of two newly arrived migrants, Sylvia Kamanga and Enesi Zagwa in Highfield location in 1966. The two had been ardent affiliates of the female wing of Banda’s MCP chaired by Rose Chibambo in Blantyre Malawi.⁵³¹ Demonstrating the reality that migration is also about the movement of ideas and concepts, the women brought the League all the way from Malawi to Zimbabwe’s capital to reach migrant women in the African locations. With a base in Highfield, the historic urban nationalist hub where both the chairperson and secretary, Sylvia Kamanga and Enesi Zagwa resided, the League

⁵²⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London, Verso, 1992), p.89.

⁵²⁸ Matsuoka and Sorenson, *Ghosts and Shadows*, p.89.

⁵²⁹ Annie Phizacklea, Rosemary Sales and Eleonore Kofman, *Gender and International Migration in Europe*, p.3.

⁵³⁰ Phizacklea et. al. , *Gender and International Migration in Europe*, p186.

⁵³¹ Sylvia Kamanga and Enesi Zagwa, Highfiled, 7th, 8th and 9th October, 2008. See also interview between Lisa Gilman and Rose Chibambo, 4 February, 2000.

branch must have made initial contact with the Malawi High Commissioner in Mount Pleasant, Harare in late 1966 as records imply.⁵³²

Having participated in League meetings in Malawi and with a standard six education Enesi Zagwa, the League secretary in Harare aimed not only to represent “migrant women’s views as citizens” but to inform migrant women of the importance of League affiliation.⁵³³ She explained;

We Malawian women in Salisbury were now talking of the importance of *umodzi*/ unity. That’s why we began to come together and call on each other to form *chigwirizano chadziko limozi*/ cooperatives based on one nation of origin even in our *mwariro* and welfare societies. When word came from the High Commission Office that we were to discuss *nkani zaMalawi*/ news about Malawi, everyone came, Aman’anja, Asena, Agomani, Alomwe, Atumbuka, Ayao, Achewa, all *alendo*/migrants. The women came saying, “*tiyeni tikatenge malamulo a Ngwazi yatu*/ lets go to hear the rules sent from our leader, Banda.” At that time, all of us, we were *mbumba yaNgwazi*/ female members of Kamuzu’s national family and were no longer looking at *mutundu*/ ethnic divisions. Even in Malawi, people were now looking at *dziko*/ nation, that’s how we *alendo* began to come together like that.⁵³⁴

It appeared that the line between welfare and burial associations on the one hand and the League gatherings on the other quickly blurred. It was not by mere coincidence that women, such as the League chairwoman Sylvia Kamanga, the League secretary in Harare Enesi Zagwa, as well as the leader of the Mbare branch of the Woman’s League, Mwanjawatu Chinkwapuro launched *Mavhuto AwaMalawi* welfare association, *Chiyanjano Pamwariro* and *Umodzi* burial societies respectively. The associations’ names reflected that ethnicity was no longer significant. For instance, the name *Mavhuto a waMalawi*/ Troubles of Malawian people, denoted a focus on alleviating suffering among Malawians. Enesi Zagwa named her burial society *Chiyanjano Pamwariro* indicating friendly support at funerals, while the name *Umodzi* burial society directly referred to the power of unity. Informed by the nationalist flavor of the moment, even old

⁵³² Sylvia Kamanga and Enesi Zagwa, Highfiled, 7th, 8th and 9th October, 2008. Malawi Office, Harare, Economic and political conditions of Malawians in Rhodesia since 1966.

⁵³³ Enesi Zagwa.

⁵³⁴ Enesi Zagwa.

associations such as *Tikumbuke* and *Rekani Kurira* expanded their boundaries to incorporate all Malawian women, regardless of ethnicity. *Tikumbuke Achewa* was transformed to *Tikumbuke aMalawi*, deliberately replacing the reference to ethnic group with the national name to capture the importance of a broader Malawian national identity.

To further promote this national identity consciousness, the High Commission Office brought migrant women together in state sponsored nationalist travels to and from Malawi.⁵³⁵ Enesi Zagwa and Sylvia Kamanga also claim that invitations to meetings in Malawi first reached them as representatives of the women because they took the initiative to frequent the High Commission Office between 1965 and the 1970s. Through the Office women negotiated for travels for *chikumbutso*/ Malawian independence commemoration during both associations and League conventions. By virtue of adopting nationality as the principle of organizing welfare and burial associations, members also received uniforms emblazoned with Banda's bust, and the rising sun which symbolized the rise of independence and nationhood.⁵³⁶ In 1969, women from various locations' associations met in Highfield and traveled under the High Commission Office's sponsorship to and from Malawi for that year's *Chikumbutso* and political meetings.⁵³⁷ Yearly, they negotiated through the Office and got the chance to travel to districts beyond their own since they attended *chikumbutso* in different districts of Malawi, further promoting interactions between previously ethnic and district bounded peoples.

What partly made such united travels and association viable was that in Malawi, Chewa, as the language of the new leader, Kamuzu Banda who at this time was still very popular among Malawians, was being promoted as the unifying language. In Harare too, the Chewa people dominated the migrant population constituting approximately half of them. Their dominance can be gleaned from the fact that in Mufakose, Highfield, Rugare and Mbare, Chewa became one of the day to day languages even among the indigenes based

⁵³⁵ File 1022/A, Malawi Office, Economic and political conditions of Malawians in Zimbabwe, 1966-1991.

⁵³⁶ See Appendix E.

⁵³⁷ Sylvia Kamanga. Enesi Zagwa. Tavhina Masongera.

in such locations. According to Barbara Meiers and Andre Tabouret-Keller who studied migrants in West Africa, migrants' identity formations will always include "migratory linguistic renegotiations in which the dominant group's language usually becomes the *lingua franca*", and where multiple ethnicities meet, "the usual solution to language diversity is the so-called *lingua franca*."⁵³⁸ To Verdoot the negotiations involved, "a tacit consensus as to which language is to be used for communication on what topics or for what purpose..."⁵³⁹

In constituting their new organizations, the women thus assimilated Chewa to find a common ground of cooperation as Malawians. That renegotiation was also reflected in some female dominated Malawian Churches in Zimbabwe such as *Mpingo wa Christu/* Church of Christ and *Mpingo wa Presbyterian/* Presbyterian Church, where Chewa became a central language of communication to which even the Bible was translated from English.⁵⁴⁰ In Zimbabwe, the African radio broadcast Chewa programs even today while major African newspapers, like the African Weekly, had a Chewa section. Chewa inevitably became the prestigious language of solidarity. Therefore, migrants who had been thrown together in the urban milieu regarded Chewa as the *lingua franca* which eliminated linguistic barriers among the Lomwe, Tumbuka, Yao, Nkonde, Nsenga, Gomani, Tonga speakers and other linguistic groups from Malawi. Erida Lusiasi of Highfield sums it all up:

I am a Mlomwe but I speak Chichewa fluently. I became an adult in an era when Chewa became everyone's language even for some local Shona people... When I got married in 1973, I was just like that girl (pointing to her teenage niece) but I joined *Mavhuto a waMalawi* welfare society right here in Highfield...we began to do this - when we were alone with our ethnic women we spoke our own language, Chilomwe. When we came together with other ethnic groups in our societies we

⁵³⁸ Andre Tabouret-Keller, "Language use in relation to the growth of towns in West Africa: A survey" in *International Migration Review*, vol. 5 No. 2, (1971), p10. Barbara Meier "Migrant women's associations in Ghana: the case of female chief and female chain migration", in Jacqueline Knorr and Barbara Meier, *Women and Migration: Anthropological perspectives*, (New York, St Martin Press, 2000), pp.181-196.

⁵³⁹ Albert Verdoot, "The differential Impact of French Speakers on indigenous German Speakers: A case study in light of two theories", in *International Migration Review*, 5, 2, (Summer 1971), p.142.

⁵⁴⁰ Most of them attended mission schools such as the Seventh day Adventist Mission in Chikwawa district, Mvera Mission of the CCAP in Dowa among others. For details see Emma Tembo Highfield, 3rd September, 2008 and Esteri Zamakani, Mufakose, 6th January 2009 respectively.

spoke Chichewa... It was the language of the *Ngwazi* and of *umodzi*/ unity. So we *alendo* began to use it to better communicate and support each other.⁵⁴¹

In addition, they even composed and sang common songs in Chewa. In my discussion with them in Rugare, Mufakose, Highfield and Mbare of Harare as in Mbayani and Mpondabwino in Malawi, I discovered striking similarities in the women's main songs, used for entertainment and dissemination of nationalist messages at League, burial and welfare associations' meetings. For instance, they popularly sang:

Mbumba yaNgwazi yabwera-a-a! (The female members of Ngwazi's national family have arrived!)

Alendo angwazi abwera. (The migrant women of Ngwazi's national family have arrived.)

Iyaona, ona tavhara bwino. (See, see we are well dressed)

Ona tavhara kwacha. (See, we are wearing the dawn of freedom)

Ona tirikunyada-a-a! (See, we are proud now!)

Mbumba yangwazi yabwera. (Female members of the Ngwazi's national family have arrived.)

Mbumba yaNgwazi yabwera-a-a! (Female members of the Ngwazi's national family have arrived!)

Mbumba yaulendo yabwera. (Female members of the nation who were on a journey have arrived.)

Amama aulemu abwera-a-a! (The mothers of respectability have arrived!)

Mbumba yaNgwazi yabwera. (The female members of Ngwazi's national family have returned.)

Tavhara, ona tavhara bwino. (Well dressed, see we are well dressed.)

Ona, nyakura ndinsaru. (See, *nyakura* and *nsaru*.)

Ona zitenje zakwacha-a-a! (With *zitenje* of the dawn of freedom!)

Mbumba Yangwazi yabwera. (Female members of the Ngwazi's national family have arrived.)⁵⁴²

⁵⁴¹ Erida Lusiasi Nyon'onya, Highfield, Harare 29th August 2008.

⁵⁴² I first heard this and many other songs in Harare. These were among the most popular and commonly remembered songs for women who lived in Mufakose, Rugare, Highfield and Mbare, revealing close interaction between them. These were particularly sang to me in separate interviews by such women as Kuraiti Chauruka and Enifa Njewa of Mufakose; Selina Kumbanga of Highfield and Tavhina Masongera of Rugare. The term **Ngwazi** was just one among many that Malawians used to eulogize Banda. **Nyakura** refers to blouses which were worn with **Nsaru**, that is, the large cloth tied around the waist to go down, covering the legs to the ankles, while **zitenje** (plural) and **chitenje** (singular) refer to the small extra cloth tied on top of nsaru to reach the knees. All were sawn from matching cloth, of either printed java or plain.

Women disseminated the message of unity in Chewa through other popular songs like the following;

Rore rora rora, mundirore! (Choose me, chose me, choose me too!)
Mundirore 'ne Mtonga, mundirore! (Choose me Mtonga, chose me too!)
Mundirore 'ne Mchewa, mundirore! (Choose me Mchewa, choose me too!)
Mundirore Angwazi, mundirore! (Choose me Ngwazi (Banda), chose me too!)

Wopanda Cadi, wopanda Cadi azalandira chilango akazi aMalawi! (Those without Congress Cards, those without congress cards will receive punishment women of Malawi!)
Kumbukani, kumbukani tabwera pamozi haye, Kumbukani tabwera pamozi haye! (Remember, remember we have united yes. Remember we have united, yes!)
Tikutokoza Ngwazi yatu tiripamozi rero! (Lets praise him, our Ngwazi, we are one people now!)⁵⁴³

Not one person could claim authorship of the songs. Rather in the typical African popular cultural tradition captured by Leroy Vail, women composed and improvised on the songs collectively in an ongoing process over time to capture and depict changing agendas and circumstances.⁵⁴⁴ They used them to pass on messages, to teach each other, reflect their feelings and emphasize their significant relationship to Malawi and to the Ngwazi Kamuzu Banda, who embodied the new found Malawian identity upon which they recast their welfare and burial organizations.

In this context, it is not surprising that ethnic associations simply lost their former glory and died down.

People were skipping meetings, and then they were not coming anymore. Then we began to hear that we were all being invited to one burial association or another. They were new associations for all women from *dziko la Malawi*/ the country of Malawi, that's where people were now going. I myself first went to *Chiyanjano Pamwariro* in 1967, out of curiosity. I wanted to see why everyone was now going there, and I never left that organization...⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴³ All the women I interviewed in Harare, Zimbabwe claim that this song was most popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

⁵⁴⁴ Vail Leroy, "Plantation Protest: The History of a Mozambican Song", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No.1, October, 1978, p8.

⁵⁴⁵ Loda Dhaka, Highfield, 11 September 2008.

Enesi Zagwa's *Chiyanjano Pamwariro* and Mwanjawatu Chinkwapuro's *Umodzi waakazi* a Malawi/Unity of Malawian Women were among the most popular burial associations launched between 1965 and 1980. At MCP League meetings and other gatherings, people spread word of the viability of the broad based associations. Enesi Zagwa claims that she also sent out women to move around Highfield inviting others from all ethnic groups to meetings. Up to the 1970s, messengers relayed news about all *Chiyanjano Pamwariro* meetings in Highfield in advance. According to the charismatic Enesi Zagwa,

I relied on my neighbors and friends. Some were not Achewa but I made friends easily because I made it a point to learn the ethnicity of people near me and tried to greet them using their language when we met. Of course any conversation reverted back to Chewa but that's how I started. When I said all of us, let's form our union for burials, they came regardless of *mtundu*/ ethnicity and they brought more friends...⁵⁴⁶

Apparently, that Enesi and the other initiators of new organizations were closely affiliated with the MCP Women's League also made it easy for them to get positive responses. The very ideas of national unity that they advocated in League meetings, the popularity they enjoyed as League leaders who could directly connect with the Malawi Office in Mount Pleasant, influenced and facilitated their constitution of such broad based associations. Also they could easily draw a following from fellow Malawian women in Harare. Not surprisingly, *Chiyanjano Pamwariro* burial society allegedly had over 500 members by the 1970s.⁵⁴⁷ Also launched by the Chewa woman, Mwanjawatu Chinkwapuro, who headed the MCP League's sub branch in Mbare, *Umodzi* was among the first comprehensive national oriented burial societies. While membership was initially placed at a mere 15 in 1966 it quickly grew since,

Word was passed at the stores, at the main market, at communal baths and water taps, everywhere! So on 19 June 1966, we launched the first large meeting of *Umodzi* here in Jo'burg Lines section... Later on more and more people came so that we were over 100 by October 1966. We had about 500 or so by the 1970s. I

⁵⁴⁶ Enesi Zagwa.

⁵⁴⁷ Enesi Zagwa. Eneresi Paliza.

remember that at that time, *katseker*'s burial permits for Warren Hills were expensive at 10 and 20 dollars!⁵⁴⁸

To deal with rising membership numbers, the women split up Mbare's Umodzi into 10 branches representing different sections of the African township. It appears that *Umodzi* attracted members from the other Malawian dominated Townships Mufakose, Highfield and Rugare, situated within a three to four kilometer radius of each other. The large membership complicated the management of meetings. At a leadership meeting held in Mbare in 1971, the women agreed to split *Umodzi* into branches representing each of the townships. These in turn had to be split again depending on the membership size such that each location had up to ten sub branches.⁵⁴⁹ By the 1970s therefore, *Umodzi* literally spread throughout the African townships of Mbare, Mufakose, Highfield and Rugare. This development seemed to represent a general trend for more successful burial associations given that Enesi Zagwa's *Chiyanjano Pamwariro* also planted sub branches not only in Highfield but in other Malawian dominated townships. With a membership of between 30 and 50 women representing their families, each branch of *Chiyanjano* and *Umodzi* for example, generally fixed monthly cash subscriptions of between 2 and 5 dollars to be collected into a central branch fund.⁵⁵⁰ They thus shifted from the practice in former ethnic burial associations whereby each member brought in any contributions in the event of a funeral.

Apart from finances, women also convened to discuss policy and appoint leaders responsible for various areas. Each of the new burial societies had its chairwoman, secretaries and committee members educated to between standard one and six, equivalent to grade three and grade eight.⁵⁵¹ Secretaries recorded subscriptions, money used to support the bereaved family or meet burial needs including the purchase of cooking, cleaning and kitchen utensils required for successful wakes; beer, meat, burial cloths,

⁵⁴⁸ Mwanjawatu Chinkwapro.

⁵⁴⁹ Mwanjawatu Chinkwapuro. Maud Mapundu.

⁵⁵⁰ Mwanjawatu Chinkwapuro. Maud Mapundu. Nambewu Arumenda.

⁵⁵¹ This information is compiled from a survey based on the standard personal questions I asked each interviewee at the beginning of conversations.

blankets and coffins. They also hired between one and three buses from the Rhodesia United Bus Company to ferry mourners to Warren Hills African Cemetery after paying for grave space to the municipality.⁵⁵² *Umodzi* was leading in associations' transactions for Warren Hills Cemetery, paying 20 dollars each for 210 permits, while *Chiyanjano Pamwariro* paid for 145, *Chigwirizano* (cooperation) 38, and Malawi Burial Society 32 permits between September and November 1975.⁵⁵³ Although the records must have left out many societies and where exactly they were coming from, they reflect the operations of major burial organizations in Harare. Contributions also paid for the travel of delegations to accompany bereaved family members to Malawi to condole and take the deceased's personal effects to his or her people. This therefore promoted the back and forth movement of people between Malawi and Zimbabwe, further promoting the transnational transmission of the ideology of *dziko limozi/* one nation upon which the new Malawian identity was constructed. In addition, focusing on nationality enabled any burial association to supplement resources by collecting "a plate of corn meal, vegetables and any cash available door to door, in all the houses occupied by *Manysarandi*. So everyone, even those belonging to other burial associations, they also got the news that a Malawian had died and helped. Death was a time for unity"⁵⁵⁴

When urban hardships escalated in the 1970s, the fact that "death was a time for unity" gained significance even among men who had hitherto benefited from wives, mothers and sisters membership without contributing anything themselves. The idea upon which the initial contributions system was based was that women members represented their immediate families, including husbands and children. However, in the mid-1970s, cross ethnic formations, especially burial associations came to incorporate men. As a result, while neutrally labeled organizations such as *Chiyanjano Pamwariro* retained their names, others such as *Umodzi waakazi achiMalawi/* Malawian women's unity had to

⁵⁵² Angwaula Mlepa. Esteri Banda. Alice Mbalami Kutengo.

⁵⁵³ While most of the available records are postcolonial, HCA, File RHB34/45-75, African Recreational and Burial Grounds: Payments and Permits, January-December, 1975 gives a rough picture of the work of burial societies among migrants.

⁵⁵⁴ Mwanjawatu chinkwapuro. *Manysarandi* was the term by which Malawian were popularly called.

abandon female specific terms. For instance, though a few branches denied male membership and retained the original label, many took the new name *Umodzi Waantu achiMalawi*/ Malawian peoples' unity, thus opening doors to men. In 1975, Giremu Chinkwapuro the husband of founder, Mwanjawatu Chinkwapura, and his friends were among the first men to join *Umodzi* in Mbare's Jo'burg lines section. In 1976, Giremu became the first chairman of the main branch in Mbare, while the late Peduru Magombo was a committee leader in *Chiyanjano* of Highfield.⁵⁵⁵

With this gendered shift however also came debates that shook the original foundations of the burials in the urban locations. Firstly, men's membership on the one hand and the cultural concerns they brought with them caused serious tensions. The tensions were not just about the issue of renaming to incorporate gender shifts or about some women's fears of loss of power to men. Generational issues were raised as some men argued that by catering for funerals of members' adult children, burial societies strained their funds. The general proposal was that instead of parents representing them, employed or married adult children must join in their own right.⁵⁵⁶ While some associations adopted this rule in the second half of the 1970s, others decried both bringing in men and the younger generation into the associations. Women feared that men and the younger generation would "defraud us or even misuse funds. Who ever heard of men managing money with a level head? They wanted to drink and drink, that was the problem."⁵⁵⁷ In *Chiyanjano*, anxiety was deflected by the proposal that committee members who included both men and women had to go and deposit the subscriptions each month in the newly established Post Office Savings Banks located in Mbare and Highfield's Machipisa.

⁵⁵⁵Mwanjawatu Chinkwapuro. Alecke Magombo, Highfield, Harare, 15th September, 2008. Peduru, grandfather of Alecke Magombo is currently regarded as the overall leader of all Malawians in Zimbabwe. He holds records on Chiyanjano and later national organizations but was too sick to offer any help and his grandchildren considered it inappropriate to get his records for me while he was most likely on his death bed.

⁵⁵⁶ Alecke Magombo.

⁵⁵⁷ Enesi Zagwa.

Greater cultural tensions including questions on the acceptability of common burial societies among a people differentiated by ethnicity which went back to their inception in the mid-1960s still threatened these associations, and hence migrant communities' newly forged national identity. The African Weekly chronicled how some men and women raised concerns that nationally oriented associations had negative implications on migrants' cultural and hence social health. Represented by N. R Chimalanga, this group argued that each *mutundu* must bury its dead according to "*mwambo yawo*" (their ethnic ways) in *mabwalo awo* (their own meeting places).⁵⁵⁸ Responding to the side dominated by Man'anja people, advocating for national cohesion, and claiming that *mutundu* was irrelevant to women's unions, Chimalanga argues, "*umodzi* implies intentions to bury each other indiscriminately. Yet, let's remember, each *mutundu* has its own *mwambo* and *mabwalo*. Any deceased Mgomani, Mtonga or Mchewa's rites must be performed by *anzake* (his ethnic people) as you Aman'anja must go to Aman'anja *anzanu*."⁵⁵⁹ Representing all organizations that sought to reach a compromise, by the 1970s women and men in *Chiyanjano* as in *Umodzi* finally agreed,

...to have both male and female ethnic leaders in our branches. We selected them according to seniority and thus knowledge of their *mutundu's mwambo*/ ethnic customs, so that if it's a Mchewa we are burying, Achewa *anzake* would lead in burial preparations and rites, if it's a Myao, Ayao would take the lead and even have room to perform their own ethnic dances. We were still together as a Malawi but respected each other's *mwambo* like that.⁵⁶⁰

Hence, recognizing cultural specificity in burial rites did not necessarily nullify the long articulated rationale of nationally oriented associations since, "Really, we are all *wamodzi* even if we are also from different *mitundu* and each *mtundu* has its own *mwambo* and *mabwalo*."⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁸ African Weekly, 13 September, 1966.

⁵⁵⁹ African Weekly, 21 September, 1966.

⁵⁶⁰ Enesi Zagwa.

⁵⁶¹ African Weekly, 13 September, 1966. *Wamodzi* means one people while *mtundu* means ethnic group and *anzanu* means your own people.

Although no such tensions and thus compromises were necessary, through the 1970s national orientation also impacted on *mutandizi*/ welfare associations. For example, some formerly ethnic associations widened their boundaries of inclusion to “all *alendo*/migrants from *dziko la Malawi*.”⁵⁶² Tikumbuke Achewa particularly became *Tikumbuke aMalawi* in 1967.⁵⁶³ Alomwe of Rugare, the Man’anja’s Nkokwe Society of Old Highfield and the Sena’s Kusunza of Mbare however rapidly lost membership as people moved into larger and more popular nationally oriented formations such as *Mavhuto a waMalawi*/ Malawian people’s troubles founded in Highfield by Sylvia Kamanga. Membership in *Mavhuto awaMalawi* for instance was also larger than in ethnic associations reaching between 200 and 500 women organized into many small branches in each as well as across townships.⁵⁶⁴ *Mavhuto* had a total of eight branches in Highfield alone representing Western Triangle, Machipisa, Old Canaan, New Canaan and Gazaland sections among others.⁵⁶⁵ Due to the fact that Sylvia Kamanga was the chairperson of the migrant Women’s League, her association, *Mavhuto*, must have been most attractive since it had about six branches in Mufakose, six or seven in Mbare and four in Rugare. Each sub branch pegged membership to between 60 and 100 with additional members required to form new sub branches for ease of management.⁵⁶⁶

Representing the general trends in the new welfare associations, each branch convened either weekly or every two weeks to educate each other about various issues and bring in cash contributions. Instead of bringing in cash and food as and when need arose, that is in case of serious difficulties faced by any member, the system changed as each woman in societies such as *Mavhuto* brought cash contributions to such meetings to be collected and given to assigned women. Each branch of *Mavhuto* was organized into “cells of ten women each” which sat in separate places after general discussions in the larger group. On their own, each cell of ten had their own overseers who collected subscriptions each

⁵⁶² Enifa Njewa.

⁵⁶³ Enifa Njewa. Angwaula Mlepa.

⁵⁶⁴ Sylvia Kamaga. Eneresi Paliza. Alice Mbalami Kutengo.

⁵⁶⁵ Sylvia Kamaga. Eneresi Paliza. Alice Mbalami Kutengo.

⁵⁶⁶ Sylvia Kamanga.

week, recorded names and forwarded the money to one woman for her family's use. Each week or fortnight a different woman received the cell subscriptions until all had benefited from the revolving fund and the cycle started again. In *Mavhuto*, each woman brought two dollars per week to be given to one woman in their particular cell. In addition, instead of bringing food contributions when someone needed them, women in associations such as Mavhuto agreed that each cell had to select leaders apart from the central committee members and chairperson to receive food contributions. At the end of each month, women carried maize meal, beans, sugar, oil, salt and other foodstuffs to the home of the selected women who received it and wrote down their names. In explaining the system, Sylvia Kamaga states:

Instead of scrambling to find food for a troubled family in case of emergency, a woman would come to me or their branch leader and get a letter saying “*tandizani anzatu, alowa mumavhuto mubanja/* help our fellow woman she is facing hardships in her household” and give her another woman to go with her to the one who kept the food stores in her own cell. There she got a little bit of everything until things got better. This was good because, there was always something ready to give out...⁵⁶⁷

Asked if cell leaders did not defraud the others, Sylvia Kamanga stressed that cell leaders were selected according to integrity and “never took anything for themselves without general approval. They would face shame and stigma if they acted in any underhand way...”⁵⁶⁸

Cross ethnic societies, even reformed ones like *Tikumbuke* of Mufakose raised an emergency fund to aid those facing illness in their families. Here, cell leaders spread the message of such illness so that all members would take the time to visit the sick, help take care of them and offer friendship and support. In addition, the fund was used to aid not only illegal singles, but even those whose husbands died, were unemployed or injured and had therefore been ordered to leave the colony. In addition, different associations made it a point to obtain information at Women's League meetings which they used to

⁵⁶⁷ Sylvia Kamanga.

⁵⁶⁸ Sylvia Kamanga.

help their members in times of need. For example, in the early 1970s women in various associations discussed the possibilities of obtaining assistance from the High Commission Office. In light of the need to travel back home during the dangerous era of Zimbabwe's liberation war, women disseminated the message sent from the Malawian government that,

Malawian citizens resident abroad should at the earliest opportunity register their names and addresses in Malawi or at the nearest Malawi Embassy, legation or consulate or at the Office of the Resident Malawi Representative...Failure to register may in the period of need or emergency result in difficulty...in according to Malawi citizens the assistance and protection to which they are entitled.⁵⁶⁹

With associations conscientizing them, many registered with the High Commissioner and association leaders such as Sylvia Kamanga advocated for them.

Some of them came all the way from Mufakose, Rugare or Mbare... I went to the office with all their papers and got tickets and funds to go through Botswana and Zambia. This was for safety because of the war but it was very expensive because it was not as near as going through Mozambique. We petitioned as associations of nationals of *dziko la* Malawi not as *mitundu*, so we got help...⁵⁷⁰

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced the development of Malawian women's welfare and burial societies in the urban locations of Harare. I have argued that their associations represented a very important strategy in migrant women's struggles for their own, their families' and communities' survival. Welfare and burial associations were a significant mechanism in migrants' efforts to cope with and adapt to the poor living conditions which worsened in the 1960s period of economic decline. They also constituted arenas from which singles, widows, divorcees as well as some married women could negotiate, evade and circumvent the highly restrictive environment in of the city. Despite their social differences, these mostly unemployed women some of whom had no working husbands to earn a family wage for them, joined together to secure their socio-economic

⁵⁶⁹ Passports including one belonging to Marcelina Mukakiwa of Rugare issued under Banda and indicating the safest routes during the war era (part of page entitled, Registration-see appendix section).

⁵⁷⁰ Sylvia Kamanga.

lives in a foreign territory. I have attempted to show that as was the case with their economic ventures such as beer brewing, fresh produce marketing and urban farming discussed in chapter 4, up to 1980, their associations helped them to cope with their common vulnerabilities within the urban locations.

I have also argued that their associations also became vehicles through which they negotiated their identities in a foreign city. Since they came from a wide variety of ethnicities which had no obvious relationship with each other, Malawian women initially gravitated towards ethnic associations. As women left behind the support of extended families, village elders and friends, they created new social bonds based on ethnicity to enable them to navigate gendered urban legislation, unemployment, husbands' poor wages and rations amidst a rising cost of living, illness and deaths. To deal with all this, they constructed two distinct types of organizations, that is, *mutandizi* (*welfare*) societies and *chigwirizano pamwariro* (burial cooperatives) defined by ethnicity. *Mutandizi* societies aided migrant women from specific ethnic groups who themselves joined such associations because they were led by their ethnic leaders and were ethnically named. Achewa affiliated with societies such as Tikumbuke Achewa welfare society of Mufakose, while Ayao affiliated with Ayao Burial Society in Rugare.

Of course, ethnic identities among migrants cause fragmentation in the migrant communities but to complicate matters, each ethnic group also created various associations denoting that even coherent ethnic groups had other identities which they sought to preserve. For example, in Rugare, apart from Erise Chunga's Ayao Burial association, other Yao people formed Ayao a Balaka and Ayao a Port Herald burial associations to attract Yao's from specific Districts of Malawi. However, the small membership base that resulted from such divisions seemed to work well in the 1940s and 1950s era since the associations could be easily managed. Leaders could track down members, collect subscriptions, learn easily who was in need, was sick or being repatriated, who contributed consistently and who did not. They could also communicate easily using their ethnic languages. Notwithstanding, the larger point here is that by

constituting ethnic associations, the women helped each other but also demonstrated the significance of ethnicity in their identity conceptions in Harare.

I have shown that by the 1960s however nationalist transformations in Malawi and Zimbabwe significantly impacted on women's organizational base propelling a shift towards national community. The shift was made even more necessary by escalating economic challenges as the Smith regime in Zimbabwe rebelled against Britain and the UN by announcing a UDI against majority rule. Here, the war effort, combined with the economic sanctions on the colony by the western world drastically affected the economy of Zimbabwe to the detriment of migrant families who dominated urban wage work. Placed within the nationalist era when the ideology of *dziko limodzi* (one nation) gained credence, not only in Zimbabwe but in Malawi the situation made the shift from ethnic to cross ethnic associations inevitable.

The shift also triggered a gendered reconstitution of burial associations especially by the 1970s. Men, some of whom had watched and discussed the developments from the sidelines now occupied some leadership positions. Because not only women suffered the scourge of death men too found it imperative to work with them. Given that funerals in the city were highly expensive and death affected everyone regardless of gender, it is understandable that men especially joined nationality oriented burial societies and brought about organizational innovations whereby ethnic leaders were recognized in national oriented associations so as to lead in ethnic specific burials. Adult children who had depended on mothers' membership now also joined in their own right as long as they were married or employed. Today, Malawian burial associations have an equally significant male and female membership and are open to all generations.

CONCLUSIONS

The story of Malawian women's migration is a vital part of a larger narrative of African women's struggles for mobility dating back to the colonial period. Even so, Malawian women's migratory experiences and hence this work stand out on three important levels.

Firstly, by adopting a gendered transnational analytical approach, this work points to new directions in African migrant history. This is not to ignore prior scholarship that has examined colonial states' gendered controls of women's mobility. In Kenya and Burkina Faso, men migrated to various countries in East and West Africa respectively, yet women had limited freedom to do so. Closer to home, in Swaziland the state and African authorities instituted various ways to restrain women's migration to the Rand, just as South Africa repatriated thousands of Mozambican women.⁵⁷¹ However, without adopting the transnational scope, scholars have yet to examine the well-orchestrated gendered management of population in which states colluded with each other across territorial boundaries. It was within such controls, straddling not one but several inter-territorial borders and managed by more than one state that Malawian women's migrant experiences have unfolded. To find a common ground in their interests, Malawian and Zimbabwean colonial states coordinated beyond the limits of territorial borders to restrain women's migration, dictate the circumstances of migration, the cumbersome legislation and hierarchies that they had to overcome to do so; and the differential treatment of registered wives compared to widows, divorcees and singles. Neither patriarchal Swaziland nor apartheid South Africa maintained a gendered surveillance at such a transnational scale of cooperation between receiving or sending territory.

The transnational perspective reveals these women's significance in the entangled socio-economic history of the two colonies. In Malawi, the women's pre-eminence in the whole

⁵⁷¹ Francis, *Gender, Migration and Multiple Livelihoods*. Bonner, "African urbanization on the Rand". Simelane, "The State, Chiefs and the Control of Female Migration". Ouedraogo, "The Girls of Nyovuuru".

system was made apparent by the state's reasoning that in limiting their migration while promoting a wholesale exodus of men, the territory would get wage, tax remittances and deferred earnings. The women "left behind"⁵⁷² would spend cash internally; maintain peasant economies and the social fabric. Zimbabwe would get only the male workforce that she needed while women subsidized men's wages in Malawi. The absence of women would eliminate the threat of foreign African domicile and ensure low costs of housing, general urban social amenities and labor. It also followed that despite the state's focus on denying them space in the migrant stream and in Harare, that they still claimed socio-economic space therein speaks volumes of their centrality in the connected histories of both colonies.

I have concluded that their story is not just about their activities but concerns the weaknesses, self-contradictions or miscalculations in state policies. Both states regarded the constitution of a male focused migrant system and the stifling of women's migration as a balancing act to ensure their best economic interests. However instead of maximizing benefits as initially expected Malawi communities experienced dire poverty and escalating food insecurity in the long absence of male labor. Even as women tried to cope with the rising poverty amidst the exodus of their men, some of whom became *matchona*, migration was one powerful way by which women could escape such deep seated rural indigence. Hence, the very system designed to prevent women's migration from Malawi and into the city of Harare created the conditions which made their mobility inevitable.

As I have argued, by drastically affecting rural life, the system opened women to extreme vulnerabilities. As family life collapsed, the division of labor between men and women in the *banja*/household also collapsed. The old communal work strategies where household or village men worked together to clear new land, cutting down trees with hand axes; hoed and burnt bushes, broke the soil, protected crops from small and large game, harvested, hunted and fished to supplement food supplies while women concentrated on

⁵⁷² MA, File LB5/1/1, Native Tax Ordinance- District census and payments, 1941-50: Tax remittance Notice from the Governor to Labor Commissioner, 19 December 1947.

planting, weeding, storage of the harvest and food processing among other tasks collapsed. As the Governor of Malawi observed, “village standards have become markedly low” since “the growing emigration has brought misery and poverty to thousands of female headed families. The waste of life, happiness, health and wealth is colossal.”⁵⁷³ Indeed, the negative impacts of the male biased system triggered serious insecurities forcing many women into the migrant stream.

That their vulnerability was most extreme in contrast to migrant women from other territories is made clear by the fact that desperate women illegally traversed other territories such as Mozambique and Zambia to flee Malawi. Because their territories shared boundaries with Zimbabwe, Mozambican or Zambian women could move into the colony with relative ease. However, Malawians had to travel longer distances through Zambia or Mozambique to reach the Zimbabwean border. They risked encounters with wild animals, the elements, policemen and from the 1960s with soldiers during the Mozambican nationalist war. Because of the cumbersome hierarchies and processes necessary to obtain travel permits in Malawi, many could not travel legally. They suffered brutal inspections, detentions and deportations from Malawian, Mozambican and Zimbabwean patrols until they reached Harare. In Harare’s African townships, gendered internal and inter-territorial laws exposed them to intrusive house raids, street searches and repatriations. Contrary to expectations, the hardships associated with the male exodus under joint colonial migrant laws only escalated the conditions making it necessary for thousands of women to take such risks and brave police brutality to reach Harare.

I have also established that the transnational approach opens a window into Malawian women’s coping strategies in Malawi, on transit and in Harare. Before resorting to migration, peasant women coped with increased workloads, starvation and lone burials of their children who died due to malnutrition related diseases.⁵⁷⁴ They worked longer,

⁵⁷³ BFAO), File 137/1942-48, Ref 27A, Agreed Record of Proceedings at the First Meeting of the Migrant Labor Committee held at Limbe on 21 March 1946.

⁵⁷⁴Embassy of Malawi, Harare, Mt Pleasant, “Marching From the past to the future: Improving the health and mortality of infants in Malawi”, Ministry of Health, 8 June 1965, p.3.

starting at dawn and retiring way after dark. They combined tasks culturally reserved for men with their social reproductive work in the homesteads. They even begged for food left-overs from those of their neighbors who had some to spare, preserving *nkute*/maize meal polenta left-overs, gathering water lily bulbs, cassava and plantains to make *ufa*/ flour and also collected wild vegetables and edible insects to feed their families. However, under the conditions caused by the male biased migrant system, migration seemed to be the ultimate way out.⁵⁷⁵

Notwithstanding, simply leaving Malawi and entering Harare did not bring them into a land of ease. In Harare they entered a male dominated city in which women made up a mere 5 percent of the total workforce as late as 1956.⁵⁷⁶ In addition, their men earned very meager wages which generally fell below the required urban family income of 7pounds 10shillings 6pence in 1957, for instance.⁵⁷⁷ Even the food rations they received to supplement wages were primarily meant for a “single worker.” Without husbands, single women, divorcees and widows lacked even those meager wages and rations, as did women whose husbands could not work for any reason. Malawian women had to draw from their life experiences in Malawi and opened *madimba*/ swamp and *minda*/ rain fed fields in the vast unoccupied land surrounding Mbare, Highfield, Rugare and Mufakose. They also coped by engaging in beer brewing, produce marketing, *chimbadzwo*/ usury and prostitution to support their families; and maximized their socio-economic security by establishing *mutandizi*/ welfare and *mwariro*/ burial associations.

I have however argued that even coping was not enough. The women launched distinct struggles against a system which denied them mobility in Malawi and survival in Harare. That they migrated and established an economic life not only demonstrates women’s desperation and ingenuity but exposes the weaknesses or inherent contradictions of the

⁵⁷⁵ Sinclair Marion Ryan, “Community, Identity and Gender in Migrant Societies: Emerging Epistemological Challenges”, *International Affairs*, 74, 2, (April 1998), pp. 339-353. She argues that for women in Eastern and Southern Africa, migration was one way by which women sought to cope with new hardships, holds true for Malawian women.

⁵⁷⁶ Barnes, “*We Women Worked so Hard*”, p37.

⁵⁷⁷ NAZ, File S51/3-6, Evidence to the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1957.

colonial project. Amidst transnational controls, the women maintained enough autonomy to determine their own situation even without launching any massive acts of revolt. In Malawi, the state could not control every one of the household heads, village heads, chiefs and their respective police men on which it depended in Malawi. So women resorted to flight, negotiations with their male guardians at household level, bribery, the use of clandestine routes with the help of illegal transporters popularly known as *madhobhadhobha* and forced husbands to obtain required documents. The state could not engage enough functionaries to saturate all routes in the countryside and women hiked in the company of male friends who subsequently hid them in train cabins until they arrived in Harare.

In Zimbabwe, the wide gap between legislation and possibility of implementation was apparent. Firstly, police manned only three border entry points - Forbes, Nyamapanda and Mukumbura, leaving vast parts of the border open to thousands.⁵⁷⁸ Indeed, the women demonstrated how the border itself is not a physical barrier but a legislatively negotiated porous space of demarcation between insiders and outsiders. Actually, “border regulations could be circumvented and extensive borders, relative to available manpower, made effective policing extremely difficult.”⁵⁷⁹ Little could policemen stem the tide that broke through *madhobhadhobha*/ illegal entry points; bus or train stations. In Harare, the women took advantage of racial divisions to liaise with African policemen some of whom were Malawians. Through them *anyankungwi* /leading women knew about impending raids. Neither laws nor police action could stop women from carrying out their activities under cover of darkness or from launching powerful welfare organizations as a bulwark against arrests, beatings, detentions, forced repatriations or denial of shelter. The Police could neither inundate every moment and space in which the women existed nor

⁵⁷⁸ NAZ, File 2239, Migratory Labor Carried by Southern Rhodesia Government Migrant Labor Transport (Ulere), 1947-60.

⁵⁷⁹ Aderanti Adepoju, “Creating a borderless West Africa: Constraints and prospects for inter-regional migration” in Antoine Pecoud and Paul de Guchteneere, (Eds) *Migration Without Borders: Essays on the Free Movement of People*, (New York, Bergahn Books, 2007). pp.161-174.

understand how they operated or simply underestimated their capacity to resist, subvert and challenge the system.

The second dimension that makes Malawian women's migratory history unique is their domination of the female migrant stream and transformation of urban life in Zimbabwe. Even as they needed to pass through other territories to reach Zimbabwe, they far outstripped Batswana, Zambian and Mozambican women. For instance, colonial records show that between a minimum of 1 700 and a maximum of over 2 000 Malawian women arrived in Harare yearly between 1947 and 1960. The highest number that left Zambia yearly was one hundred.⁵⁸⁰ Also, in 1949 and 1959 Mozambican, Zambian and Tanzanian female detainees and deportees recorded at Forbes Border post were 132; 74 and 10 in August 1949; 101; 38 and 2 in August 1959, where Malawians made up 242 and 189 in August 1949 and August 1959 respectively.⁵⁸¹ Their dominance is understandable given that Zambian women and men concentrated on the Zambian copper-belt just as Mozambicans dominated on the Rand. Also the national/ethnic chain of migration ensured that Malawian women tracked sons, in-laws, husbands, betrothed men, uncles and brothers in Harare where they transformed the social and spatial structure. Before the 1940s, only the so called economically productive migrants, men who worked in nascent European manufacturing and food processing industries, had legal access to the city's dormitory townships. Even before 1978, when the city fathers extended the lodgers' permit system to accommodate foreign women whose husbands obtained employment in Harare by 1960, Malawian women's dominance in the early African townships of Mbare, Highfield, Rugare and Mufakose was apparent. Their families claimed three in every five houses in the limited marriage sections and they established unique economic ventures, challenging the existing racial and masculinist

⁵⁸⁰NAZ, File2239, Migratory Labor Carried by Southern Rhodesia Government Migrant Labor Transport, Ulere, 1947-1960.

⁵⁸¹File S1007/8, Office of the Chief Native Commissioner: Repatriation of Native aliens, 1949-1971; Forbes Border post; Directing Officer's Reports, August 1949 and August 1959.

spatial demarcations of the city.⁵⁸² Today, these townships are known as *Komboni dzemanyasarandi*/ Malawians' locations.

The final dimension of their unique history is their establishment of a new usable identity which impacted on the socio- cultural landscape of the African townships in Harare. They began by constructing ethnic welfare and burial communities to cushion each other from urban hardships, away from extended families. By the 1960s serious urban challenges arose due to the guerilla war, flight of investors, closure of companies and drastic economic decline.⁵⁸³ Refugees fled from rural areas and farms to collide with new migrants from Malawi who joined long lost relatives in the safest destination, Harare. To stem the influx pressure amidst economic decline and war, urban authorities turned Harare into a highly policed city.⁵⁸⁴ To develop more effective ways of cooperation, women established cross ethnic associations based on nationalist ideologies circulating in Zimbabwe and transmitted from Malawi.

The transnational framework allows us to understand that Malawian women's migration also included movement of ideologies and identity concepts. The concept of *dziko*/nation became central in Malawian nationalist culture under Banda. When the Malawian Women's League opened its branch in Harare in 1965/6 it also transmitted concepts of *umodzi*/unity and *dziko*.⁵⁸⁵ With *umodzi*/unity and *dziko* at the forefront, Chewa also became the *lingua franca*, connecting women from a diversity of Malawian ethnic groups in Harare. They renegotiated community, shifting from ethnic organizations to supra-

⁵⁸² First generation migrants or their sons, daughters and grandchildren occupy the majority of the houses in these townships and it is easy for people to assume that anyone who lives in the locations is Malawian because they are still known as Malawian people's townships. Chewa is one of the most important everyday languages in these locations.

⁵⁸³For a discussion of the UDI and the effect of sanctions on the Rhodesian economy see Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, pp.385-411.

⁵⁸⁴ The laws included the NUARAA, 1960 Vagrants Act; the 1960 Foreign Migratory Labor Act denying them entry within the 10 miles radius of Harare, the 1973 Law and Order Maintenance Act and the 1973 Riotous Assembly Act.

⁵⁸⁵Joey Powers, *Political culture and Nationalism in Malawi: Building Kwacha*, (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2010). Enesi Zagwa and Sylvia Kamanga, both leaders of the Malawian Women's League in Harare from 1965 stress the importance of *dziko* in migrants identity building and in Malawi.

ethnic ones and together they received Malawian government's financial aid, national uniforms and documents to travel as association cum League members by plane to and from Malawi. Here, they attended unifying political gatherings such as *chikumbutso*/national independence commemorations.⁵⁸⁶ Through the 1970s, theirs became a unique story of transnational identity construction influenced by changes in Harare and in their natal country.

While the postcolonial aspects of these women's experiences fall outside the scope of this study, it suffices here to mention that the end of colonialism in Zimbabwe marked a new era for them. Inter-territorial and internal colonial laws collapsed with the embrace of all Africans whose residence in Zimbabwe dated back to the colonial era. The FMLA, NUARAA and infamous 1948 Act lost relevance as Malawian women and men could remain in their urban homes or move to new rural reservations in Zimbabwe from 1980. Elderly migrants had the option to nominate to employers their sons as replacements for them on their jobs and hence in urban housing.⁵⁸⁷ In 1994, the state agreed with the municipality to promulgate a rent to buy scheme allowing all current home occupants in the city to claim ownership.⁵⁸⁸ Malawian families claimed the homes in the oldest townships while indigenes dominated new high density locations.⁵⁸⁹

However, in 2008 conditions changed for Malawians as the Mugabe regime demanded that foreign Africans either declare themselves full Zimbabweans or foreigners without entitlements. This was in the wake of the urban victory of the first powerful opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change and might have been a ploy to destroy its support base. Uncertainty bred pandemonium as Malawians, some of them born and

⁵⁸⁶ In all my conversations with them, Malawian women stressed the importance of the linguistic flexibility and the use of Chewa to promote *umodzi* and be able to effectively work together.

⁵⁸⁷ Being a teenage at this time, I witnessed this change as exemplified by the National Railways of Zimbabwe Company, formerly, the Rhodesia Railways whose housing units all passed down to nominated sons who replaced elderly fathers and grandfathers as workers.

⁵⁸⁸ The Herald, 30 April 1994.

⁵⁸⁹ The pattern whereby migrants people, especially Malawians dominate the oldest African townships, while indigenes who moved to the city much latter, dominate postcolonial townships is apparent in Harare.

raised in Zimbabwe, rushed to and from Malawi to secure documents in this economically unstable period.⁵⁹⁰

This movement to and from Malawi was not unique to the postcolonial era. I have shown that before 1980, Malawian women were repatriated while others went to mourn their dead, take back personal items of deceased spouses and perform appropriate rituals, to celebrate nationalist victory and attend political gatherings such as *Chikumbutso*/independence commemoration. Even as many whose husbands were pensioned for old age, or became too sick or injured to work went back to Malawi, many more became women of two worlds, who until today move from Harare to Malawi and back again as economic and political conditions dictate.

In the future I plan to extend my analysis of Malawian women's migration experiences from Harare to that of their counterparts on farms and mines of Zimbabwe. Even though Harare was the most popular destination due to the imagined and real attractions of city life and the dominance of Malawian men therein, some women settled on farms and mines. Though the farms offered little prospects for lucrative informal work, and presented the challenges of labor intensive and regimented agrarian work, they had a much freer legislative environment controlled primarily by farm owners. Women could settle freely in their own huts even without husbands as long as they could work, of course for very meager wages.⁵⁹¹ On mines, women could not work except as beer brewers and prostitutes and conditions of settlement differed from mine to mine and according to marital status. Mines and farms therefore represent interesting areas of future inquiry.

⁵⁹⁰ Daily News, January 2008. The Herald, 18 July, 2008.

⁵⁹¹The interviews I carried out with women such as Yuna Chipoka and Mary Kadamika who escaped urban persecution by temporarily moving to Pattison's farm in Beatrice area shed much insight into farm life. See also BFAO, File 137/1944-1948, Report on Conference to discuss the Formation of a Native Labor Organization, held in Salisbury on the 22nd February, 1944 discusses the insatiable demand for labor on farms as the land under cultivation increased by a 10 000 hectares between 1940 and 1945.

Glossary

Abambo: Father

Akamwini: son-in law

Akaporo: slaves.

Alendo: visitors/ migrants.

Amai: mother.

Anyankungwi: leader/instructor. This originated from the Chewa culture of initiation whereby elderly women responsible for training adolescent about customs, marriage, family maintenance and life in general are referred to by that name.

Apongozi: in-laws.

Atsabwila: Family friend or funeral friend who took charge of proceedings.

Azungu: (singular muzungu: Caucasians /Europeans.

Boma: this term has been used among migrants to refer to District or the District Commissioners' Office.

Chikamwini: practice where sons in law work for the mother in law to receive approval and show their worth as husbands of their daughters.

Chikokiana: Opaque beer distinguished by its short period of fermentation.

Chikumbutso: commemoration or literary that which causes remembrance.

Chimanga: corn.

Chiseven days: Opaque beer which took seven days to ferment but was considered better than chikokiyana.

Dimba (singular) **madimba** (plural): garden in the swamps or marshes.

Dziko: nation.

Kachasu: locally made gin/ a clear beer brewed by Malawian women.

Karata: Letter/ document.

Kasunika: a spicy vegetable which grows in water like water lilies.

Komboni: derived from the work compound and used to refer to the locations in which Africans lived on farms, mines and urban areas.

Lichelo: winnowing basket

Mabvuto: Means very serious trouble/ crisis.

Mabwidi: derisive term for Malawians

Madhobhadhobha: The term appears in colonial records and is also popularly used among migrants to refer to illegal labor recruiters.

Mafumu (plural) amfumu (singular): Headmen.

Matchona: the term is used to refer to those people, especially migrant men who break all ties with their people in Malawi.

Matutu: soil heaping carried out to conserve the soil from erosion when planting.

Mbali: clan.

Mbatata: Sweet potatoes.

Mbumba: Female members of a family.

Mfiti: witch.

Mitumbira: ridges which peasant used to conserve soil fertility especially in areas prone to soil erosion.

Mphala: dry land where farming depends on rains

Mpunga: rice.
Mudzi: village
Mufalinya or chinangwa: cassava
Munda (singular) minda (plural): Rain dependent fields in dry lands.
Mutandizi: derived from the word kutandiza which means to help. Migrants used the term to refer to free transport arrangements by which the state in colonial Zimbabwe helped them to reach Zimbabwe.
Mutundu: ethnicity.
Mwambo: cultural customs.
Mwananga: my child.
Mzimbe: sugar cane
Ndiwo: relish eaten with the main diet of nsima/ corn meal polenta.
Ngwazi: Praise name for Kamuzu Banda, first leader of independent Malawi.
Nkoswe (plural ankoswe): all male guardians in matrilineal and patrilineal communities of Malawi.
Nkute: leftovers from the previous night, usually of nsima.
Nsikana: girl
Nsima: stiff porridge made from cereals and a principal component of the daily meal.
Ntedza: peanuts.
Nyandoro: pigeon pea which grows in a tiny tree.
Nyika bulbs: roots of a kind of water lily which people in Malawi rely on in the hungry season.
Shatini: forest
Sinjiro: peanut butter made from grinding unroasted peanuts.
Ufa: flour.
Ukwati: marriage
Umodzi: unity

FIGURES:

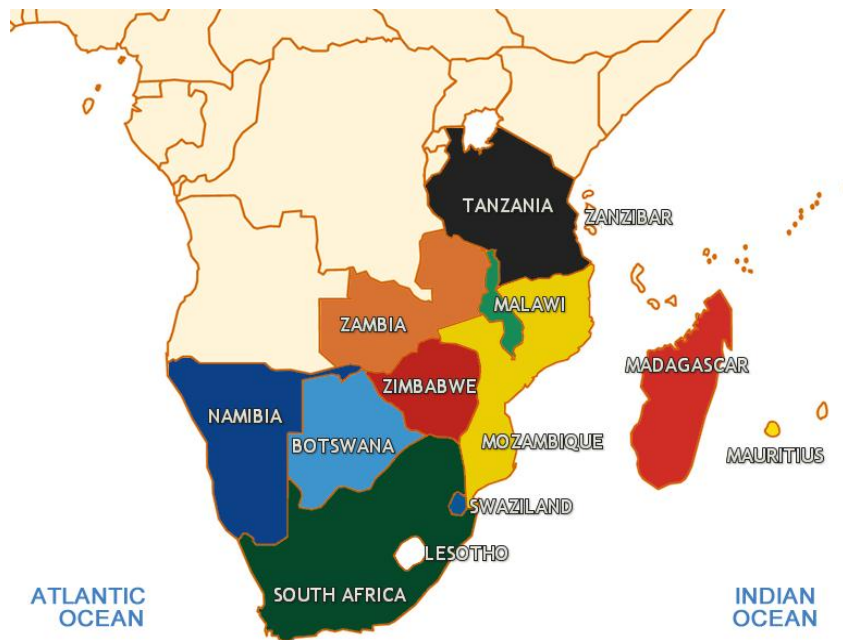
1. Map of Malawi



Fig. 2 Map of Harare



Fig. 3: Map showing location of Malawi and Zimbabwe



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Appendices: A.

Trevelling Permit Extracted from File137/1940-48, Memos, Reports, Agreements, Ordinances and Acts. The structure and wording are exact.

TRAVELLING PERMIT

AFRICAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN No.....

This certificate entitles the holder to leave Nyasaland and proceed to Southern Rhodesia for the purpose of (a).....

District.....

Full name.....

Father's/ Guardian's name.....

Sex.....Particulars of husband (b).....

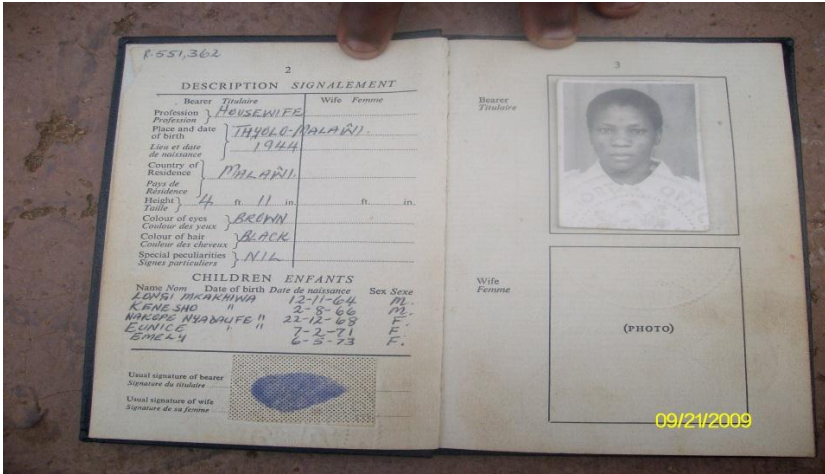
Place where holder is proceeding to reside with the head of the household..

.....

Tribe.....Village.....

Native Authority.....

B.



Passport of Marcelina Mukakiwa showing her personal details including marital status and number of children.



Marcelina's passport showing new routes of travel to escape the dangers of the war in Mozambique. It also shows frequency of to and from movement between Malawi and Zimbabwe.

C.



Worker's passbook belonging to Mr. Barnet Mlewa of Rugare as issued under the 1948 Migrants Act.

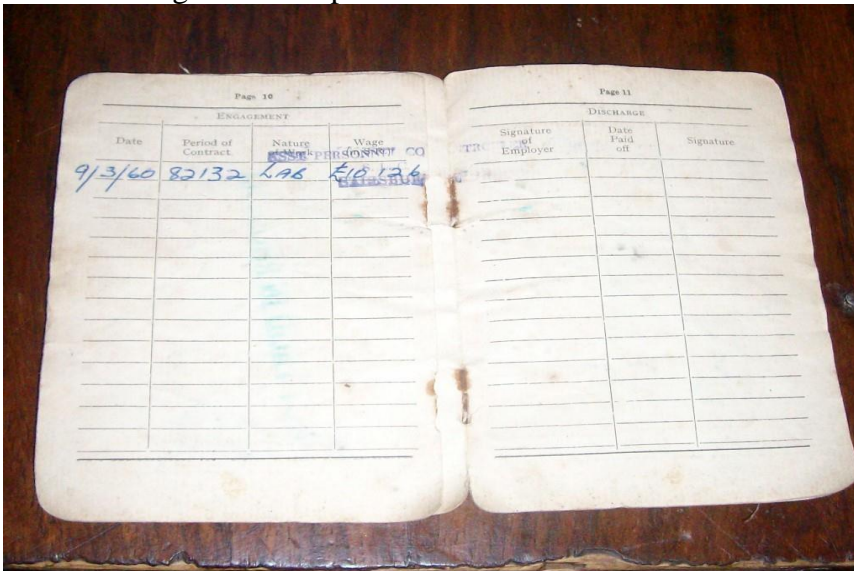


Mr. Barnet Mlewa's passbook showing his work number required for women to apply for permits.

D.

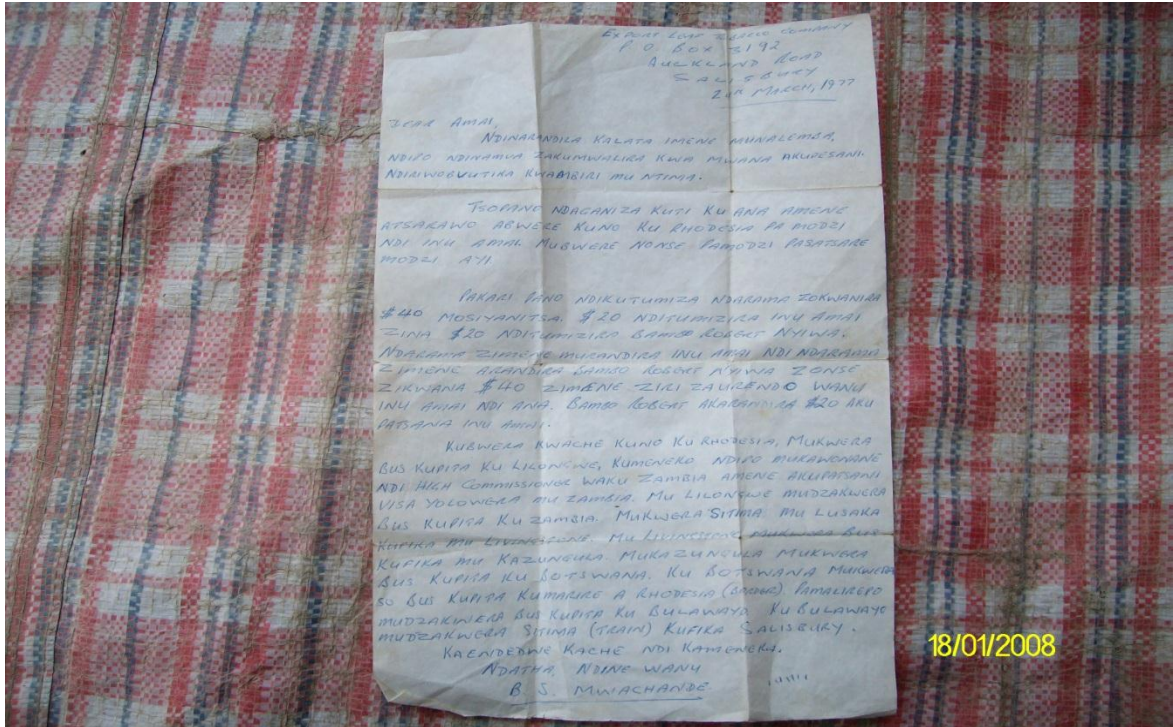


Mr. Mlewa's workbook shows that the system was not immediately discarded with the establishment of the new government of Banda. Migrants still operated under the colonial 1948 Act until 1969.



Workbook also shows wage rates for Mr. Mlewa who was a gang foreman in the Railways in 1960.

E.



Mr. B.S. Mwechande's letter to Mrs. Mwechande instructing her of the safest routes to take to Zimbabwe during the liberation war era.



Mr. and Mrs. Mwechande's marriage certificate.

F.



Mrs.Masongera in the MCP Women's League Uniform which, until this day she keeps safely in her home in Rugare.

G. Photograph taken from original 1979 picture of Aenifa Njewa and friends in Mufakose Mhizhi.

