HUNGER IN THE CWEMBE VALLEY: A CASE STUDY OF MWEEMBA CHIEFTAINCY, 1905 - 1987

HUNGER IN THE GWEMBE VALLEY: A CASE STUDY OF MWEEMBA CHIEFTAINCY, 1905 - 1987

By

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LUSAKA

1993

DECLARATION

I, Bennett Siamwiinde Siamwiza, hereby declare that this dissertation represents my own work, and that it has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or another University.

Signature: .....

Date: 12th May 1993

A P P R O V A L

This dissertation of Bennett Siamwinde Siamwiza is approved as fulfilling part of the requirements of the award of the degree of Master of Arts in History at the University of Zambia.

EXAMINERS

1. ..... DATE: 15 November 1993
2. ..... DATE: 12 Nov 1993
3. ..... DATE: 14th July, 1993

DEDICATION

For Kasamba

ABSTRACT

This dissertation reconstructs a history of hunger in the Gwembe Valley Chieftaincy of Mweemba. It covers the period between 1905 and 1987. Since 1991 - 92, the period in which the study was being worked on, was a drought and hunger year a postscript was written to append to the main text.

The first chapter examines the causes of food shortages in the Chieftaincy. The chapter investigates the reasons why the people of Mweemba were not able to produce enough grain to keep in reserve so that a single season's agricultural shortfall would not cause them a subsistence crisis. We point out that the people of Mweemba were unable to produce a surplus because of ecological constraints of land shortage which resulted into loss of soil fertility due to continuous cultivation, poor and erratic rainfall, high summer temperatures, irregular flood pattern and crop ravaging animals and insects. The chapter has shown that of these agricultural production obstacles, erratic and poor distribution of rainfall has been the direct and immediate cause of food shortages.

Chapter two discusses the Mweemba people's various coping mechanisms that helped to insulate them against a subsistence crisis. The main theme of this chapter is to demonstrate that **Bana Mweemba** did not adopt a fatalistic attitude whenever they were faced with a subsistence crisis. It highlights many socio-cushion the impact of hunger.

In the third chapter we examine the theme of emergency food relief operations. The main focus of the chapter is the relief policies of the British South Africa Company, British Colonial Office and of the Zambian Government. The chapter also looks at the problems of food relief each of these faced. The most interesting aspect between 1908 and 1987.

The last chapter examines the food security policies in the period between 1910 and 1987. During this period

various attempts were made by the successive governments of this country and also by some non-governmental organizations to build a sustainable food security system. The attempts involved the introduction of long term strategies that if successful would solve the problem of food shortages in the Valley once and for all.

The postscript looks at the food situation in the Chieftaincy during the 1991-92 shortages. It examines the development of the drought situation, the people's responses and food relief operations. The section is written in relation to the main text. The postscript reveals that as hunger intensified the people of Mweemba resorted to the subsistence strategies they employed in the past to avert starvation. One interesting point revealed in the segment is the policy of food for work which was re-introduced by the World Food Programme (WFP). This policy was used by the Colonial Office during the subsistence crises of the period of its governance. The return to the policy suggests its usefulness as a relief practice. The postscript also highlights a unique policy of communal work parties as a strategy to help the hunger stricken people grow more food crops.

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I wish to thank Professor Randi Ronning Balsvik of the Institute of Social Science, University of Tromso, Norway, for assisting me with valuable literature on my topic of study. I also wish to express my thanks to Professor Thayer Scudder of the Institute of Development Anthropology and California Institute of Technology, California, USA, for sending me some literature on the Gwembe District which I could not get in our local libraries.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the cooperation and insights of **Bana Mweemba** who willingly allowed me to interview them about their experiences of hunger. Their contribution to my understanding of food shortages in Mweemba is immense. They are too many to thank individually here, but they are mentioned in the notes to the chapters and in the bibliography.

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I owe my dear wife Kasamba an irreparable debt. her sacrifices for me are numerous and go beyond any sincere words of appreciation. My sons Jeke mukusu, Kanyunyina Munsaka, Nchimunya Siabwanta and Cholola Wallace have been very instrumental in my studies. They paid dearly for this dissertation.

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I wish to emphasize, however, that the errors of omission, judgement and view points in this dissertation are entirely my responsibility.

Lusaka, Zambia **Bennett Siamwiinde Siamwiza**

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSA Co.	British South Africa Company
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GGDP	Gwembe South Development Project
GVDC	Gwembe Valley Development Company
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
NAMBOARD	National Agricultural Marketing Board of Zambia
NAZ	National Archives of Zambia
PPM	Programme to Prevent Malnutrition
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
TGP	Tonga Oral Hits Programme
UCZA	United Church of Zambia Archives
VSP	Valley Self Help Promotion Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WVI	World Vision International

FIGURES AND MAPS

INTRODUCTION

Hunger, which in this study will mean "a condition in which people lack the basic food intake to provide them with the energy and nutrients for fully productive, active and healthy lives",[1] has been an old and chronic problem in the Gwembe Valley. The people of this region have endured over the years perhaps the most severe and perpetual food shortages in Zambia. The problem has not been confined to the twentieth century. Thayer Scudder wrote that his Valley Tonga informants were "aware of at least three great famines during the second half of the nineteenth century".[2] According to written sources the last of these occurred in 1899 when locusts destroyed most of the crop in the region, especially in the Upper Zambezi area.[3]

The first documented food shortages during the present century occurred in 1905. These were most severe in the Upper River areas.[4] This food crisis was followed by **Inzala impati** (the great famine) of 1909 which, in spite of some relief measures that were drawn up,[5] is reported to have left many people dead.[6]

The 1912-13 season marked the beginning of yet another period of food shortages which continued until 1918. During these shortages the BSACo. Administration issued relief grain to villagers in those areas where the situation was most severe.[7] Another food crisis was reported in 1922-23. The colonial administration issued a total of 3,000 bags of relief grain throughout the affected areas of the Valley.[8] In 1931-32 year another widespread subsistence crisis occurred throughout the Gwembe Valley and other parts of Northern Rhodesia. An emergency food relief scheme was drawn up involving the issuing of food throughout the Valley portion of Kalomo-Gwembe .[9]

Between 1940 and 1948 two major series of food shortage hit the Gwembe Valley and other parts of the Colony. In the 1940-41 season Northern Rhodesia experienced a deficit of about 400,000 bags of maize

owing to poor rainfall during the season.[10] The deficit resulted in a bad famine in 1941-42. Widespread starvation occurred among the Gwembe villagers. During the 1947-48 crisis, the colonial government drew up a scheme of relief and sent bags of grain to feed the starving villagers.[11]

Further reports of widespread food shortages were made in the Gwembe Valley in the years 1951-52, 1954-55, 1957-58, and between 1968 and 1970. During the 1957-58 hunger the government issued about 750 bags of maize grain to Mweemba Chieftaincy alone.[12] In the years between 1968 and 1971 a total of more than 1,856 bags of maize were issued to Siampondo and Sinangombe villagers in Chief Mweemba's area.[13]

Following a poor farming season in 1972-73, another food shortage occurred in 1973-74. During this crisis food relief was issued to the affected areas of the Chieftaincy beginning August 1973.[14] The 1980s was a decade of poor agricultural seasons in Gwembe and in many other parts of Zambia, particularly in the seasons between 1981 and 1984 and 1986-87. For the first time in the history of Zambia's food shortages the international community sent emergency relief food during these crises.[15]

The Chieftaincy of Mweemba, with which the present study is concerned, falls within the Gwembe Valley's "worst famine areas".[16] Consequently whenever the region was hit by food shortages, the Chieftaincy experienced serious shortages.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study aims at finding out why the people of the Gwembe valley and of Mweemba in particular were in some years between 1905 and 1987 unable to produce enough food crops to feed themselves. The study further attempts to investigate the local people's subsistence strategies for coping with food shortages and how these have changed over time.

It is also the aim of the study to examine the nature of the emergency food relief measures of government and relief agencies that were undertaken to supplement the local people's subsistence strategies when hunger hit the area.

Finally the work investigates the nature and scope of the long term attempts the government and non-governmental organizations undertook to try and alleviate the problem of chronic food shortages in the region.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Researchers have paid little attention to the problem of hunger in Zambia. Background information about the area of study comes from anthropological works. Elizabeth Colson's **The Social Organization of the Gwembe Tonga** (1960) and **Social Consequences of Resettlement** (1971) provide very valuable information for the present study. The two works examine the sociological patterns of the Valley Tonga before and after the resettlement following the construction of the dam at Kariba Gorge and its subsequent flooding. This focus has enabled us to understand the functioning of kinship relations, the land tenure system and food production patterns prior to the movement of the people and after. The resettlement programme had an impact on the food crop production systems of the area. The dislocation of social relations due to dispersed kin affected, to some extent, the subsistence mechanism during periods of hunger.

Thayer Scudder's **The Ecology of the Gwembe Valley Tonga** (1962), **Gathering Among African Woodland Savannah cultivators: A case Study: The Gwembe Tonga** (1971) and **A History of Development in the Twentieth Century: the Zambian portion of the middle Zambezi Valley and the Lake Kariba Basin** (1985) have provided very useful information on agriculture and people's responses to food shortages. Barrie Reynolds' **The Material Culture of the People of the Gwembe Valley** (1968) is another important work. It provides us with information on mechanisms of food

rationing and acquisitioning during the periods of food shortages.

Timothy Ian Matthews' 'The Historical Tradition of the Gwembe Valley, Middle Zambezi' (1976) and Godfrey Haantobolo's 'Ecology, Agriculture and proletarianization' (1992), the only works on the area of our study written from an historical point of view, provide valuable information. Matthews' work provides information on the pre-colonial socio-economic and political situation which helps us understand better the developments of the twentieth century. Haantobolo's study discusses some colonial and post-colonial land policies and their impact on ecology and agriculture of the Gwembe South region.

General works and case studies on food crises in Africa and elsewhere have influenced our approach and enhanced our understanding of the problems of food production and people's responses to subsistence crisis. We think these can be appropriately reviewed according to their theoretical orientation. One major theoretical framework used in the study of food crisis is the entitlement approach. Its proponents argue that hunger or famine occurs only because of the loss of entitlement to the available food or the loss of the means to get food. The chief proponent of the theory is Sen whose **Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation** (1981), illustrates his argument from various famines. Other scholars who have written from this point of view are Bush, Chipungu, Hussein and Muzaale.[17] Fundamentally these scholars seek to understand the problem of hunger or famine from a political and class point of view.

The causes of food shortages have also been explained from the underdevelopment problematic. Scholars who wrote from this point of view can be put in two groups. One camp examines the effects of land alienation, arguing that the policy dislocated the age old African systems of land use and food production leading to ecological impoverishment, thus making it

impossible for Africans to grow enough to feed themselves even in a relatively good agricultural season. Comprising this camp are Vail, Mamdani, Gartel and Shenton and Watts.[18]

In the other camp are Lofchie, Lemman and O'Brien.[19] These argue that Africa's involvement in cash crop production for the international market and to some extent for the local market tends to reduce food crop production, a practice that exposes her to the dangers of perpetual food shortages.

Some scholars have attempted to investigate the causes of food crisis by using a neo-Malthusian theoretical framework. The theory attempts to understand the relationship between arable land and population in food production and also between the amount of available food and the number of 'mouths' to be fed. Eicher and Seebohm have written from this angle.[20]

Other theoretical approaches that have been used to help understand the problem of food crisis in many African countries are environmental and technological determinism. The former sees hunger as a consequence of natural catastrophes. Its proponents argue that drought, overcultivation and crop pests are major ecological dilemmas responsible for food shortages. Among the scholars who have written from this point of view are Sasson, Kloos, Derrick and Timberlake.[21] Among the technological determinists are Lofchie and Commins.[22] These blame the 'poor' and 'primitive' state of African farm technology. There are some scholars who have argued that in order to comprehend fully the problem of food crisis in Africa or indeed elsewhere in the world a multi-faceted analysis must be employed. This is the view upheld in Sara Berry's "The Food Crisis and Agrarian Change in Africa: A Review Essay", **African Studies Review**, 27, 2(1984), 59-112, W.R. Aykroyd's **The Conquest of Famine** (1974), M. Vaughan's **The Story of an African Famine** (1987) and in James McCann's **From Poverty to Famine in Northeast Ethiopia** (1987). These scholars have argued that there are many factors that limit food

production in various places and at different times and that taking a mono-causal approach may lead to overlooking some important factors or indeed to an over-simplification of complex problems. For example, Vaughan demonstrates the inadequacies of the neo-Malthusian view; the under-development argument; and the view that marketing policies discouraged the production of food crops such as maize. MacCann demonstrates that human and animal diseases, crop pests, climatic factors, population rise, poor technology, ecological damage and commoditization of land and labour can be perennial obstacles to agricultural production.

John Iliffe's **Famine in Zimbabwe 1890 - 1960** (1990) is an interesting study of the transition from the famine that kills to the one that does not kill. While accepting the argument that land alienation and steady population growth reduced the total grain production per capita to such a degree that those villagers whose land was alienated could no longer meet their food requirement even in a normal rainy season, Iliffe argues that settler capitalism mitigated famine in Zimbabwe through the contribution of effective communication, marketing and transportation systems that made it possible to relieve distress. Besides this argument, which actually is the focus of his work, Iliffe demonstrates that drought was the major cause of food shortages, a factor which was, in some seasons, compounded by ravaging crop pests, particularly wild animals and locusts.

To a large extent, a number of the works examined above deal also with the various mechanisms the people faced with food crisis and ecological stress adopted to stave off the impact of these adversities. However, Dessálegn Rahmato's **Famine and Survival Strategies: A Case Study from Northeast Ethiopia** (1991) and Lovejoy M. Malambo's 'Rural Food Security in Zambia' (1987) deserve mention here. Rahmato's work discusses how the rural people faced with food crisis act in order to try to survive the trauma. Malambo deals with both the anticipatory and crisis management of food insecurity.

These studies provide us with some valuable information on one of the themes of this study. The body of literature reviewed above reveals that there are many and diverse explanations of the causes of food shortages in Africa and elsewhere. In my analysis of the causes of hunger in Mweemba I have taken this position.

THE GEOGRAPHY AND AGRICULTURE OF MWEEMBA

Area of Study

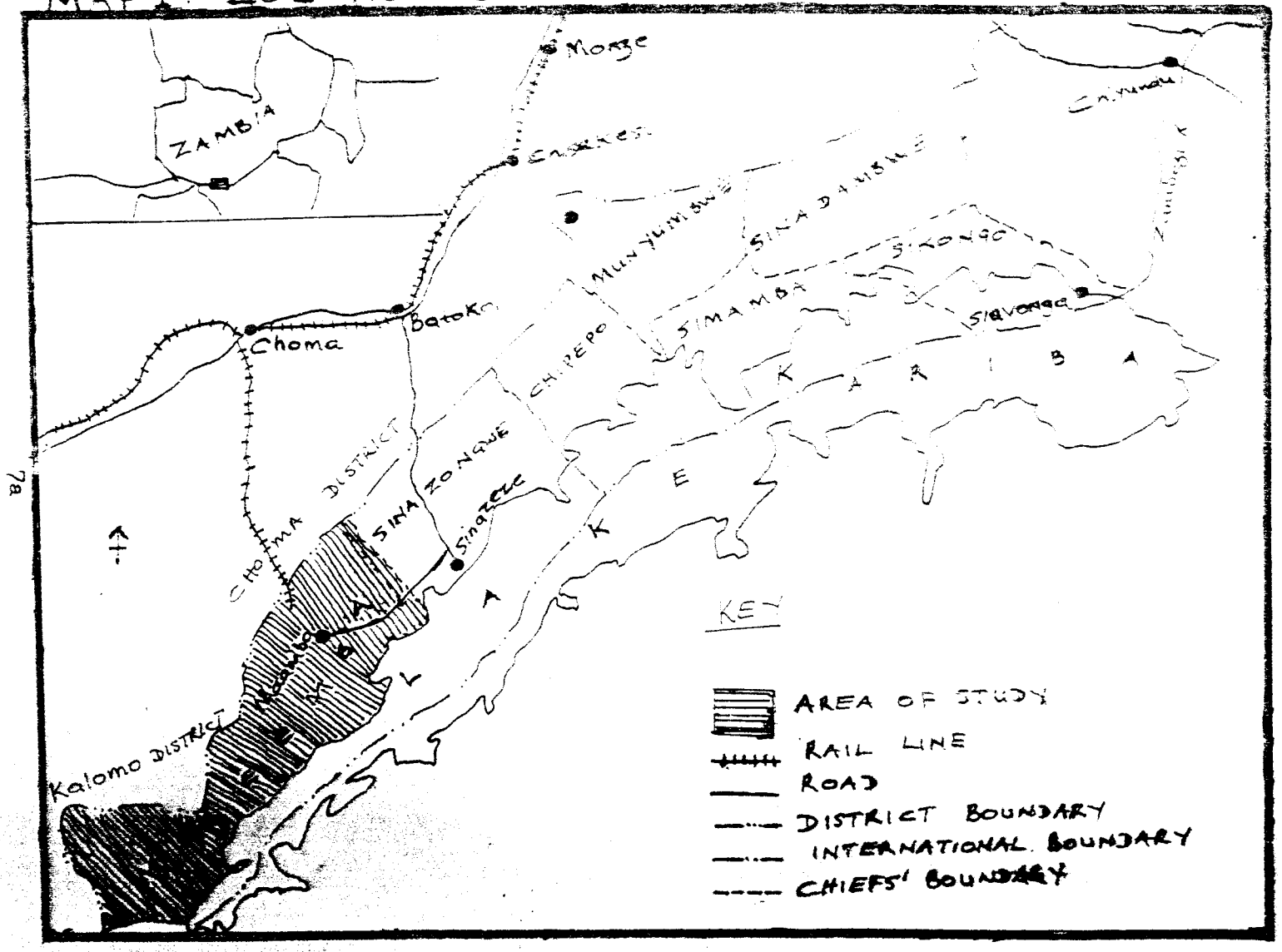
Mweemba is one of the seven chieftaincies in the Gwembe District, Southern Province, Zambia. Situated in the southernmost end of the District, the Chieftaincy has an area of about 450 square kilometres. It lies between latitudes 17° 10′ and 18° S and Longitudes 26° 30′ and 27° 15′E. Its population increased steadily since the turn of this century from about 5,000 in 1900 to about 15,000 in 1958 . By 1987 it had increased to about 25,000. The Chieftaincy comprises two slightly different ecological zones, namely the riverine and upland Valley areas. The former covers the area about five miles from the lake while the latter lies between five and thirty miles inland from the lake.

Rainfall

The rainfall in Zambia is received from three air masses namely: the moist Zaire Winds also known as North West Winds; South East Trade Winds; and the North East Monsoon Winds. Most of Zambia receives rains from the North West Winds which emanate from the Atlantic Ocean. These winds enter Zambia from the Northern side when they are still very moist. By the time they reach the Southern part they are relatively dry. Because of this geographical phenomenon, the Gwembe valley receives less rains.

The rainfall problem in the Gwembe Valley is further compounded by the fact that the area is in the rain shadow. This means that as the hot air rises on the Tonga Plateau to meet the cold one to form rains on the plateau the air loses most of its moisture as it descends towards the Valley.

MAP 1: LOCATION OF AREA OF STUDY



Temperature

The Gwembe Valley is hot for much of the year. Temperatures ranging from 38° to 45°C are not uncommon during the hottest month of October. Even during rainy months temperatures remain relatively high causing high trans-evaporation rates throughout the farming season. In the cold season ,which lasts from June to August, temperatures as low as 5 C are not uncommon

Soils

Three types of soils are found in the Gwembe Valley namely: soils on pre-karroo rocks; soils on karroo rocks; and alluvial soils derived from karroo and pre-karroo material.[23] The first type are agriculturally poor hence are not cultivated. Those on Karroo rocks are the most widespread in the Valley and are cultivated only during the rainy season. The alluvial soils are commonly found on the Zambezi basin and its tributaries. These provide fertile soils that can be cultivated for a long period because they are annually replenished by the floods.

In Mweemba area of the Valley the alluvial soil has soil composition of less than ten percent coarse sand and only exceptionally over thirty percent. The content of fine sand fluctuates usually between forty to sixty percent; silt ten to forty percent; and clay between ten and twenty - five percent. The clay content is in some places as high as fifty percent whereas an organic carbon content of over one percent is very rare. Soils of such composition tend to have a very low infiltration rate, conversely they have a very high evaporation rate and run off of water is also high, reducing water percolation into the soil.[24]

Farming Practices

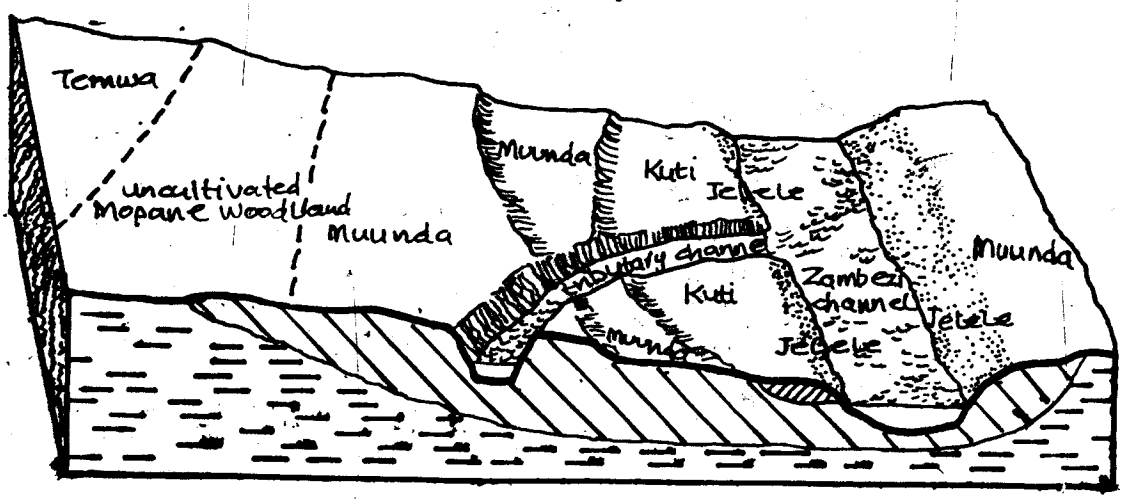
The Valley Tonga have cultivated the rich alluvial soils along the Zambezi and its tributaries since the

fifth century.25 Because of the annual flooding of the Zambezi and sometimes its tributaries these soils were annually replenished with soil nutrients and could thus be continually farmed. Originally farming in these areas was in the prized **zilili** (the riverine gardens that could be cultivated after river waters receded) and **jelele** (riverbank) and **kuti** (flood plain) fields.[26] Other garden types were **myuunda** located inland from **zilili.** These were rainy season fields. However because of the land shortage due to population growth another type of field called **matemwa** or **magani** were developed around the 1940s.These were always cleared on soils of karroo origins some miles in the bush.

Many crops were grown in these fields. The main crops grown included bulrush millet (**Pennisetum typhoides**), sorghum (**sorghum caffrorum**) and maize (**zea mays**). These were grown primarily as subsistence crops. Bulrush millet and sorghum were grown in Alluvium II **myuunda** and later in **matemwa** while maize was grown during the dry and rainy seasons (this was, however, only true of the period before resettlement in 1958) in the **jelele** and **kuti** fields. Other minor subsistence crops that were grown are cow pea (**vigna unguiculata**), **inyangu;** (**voandzela subterranean**), **inyemu;** groundnuts (**Arachis hypogaea**), **indongwe.** Grown also were a variety of cucurbits such as pumpkins (**cucurbita spp.**), **matangazungu;** cattle melon and water melon (**citrullus vulgaris**) **masokoli** and **namunywa;** gourds (**Lagenaria vulgaris**), **luungu;** and cucumbers (**cucumis spp.**), **makowa.** These were interplanted with the main crops.

Commercial crops included hemp (**cannabis sativa**), **lubanje** and tobacco (**Nicotiana Spp.**), **tombwe.** However, by 1958 the trade in the two crops decreased. Hemp was by law a prohibited drug. However trade in the crop was revived after 1980 with the independence of Zimbabwe in that year. Many Mweemba men began exchanging the crop for Zimbabwean products such as radios, blankets, dishes and many other items. The point of trade was at Makunka

Fig. 1: VALLEY TONGA GARDEN TYPES



Karroo Sediments

Alluvium II

Alluvium III

Adapted From: Scudder, Ecology, (1962), 35.

directly opposite the mouth of Zimbabwe's river Mulibinzi.

Tobacco declined because of the shortage of alluvial **zilili** land as the available land was put under food crop production in order to increase crop yields.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

This study is based on research conducted between September 1991 and May 1992. Data was collected from four libraries, namely: the University of Zambia, main Library; the Institute for African Studies Library/Documentation Unit; the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Planning Division Library; and the Cooperative College Library. All these are in Lusaka.

In the University of Zambia Library, primary sources comprising various annual reports of both the colonial and post colonial government departments and ministries, Legislative Council debates, Parliamentary debates, official reports, newspapers and published accounts of travellers in the pre-colonial period were consulted. I also consulted the Gwembe Oral History Project material.27 Also published and unpublished secondary sources, including books, theses, dissertations, and unpublished staff seminar papers were consulted

At the Cooperative College Library only secondary published material were consulted. At the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries both unpublished and published material were consulted. The documentation/library unit at the Institute for African Studies provided me with published and unpublished secondary sources.

Three archives were consulted, the National Archives of Zambia (NAZ), Lusaka and United Church of Zambia Archives (UCZA) at the Church's Theological College, Mindolo, Kitwe and the World Vision International(WVI),Lusaka. At the National Archives of Zambia I consulted colonial records such as district tour

reports and annual reports of various government departments and ministries, newspapers, Legislative Council Debates and the Parliamentary debates that could not be found in the University of Zambia Library. At the UCZA, I consulted missionary correspondence, minutes of meetings and reports .

At the World Vision International (WVI),I consulted records on hunger and drought relief. I also consulted the records of the World Food Programme (WFP).

On the last stage of my research I conducted oral interviews among the villagers in my area of study. In all, forty-one people were interviewed and the interviews were taped (the tapes are deposited in the Special Collections Division of the University of Zambia Library). Among the people interviewed were peasant farmers, retired government officers and those still in employment. Both men and women were interviewed. Some of the oral information was obtained through ordinary conversations. These sources provided me with valuable information on the extent of hunger and food relief.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This dissertation is divided into four chapters, A fifth chapter, intended to look at the differential impact of food shortages resulting from rural inequality and social differentiation, was planned at the beginning of the study. But because of the limited space it has been left for a future study.

Chapter one presents an argument on why the people of Mweemba faced hunger in some years during the period between 1905 and 1987. It argues that the shortage of arable land compounded by the climatic and other ecological factors made it difficult for the people of that area to produce enough food to feed themselves even in a relatively good year.

The second chapter looks at the local subsistence strategies in times of food crisis and how these changed overtime. The chapter demonstrates that over the years

Mweemba people evolved a variety of coping mechanisms that helped to insulate them against a subsistence crisis.

However inspite of such strategies the people of the Valley lived at the edge of hunger whenever food shortages occurred because their coping mechanisms did not ensure adequate food supplies. In order to ensure that food security was at least sustained, outside help was often needed. This is the theme of chapter three. It examines the emergency food relief measures that were undertaken by successive governments of Northern Rhodesia and Zambia and non—governmental organizations during periods of food stress.

The last chapter discusses various long term attempts made by the government and non-government agencies to try and redress, perhaps once and for all, the problem of chronic food shortages in the region.

This dissertation was being written, though not conceived, at the time the Gwembe Valley and the nation as a whole was undergoing a severe hunger following a traumatic drought that destroyed most of the crops during the 1991-92 farming season. Consequently, a postscript was written to examine the events of the 1992-93 hunger year.

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CHAPTER ONE

CAUSES OF HUNGER IN THE GWEMBE VALLEY, 1905-1987

The Gwembe Valley has been a land of hunger. The 1931 Native Afairs Annual Report pointed out that its people lived from day to day without food in reserve and "when hard times befall, they have no resources to draw upon."[1] Various theses were advanced for that state of affairs. Some colonial officials saw the problem as a result of "inherent laziness" among the locals.[2] Rev. Fell of Kanchindu Mission attributed the situation to improvidence:

> Our people are most improvident and entirely without reserve stores. Living from hand to mouth, a famine is serious, when it follows a series of others it is disastrous.[3]

Yet others blamed the continued use of the traditional hoe and "primitive" agricultural techniques.[4]

The aim of this chapter is to examine the reasons why Mweemba people were unable to produce and store enough so that a single season's shortfall would not cause them a subsistence crisis. In the first place we contend that the above theses concerning food production in the area are an oversimplification of a rather complex problem.

It is not true to say that Gwembe people faced chronic hunger because of their natural laziness. Depending on the availability of sufficient arable land, they had enough strength and energy to cultivate large areas of farm plots. The cultivation of **matemwa**, which required clearing by cutting out the thickets, **loonde**, was a test of their strength and will to increase their food production.

It is also not true to say that they were improvident. Evidence shows that Mweemba and indeed Gwembe people in general were ingenious and always thought of the future. They tried, for example, to store grain to last until the next harvest and even beyond. They often built large clay grain storage bins called

Zimumbwa. Inside these bottle shaped granaries, they put broken pieces of cones of **Inyoka** tobacco to prevent the grains from **Kusumpwa** - damage or attack from weevils. Besides attempting to store grain, they dried various vegetables for relish when fresh vegetables were not available. They also dried pumpkins and cucumbers, which they called **mapale.** They cooked fresh maize cobs and dried them to make **mifungu.**

Equally, the traditional hoe and primitive farming methods thesis can be challenged. Considering the agricultural system of the area, which involved inter-cropping, a traditional short handled hoe was the most ideal. It made weeding a lot easier because it required bending which facilitated identifying crops of various sizes and heights. Moreover the ox-drawn plough introduced around 1930 had only a short term positive effect on agriculture. It soon aggravated soil erosion.Many plough owning households did not know how to use it. Instead of ploughing along the contours , they ploughed down the slopes, causing gully erosion. Furthermore, throughout the period to resettlement, Mweemba had more ox-drawn ploughs than any other chieftaincy in the valley, yet whenever hunger hit the area, Mweemba was always the worst affected.[5] In 1971 a total of sixty-nine percent of Mweemba families owned one or more ploughs[6], but whenever hunger hit the area even the plough holding families suffered the crisis.

The main argument being presented in this chapter is that Mweemba people faced perpetual subsistence crises in the period between 1905 and 1987 because of land shortage and other ecological constraints. The chapter is divided into two major sections. The first section examines the population and land situation. In it we discuss the population increase in the periods to 1958 and thereafter to 1987. The section also looks at the effects of population increase on land and the impact of those effects on food production. In the second section, we discuss the interrelationship between rainfall, temperatures, crop pests and floods and food production.

Here we argue that the erratic rainfall, extreme summer temperatures, the Zambezi flood pattern and crop pests made it rather difficult for Mweemba and Gwembe people as a whole to produce and store enough food.

Population and Land Situation , 1905-1987

In the period between 1905 and 1987 the situation regarding arable land in the Valley increasingly became precarious. The arable land per family became smaller because it was continuously being subdivided among the ever increasing number of people. The population increase resulted, apart from the natural demographic upward trend of the period, from some external historical forces which will be discussed below.

The Situation to 1958

Despite the absence of population counts the population increase can be projected back to about the 1860s. In 1864 the Lozi people of Western Zambia revolted against continued foreign domination, following the death of Sikeletu, the Kololo King of Bulozi . Many Kololo men lost their lives in that bloody revolt. However, some managed to escape. One of the fleeing groups headed down the Zambezi river and came to take refuge among the Tonga of the Upper River area. [7]

The cessation of the Lozi and Chikunda incursions on the Upper River area in 1880 following the formation of the Ndebele -**Bana Mweemba** alliance in that year, helped to stabilize the population growth.[8]

In 1898, the British South Africa Company introduced, through the Native Administration, hut tax in Southern Rhodesia. The policy antagonized the peasantry in that territory. Since tax had not yet been introduced in North-Western Rhodesia, some of the aggrieved decided to cross-over to the northern bank of the Zambezi, mainly to the Upper River area of Mweemba.In spite of attempts to repatriate these'illegal' immigrants during the first

decade of the twentieth century, some of them remained as permanent settlers.[9]

These developments had an impact on land holding and utilization, as land pressure began being felt. Matthews noted that by the late nineteenth century the problem had become more pronounced such that land disputes among chiefs and individuals were no longer uncommon.[10]

The coming and subsequent settlement of the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society missionaries in Mweemba in 1901 made the land situation more precarious. The BSACO's grant of land to the Mission for buildings and farms, increased land pressure in their immediate vicinity. For example they were granted the islands of Kasuwa-Kang'ombe in Sinang'ombe for their Loongo sub-mission station and Kanchindu for the main station. Both islands had before provided dry season cultivation plots for the local people. Besides being granted these islands they were also given some mainland plots for mission farms.

From 1901 to the mid 1940s the missionaries allowed some of the villagers to continue cultivating on the 'mission land'surrounding their farms However ,in 1945 they banned some of these villagers from cultivating the land near these mission farms on the ground that they were promoting soil erosion due to 'poor' traditional cultivation methods. [11] Those who were allowed to continue,were,from 1946, subjected to payment of grain as rent for cultivating on 'mission lands':

> All villagers who have gardens on mission farm will contribute one full basket of unthreshed grain to the mission after harvest. Anyone who fails to do that she or he may have no garden at the mission farm.[12]

The land problem continued worsening after the 1940s. One other major development of this period was the halting of emigration from the Valley. Before the 1940s emigration to the Tonga Plateau had provided an outlet through which excess population was reduced and pressure on the land minimized. However, beginning in

the 1940s this migration became more difficult. For Mweemba people Kalomo and Choma areas which had in the past provided sanctuary could no longer do so because they were becoming overpopulated.[13] The developments along the line of rail made it rather difficult for Mazabuka or Monze to accommodate people migrating from these districts.

The production, among the plateau peasantry, for the market which began in the 1910s meant the cultivation of large farms. The land alienation that pushed most of the Plateau Tonga cultivators into marginal lands following the creation in 1928 - 29 of the native reserves along the line of rail aggravated the problem of land shortage on the plateau.[14] This in turn compounded the situation down in the Gwembe Valley, making it unlikely for the people from there to get land to settle.

Meanwhile the population in the Valley continued increasing, as rudimentary medical services provided by the missionaries reduced the mortality rate by treating malaria and dysentry, both of which were very prevalent and major causes of death in the Valley.[15] The Valley population also increased steadily during most of this period because there were no more "famines that killed" owing to relief measures.

Since the little available land was put under continuous cultivation,soil erosion set in.This may have set in at quite an early date in Mweemba but the first reference to the problem appears to be that of one District Officer, Craufurd-Benson who, in 1942, noted that in the area on the Zambezi between Siampondo in the southernmost region of the Chieftaincy and Sianyuka in Chief Sinazongwe's area, soil erosion had become a common feature.[16] Yet another government official observed in 1954 the growing problem of soil erosion and attributed it to the population pressure compounded by the large number of livestock.[17] The traditional practice among the Valley people, as the practice may be among many other agro-pastoralists, had been that soon after harvest, animals were allowed to eat the crop residues.

The tramping of animals loosens the soil and in this way promotes soil erosion either by water when the rains come or by wind during the dry season. This results in great loss of top soil and humus that is essential in crop growth.

By 1957 the population densities in Gwembe in relation to arable land ranged from "under 25 to over 100 per square mile."[18] By most Central African woodland savannah standards, this was a large density. In two different traditional land use systems studied by Allan, namely the Lamba and the Ngoni-Chewa, the carrying capacities were found to be only 23 or 24 and 25 persons per square mile respectively.[19]

The situation was certainly worse in Mweemba where land shortage was more acute than elsewhere in the Valley. Johnson put the arable land at 0.5957 to 0.9065 hectares per capita shortly before resettlement.[20]

Post-Resettlement Developments,1958-1987

A total of 518,000 hectares of river basin was covered by water upon the formation of Lake Kariba in 1958.[21] This meant a loss of a total of 2,227.4 hectares of river bank gardens, 12,950 hectares of flood plain and alluvium gardens and 11,292.4 hectares of gardens in the higher parts of the Valley.[22] More than 172,743 hectares of the flooded land belonged to **Bana Mweemba**(people of Mweemba). However, going by Johnson's data we know that each adult person from Mweemba who was moved lost between 0.5957 to 0.9065 hectares of his or her land. Cases of overcrowding on new land were already being reported in some resettlement areas hardly a year after the move.[23]

The problem was actually projected well in advance before they moved. Sugg, the District Commissioner for Gwembe in the mid 1950s, had this to say:

> The position regarding Mweemba is...difficult. There is a limited amount of land available among...inland villages.[24]

The government officials were also aware of the fact that much of the land was poor and easily erodible.[25] Inspite of the availability of such logistic knowledge about the land situation in the areas of resettlement, they went ahead to resettle about 7,500 people in an area whose arable land's carrying capacity was estimated at only 2,300.[26]

It would, however, be wrong to characterize the colonial officials as unsympathetic towards the plight of Africans. They had no immediate solution to the problem. They, however, assumed that, in the long run, with the formation of the lake, fishing would provide an alternative to farming.[27]

The land problem was compounded by the return to Mweemba in 1960, following a high mortality rate among the aged and children, of some of the one thousand and eight hundred relocatees who had originally been resettled at Siakatuba in Choma District.[28] During his tour of the Chieftaincy in October 1960, District Officer, Boxer lamented thus:

> ...I am, no doubt, stating the obvious when I say that at the present time, Mweemba is vastly overpopulated in relation to its present capacity to supply the population with its basic requirements of foodstuffs.... Gardens at present are barely adequate for present needs of the population, and when these gardens are exhausted through excessive cropping, a very serious situation may arise, leading to recurrent famine within the area.[29]

By this time the land-population equation was highly unbalanced, with densities ranging from one hundred to more than three hundred persons per square mile.[30] This situation further aggravated soil erosion. William Allan observed that the Gwembe Valley's cultivatable soils had been "much over-cultivated under pressure of population" because "populations had increased at an alarming rate ..."[31] By the late 1960s Scudder was able to identify over-cultivation as a cause of soil degradation in the Valley.[32]

The opening of Maamba Coal Mine in 1970 further inreased land pressure in Mweemba. The mine covered a total area of 5870 hectares,an area which included the local people's agricultural land.[33] This development led to the loss of that land and the removal of about 2,500 people from the villages of Maamba , Mweela , Siankodobo and Sikalonzo.[34] The mine pit, offices and compounds occupied the area surrounding the fertile belt of middle Kanzinze river basin which had provided the locals with arable land for their summer fields and dry season vegetable gardens. Since there was no planned resettlement of the affected villagers , many migrated into the hilly areas where they continued eking out their subsistence on marginal land. By about the mid 1970s the estimates for the Chieftaincy regarding arable land was put at 0.3108 to 0.3885 hectares per capita.[35]

From the early 1970s through the 1980s the number of peasant farmers seeking out marginal lands at the edge of villges increased. The situation became worse because the number of people seeking land inceased as labour migration that had kept many young and middle aged men away from farming was no longer possible after the 1980s.[36]

The land situation was reported to have been worse "especially... in Siameja where all the more fertile land in the Valley of the Mweenda is under cultivation," forcing the farmers "to clear and cultivate the steeper hillsides which have low inherent fertility and are easily degraded."[37]

During my field research in 1992, I found that the condition that characterized Siameja as illustrated above was actually a common phenomenon in most of Mweemba. Villagers in Kafwambila, Siampondo, Mudododli, Muuka, Sinakoba, Siamatimba, Sianzovu and in many other villages had long since taken to farming on the hillside. Some of my informants indicated that they had been continuously cultivating the same fields since they were resettled in 1958.[38] In 1987 the National Task Force on drought and hunger observed that the high population

on drought and hunger observed that the high population density in the Gwembe South region had led to great pressure on the land and generally on the natural resources resulting in alarming amounts of soil erosion causing "irreparable gullies in some areas, heavy siltation, ... and loss of fertile soils."[39] As a result some of the areas in the region were by 1987 being likened to some parts of the "Sahel with tree cover greatly reduced and winds sweeping up clouds of dust during the dry season."[40]

In addition to increased human population, the livestock population also increased appreciably during the same period. This meant that the little available land, especially in the hilly places which were in the past treated as grazing areas, had to be shared between man and his animals. Before the 1940s small stock of goats and sheep predominated. However, cattle population (cattle having been introduced into the Valley during the first decade of the twentieth century) which had hitherto stagnated, gradually began to rise after the late 1940s following the introduction by the Government of some trypasonomidal drugs in the area,[41] and increased very rapidly in the post-resettlement period from about 5,355 head in Mweemba in 1959 to 29,404 in 1972. [42] The tsetse control programme of the 1970s also helped to stabilize cattle losses that had continued even after the introduction of both curative and preventive medicines,[43] to such an extent that by 1985 the Chieftaincy had a total of 51,580 head.[44] By 1987 overgrazing due to high animal population was contributing to soil erosion.

Impact on Food Production

In his study of Eastern Zambia Leroy Vail demonstrated how tampering with the relationship between man and his environment by overcultivation led to soil degradation that plunged the native reserve peasant farmers into chronic subsistence crisis.45 According to Alan Grainger overcultivation reduces:

> the potential for replenishing fertility and depletes soil organic matter. This causes a decline in the fertility, structure, permeability and water-holding capacity of the soil, and increases its vulnerability to erosion by wind and water.[46]

In recent years, environmental bankruptcy has been increasingly said to be the major factor in Africa's declining food availability. Timberlake for example, saw the 1984-85 Ethiopian and Sudanese famines as the consequences of the long term soil misuse which had been characterized by the diminishing rainfed crop yields since the 1960s.[47] Beye, Chambers and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) identified soil deterioration as the cause of declining crop yields. They argue that it is a population facing land shortage that is likely to misuse soil and face poor harvests.[48]

In Mweemba, the impact on agricultural production of the degenerated land may have appeared earlier during the twentieth century, but it began being noticed around 1918. Rev. Buckly of Kanchindu noted that since about that time not many Mweemba people had been able to "grow grain at least not more than a few days supply"(sic) and blamed the ever increasing poverty of the soil which resulted from overcultivation owing to large population density. In addition he had this to say:

> moreover the grain problem even for the natives is getting more acute every year as the population is increasing and it is increasing rapidly, every inch of workable soil is being taken up, and in the near future the natives themselves will have to move onto hills.[49]

The effect of soil infertility on the physical yields of the land became a concern among some colonial officials. For example, District Officer, F.B. Macrae saw the 1931-32 famine as a result of poor yields due to continued cultivation of the same fields over a long period, a practice which led to the exhaustion of most of the good soil to an extent whereby it became rather difficult to harvest a surplus crop:

> Good soil is hard to find in the Zambezi Valley, especially the western extremity.... It is very rare to see good soil that is not cultivated and it is no uncommon thing to find people cultivating miles from their homes because they have no other soil. Most of the available soil is already showing signs of exhaustion, a situation that has led to poor yields over the past years.[50]

During his research in the late 1950s Scudder found that hunger had increased during the present century because of poor yields.[51] The situation was aggravated by soil infertility. For example by 1957 the Alluvium III fields in the meander zone of the Chieftaincy were showing signs of exhaustion while the large tracts of Alluvium II had been abandoned because of poor crop yields.[52]

Twelve years after resettlement, Siampondo, Sinangombe and other surrounding villages began experiencing perpetual food shortages. The arable soil around these villages had by then become very poor and was agronomically useless as it was beyond regeneration. Deep dongas (gullies) characterized the regions.[53] It was the contention of my informants that even in relatively good rainfall year, the number of families experiencing seasonal shortages and hunger increased, particularly in the period after resettlement. The physical yields in Gwembe south became extremely low during this period. At least a minimum grain of 2 200 pounds of grain per head per year was required. Many families were no longer able to produce this amount because of farming on eroded soil .In 1971, for example, a relatively good year, overall grain yield was about 1.5 200 pound bags per head.[54] This implied that if the above 2 200 pound bags of minimum grain consumption requirement was to be met, about half a bag more per head was needed.[55] By 1987 less than 1.5 bags of grain per head may have been produced. The National Task Force on drought and famine indicated that by that year even in a good year many Mweemba and other Gwembe South families

had no grain to feed themselves eight to ten months after harvest.[56]

Chronic Agricultural Production Problems,1905-1987

In addition to the problem of land shortage, Valley Tonga cultivators had to contend with many other crop production obstacles. In this section we discuss the adverse impact on crop production of low and erratic rainfall, high temperatures,irregular Zambezi floods and crop pests between 1905 and 1987.

Rainfall and Crop Failure

The problem of arable agriculture in the Gwembe valley has been to a great extent associated with inadequate rain to sustain crop growth during the farming season. According to Farmer and Wigley such a situation constitutes a drought: "a consistently high soil moisture deficit over the growing season."[57] Michael Mortimore added another dimension to our understanding of the relationship between crop and rainfall . According to him:

> Agricultural ... drought results not only from an overall shortage of rainfall, but equally from a maladjustment of the seasonal distribution of rainfall to the growth cycle of plants. Thus when total rainfall is below the mean, excellent crops may be obtained when the distribution is satisfactory....[58]

Other scholars agree with Mortimore. Beye tells us that drought can result when an area receives normal rainfall over a very short period of time or at very irregular intervals.[59] Porter and Faulkingham observed similar trends for East and West Africa respectively.[60]

Documented and oral information indicates that drought had always been the major cause of agricultural shortfall in the Gwembe Valley. The importance which people of this area attached to rain is evident in their attempts to control it. Colson, Scudder and Roberts all

describe the importance which people attached to controlling the rain.[61] Rain rituals were a common feature in the region , especiallyin the pre-1958 period.

In spite of the attempts to control the forces of nature , between 1905 and 1987 Gwembe District frequently suffered adverse rainfall conditions which often culminated in severe droughts. Then crops failed and widespread food shortages always followed.

In both 1905 and 1908 the rains failed and hunger was very bad, especially in 1908-09 when it killed many people.[62] Lack of rains also caused crop failures and subsequently hunger during the period between 1911 and 1918. The devastating impact on crops of the 1911-12 drought is presented by a graphic description given by Rev. Kersewell who noted that for the sixty miles continuous from Sichooba to Kanchindu "all native crops are withered and white ants are eating the stalk."[63] The 1911-12 drought continued through to 1913-14 season with rains described as "less than ever", having been "eight inches less than last year whcih was a drought year."[64] The drought was devastating and severe. This may be measured by comparing that season's yield of the Mission farm with its normal years' output. According to Fell, the Kanchindu Mission farm had a capacity of yielding about seventy 200 pound bags of maize grain, but in that season a meagre seventeen bags were harvested.[65]

The seasons between 1914 and 1918 were also years of poor rainfall. However, a serious drought occured in 1922-23 resulting in a complete crop failure in many areas. The situation was particularly bad in the riverine areas, making the inhabitants the cheif sufferers. The situation in that zone was so bad that planting was done several times and each time seeds failed to germinate. Buckley reported that:

> The whole of our time and energy during the quarter has been devoted to the growing of grain. We put 10 acres under maize at the commencement of the rains. This we had to replant serveral times on account of the shortage of early rains.[66]

The upland valley areas had done better. For instance, the people around the villages of Maamba, Masengele, Muuka and Sinakoba at least harvested enough grain to last them a few months.[67]

Between 1931 and 1958, a series of rainfall shortages caused widespread drought and crop failures. Of the widely documented and remembered were the 1931-32, 1941-42, 1947-48, 1951-52, 1954-55 and 1957-58 failures.

Rainfall failures also caused severe droughts and widespread food shortages in the post-resettlement period. The southernmost areas of Siameja, Sianzovu, Kafwambila, Siampondo, Sinang'ombe and many others suffered some food shortages between 1965 and 1968 and during the 1972-73 season owing to drought. The years between 1981-84 suffered rainfall failures. The condition continued through 1986-87 after a pause during the 1984-85 season. Hunger ravaged the region.

During the 1972-73 season the rainfall was so erratic that it made the agricultural department's drive for early planting "ineffective as many farmers did not have satisfactory germination until after replanting later in the season" with peasant farmers replanting "some of them up to five times."[68] The rains performed poorly in the 1982-83 season. As it continued through 1983-84 that season's harvests were drastically reduced to such an extent that the majority of farmers in Gwembe south failed to harvest as there was no crop in the fields .[69]

Besides complete rainfall failure, poor distribution of the rains also affected productivity. Narrating the rainfall patterns during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries in Gwembe Central, patterns which may have been observable in the Gwembe South region too considering the proximity of the two areas to each other, Naakoyo noted that the rains could set off at the right time, about November-December, but often disappeared suddenly at the prime period of crop growth. This, she observed, often adversely affected crop production and consequently caused widespread hunger in

that area.[70] During his research, between 1968 and 1971, in the Valley, Honisch identified the problem of unevenness of rainfall pattern as one of the ecological factors that affected agricultural production. [71]

Evidence collected from oral and archival sources indicates the impact of uneven or poor rainfall distribution on agricultural production . During the 1930-31 season the food situation in Mweemba and Gwembe District as a whole was "most serious indeed ",culminating in the famous 1931-32 famine. Although we do not have rainfall data for that season ,we are informed that the situation did not arise from the complete rainfall failure , but rather because " all the rains came at once in the month of December."[72] The 1956-57 season provides yet another example . During that season both Mweemba and Sinazongwe received almost the same annual rainfall averages . However ,in the former all the rains came almost at once beginning the end of November, lasting through December , while in the latter the distribution was well spread throughout the farming season . Consequently Mweemba suffered food shortages in 1957 to 1958 harvest period while Sinazongwe produced adequate yields to last a few months.[73]

A similar pattern of rainfall distribution occurred in the Chieftaincy during the 1983-84 season . The rains came around mid-December . The planted seeds germinated with little problems, but the rains suddenly stopped during the first week of January 1984 only to come again at the beginning of February . But by then it was too late . The crops had already died .[74]

The importance of even distribution of rainfall may be illustrated by taking the 1953-54 season as a model . During that season nearly everywhere in the Gwembe Valley the total annual rainfall recorded was in the range of 20 inches (508.0 mm), a low figure when compared to the annual average Of 25 inches(635.0 mm). But because it was fairly distributed over the farming season , the harvests were relatively good .[75]

The impact of poor rainfall , its complete failure and its uneven distribution on agricultural productivity has been discussed elsewhere in Africa . Weinrich wrote of decreased agricultural productivity in Zimbabwe's Karangaland during the 1966-67 drought.[76] Bratton also wrote of the impact of the 1982-83 drought on aggregate crop production in Zimbabwe .[77] Assessing the interrelationship between drought and arable agriculture in Botswana , Jones noted that a combination of late first rains and early departure or dry period at the prime stage of crop development can cause serious crop failure .[78]

Effects of Temperature

High and extreme temperatures over the crop growing season often exacerbated the trans-evaporation rate . In an environment subjected to poor rains the process aggravates agricultural drought.[79] During the seven year period monitored at Kanchindu during the 1920s , the average maximum and average minimum temperatures were found to be 33 degrees C and 20.4 degrees C respectively with 23.3 degrees C as the mean of maximum and minimum temperatures .[80] Gwembe soils , particulary those found in Gwembe South region have a very low infiltration rate and run off .[81] Because of the high temperatures as illustrated above it was difficult for the soils to retain enough moisture for crop requirements .

As a chronic environmental problem ,extreme temperatures may have affected agricultural production in the past , but the first reference to the problem seems to be that of Rev. Fell who in 1914 observed that in the Valley the "heat is intense , the rains are very uncertain and variable ... one feels that they cannot expect more than they get."[82] Twenty years later his observations were endorsed by the Director of Agriculture, Lewin. Lewin pointed out that in the recent past crop failures and famines had become common features

of the Valley partly because of "the great summer heat with the recurrence of droughts of perhaps ten to twenty-five days between December and February."[83]

In 1946 the Land Commission endorsed that the problems of food production in the Gwembe had in part to do with extreme temperatures. It noted that because rainfall was often below 30 inches (762.0mm) and "more erratic" than on the Tonga Plateau, high evaporations often made water retention of the soil rather difficult because of "appreciably higher" temperatures.[84] The 1957 Government report on resettlement simply concluded that : "erratic rainfall and the great heat of the Valley often led to famine."[85]

My informants contended that among the factors that constrained their ability to produce enough food was the problem of high summer temperatures which compounded the problems of poor rainfall and uneven distribution over the growing season. They also contended that the plateau or escarpment areas were capable of producing enough food even in a year of below average rainfall because temperatures in these areas were lower.

Flood Pattern

One of the major ecological factors that determined food production in the pre-1958 period for the riverine cultivators was the flood pattern of the Zambezi river. The flood depended primarily on rainfall on the Upper Zambezi rather than on the rainfall in Gwembe itself.

The flood pattern determined agricultural production in three ways: Firstly by normal annual flooding; secondly by failing to flood; and thirdly, by early flooding. The latter two often adversely affected crop production and consequently caused food shortages among the riverine people.

The cultivation of the dry season riverine fields,**Zilili**, was regulated by the normal annual floods which used to deposit fertile silt that replenished the

fertility of these gardens. In a normal year, the Zambezi river bank was all green with maize crop from about June to October. The failure of the floods and early flooding usually signified misery, especially in a year when the rainfed crops failed due to drought. The failure of the Zambezi to flood above its banks was not uncommon between 1905 and 1958. Periodically this condition reduced the riverine cultivators to starvation, especially when it coincided with the failure of rainfed crop to mature owing to insufficient rains.[86] Such a condition obtained in 1921 - 22 season. In that season, the rain failed. As at January 30, 1922, rainfall at Kanchindu was only 24.3 mm.[87] This situation was compounded by the failure of the Zambezi to flood because **Bana Mweemba** could not cultivate their **Zilili** in the following dry season. [88]

A similar situation obtained in the 1930-31 and 1941-42 seasons. During both seasons, the rains failed and drought set in. Because of the extremely low water level, owing to failure of rains in the Upper Zambezi watershed area, the River failed to rise.[89] As the case was in 1922-23, in the years 1931-32 and 1941-42, the valley experienced severe and widespread subsistence crises. These years are widely remembered hunger years among Mweemba people.

Occasionally, there were also seasons when the Zambezi river flooded in March instead of April and or May. Since rainfed crops could not be harvested until after March, such floods tended to affect the rainy season crops planted slightly above **Zilili**. Such floods often flooded the deltas of the tributaries of the Zambezi, which comprised the main areas of cultivation and the lower levels of Alluvium II **kuti** and **myuunda** prior to the harvesting of rainfed crops. The first documented flood of this nature occurred during 1947-48 season.[90]

Similar and equally crop devastating floods occurred during 1951-52 and 1956-57. The latter floods caused severe destruction to rainfed crops, leading to the

widespread hunger in that farming year.[91] The 1956-57 season which was of erratic rainfall in the Gwembe Valley turned out to be the season with a record flood. In March, the Zambezi flooded very high, devastating Alluvium III and the lower level Alluvium II fields from Walkers Drift in Sichooba down to the Zambezi-Kafue confluence.[92] Rev. Bernard D. Jinkin noted that the flood was the "highest anyone at Kanchindu could remember"[93]

Crop Pests

The problem of crop pests as a chronic ecological factor in agricultural production is widely documented. Mulongo argued that the areas of Shimumbi, Chungu, Matipa, Tungati and Fuwe in Bangweulu failed to produce agricultural surplus in the late 1920s because of game ravages, while locust caused low crop yields in Namwala in the period between 1931 and 1936.[94] Gwyn Prins and Abel and Levin argued that the people of Western Zambia and Botswana respectively moved away from sorghum growing to maize because of sorghum's vulnerability to birds.[95] In his study of famine in Northeast Ethiopia, James McCann noted that that region suffered three major locust devastations between 1900 and 1935 and these induced severe famines. To these devastations, he noted further, must be "added the damage caused by birds, rodents and roving troops of baboons."[96] John Iliffe also noted that the drought of 1933 in Zimbabwe caused serious famine in the Sabi Valley because it was compounded by locusts which destroyed the crops that year.[97]

Although we cannot validate our argument with statistical data due to lack of figures on yields in traditional agriculture, birds, insects and wild animals caused a lot of crop damage in Mweemba and Gwembe as a whole. The history of crop pests in the region may be long, but can be traced only back to the nineteenth century. Travelling through the Upper River region in October 1862, Chapman noted that the elephants, buffaloes and hippopotami were common animals. Although these

provided food in form of meat they often caused serious crop damage. He observed that:

> the natives carry a horn, on which they blow to frighten away the elephants out of the gardens ...[98]

Small game animals such as monkeys, baboons, wild pigs and porcupines also devastated crops. During the same journey, Chapman pointed out that he often came across crowds of baboons "returning from a foraging expedition in the native gardens...." [99]

In addition to wild animals, insects and birds also threatened agricultural production throughout the nineteenth century. Locusts were a major threat among insects pests . Passing through the region in November 1898, Stevenson-Hamilton had this to say:

> This is starvation country and we cannot get anything for the boys. Locusts, of which we see clouds had been eating all mealies up and the niggers are living on roots in the smaller villages.[100]

The extent of the problem these elements caused to the Valley cultivators may be measured by the trouble these people took to try to control them. The spirit mediums, or prophets, locally known as **basangu** made attempts to ensure that crops were protected against the marauding animals, birds and insects.[101]

Besides attempts to control pests mystically, Gwembe people also tried to protect their crops by physical means. For example they protected sown seeds from white ants by soaking the seeds in a mixture of pounded fruits and seeds of wild cucumber (**cucumis focifolius**) and cold water for a day prior to planting or by planting a mixture of seeds and pounded **munonge** (**Pseudocadia Zambesiaca**). Wild animals were kept out by fencing the fields with thorn bush or shouting and horn-blowing. Hippopotami were trapped in pits dug in the centre of their tracks or were harpooned from the dugout canoes during the day.

In spite of such attempts crop ravaging pests remained a chronic problem in the twentieth century as they were in the nineteenth. Scudder wrote that:

> From the day seed is sown, Gwembe crops are threatened by a wide range of natural agencies including... insects and animals.[102]

Throughout the period between 1905 and 1987 crop pests were a menace to agricultural productivity in Mweemba and Gwembe in general. Rev. Matthews wrote that such animals as elephants were a major cause of food shortages. He indicated that the situation tended to be worse in the upland valley areas where for some years the thick bush had given them cover.[103] It was, for example, not uncommon up to the 1930s to find elephants raiding village granaries.[104]

The presence of a large elephant population was a deterrent to the development of **matemwa** before the 1940s. These Karroo soil fields could only be cleared in the **mopane** and **Triplochiton Zambesiacus** covered bush. These plant species are of great attraction to elephants, buffalo and other large fauna.[105]

The situation however changed drastically after the 1930s because of the increase in the number of people with guns. Read counted a total of eighty-one firearms in Mweemba in 1932.[106] The possession of guns did not only help reduce the number of large animals, but also helped drive them into inhospitable bush. This did not, however, mark the end of crop destruction by elephants. Most of these animals were pushed mainly into the inland areas or the upland valley where the human population was less than in the riverine area. Consequently elephants continued, although to a lesser extent, haunting upland dwellers.

The situation changed for the worse again when the people were resettled . The shortage of land meant that the people and their animals had to share with wild game the available resources. Elephants began causing severe damage to crops during the 1960s. This continued in the

1970s.[107] The most affected areas included villages from Muuka to Siampondo. The intensification of the Zimbabwe war of independence around the 1970s - the whole of Gwembe Valley from Siampondo to Chirundu was a battle arena - drove the jumbos away from their habitat. It is also likely that many were poached for ivory.

In the period before resettlement, the hippopotami were the main threat to **Zilili** cultivators. They became more destructive after 1925 when the Department of Game and Tsetse passed the Game Ordinance 1925, which banned such hunting methods as pitfalls and harpoon which had hitherto been used to keep away the beasts from the fields.[108]

Equally destructive to crops were small game. For instance, during the 1929 - 30 season, the impact of the shortage of rainfall was aggravated by small wild animals. Rev. Curry lamented thus: "Baboons and monkeys by day and wild pigs by night do considerable damage."[109] During one of his visits to the villages in 1934, Rev. Matthews noted that there were no people in the villages apart from the very old men and women because the middle aged, young and children had been mobilized to provide labour for scaring monkeys and baboons during the day and wild pigs and porcupines at night. People had to temporarily shift from the villages to the fields until after harvesting.[110]

Cdt. Kirwan-Taylor reported frequent attacks on Mweemba crops by the marauding animals especially the monkeys, baboons and wild pigs in 1956. He noted that "any shortage that may come about later will be due to these elements."[111]

Birds took a heavy toll on crops too, particularly at planting stage and before harvest, **Maila** (sorghum) and **inzembwe** (millet) suffered most just before harvest while maize tended to suffer at planting time. The major maize pests at this stage were three, relatively large, birds - **Bakwale** (francolin), **Inkanga** (Guinea fowl) and **Nkwecheche**, (a family member of the francolin). These very often tended to make germination a problem as they

scratched the seeds from the ground once they were planted. They also caused serious damage shortly after germination by scratching at the base of the young plant.[112] This killed young plants and led to replanting. In an area with erratic rainfall, the possibilities of replanted crops reaching maturity within the growing season were greatly reduced.

In the case of sorghum and millet, smaller birds such as weavers and common waxbills (**Estrilda astrild**) were particularly destructive once the crops began showing grains.[113] Although they were often in small numbers, parrots (**Poicephalus spp.**), doves (**streptopelia spp.**) and the grey-headed sparrows (**Passer diffus**) also caused some damage to sorghum and millet. For instance, some colonial officials observed in 1905 that the people of Sichooba did not produce a surplus partly because the area was a sanctuary for many crop attacking species of birds.[114] Rev. Buckley noted that in spite of the 1921-22 drought some isolated cases of relatively good sorghum and millet crops were reported in the inland villages of Muuka, Masengele and Sinakoba, but most of it was destroyed by large flocks of birds.

Reports of sorghum and millet being attacked by birds were also made in 1934, forcing many cultivators to sleep at the fields. Apart from scaring away other crop marauding pests, they "frightened away birds" which usually attacked the crops in the early morning and late in the afternoon.[115] In the 1970s many Mweemba people, especially those occupying the valleys of Mwenda and Zimu rivers, suffered serious weaver bird attacks. In order to lessen their number, they had to cut down **mukoka** (**Acacia Tortilis**) trees which provided sanctuary and breeding grounds.

Insect pests also contributed to decreased agricultural productivity. **Bachimvinye** (corncreak), grasshoppers and **Nswabaanda** (**strinksprinkhaan**) used to cause extreme crop damage. Locusts of a migratory type at times caused poor harvests. Between 1913 and 1917 crop attacking insects contributed to the food shortages.

During the 1914-15 season the effect of poor rainfall was aggravated by a swarm of **Bachimvinye** which caused "considerable damage to the crops", particularly in the areas along the banks of the Zambezi where there was a "regular plague of these creatures."[116] Colonial reports also indicate that a combination of **Bachimvinye, Inswabaanda** and **Maluntila** (a member of the grasshopper family, larger in size than the ordinary ones) ravaged a lot of crops in Mweemba division of the valley in 1917.[117]

Between 1933 and 1934 locusts, of migratory type were reported, mainly in the inland areas of Siatwiinda and Sikuteka where "they had settled by the millions."[118] In 1934 these caused food shortage in some villages: "the locusts attacked the crops early and cleared everything" reported Rev. Curry.[119] The villages around Kanchindu were reportedly the heaviest casualties of the swarms.[120]

My informants indicated that to 1987 **Bachimvinye** remained the most serious agricultural pest in the area.[121] For some reasons, **inswabaanda** and **maluntila** were not reported as having destroyed crops in the resettlement areas.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the Mweemba people suffered chronic subsistence crises in the period between 1905 and 1987 because they were not able to produce enough food for a surplus. Two major factors namely: land shortage and other ecological constraints were responsible for the problems of inadequate food production. The chapter has shown how the increase in population led to reduction in arable land holding which in turn led to loss of soil fertility due to constant cropping and also due to overcultivation. This situation led to poor yields per acre. The chapter has also demonstrated that ecological factors of erratic and poor rainfall distribution; high summer temperatures,

flood patterns and crop pests intervened during farming periods to constrain food production.

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CHAPTER TWO

VALLEY TONGA SUBSISTENCE STRATEGIES, 1905-1987

The present chapter examines how the people of the Gwembe Valley, in particular of Mweemba, managed to live in an environment which was apparently hostile. In this chapter we demonstrate that because the people of Mweemba knew their area well, over time they evolved a variety of coping strategies to cushion the impact of a crop failure in a bad year. The coping strategies are chronologically presented by dividing the chapter into two main sections. Since the effective colonization of North-Western Rhodesia in the early 1890s up to the time of Kariba resettlement, the Gwembe Valley remained an area isolated from the rest of the country in terms of communication. Because of the underdeveloped road network, contact with the rest of the country was very minimal indeed. However with resettlement roads were constructed to quicken the process of communication, and trading stores were built. The post-resettlement period also witnessed the opening of Maamba Coal Mine in Chief Mweemba's area. The post - 1958 period thus saw the rapid integration of the Valley into a wider national economy. This development had an impact on the manner the local people responded to food crisis. Thus, we have chosen 1958 as the dividing period in our examination of subsistence strategies.

BEFORE RESETTLEMENT, 1905 - 1958

This section examines the survival strategies Mweemba men and women employed in the face of hunger in the years before the Kariba resettlement. During this period dependence on fauna and flora, social and economic networks were common strategies.

Food Gathering and Hunting

Gathering and hunting have been part of man's wider subsistence economy and have a long history and as such are as old as the **homo sapiens.**

Wild plant and game resources played an important role in the economy of the Valley people in a bad year. However, it must be pointed out that the strategic significance of the wild resources in the food supply in the Gwembe region was not only limited to periods of food crisis . A great variety of vegetable relishes, fruits, grasses, tubers, roots and of animal species were exploited in good years to supplement the staple diet. The presence of a subsistence crisis meant that these resources were given an additional dimension of extensive and intensive exploitation and use.

Importance of Gathering

Food collecting as a subsistence strategy in hunger years elsewhere in Africa has been widely documented. During the nineteenth century the Basotho gathered and subsisted on the seeds of the **moseeka** grass whenever their kingdom was beset with food crisis and Basuto herd boys used to survive partly on edible roots and tubers (**Lihoete**) while women used to gather besides the seeds of **moseeka**, some wild vegetables and greens (**Meroho**).[1] During the 1917-20 famine that ravaged Central Tanzania, the local people turned to the bush for food.[2] Both Vaughan and Kayira wrote of a similar phenomenon in Malawi during the 1949-50 subsistence crisis.[3] Michael Mortimore found that a total number of forty-seven different plant foods were used in Nigeria's northern Kano state during the crisis of 1972-74.4 Dependence on wild plant resources was also observed in Wollo and Darfur provinces of Ethiopia and Sudan respectively during the 1984-85 hunger year.[5]

The Gwembe Valley people were particularly fortunate that their area was endowed with abundant plant and animal resources to which they turned in times of scarcity. Passing through the Upper River region of the Chieftaincy in 1862, Chapman observed with amazement the abundance of wild fruit trees in the area.6 During the 1931-32 famine Read made the point clearly when he said that:

> There is no district in the country that is entirely devoid of food if crops fail and Gwembe is particularly fortunate in the quantity and variety of forest produce available. In addition to vegetable produce there are many species of game, duck, geese, game birds, etc. The forest can supply a considerable quantity of food at different times of the year.7

Indeed the resources of this environment played a vital role during the bad years of the period between 1905 and 1958.

During the 1908-09 hunger year the Assistant Native Commissioner for Gwembe District found that the people of Mweemba were feeding on the tubers of **mutili** (**Neorautanenia mitis**), **Busiika** (**Tamarindus indica**) fruit and on the pods of **muunga** (**Acacia albida**).[8] Both missionary and government reports indicate that during the food insecurity of between 1912 and 1918 **Bana Mweemba** lived on seeds from edible grasses, fruits and tubers.9 During the 1912 - 13 hunger year the situation was extremely bad as there was no grain as early as April 1913. The Kanchindu based missionaries joined the local people in gathering the seeds of **impunga** (**Urochloa mossabicensis**) grass. Their April - June 1913 report indicates that they began that quarter by "gathering grass seeds, threshing and winnowing" in order to avert starvation.[10] Documentary and oral evidence indicates that plant resources supplemented the meager diet during the crop failures of 1921-22, 1931-32, 1941-42, 1947-49, 1951-52, 1954-55 and 1957-58.[11]

Some plant foods were poisonous, particularly the famine foods. According to Scudder, these were those

wild food plants which played a vital role in the Valley people's diet only during hunger years but were not eaten in good years.[12] Because of the toxic content of these plants, special preparation, usually prolonged boiling lasting several hours, was required before they were ready for consumption. At some stage during the preparation these foods had to be boiled in a water-ash mixture. Being an alkaline, ash acted as a toxin neutralizing agent.

Besides the gathering of wild plant foods, honey was collected on a large scale in times of subsistence insecurity. Four types of insects are known to provide honey: honey-bees (**inzuki**) and stingless bees which include **impasi**, **kantowe** and **simpikwa**. The Valley Tonga and other Tonga in general have no tradition of setting beehives in the trees as do the Luvale of North - Western Zambia. Thus, the honey was collected from the forest after hours of searching for the hives. During hunger years the **modus operandi** of searching for hives was to wander about the forest. During such wandering the searching party would often meet **nsolo** or **kacheka** (honeyguide), a bird which is well known for guiding people to a hive in as long as one has patience to follow it. It must be noted that such were strategies of desperation which were rarely employed during times of plenty. Some of my informants narrated how, during the 1931-32, 1941-42, 1951-52 and 1954-55 shortages, men combed the forest in search of honey.[13] Both pure honey and **mana** (young grubs still enclosed in the nests) were eaten. Giving a personal account, Murray -Hughes noted that "one could keep well nourished for forty-eight hours on the young bees taken from the hives".[14] Other African societies also cherish the importance of honey as a food in times of dea/th. Crosse -Upcott wrote of honey among the Ngindo of Tanzania thus:

> Honey ... is owned to be vital to Ngindo subsistence in time of want .... Honey ... is dense, pungent, concentrated nutriment; and the Ngindo will expend energy recklessly to get it.[15]

The Role of Hunting

Hunting was an important economic activity in Mweemba and in the Gwembe Valley in general . Travellers in the pre-colonial period in the area reported the abundance of game animals.[16] Although the rinderpest epidemic of 1896-98 may have killed many animals in this area, it is most likely that the recovery was quick because of the good fauna habitat provided by the region. Matthews wrote that many animal species which included elephants, rhinoceros, buffalo, eland, wild pigs, antelopes and baboons were found in the region.[17] A wide range of these animals were hunted and killed for food both during times of hunger and normalcy. However,an occurrence of a subsistence crisis meant diversification of the species hunted and the intensification of the activity.

Documentary evidence on the significance of animal resources during hunger in twentieth century Gwembe is very scanty and fragmented. The only tangible evidence comes from one District Officer, Sgt. D. Giddings' Kalomo-Gwembe tour report of between January 1922 and July 1923 which indicates that because of the food shortages of that time **Bana Mweemba** "were depending on hunting, often getting buffalo."[18] Although written evidence on these people's reliance on hunting as a crisis survival technique during the first half of the present century is lacking, oral evidence on the other hand is overwhelmingly sufficient. Asked how they averted death by starvation, many of my informants mentioned the role of hunting during such times. Their memories of how they acted during scarcities are vivid and fascinatingly narrated. Many of my informants narrated how they supplemented the meagre diet during hunger years. Rev. Malyenkuku had this to say:" in those days, God loved us very much because he gave us plenty of animals, small and large."[19]

Hunting techniques were many and varied according to the type of game sought. Up to about the 1940s the most

Hunting techniques were many and varied according to the type of game sought. Up to about the 1940s the most common included **makole** (spring-pole snares), **milindi** (pitfalls)and **Bwaalu** or **Lweembe** (communal hunt).[20] These were Tonga traditional methods. Mulongo noted that these methods were also commonly used by the Ila of Namwala and the people inhabiting the Bangweulu region of Luapula.[21] Beginning in the 1860s when the Chikunda trade in the lower Zambezi region increased and thus came to involve Mweemba area, **intobolo** (guns) were added to the list of hunting techniques.[22] By 1932 there were about eighty-one fire-arms in the Chieftaincy.[23]

By the time of resettlement hunting was no longer carried out openly. Reasons for this date back to 1925. In that year the Northern Rhodesian Government passed the Game Ordinance which restricted hunting without licence. The Ordinance also banned the indigenous hunting techniques such as pitfalls, snares, poison, and harpoon . That hunting had to be done by getting a licence from colonial officials, meant that the only legal and permissible method of hunting was to be the gun. The encouragement of villagers to spy on each other put a lot of strain on hunting during hunger times in the years after 1947. In this regard section 31 of the Ordinance stated that:

> The Magistrate or Native Commissioner before whom any person shall be tried for an offence under this ordinance may direct that any portion not exceeding one half of the penalty imposed and recovered shall be paid and awarded to any person who may have given information which shall have led to the... conviction of the offender....[24]

The fact that the Gwembe Valley remained relatively isolated between 1922 and 1947, there being no close administration of the region (during this period, Gwembe was administered from Kalomo and Mazabuka as Kalomo-Gwembe and Mazabuka-Gwembe) rendered the Ordinance somewhat ineffective and so hunting by local men continued on a large scale during the years of scarcity that occurred in 1931-32 and 1941-42. However, the

reconstitution of Gwembe as a full administrative district in 1947 made hunting a closed and secret strategy. The Ordinance's effectiveness was reflected in the decline of the number of traditional hunting methods in use by the time of the resettlement. At the time of his fieldwork in the Valley, between October 1956 and September 1957, Scudder found that out of eighteen indigenous known hunting methods only two were still in common use.[25]

Hunting has been a strategy of coping with food crisis elsewhere in Africa. Investigating the Tswana responses to food crisis, Hitchcock found that they used to mobilize group labour to conduct communal hunts.[26] The Basotho and Binga of Lesotho and Darfur, Sudan, hunted to avert starvation in famine years.[27]

Kinship and Bond Friendship Alliances

In Africa network relations play a major role in the provision of food to some of the members of the community who can not withstand the impact of a food shortage. James Giblin demonstrates that the Zigua of North-Eastern Tanzania maintained subsistence security in times of scarcities in part because of social relationships which granted them insurance.[28] The Kiganda, **oluganda kulya** (Kinship is eating) saying is a traditional reminder to the Baganda about the importance of kinship relations in food sharing during scarcity.[29] Caldwell and Lancaster have also written of similar phenomena in the West African Savannah and among the Goba of Zimbabwe.[30] **Bana Mweemba** were very keen on maintaining institutions that ensured the continuity and strength of established social alliances.[31] Among the most important social networks in the Valley were the institutions of kinship and bondfriendship. Scudder argues that these institutional networks were maintained by these people to "assure themselves of a place of refuge during famine years."[32]

Kinship networks or relationships, which include marriage alliance and relations of affinity, assumed a

very important role in times of food stress. Very often when food resources were exhausted, and they had no money or items to exchange for food the first step the affected members took was to turn to members of their kin group who were not affected or less affected by the scarcity.[33] The strategy has a long history. One of my informants narrated the story told to him by his late father how his grandfather's family migrated, probably during the 1899 famine, to Monze area on the Tonga plateau to stay with relatives until towards the beginning of a new farming season when the family went back to the Valley.[34] It was an obligation that in times of scarcity a man or woman with food had first an obligation to share with kinsmen or women and bond friends who had a right, by claim of relationship to receive assistance.[35]

As a subsistence security network, kinship alliances were widely used to gain access to food during bad years in the period to 1958. Touring the Kalomo-Gwembe sub-district in 1931, Macrae found that because the "famine was very severe" many Mweemba families from the riverine region of the Chieftaincy were trekking to relatives in the escarpment areas as early as February.[36] A number of families from the Chieftaincy were found staying with relatives in the plateau villages by April 1942 during the 1941-42 shortages.[37] By June 1942 Craufurd - Benson was reporting that people from:

> Chief Mwemba's area were already making in - roads upon the food supplies from Chief Siasikabole about 87 miles on the plateau ... acquired from relatives.[38]

Beyani also narrated how during the same (1941-42) crisis, Valley men and women and their children migrated **en masse** to the Tonga plateau areas of Choma and Kalomo, trekking with their livestock and remained in the area of destination with relatives until towards **kumwaka** (rainy season) when they returned with their **ntebe** (loads of grain), enough to see them at least through the period of preparing their fields for the new farming season.[39] During the shortages of 1954-55 which mostly ravaged the

riverine area, Akashambatwa - Lewanika, an African Assistant with Gwembe District, found during his tour of the area in September 1955 that due to the "real shortage of food", many men and women were away from their villages and in the neighbouring upland villages of Sinakoba, Muuka, and Masengele looking for food among relatives.[40]

To ensure assistance from non-blood kins in time of scarcity, two relationships were cultivated. Marriage was one such relationship that could be arranged by two previously non-linked families. Among the Luo of Western Kenya relational alliances through marriages were used to gain access to food in bad years. Because of such benefits, very often arranged marriages were contracted between groups that were settled in non-contiguous areas. In arrangement of marriages Cohen noted that:

> there was a consciousness of the value of extending networks of support over long distances and into different zones of production.[41]

Marriage arrangements of such nature were not uncommon in Mweemba before the Gwembe Local authority banned childhood betrothals in 1952. Girls were engaged in marriage at a very tender age. Some informants noted that some of such marriage arrangements were made between the Valley and escarpment or plateau families. The former usually married their daughters to the men from the latter zones. Rarely were marriages arranged in a reverse order. Often as a reminder of the 'dangers' inherent in the Gwembe Valley subsistence economy, plateau women used to sing derogatory songs about the area such as:

Nsikakwatwi kubuwe,	I will not marry in the Valley
nkobalalila maande,	where they eat frogs,
lyoonse nkweenda	Always travelling in search
nkumana kasindi	of food [42]

Such arranged marriages insulated some Valley families against a shortfall.

During some bad years some parents married their daughters away to men who had food, or entered into a secret contractual arrangement with such a man to have sexual relationship with their wives in return for food.[43]

Arrangements of such nature were more common during the 1941-42 food shortages as food resources on the Tonga plateau declined rapidly because of the widespread food shortages. The giving away of daughters in marriage and 'selling' of wives was done during the 1949-50 crisis in Malawi.[44]

The Role of Bond Friendship

Bond friendship (**bulongwe/buzolwani**) was another disaster survival strategy common among Mweemba families. It is difficult to date its beginnings, but one undisputable fact about it is that it was an old institution among the Tonga. It represented an attempt to develop a permanent claim on people with whom one had no kinship or any other alliances. Once established, **bulongwe**, could be inherited by sons or daughters in the event of the father's death. This institution was always cultivated between people of the same sex, only in the case of an inherited relationship could a man and a woman become bond friends. The sharing of items between the parties to the friendship constituted the mainstay of the relationship. Although bond friendships could be formed between people in the same ecological zone, very often they were formed between people living in different ecological areas and between residents and traders who visited the area.[45]

In Mweemba and elsewhere in the Valley **bulongwe** was formed between tobacco growers and traders from the escarpment and Tonga plateau areas. The tobacco trader used to get cones of tobacco from Valley growers as gifts

and when he returned to the Valley the next season he carried goods as gifts for his bond friends.[46]

In times of food shortages those Tonga men who had bond friends often sought those whom they had formed friendship with through earlier gifts.[47] During my field research, one informant from Siameja told me how she and her family survived the food shortage of 1941-42 by migrating to Kanchele in the Kalomo district where her husband sought refuge with his late father's bond friend.[48] Colson wrote that "... each person probably has a roster of ... bond friends whom he keeps in mind for use in hunger periods", thus she found that as hunger intensified during 1957 people went in different directions in search of such bond friends and relatives.[49]

A similar system was found among the Sarwa of Ngamiland, Botswana, known as **hxaro.** It was based, just like bond friendship, on mutual trust and gifts. The system played a major role as a subsistence security network in times of scarcity. A friend in a famine hit area would often go to visit his friend in an area with adequate food resources. The alliance was often established across broad ecological regions.[50]

Labour Migration

Labour migration assumed an important role in periods of scarcity. Mweemba men often went into wage labour and exchanged some items even in good years. A bad year, however, saw increased activity in this economic sphere.

In good years it was mainly the unmarried or the newly married young men who went into wage labour. The latter went into wage employment to raise money to pay for dowry while the former may have done so in order to raise money for other items or to help them pay dowry upon marrying. In bad years these were joined by older married men. In the period before resettlement more than forty-one percent of the Valley male population was out

in labour migration at any one time.[51] During the hunger years the number tended to increase. For example, during the localized food shortages that occurred in the riverine areas of Mweemba in 1928-29, Rev. Lyon of Kanchindu reported an "exodus of able-bodied lads in search of work."[52] During the scarcity of 1931-32 many able - bodied men and bigger boys began migrating to towns in March 1931.[53] By September , Macrae was to report that most villages were "denuded of able bodied men" because many of them were away in search of wage labour.[54] Later in the year Cdt. F.M. Thomas reported that out of the total adult male population of sixty in the three villages of Siapolo, Mugonko and Kanyemba, more than forty-seven were out in labour migration.[55] During the same crisis (1931-32) about two thirds of the 2,471 total taxable male population from the villages of Mweemba, Siameja, Siampondo and Sinakoba were at work in southern Rhodesia or within Northern Rhodesia.[56] The number of taxable male at home was so low that the tax collected from the area for that year was very poor.[57]

A similar trend was noticed during the hunger years of 1941-42, 1947-48, and 1951-52. As at June 1942 for instance, over 597 out of a total of 809 men in seven villages were away in wage labour.[58] In 1947 of 1660 taxable males in about fifteen villages, 1002 had sought wage employment to avert starvation.[59] In 1951-52 as hunger increased men began to look for wage labour. Around Siameja some men began going with their wives and children particularly those who went to work on tobacco farms of Choma-Kalomo area.[60]

Besides working for wages with which to buy food, work for food was a common strategy among Valley men and women in bad years. It was the plateau families that offered food for work. Men were involved in felling trees to extend fields or opening up new ones while women and young girls were involved in weeding and pounding while young boys were given the task of herding cattle.[61] My informants pointed out that during the 1941-42, 1947-48 and 1951-52 hunger years, some Valley families

temporarily moved into the plateau areas where they constructed **mikuta** or **misasa** (make shift homes). From there they sold their labour.[62]

The Role of Trade and Exchange

Through labour migration Mweemba men raised some money which they remitted home to their families to buy grain mainly from the Tonga plateau or the escarpment areas. Those who did not go into wage labour, hawked a number of items in exchange for grain. Very often the items included craftwork, tobacco, livestock, forest products and personal effects.

Craftwork

Although the Valley Tonga were good craftsmen and women, they did not trade their crafts on a large scale in good times. But during hunger years they "produced as much as they could and peddled their wares about the countryside in return for food."[63]

Basketry products such as **zisuwo, tutwida** and **insangwa** which were not locally woven on the plateau and escarpment regions because of lack of the raw materials which included **matete** (reeds) - (**phragmites mauritanus**) and **malala** (**Hyphaene ventricosa**) were bartered for grain, mainly maize. Some of my informants remembered these items being bartered for plateau maize in the period between 1922 and 1958.[64] During the 1941-42 hunger year, Craufurd - Benson found **Bana Mweemba** bartering baskets, while both Colson and Scudder observed that products of pottery, basketry and mats were exchanged in return for grain in the 1957-58 hunger year.[65]

Iron products included **masumo** (spears), **tuleba** (axes), **mbezyo** (adzes) and **tufulo** (knives). Although archeological evidence indicates that iron working was carried out in Southern Zambia about A.D. 300 - 90,[66] there is no particular tradition of iron-working associated with the people of the Valley. Most iron

products that were used before the twentieth century came into the area through trade contacts.[67] However, with increased labour migration during the early years of the present century, some men learnt black-smithing and usually made their crafts from scrap metals which they got from the modern industrial centres. It was from this metal that they made their wares.

In times of food crisis those men who had learnt the skill made wares to exchange for grain. In 1941-42 hunger year, for example, two blacksmiths from village Mudodoli temporarily migrated to Siasikabole area of Choma district where they continued their profession making these wares and exchanging them for grain.[68]

There is no evidence to suggest that pottery and iron artifacts were exchanged for grain after the 1941-42 food crisis. The rapid integration of the plateau economy, where these items had found a ready market, into the global economy from the 1920s placed them out of market. Modern European wares became more popular than indigenous ones.

Disposal of Personal Effects

The term personal effects is used here in a narrow sense to mean those personal assets that were used for the purpose of adornment.

Oral evidence points to the fact that **impande** (conus shells), **minkonde** (Bead Collars), **imbanyina** (cowrie shell headpads), **intilani** (bead armbands) and other related articles were exchanged for grain in crisis times. Some informants, however, remembered specifically the exchange of these items for grain during the hunger years of 1921-22, 1931-32 and 1941-42.[69]

Craufurd - Benson in June 1942 noted that as the hunger increased some Mweemba families exchanged their beads for maize with some plateau families.[70] Rahmato documented a similar reaction in Ethiopia's Wollo province during the 1984-85 famine. He wrote that women

sold all or most of their personal effects which included jewelry and clothing.[71]

Exchange of Forest Products

In periods of hunger wild plant foods and game, were exchanged for grain through barter. Some vegetable relishes such as **tende** (**cocculus hirsutus**), **mundyolo** (**Triplochiton Zambesiacus**) powder, **mbelebele** (**seshania sesban**) and **inkomba** (**ceratotheca sesamoides**) were common products of exchange during the subsistence crises of 1941-42, 1947-48, 1951-52, 1954-55 and 1957-58.[72] Similarly, **malala** (**Hyphaene ventricose**) strips, **mubuyu**, (**Adansonia digitate**) and **mukoka** (**Acacia heterancantha**) fibre increasingly came into exchange during 1957-58 hunger year. [73] In spite of the legal prohibition against hunting, game meat trade was still carried out with the plateau people during crop failure in the 1950s.[74]

The Role of Tobacco

Tobacco was one of the traditional commercial crops grown in the Gwembe Valley. **Lubange** (Indian hemp or bhang) was yet another.However, as a prohibited crop we do not have information on the extent of its trade. Tobacco had been grown perhaps since the time the crop was introduced in Central Africa around 1500.[75]

Passing through the area in 1862 David and Charles Livingstone noted that the Sinamani people of the present Mweemba Chieftaincy were growers of good quality tobacco.[76] During the nineteenth century this tobacco was sold, like the tobacco of the Shangwe people of Inyoka District, Zimbabwe, in Zimbabwe and on the Northern Rhodesia plateau and later in the late 1920s on the Copperbelt mines.

In times of hunger the money raised from the tobacco sales was used to purchase grain. In 1912-13 hunger

year, Mweemba peasant tobacco growers were able to buy maize grain at prices ranging from five to ten shillings six pence per one hundred pounds bag on the plateau areas of Kalomo and Choma.[77] Tobacco continued to play an important role in hunger years up to 1958. Although Godfrey Haantobolo argues that the 1924 Inyoka Tobacco Export Duty Ordinance that slapped a 3½ pence levy per pound of tobacco exported to Southern Rhodesia killed the Valley Tonga trade in tobacco to such an extent that when famine occurred in 1931-32 they were exposed to starvation for want of cash to buy grain,[78] this is not true. Firstly, the Ordinance was shortlived because it was repealed on the 21st of November 1929,[79] and thus did not affect the Gwembe people's ability to mitigate the 1931-32 food shortages. Secondly, contrary to Haantobolo's analysis, evidence shows that by 1929 an alternative market to that of Southern Rhodesia had been found, for the crop from the Valley was being sold on the Northern Rhodesia Copper mines where it was annually yielding 3,000 pounds.[80]

Apart from being sold to raise money with which grain was purchased, it was exchanged for grain through barter. Some of Matthews' and my informants at least mentioned the fact that those who grew the crop bartered it for grain with the escarpment and plateau Tonga people.[81] **Bana Mweemba** bartered their tobacco in large quantities for the Tonga plateau maize during the 1931-32 hunger year.[82] They also exchanged their tobacco for maize during the 1941-42 food shortages.[83]

Although there is no direct evidence of tobacco being exchanged for grain during 1947-48, 1951-52, and 1957-58 hunger years, during her research in the late 1950s, Colson found the Valley people still trading in the crop.[84]

Importance of Livestock

Besides their role in meeting some major social commitments, domestic animals were a buffer stock against

any crop failure. During food scarcity, goats, sheep and cattle were sold to raise money to buy grain or were bartered for grain. In the early part of the twentieth century, goats and sheep were the most important livestock in the Valley. Although there was a steady build up of cattle population in the area about the second decade of the present century,[85] there is no evidence of selling or exchanging cattle for grain during times of subsistence crises until after resettlement. However small stock were sold for money, bartered for grain and killed for meat in lean years in the period between 1905 and 1958.

In 1904-05 hunger year the people of Sichooba and probably of Sinamaani and Siampondo sold their small stock, about 1,700 in all, in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, at four to ten shillings and five shillings to one pound for goats and sheep respectively.[86] In 1908-09, the year of **inzala impati** (the Great famine), most families in Mweemba and perhaps elsewhere in the Gwembe Valley relied on small stock which they "killed in great number for meat".[87] A similar response was reported during the 1913-14 subsistence crisis, leading to a substantial decrease in the number of goats and sheep.[88]

My informants indicated that besides other strategies, goats and sheep played a very important role in relieving distress during the 1922-23 crisis. They were sold for money to buy grain or exchanged for grain in the escarpment and plateau areas of Kalomo and Choma.[89]

The localised food shortages of 1928 also saw mass slaughtering of goats and sheep whose meat was eaten or exchanged for maize.[90] During the 1931-32 famine relief, Read narrated how he was, in August 1931, "besieged by natives bringing sheep, goats and fowls... which they wished to exchange for grain."[91]

When another hunger occurred in 1941-42 Craufurd - Benson reported that besides purchasing maize in the inter-African trade, which was selling at fifteen

shillings a bag or two shillings and six pence per petrol tin, much of the maize was bartered for goats and sheep.[92] Small stock were also exchanged for grain during the 1947-48 food shortages .[93] Because of the food shortages of 1951-52 the total number of small stock decreased from 60,081 in 1950 to 41,939 in 1951 to 30,361 in 1952.[94] During this crisis sheep were sold to the butchers on the line of rail where their prices ranged from thirty to forty shillings each.[95] This was the first reported case of small stock being sold to modern butcheries. In the past they were sold or exchanged for grain in the inter-African trade only. It was not, however, possible precisely to isolate the number of animals sold by Mweemba people out of the figures given above.

In the pre-resettlement period dependence on small stock was again reported during the food shortages of 1957-58. The District Commissioner reported that because of the serious food shortages in the Gwembe:

> Some of the very numerous goats in the Mweemba area were sold at places on the plateau in the second half of the year in order to raise money to buy food.[96]

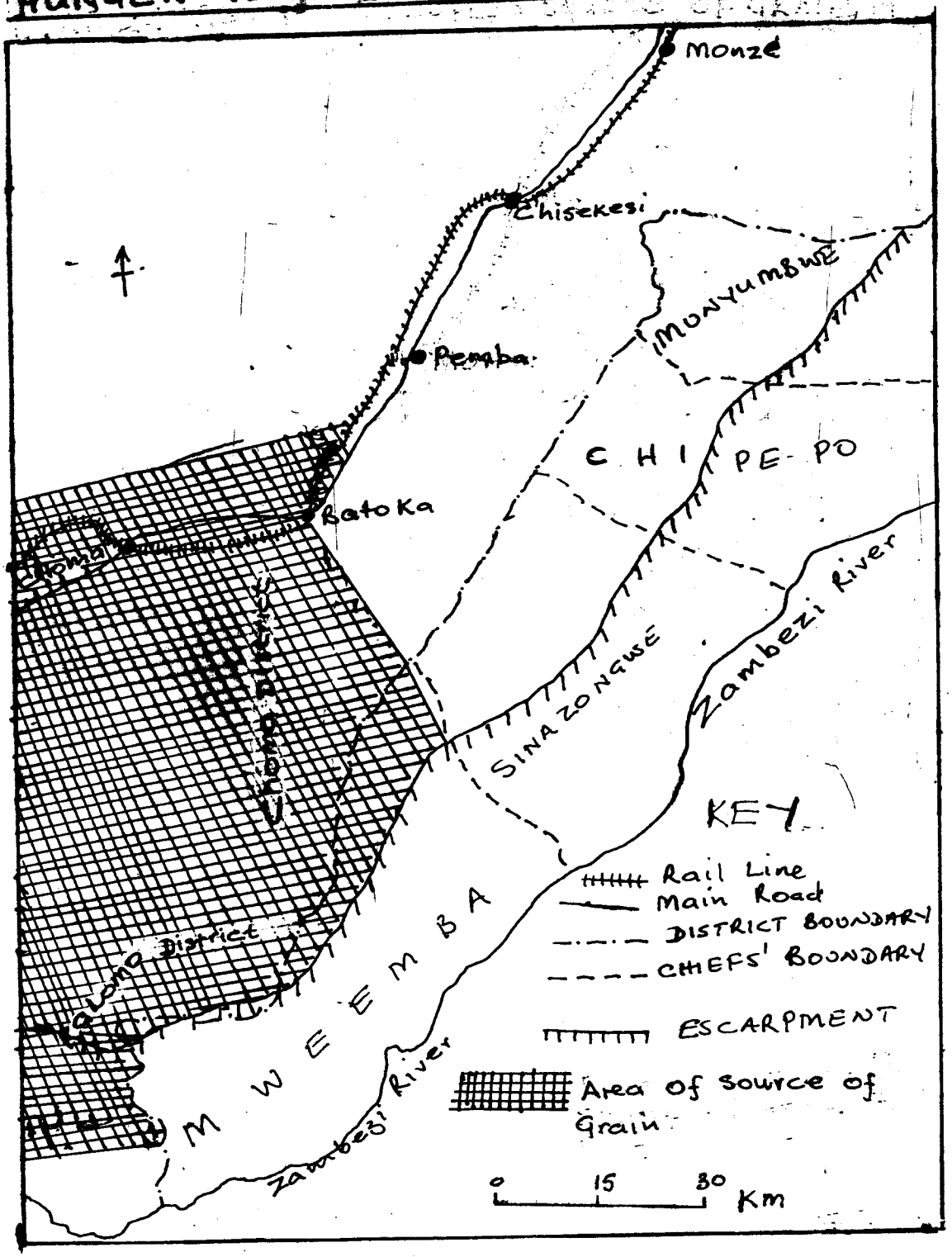
Food Rationing and Consumption Reduction

One important element of surviving a food crisis is the management of available resources to ensure that they last. In this regard processing, preparation and the allocation of meals to the members of the household become decisive. It was impressive to learn how the Mweemba women managed their food resources in bad times.

In times of normalcy the processing of grain entailed careful winnowing to remove chaff or husks so that clean grain was left for pounding. However, during shortages the little available grain was ground with husks, **kuziya kampandu.**[97] Reynolds and Colson wrote that in a hunger year the use of mortar, **inchili**, was generally discouraged.[98]

Whenever the crisis intensified, the practice was to reduce the number of meals and the amount of food served at each meal. "children could cry, cry, cry, you gave

MAP 2: SOURCE OF GRAIN IN HUNGER YEARS DURING THE PERIOD TO 1958



Adapted from: Zambia Geographical Association Magazine, no. 25 January 1974, 4.

them a deaf ear as if you were not aware of their cries" narrated Monica Sinyinga Mankanga. Meals were prepared late in the evening so that children could have a harmonious sleep. If meals were prepared early in the evening children would wake up in the night and start crying. It was better to have them cry during the day.[99]

To ensure that all the members of the household had equal access to the little available food, allocation of such food was very important. Mothers, old women and men usually tended to eat less to allow children have enough food. Very often the mother would divide the food in equal lumps and give each child his or her share rather than leaving them to eat from one dish as the practice was in times of plenty.[100] The strategy gave protection to the younger children against the older ones who might be able to eat at a faster pace than others.

AFTER RESETTLEMENT, 1958-1987

Between 1946 and 1955 a great argument went on in the colonial official circles on the issue of whether or not a dam ought to be built at Kariba or Kafue gorge.[101] When agreements were reached, work commenced in 1955 and was completed in 1958 leading to the damming of the Zambezi at Kariba gorge. Before the lake was formed, a programme of resettlement to move those riverine people who were to be affected by the rising water was put in place and was finally effected between 1957 and 1958.

The move affected some of the mechanisms that provided security in times of subsistence crises. This section examines some of the coping mechanisms that declined after resettlement. It further looks at some of the old, the pre-resettlement, strategies that survived after the move and the new strategies. We demonstrate that although some coping mechanisms survived the aftermath of resettlement they were fundamentally altered.

Decline of Some of the Pre-Resettlement Strategies

Resettlement meant loss of **zilili** where dry season crops were grown. Tobacco, the major traditional commercial crop was also grown in these riverine gardens. The loss of **zilili**, therefore, meant the abandonment of tobacco growing among the Gwembe people. This meant the demise of a crop that provided security against hunger.

Another coping mechanism that collapsed was the institution of bond friendship. Although there is evidence showing that elsewhere in Gwembe District, some of the resettled men formed bond friendship with some men in the regions near the new areas of settlement,[102] neither documentary nor oral evidence is available to suggest that the institution continued among Mweemba men. In most areas of the Upper River region, the system of bond friendship centered mainly around tobacco. The decline of the peasant tobacco production meant, therefore, that the institution came to an end too.

The bartering or selling of traditional craftwork and personal effects during hunger years was no longer a practice common in the years after resettlement. Although many craft articles, especially of basketry, remained in use and were encouraged by the Gossner Service Team in the 1970s, the artifacts were no longer hawked in the Valley or on the plateau, which provided a traditional market during famine years, as a means of acquiring food. The situation was similar with bead or shell products of personal adornment whose main outlet market was also the plateau area.

The rapid integration of Zambia into world economy did not only transform the economy but social and cultural values as well. By the 1960s it was no longer fashionable to use or wear articles that were traditional and were looked upon as belonging to the primitive age which was phasing out. Moreover, the plateau people were becoming more and more integrated into the capitalist economy because of their participation in commercial farming which began around the 1930s.[103]

The pre-resettlement hunger subsistence strategies that were carried out in the new areas included gathering, hunting, labour migration, kinship relations and reliance on livestock. Beer and illegal precious stones trade emerged as new post-resettlement survival strategies.

Gathering and Hunting

Both gathering and hunting continued after resettlement. During the food shortages of 1968-69 the most affected people of Siameja, Siampondo, Sianzovu and Sinangombe gathered **impunga** seed and other wild plant foods. Siameja informants remembered eating **muswezyo (maerua glauca)**, a famine food.[104] Similarly during the 1973-74 hunger year the people of these areas and others in the Chieftaincy supplemented their meagre staple diet by turning to the bush.[105] Many households supplemented their little food resources by eating wild plant foods during the 1982-84 and 1986-87 hunger years. Oral evidence indicates that fruits of **mubuyu (Adansonia digitata)**, **munego (Azanza garckeana)** and **musiika (Tamarindus indica)** were consumed during these crises years.[106]
Elsewhere, in Munyumbwe Chieftaincy, dependence on wild foods was also reported during the 1982-84 hunger period.[107]

Hunting continued alongside gathering, although it continued as a secret operation. Game laws were closely enforced during the colonial period when district tours by officials were conducted. The situation changed after 1963 when official government tours ceased. Although most colonial laws were carried over by the newly independent government of Zambia after October 1964, game laws in areas falling outside the designated National Parks or Game Management Areas were somewhat relaxed. They were no longer highly enforced unless one killed an elephant whose tusks were a sought government trophy and were difficult for individuals at village level to

dispose of without detection from the law enforcing agents. Hence, during food crises hunting was intensified, not as a source of direct means of subsistence but rather indirect. Animals were killed using snares, dogs and guns and the meat was dried and sold mainly to salaried government officials such as teachers, veterinary, agricultural and medical assistants whose appetite for meat was always great. Some of the meat was secretly sold at Maamba Coal and Mapatizya and Mbwiko amethyst mines. The money raised went to purchase grain or mealie meal. In some cases the meat was exchanged for grain or mealie meal within the village community among those who had some food resources. Timothy Simaumba said:

> ...a hunger year in our area is a year of drought, water becomes a big problem not only for people and their domestic animals, but for wild animals (**banyama bamusokwe**) as well. They (wild game) get tired easily because of lack of water. Even young boys kill big game such as kudu with dogs.[108]

Indeed many other informants alluded to the ease with which wild animals were killed during the drought of 1983 - 84 and 1986 - 87 and how some members of the three mining communities used to roam the villages, **kufunfuzya**, asking around where they could find meat to buy.[109]

Kinship Relations

Claude Meillassoux wrote that the "development of exchange and the rise of the market economy" was not compatible with kinship.[110] The argument revolves around the profit mindedness that forms a basis for the transformation of a product into a merchandise. Maintaining kinship ties and reliance of disadvantaged relatives on better resource provisioned relatives threatens the sustainability of the business. Although the Valley as a whole began to be integrated into the capitalist economies of the region in the late 1890s,

there is no evidence to suggest that kinship relations lost actuality.[111]

It remained a common practice to find that in times of hunger some relatives facing food crisis sought the assistance of those relatives with grain or money to buy food. Thirty years after resettlement, Scudder and Colson observed that:

> In the past the exchange of food and other forms of wealth between kin was an important famine relief mechanism. This expectation of assistance from kin regardless of where they live continues today.[112]

During the 1968 - 69 hunger year some families from Siameja, and probably Sianzovu, Siampondo and Sinangombe sought assistance from their kin at Kandyoli in the nearby escarpment hills.[113] Colson and Scudder also noted that during the hunger period of 1982 - 84 young families were forced to "split up, with wives and children moving in with senior relatives who had the resources to buy grain."[114] Siakalambwa and Siakumbila, both teachers at Nyanga Primary School, mentioned that during the crises of 1982 - 84 and 1986 - 87 school attendance suffered as many pupils left the villages for towns and cities to stay with salaried and waged relatives.[115]

Labour Migration

Migration into cities and towns of Zambia and Rhodesia continued in the post-resettlement period during both normal and hunger years. In the hunger years of 1968 - 69 and 1973 - 74, for instance, the rate of migration had appreciably gone up.[116] The able bodied men left for cities, towns and commercial farms on the plateau areas of Kalomo and Choma. However, one significant development about the labour migration responses during the above shortages was that Southern Rhodesia which was a major traditional market for the Mweemba labour was not sought. The development can be traced from 1966 when that country unilaterally declared

independence from Britain. Following the declaration, Zambia closed its borders with Rhodesia. The move affected mainly the people of the Southernmost part of the Chieftaincy who were the main migrants to that country's labour market.

As a response to food shortages, labour migration was no longer a viable option due to the economic downturn Zambia experienced in the period after 1975. The downturn began with the decline of copper prices, Zambia's principal export, in the mid 1970s at the very time when oil prices were rising. This national economic trend led to the "collapse of the [Gwembe] district economy."[117] The national economic problems of this period culminated into lack of employment signified by the increasing difficulty associated with getting unskilled wage employment in the formal sector of the national economy.[118]

The situation rapidly worsened in the period between 1975 and 1979. There was, for example, retrenchment of labour in the formal sector from 393,000 in 1975 to 368,000 by June 1978,[119] making it difficult to get employment. Therefore, few people went on labour migration.

Significance of Livestock

In the period immediately following resettlement Mweemba area suffered heavy losses of small stock mainly from predators and disease. However, the goat population quickly increased thereafter, but sheep were almost decimated and only very slowly increased their number.

The cattle population which had begun rising gradually in the late 1940s following the introduction of trypanosomidal drugs,[120] increased very rapidly in the post-resettlement period. [121] The tsetse control programme of the 1970s stabilized cattle losses in the Chieftaincy. [122]

The period witnessed also the beginning of the rearing of pigs and domestication of wild guineafowls and

a tremendous increase in the number of domestic poultry. Before resettlement only three Gwembe Chieftaincies, Munyumbwe, Sikongo and Sinadambwe reared pigs.[123] However, pig culture began spreading through other Chieftaincy in the Gwembe including Mweemba in the period after resettlement. From zero at independence, pig population rose to 2,060 in Mweemba in 1986.[124] The domestication of wild guinea fowl became a common phenomenon in the late 1970s. The trend became so common that by 1987 there was hardly a village without the birds.

During the food shortages of the post-resettlement period, dependence on livestock was thus extended beyond goats and sheep. In the hunger year of 1968 - 69, Siameja, Kafwambila and Siampondo people sold cattle to raise money to buy grain for the first time.[125] However, many remembered having participated in a governmental organized cattle sale of 1961 which was held at Kabanga in Kalomo district. This was, however, not moved by any food shortages, but rather as a deliberate state policy to destock the area.

During the 1982 - 84 and 1986 - 87 hunger years, many Mweemba households sold their goats, cattle, pigs and both tamed wild fowls and domestic ones to raise money for the purchase of bags of maize or mealie meal. Cattle and goats were bartered for bags of maize and of mealie meal respectively. In 1982 - 84 one head of cattle was exchanged for 5 90kg bags of maize, while during 1986 - 87 it was at 10 90kg bags. Goats were exchanged for a 25kg bag of mealie meal each.

Dependence on livestock during the food crises of the 1980s has parallels elsewhere in the Valley. In her study of the impact of drought on agricultural production in the Chieftaincy of Munyumbwe, Euphrasia Milambo found that during the 1986 - 87 hunger year, 34 head of cattle and 38 goats were sold among 50 people she sampled to raise money to buy grain or mealie meal.[126]

The Role of Beer

During the relief operations of 1983 - 84 hunger year, the WVI agents complained against increased beer brewing among the relief food beneficiaries.[127] The act was seen as improvident and a deprivation of food to those members of the households who did not partake in beer drinking. However, my field research revealed that beer brewing tended to be very common in a hunger year simply because this was an economic way available food resources could be used to ensure that a household's food needs were sustained during the crisis. My informants pointed out that if one had money to buy mealie meal or maize grain and sorghum or millet for **chimena/busweezyo** (malted meal) the most economic approach to ensure that there was money to buy mealie meal or grain was to engage in brewing for sale.[128] The system worked in such a way that the profit from beer sales was used to buy food while the initial sum was re-invested into beer brewing until such a time that they had a normal harvest.

On the question of turning relief food into beer for sale, most of my informants expressed more or less similar sentiments, arguing that relief food was not available or given when the recipients needed it most because its distribution was erratic. Thus, to avert starvation they thought it economic and wise to turn some mealie meal or grain into beer to raise money to purchase more mealie meal or maize grain for the family while waiting for the next provision.[129] With food, especially mealie meal, available for sale in local stores, the strategy was practical . Calculations made in Gwembe Central which may be applicable to Mweemba in Gwembe South revealed that around the early 1980= one gallon of beer brought a net profit of fourteen ngwee above the actual cost of brewing it, the actual purchase price of three pounds of maize required to brew it was at that time 4.5 ngwee.[130]

Brewing for sale was even more profitable than selling a fowl or a goat. In the 1970s, a 44 gallon

capacity drum of beer raised more than ten Zambian Kwacha while a fowl and a goat were at one and four Zambian Kwacha respectively. In the 1980s a 44 gallon drum raised twenty kwacha while a fowl and goat were at two kwacha fifty ngwee and eleven kwacha respectively.[131]

Although beer for sale had been brewed in the Gwembe District since the early 1950s, this strategy to brew in order to sustain household food requirements in a hunger year seems to be quite a recent development.

The strategy may have been used during the 1951-52, 1954-55, 1957 - 58 and 1968 - 69 hunger years but there is no evidence, written or oral to suggest that. The earliest the mechanism was used seem to be during the 1973 - 74 hunger year and this was in Gwembe Central village of Sinafala where Colson and Scudder observed that as the 1972 - 73 drought continued:

> ...practically all sales were intended to raise money to buy food. Moreover, as the drought increased, men joined women in using the sale of beer to obtain food for their families.[132]

Besides its importance in raising money to buy mealie meal and grain in a hunger year, beer played a major role in food rationing. Most of the beer drinking adults developed a tendency of having one main meal a day, in the morning before leaving for a beer drinking party.[133] From this practice, the members of a household secured one major benefit during a hunger year. Beer drinking adults reduced their participation in the sharing of available food.

Illegal Amethyst Trade

Following the attainment of self-rule in Zimbabwe, at the end of the bloody guerrilla war, in April 1980, Mapatizya and Mbwiko amethyst mines which had closed down because of the war re-opened. The mines were soon besieged with an influx of West African illegal stone traders locally known as **Masenesene** (corruption for Senegalese).

Since the presence of these immigrants in the mine compounds was held suspect, these men used the local men employed in the mines to smuggle the stones out of the mining areas. The business began booming around 1981.[134] During the food shortages of 1982 - 84 and 1986 - 87 the ordinary villagers, especially from the villages of Siameja, Kafwambila, Sianzovu and Siampondo joined the illegal trade. Very often they would leave these aliens in the villages while they went to get stones. Beginning about the 1983 - 84 food shortages, some villagers began digging the precious stones at night using torches to locate the required stones. The mines became popular places for making easy money during the recent hunger years. The money raised went to purchase mealie meal and maize grain.

The business was, however, risky. As the tunnels or trenches deepened, without proper and adequate support to keep the soil in place, they were prone to collapse. Two deaths occurred, one in 1984 and the other in 1987, as the tunnels collapsed on the miners.[135]

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the people of Mweemba did not adopt a fatalistic attitude in the face of food shortages that hit their region.They tried to effectively utilize their surrounding environment for subsistence. Besides this ability, these people were able to respond and take advantages of changes in the regional economies in order to survive subsistence crises. They traded their products and resources for money to purchase grain or mealie meal when an opportunity presented itself. They also responded to the labour needs of modern capitalism by selling their labour on the European farms, mines and industrial centres. They too took advantages of the existing social institutions that provided security in times of food crises. Through their ability to adapt to new environment and socio-economic changes, they were able to insulate themselves against crop failures that were a common phenomenon in their region.

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CHAPTER THREE

EMERGENCY FOOD RELIEF OPERATIONS, 1908 - 1987

Although **Bana Mweemba** always relied on their traditional survival methods to cushion the impact of subsistence scarcities, the mechanisms employed did not always furnish them with adequate food . Some of their indigenous survival techniques were more suitable to the able bodied. The old and the children tended to suffer hardships. Because of the inadequacies of the indigenous survival strategies, emergency relief measures were often drawn up in order to try and reduce the levels of distress in the community. These measures were taken by Government and Non-Governmental Organisations.

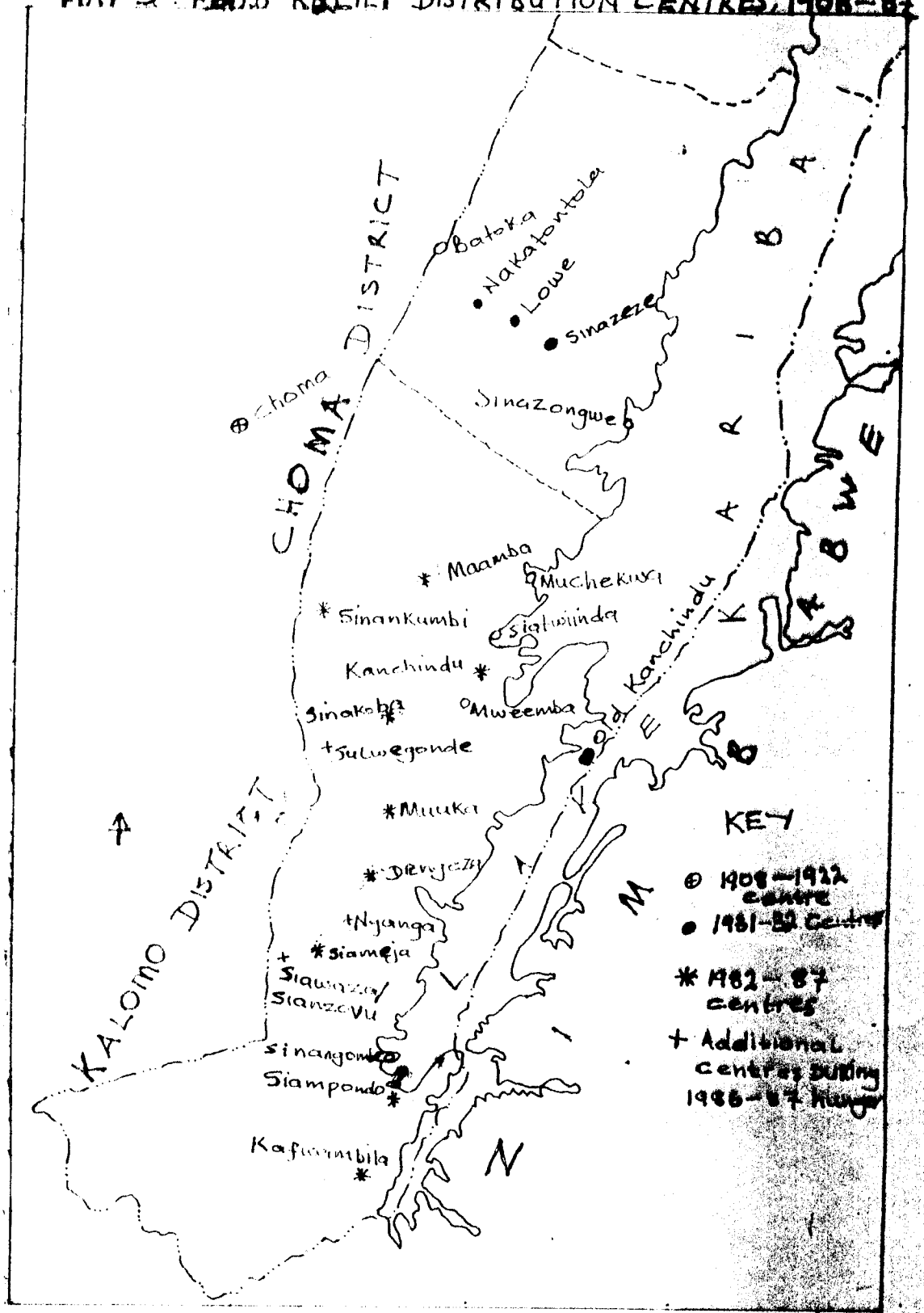
This chapter discusses emergency food relief operations that were carried out in Mweemba . The chapter is divided into three sections. The first examines the relief measures carried out during the British South African Company rule, covering the period between 1908 and 1924. The second section looks at the period of the British Colonial Office rule, 1924 to 1964. The last discusses the relief operations in the post-colonial era to 1987.

Food relief was undertaken during most of the subsistence crises of the period between 1908 through 1987 as an emergency action. Reynolds and Scudder indicated that during the crises of the colonial period, the Administration provided food as "famine relief."[1] In the period between 1964 and 1987 food security, during crises times, was also ensured by provision of food relief.

Food Relief During the BSAC Rule, 1908 - 1924

Between 1890 and 1924 the British South Africa Company ruled present Zambia. During this period the Company Administration witnessed frequent food shortages, not only in the Gwembe Valley alone, but in much of this country . Whenever the Company Administration was able ,

MAP 3 : FOOD RELIEF DISTRIBUTION CENTRES, 1906–87



it responded to food crisis by providing the people with food in form of relief.

Although available documentation suggests that the first subsistence crisis in the Gwembe Valley during the twentieth century occurred in 1905,[2] the first recorded relief operation was carried out in 1908-09 during the food crisis of **inzala impati** when free food rations were distributed among Mweemba people and people of other Chieftaincies in Gwembe.[3] Grain was distributed on behalf of the Company Administration by some agency or agencies which sources do not name.[4] This operation provided grain both for outright consumption and for seed which was to be sown during the 1908-09 farming season. Most of this maize seed, in fact, was eaten and not planted due to the severity of the food shortages. However, those who received the seed early in the season planted it and " the crop helped perceptibly in relieving the situation by March 1909" .[5]

Widespread food shortages occurred in the Valley and elsewhere in the territory in 1913-14 following poor yields in 1912-13 season. During this crisis a "high adult death rate" was reported.[6] Similar mortality levels were said to have occurred in various areas of Southern Rhodesia which were hit by the crisis during the same period.[7] The BSAC Administration responded by providing grain as famine relief. Unlike during the 1908-09 food relief operations when the Company distributed free food, during the 1913-14 relief operations no free food rations were given. Grain was issued to and accepted by the beneficiaries on condition that should the subsequent seasons's crops be adequate, a return of one and a half 200 - pound bags for every bag accepted be made to the Administration. In all, a total of about 107 200 pound bags of relief maize were issued to Mweemba people.[8]

In 1915-16 season the Gwembe Valley suffered serious food shortages following a severe and widespread drought that affected many areas in the country including many districts of Southern Rhodesia. Many Mweemba people were

affected. Conditions deteriorated very quickly after about March 1916 when the little grain left from the previous harvest ran out. By August the situation had become extremely bad, forcing the Native Commissioner, Kalomo, to issue on credit to Mweemba Villagers about 150 200 pound bags of maize grain to those who could not purchase the food outright from the Plateau because they lacked the means. Most of these bags were distributed between September and October 1916.[9] Because the crisis was severe the initial 150 bags of maize distributed between September and October proved insufficient. Consequently a further consignment of 146 bags was issued, also on credit in about November - December the same year.[10]

The 1915-16 food relief operations were well planned and organised. The poor who were not in a position to buy food were helped out and thus starvation was averted. This relief strategy was applied in some areas of the Tonga plateau in famine years when the colonial administration sold relief grain on credit to recipients who failed to buy it directly.[11] These noble and humane measures were jolted when the Native Commissioner, at the end of December 1916, amidst continued severe distress banned further credit sales because he did not "consider it in any way necessary" to continue with the same.[12] The decision caused considerable suffering among many members of the affected community . The situation remained bad between January and March 1917 before the new crops were ready to be consumed.

The food relief policy of issuing food on credit in 1912-14 and 1915-16 was an effective way of relieving distress. As noted above, between 1912 and March 1917 the Chieftaincy experienced perpetual and severe food crises. The situation put a stress on the villagers and their survival mechanisms were strained by this long period of subsistence crises. The policy therefore took into consideration the fact that after the many years of chronic food insecurity, very few could afford to purchase grain. The state of helplessness of Mweemba

villagers during these bad years may be illustrated by their inability to promptly repay the food credits. For example, it was found that by the end of August 1917 not a single beneficiary of the 1913-14 and 1915-16 credit sales scheme had paid back the grain either in kind or in money.[13] However, payment was made in cash form at the rate of one pound per one 200 pound bag of maize before the end of September 1917. Official maize prices stood at between 23s 6d. to 25s for European farmers' and traders' maize per 200 pound bag.[14]

Another drought hit most parts of Southern Zambia in the 1921-22 season. In Gwembe, Mweemba Chieftaincy was the hardest hit by the subsequent food shortages. Consequently **Bana Mweemba** and other Valley people suffered distress between 1922 and 1923. Touring the Chieftaincy in August 1922 J. H. Nisbet found the food situation extremely distressing. He counted, in all, a total of 6661 people in dire need of food. Their grain bins were completely empty.[15]

Taken aback by the magnitude and intensity of human suffering, Nisbet requested the BSAC administration to send 400,000 lbs of grain or 2,000 200 pound bags of maize or any other grain to alleviate the situation.[16] He noted that failure to send food relief would cause a lot of suffering, particularly among the "old members of the community and the young children" and noted too that "the adult weaklings might die of starvation."[17]

Upon receipt of Nisbet's report the Acting District Commissioner, Kalomo, mobilized grain for relief mainly from the Plateau areas along the line of rail where both European and African farmers had reaped large crops in the 1920-21 season but could not sell because of the serious world recession of the post World War I era.[18] Because of the fear of enormous transport costs the Company administration was going to incur if the food was transported down to Kanchindu in Gwembe, the Commissioner ruled that all relief, like that issued during the past operations, was to be distributed from Choma on the Tonga Plateau.[19] Consequently, as they did in the previous

famine relief, Mweemba villagers had to traverse the Zambezi escarpment to get to Choma and back down the Valley with rations (**intebe**) on their heads and shoulders. This was not new. With or without government relief provisions Mweemba people and other valley villagers used to cover long distances, sometimes beyond Choma to search for food (**kusunza**), whenever hunger hit their area.

To ensure that food supplies were always available, the arrangement of receiving relief food was such that when the last rations were about to be exhausted, a group, according to households or family numbers, would go to get supplies while the previous group would be resting.[20]

One significant point about the 1922-23 food relief measures was change in policy. Unlike the relief measures of 1913-14 and 1916-17 when grain was sold, during this operation grain was issued freely without paying or working for it. This was mainly because the crisis was widespread and more extreme than the previous two mentioned above.

Besides the provision of food for sale or for free distribution, the BSAC administration also ensured access by members of the affected community to any available food by passing decrees prohibiting Europeans or Asians from purchasing grain from Africans in a bad year. The ban was intended to prevent Africans from selling most of their grain to traders at harvest, which they would buy again at inflated prices late in the year as supplies ran out. In 1916-17 the Native Commissioner, Batoka Magisterial District, through the office of the Secretary for Native Affairs, slapped a ban on the purchase of African grain by Europeans and Asians.[21] A similar proclamation was made in February 1922 when the administration realized that the 1921-22 season was going to be a bad one.[22]

The ban was imposed on the Plateau Tonga peasant farmers who were the producers of surplus grain in good years. The Valley Tonga benefited from the ban because

they were the main buyers of the plateau grain in bad years (inter-African grain trade was not prohibited). The problem of Africans starving after selling all their previous season's grain was first reported on the Tonga Plateau in 1913.[23] Colin Bundy and William Beinart described how the Transkei and Pondo peasants, in South Africa, were affected in bad years by selling most of their grain.[24]

Relief Measures During Colonial Office Rule, 1924 - 1964

With the withdrawal of its mandate from the British South Africa Company by the British Government in 1924, the Northern Rhodesia territory came under the administration of the Colonial Office in London. The Gwembe Valley and Mweemba Chieftaincy in particular continued to face food shortages. Very often food supplies broke down to such levels that people were threatened with starvation. Whenever the crisis occurred, the administration ensured that food security was maintained by providing grain. During this period only the 1941-42 hunger year was an exception when the colonial Government failed to provide food relief because it directed most of the food to the war front to feed the soldiers. This was directly the opposite of what happened during the First World War when, in spite of the war, the BSAC administration provided food relief amidst the war in 1916-17 year. This section discusses the relief efforts undertaken during Colonial Office rule.

Localized food shortages were reported in some parts of the Valley including Mweemba in the 1929-30 season. By about September 1930 the situation was already being severely felt among some people in Mweemba. Rev. Curry who was alarmed by the deteriorating food situation reported to the Government that "famine is producing distressing conditions already."[25]

In 1930-31 season the on going localized shortages became widespread as the drought broadened to cause crop failure throughout the Valley and elsewhere in the

territory. In Southern Rhodesia drought was also causing harvest failure in Mashonaland, Matebeleland and other regions of the colony.[26] Rev. Curry sent another report to the colonial authorities on the state of the situation in Mweemba. A similar report was also sent by the Native Authorities Officials. The Government received both reports early in 1931, but took no immediate action. The silence prompted Rev. Curry to send yet another report to the Government on the same in March 1931.[27] It took the Government four months to respond. It was in July 1931 when food relief dumps were established.[28] This action was taken only after the visiting District Officer had reported back to his superior that "a state of famine existed in the neighbourhood of the Kanchindu Mission."[29]

Because of the gravity of the situation, the colonial Government was compelled to try and develop some kind of communication infrastructure. Relief dumps were established according to the progression of road construction. Inaccessible areas posed difficulties, hence good and reliable communication and transportation systems were required for efficient distribution of relief.

The first grain was issued between the beginning of July and August 13, 1931 from Nakatontola relief centre in the escarpment, a distance of about 57 miles from the Chieftaincy.[30] When the road construction work reached Lowe river, still in the escarpment, a distance of about 53 miles from Mweemba, a second food dump was established. Food was distributed to the recipients from this centre from August 14 to September 17.[31] From September 18 to September 30, a dump was established at Sinazeze, 42 miles away from Kanchindu. **Bana Mweemba** continued getting their supplies from this depot until about November 9 when a food centre was finally established at Kanchindu.[32]

During this food crisis, relief was distributed free to the old, women, children and the disabled. The Government introduced a food for work programme for the

able-bodied men. These had to work for food by constructing the road which was being used to transport the food to the recipients. The Colonial administration also ensured that food security was sustained by providing employment to the affected people so that they could get money to send to their families to purchase food. Engaging starving people in public works programmes so that they can get money to buy food has been one of the methods relief agencies have used to make food available to the needy .[33] This seems to be a deliberate food relief policy.

During that period, all labour requirements of some Government departments on the Plateau were met by the Valley people. In all a total of 1,177 men from Kalomo - Gwembe, the majority of whom came from Mweemba portion, were provided with employment.[34]

During this operation, the members of the Primitive Methodist Society, particularly Rev. Curry and his local school teacher, Jonah Nchite, rendered great assistance to the Government and the people of Mweemba. Rev. Curry, single handedly, supervised the construction of a road from Kanchindu to join up with the Choma-Sinazeze road to facilitate the transportation of food to Kanchindu.[35] He too, with the help of Nchite, distributed the Government food relief rations when the dump was established at Kanchindu in November 1931.[36]

A large amount of food was given out during the operation. Between July and September 30, 1931 a total of 4,462 bags of maize, 847 bags of mealie meal, 20 bags of sorghum and 20 of millet were distributed.[37] It is rather difficult to tell how many of the grain and mealie meal bags from the above totals were given to Mweemba people. During this period the food was being distributed to both Sinazongwe and Mweemba people from the same centres. When the centre was established at Kanchindu, Mweemba villagers received 820 bags of maize, 10 of mealie meal, 10 of sorghum and millet each.[38]

The 1931-32 relief efforts reveal some element of late intervention in spite of the early warning about the

looming calamity. The Colonial Government was informed well in advance before the situation became worse. Although evidence is lacking, the fact that the Government responded only after its assigned official had reported back, may lead one to suggest that in the case of 1931-32 food shortages late Government intervention may have arisen from a non-acceptance of the missionary and Native Authority reports as true. It appears that the Government thought that the reports were exaggerations about the food situation in the region. As a result by the time food relief reached Kanchindu in November 1931, many old men and women in the villages of Siapolo, Mugonko and Kanyemba were reportedly already very weak and emaciated, while in the villages of Mweemba and Nzambale the conditions had already become "more acute" such that the old men and women were " becoming very weak."[39]

In spite of the distribution of free food rations to the old people, very often the able bodied were found to "badger and worry their old relatives to share their rations with them."[40] The neglect of old relatives during this food crisis was extremely worrying to the relief agents. Rev. Curry and his team, for example, saw in one village "two most distressing cases of famine, an old woman and a man... pitful in the extreme."[41] On inquiry, Rev. Curry was surprised to discover that the two old people had sons and daughters and also some grandchildren living in the same village. But the two old folks remained uncared for because of their age. Colson and Scudder illustrate the disadvantaged position the Gwembe old people may find themselves in as the able bodied care more for their children than for their aged relatives.[42] Mwaluko observed a similar situation in the Central Province of Tanzania in 1961 where the old and the disabled, being dependent upon the charity of relatives, suffered most amidst relief food distribution until such a time the Administration erected 'eventide homes' for them.[43]

Such a situation obtained in Mweemba in the 1931-32 food crisis in spite of attempts to restore food security by the distribution and provision of some food relief. Read had this to say:

> It was quite plain to me when touring that old people and cripples were not getting the rations that had been issued for them. It is quite certain that numbers of old people died in consequence.... Native Authorities as a rule and relatives, generally do not worry about old people in times of famine and consume rations they have drawn for them.[44]

The experiences of Rev. Curry and Read suggest that the 1931-32 amounts of food rations were not sufficient for all people. They also suggest that, if not well planned, food relief cannot ensure equitable access to available food.

In 1946-47 rains failed in most areas of the territory. On the Tonga Plateau area of Monze the prayers for rain at **malende** began on December 15 1946 when it became apparent to the people that the drought was looming.[45] Southern Rhodesia was also experiencing one of the most disastrous droughts in the century.[46] Northern Rhodesia expected a maize yield of not more than 220,000 bags, a low figure when compared to about half a million bags the territory consumed per year in the 1940s.[47] In the Gwembe Valley the situation was compounded by the early March floods of 1947 which destroyed most of the crops.

Following the drought, widespread food shortages occurred in Mweemba and some parts of the territory in 1947-48 year. Consequently, the colonial administration was compelled to send food relief to **Bana Mweemba.** During this crisis the Government made a request to the Maize Control Board to release maize to hunger stricken areas. Because of the territorial shortages of Maize the Board ordered 200,000 bags from South Africa.[48] The Government sent a total of 300 bags of maize to Mweemba.[49] In 1944 a communal granary scheme had been introduced in Mweemba as a food security measure. The Government, through the Native authority, issued a total

of 515 bags of millet from the communal silos to supplement the maize it issued, 200 bags in February, and 315 between November and December 1947.[50]

Unlike the relief grain issued from the communal granary scheme, which was the people's own from their previous years' contributions, the Government provided grain was issued to the hunger stricken people only after they had participated in the food for work programme. The work performed included public works, mainly on the improvement of existing district roads and the construction of new ones. Like in the 1931-32 hunger year, only able-bodied men were involved in the programme.[51] No free rations were given out that year.

During this crisis, the Government also made an arrangement with Mr. J. Swanepoel of Choma to sell maize at his store at Simwami Tin Mine on top of the escarpment to Mweemba people. Swanepoel did not usually sell maize. During this time the Government requested the Maize Control Board to supply him with same.[52]

Localized food shortages occurred in 1948-49 year following the continued erratic rainfall. The colonial administration arranged, as a relief effort, to sell bags of maize to the affected people. In Kalomo-Gwembe two selling centres were chosen, one at Siazwela to cater for Sinazongwe people and the other at Simwami Store to serve Mweemba villagers. In all, **Bana Mweemba** bought a total number of 380 bags of maize. A total 1423 bags of millet were issued to them from the communal granaries.[53]

In 1957, 1958 and 1959, yields were poor in Gwembe because of poor rains. The situation was compounded by displacement which made it difficult for the resettled people to clear large enough fields for cultivation. As a result hunger was widespread in the region, especially in the meander zone of the Upper River area of Mweemba.[54] In 1957-58 hunger year about 750 bags of maize were sent to Mweemba for sale to the people.[55] During the 1958-59, crisis relief operations were only necessary among the displaced. Maize was issued to the people on credit against their compensation money(all Gwembe adults who

were resettled in 1958-59 were compensated for the loss of their farming land).

The 1957-58 food relief was taken late. By the time the food was delivered many people, especially the old and the lame, were already undergoing severe distress. Late intervention on the part of the Government was due to its mistrust of the Missionaries. Whenever some food crisis occurred in Mweemba, the Missionary at Kanchindu reported to the Government on the state of the food situation. However, the Government officials were, at least from their actions, sceptical of whatever the missionaries reported on behalf of the people to them. Rev. Jinkin described the Provincial Administration as being:

> Pretty hopelessly out of touch with the folk in the rural areas.... What happens in practice is that when I write and report that some of the people are starving the D.C. will send a young D.O. who will tour the villages in question and look in all the grain bins, if he finds food in some he reports back that there is some food in the village.... [56]

Relief Efforts in the 1964 - 1987 Period

When the newly independent Zambian Government was elected to power in October 1964, its leadership was not unaware of the chronic food crises some of the regions in the country had been experiencing in their recent past. Consequently, in April 1965 the Government suggested that there ought to be a clearcut policy statement on food relief issues. It was agreed upon that a distinction must be made between the food shortages resulting from the failure of the affected people to cultivate adequate fields from those shortages arising from crop failures as a consequence of natural causes. In the final analysis it was agreed that the Government would undertake the responsibility for famine relief operations only when the shortages were as a consequence of the latter.[57] However,since the Government was aware that food shortages in the Valley were caused by land shortage and

declining soil fertility as well as by natural factors , whenever the area was hit by food crisis it provided food relief. This section looks at the relief measures that were carried out in Mweemba area between 1964 and 1987.

Between the years 1969 and 1971 localized food shortages occurred in the Valley following erratic and uneven rainfall. The southernmost areas of the Chieftaincy comprising villages of Dengeza, Nyanga, Siameja, Sianzovu, Kafwambila, Siampondo and Sinangombe were severely hit. The Zambian Government, through the Gwembe Rural Local Authority, provided food relief amounting to more than 1,856 bags of maize to the people of Siampondo, Siameja, Sinangombe and other neighbouring villages. Another unspecified number were delivered to Dengeza, Nyanga, Sianzovu, and Kafwambila.[58] No free rations were distributed. All the maize was sold.

In the 1972-73 season rain partially failed in Southern Province and some areas of Central Province. The two districts of Gwembe and Monze were badly hit. The year 1973-74 was thus a hunger one. The Central Government directed the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBOARD) to deliver to the affected areas bags of maize for sale.[59] A total number of 8,200 bags were sent to Gwembe. Of this number 1,000 were sent to Sinazongwe sub-district to cater for the two Chieftaincies of Sinazongwe and Mweemba.[60] The specific number of bags that went to Mweemba are not known to the author.

The Zambian Government responded and acted quickly during this relief operation. In spite of this swift action, many problems constrained the smooth operation of relief work. The supplies could not get to the beneficiaries quickly. Lack of adequate transportation, compounded by the poor road communication networks, led to delayed delivery of the food. Because of these setbacks, the food situation and conditions of distress deteriorated quickly. By August 1973 the state of the food situation became critical, caused not by a "shortage of relief supplies but a chronic lack of transport."[61]

Somerville wrote of a similar issue as having constrained speedy delivery of relief food supplies in the Sahel during the 1973-74 famine.[62] Jean Mayer wrote that:

> Whoever is faced with the present famine usually acts as though there were no lesson to be derived from the melancholy succession of previous famines and previous efforts to cope with them.[63]

The food relief operations of 1973-74 in Gwembe Valley revealed the classic truth embodied in Mayer's words. Relief operations were conducted in the Valley in the past, but the situation that obtained in 1973-74 concerning transportation was as though the Government was conducting relief operations in the area for the first time. In spite of the problem being presented to the Government officials at both provincial and district levels, no immediate action was forthcoming.

Officials said that they could not mobilize any more vehicles in the District because many were being used to fight the border blockade. The District Council pointed out that it was only prepared to provide transport at weekends. This plan did not help much. NAMBOARD which provided the relief maize worked half day on Saturday and did not work at all on Sunday.[64] However,some of the villagers,especially the able bodied ones, fetched their relief supplies from the main distribution centre at Maamba.

The transportation problem was compounded by another related problem. The underdeveloped communication networks, particularly, the poor state of roads in the Chieftaincy, made it extremely difficult for the available skeleton transport to facilitate quick delivery of food supplies. The coming of the rains in December 1973 made the situation even more difficult. By early January 1974 the state of the roads was already making it very difficult to transport food. A **Times of Zambia** reporter wrote on January 9, 1974 that: "Famine - hit Gwembe faces roads headache."

By this time it had become practically impossible for the few available vehicles to deliver relief food to

some of the areas in the Chieftaincy, especially those in the southernmost part of the Chieftaincy. For almost five weeks food could not be delivered to the beneficiaries in Dengeza, Siameja, Kafwambila, Siampondo, Sinangombe and many other neighbouring areas.

All land communication was made impossible due to the flooding of most of the rivers and streams in the area. Seeing that the food position was becoming more precarious and was deteriorating at a very fast rate, the area Member of Parliament, Maxwell Beyani, made a passionate appeal to the central Government to take over the maintenance of the main, Kanchindu-Siampondo road from the Gwembe Rural Council and make it an all weather link to "avoid famine every year."[65]

Two weeks passed after Beyani's appeal was made to the Government with no action taken by the Government and large supplies of food relief were still "marooned at Maamba." Meanwhile the food situation was getting very bad in the affected areas. Echoing Beyani's appeal, the area Governor requested the Central Government to send helicopters to the Chieftaincy to deliver the relief supplies. As he made the appeal, the Governor lamented thus:

> I cannot over-emphasize the kind of starvation that has hit these people, especially those living in Siampondo, Siameja and Sinangombe areas.[66]

The flooding of the rivers and streams made it impossible for the people to go to Maamba to collect the supplies of food rations. However,by March 20 the food was delivered, not by the helicopter or land transport but, by boats to the lake sides near Kafwambila, Muuka and Dengeza where the affected people had to go and buy it. Two boats were assigned each with a carrying capacity of less than 20 bags of maize.[67]

The 1980s were years of precarious food situation in many parts of the African continent. The Sahel was hit by a terrible famine between 1982-1985.[68] Sudan's Darfur region experienced severe food shortage in 1984-85,[69] Ethiopia's Wollo Province was hit by food crisis also in

1984-85.[70] To our immediate South, Zimbabwe also experienced a serious food shortage in 1982-83.[71] In all the instances the crises were induced by devastating droughts.

In Zambia widespread food shortages occurred between 1981 and 1987. As usual, Gwembe was no exception. The shortages occurred in two phases. The first wave of crises occurred between 1982 and 1984 while the second was in 1986-87.

In 1981-82 season the rains failed. By March 1982 it had become apparent to the villagers that the season was a bad one. On March 13, 1982 the **Zambia Daily Mail** carried an article in which some Chiefs from Southern Province appealed to the Government to take measures to avert the looming starvation that was going on in some rural areas in the Province. Two weeks later the same paper carried an article in which the Provincial Political Secretary (PPS), Southern, was reported to have banned the Chiefs in the Province from issuing statements which were likely to alarm people on the impending subsistence crisis. In the same vein, Governors in the region were instructed to ensure that no Chief contravened the ban.[72]

For three months the people in the Valley and other affected areas suffered in silence because of the blackout on news on the status of their food situation. However, the Government undertook some relief measures in July 1982. A sum of K170,667 and a total of 31,000 bags of maize were given to Gwembe South to be shared between Mweemba and Sinazongwe Chieftaincy.[73] It is not known how much of this money and how many bags of maize were given to Mweemba. The money was released to facilitate delivery of the bags while the maize was for sale.

No relief food was sent to the Valley for the remaining part of 1982. Meanwhile the situation continued to deteriorate in Mweemba and elsewhere in the Valley. Large number of people surrounded shops at Maamba Coal Mine spending days on end queueing for mealie

meal to buy. When no deliveries came for about a week, the Police often used tear gas to disperse people from the corridors of the shops.[74] The situation continued deteriorating into 1983 as the drought continued during the 1982-83 season.

The Zambian Government did not respond in any way to alleviate the hunger. The only reference to the situation was a private correspondence with some relief Organizations warning them not to publicize and magnify the situation in the Gwembe Valley by issuing press releases.[75] In spite of this intimidation from the Government, the relief Organizations came to the aid of the people. In June 1983 the World Food Programme (WFP) gave free rations to Mweemba people and other hunger stricken people in Gwembe South. The WFP food relief was meant for the old, lame, poor and children. The World Vision International (WVI) and the Gwembe District Council criticised the WFP manner of relief.

During the joint meeting held in June 1983, just when the WFP started the provision of its food relief, the two groups condemned the Organization, accusing it of fostering class formation among the rural people. The two were of the view that the best WFP should have done was to give food to all the people in the area.[76]

In spite of this criticism the WFP continued providing food relief until about November-December 1984. During this period a total of 1,399 90 kg bags of maize, 467 25 kg bags of skimmed milk powder and 2,283 2 kg tins of edible fats were distributed among Mweemba people between June 1983 and July 1984 alone.[77] A total of 7,500 beneficiaries received food in Mweemba.[78]

The WFP relief operation did not cover the areas of Siameja, Kafwambila and Siampondo. As a consequence, in these areas, the poor, old and the lame, unable to purchase food or cover long distance to Maamba Mine where supplies of mealie meal were being purchased from shops, were "suffering terribly".[79]

After an assessment of the situation, the WVI launched, 'Zam 21278: Gwembe Drought Relief Project,' in October 1983 which continued to September 1984. The Project involved in all a total cost of $(US)418,376.[80] Unlike the WFP relief food, 'Zam 21278' distributed food to all the people in the hunger stricken areas of Gwembe Central and South. Between January and August 1984 alone 3,870 25 kg bags of mealie meal, 2,057 50 kg bags of mealie meal, 212 90 kg bags of beans and 84 50 kg bags of Sorghum were distributed in Mweemba.[81] Approximately ninety-five percent of this food relief was distributed in the Southernmost parts of the Chieftaincy namely: Siameja, Kafwambila, Siampondo and other neighbouring areas. These were some of the areas where the WFP relief food was not distributed.

During this operation a total of nine relief centres were established in Mweemba. Each centre catered for people within the radius of about 15km, although in some instances recipients covered longer distances.[82]

Throughout the period of relief operation the problem that remained almost constant was that of vehicles and poor state of roads. In April 1983 Chief Mweemba appealed to the Gwembe District Council to grade the roads in his area. He noted that the distribution of relief supplies to the hunger stricken areas in his Chieftaincy was going to be constrained by impassable roads if the council did not improve their state .[83] But the Council's only two graders had long been broken down.[84]

The poor state of the roads kept away most of the potential private transporters from participating in the distribution of the food. They feared that the bad roads would quickly wear out their tyres, a genuine fear indeed, especially at a time when the country was facing a shortage of tyres.[85] The private truckers were also unwilling to help because of the fear of landmines. Since the end of the Zimbabwe war of independence in 1980, the roads in the Valley remained uncleared of mines.

The Council's only two vehicles could not provide quick and efficient services. The two were used to cover all the three sub-districts of Siavonga, Gwembe Central and South. To make the situation worse, these vehicles could not reach some remote parts of the District, especially in the Southernmost areas of Mweemba.
Because of appeals for transport from the Council, the Zambia Red Cross Society and WVI, the Government decided to take action by calling the Zambian Army to help with the transportation of food. The Army came in, in November 1983, but by then the level of destitution among the poor, the old and the lame was already causing concern. The WVI, head of operations observed that by that time some beneficiaries were:

> Literally sweeping mealie meal from the ground which had spilt from torn bags for consumption ... sleeping at the distribution centre prior to being told of the supplies arriving the following day. These beneficiaries slept at the Centre without anything to eat.... fainting among the elderly beneficiaries was experienced as they came for their supplies.[86]

In spite of the involvement of the Army, transportation of food to the needy areas remained a big problem. Deliveries were erratic and some food went bad and could not be given out as it was not fit for human consumption. Between May and June 1984 a total of 29 90 kg bags of mealie meal provided by the WVI went bad.[87] The people were ready to travel to some main distribution points to collect the food, but could not do so because the arrangement was such that the names of the beneficiaries were kept at the final distribution centres for fear of congesting the main centres.

Another widespread food shortage occurred in many areas of Zambia, including the Gwembe Valley, in 1987 following yet another poor rainy season of 1986-87. During this crisis, the WFP provided some food relief in many areas including the Valley. Other organizations that donated money and food to Zambia as a whole include the European Economic Community (EEC), USAID, the

Governments of Canada, Italy, Kenya and the Netherlands. In all a total of 571,650 90 kg bags of maize and 55.3 million Zambian kwacha were donated.[88] Ninety percent of the food was given to Southern Province which was the worst hit area in the country. Approximately 60,000 90 kg bags of maize were sent to Mweemba. In 1982 - 84 relief operations there were nine relief distribution centres in Mweemba, established at Dengeza, Kanchindu, Kafwambila, Muuka, Maamba, Siampondo, Sinakumbi, Sinakoba and Siameja. In 1987 three additional ones were established at Sulwegonge, Nyanga and Siawaza/Sianzovu.

The WFP this time provided food relief to be sold rather than being given freely. There was public outcry because of the change of policy. However, the WFP explained that the change in relief policy was meant to assist the "Government set up a revolving fund for the programme", that is the food relief programme.[89] However, other agencies provided food for free distribution to all the affected people. Between September and December 1987 Mweemba received 6,040 90 kg bags for free distribution.[90]

Although the poor conditions of rural roads and lack of storage facilities constrained the food relief operations,[91] the problems were not as many as experienced during the 1982-84 operations. The roads were cleared of landmines and so private truckers were willing to release their vehicles. The only problem that was very common during the 1987 operation was that of poor planning and coordination of food distribution. Some informants indicated that they did not receive the number of bags of maize as was indicated in the food relief register.[92]

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that between 1908 and 1987 subsistence crises were redressed and alleviated by providing food relief. Such efforts were important because they supplemented the local people's own

initiative in handling the adversity. The chapter has also demonstrated the shifts in relief policies of successive administrations. During the BSAC administration two policies were applied. Free food was provided when the crisis was severe while food for sale was sent when the situation was a localized one.

During Colonial Office rule free food was distributed only in 1931-32, and only to the old, crippled, women and children. For most of the people food had to be worked for or bought. The other policy shift was that the BSAC had a standing proclamation that banned Europeans and Asians from purchasing grain from African producers in a lean year. The Colonial Office administration changed this policy.

The Zambian Government did not at any one time provide free food relief to the hunger stricken areas. All the food released by the Government was sold to the people. The only free rations given were donations from some Non-Governmental Organizations and some foreign governments and this was carried out only when the donor agencies recommended that the relief food be given to the starving villagers free of charge.

The chapter has also demonstrated that throughout the period of our study, transportation and communication were two persistant problems in food relief deliveries. Although there was a major breakthrough in reducing the distances between food relief centres and the recipients, throughout the period quick food distribution was constrained by the absence of good roads and lack of a sufficient trucking capacity.

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CHAPTER FOUR

FOOD SECURITY POLICIES, 1910 - 1987

Between 1910 and 1987, various systematic attempts to solve the problem of food shortages in the Gwembe Valley were made by both government and non-governmental organizations. This chapter examines the roles played by the Methodist missionaries between 1910 and 1939, government from 1931 to 1987, and the Gossner Service Team (GST) from 1970 and 1987. All three seem to agree that the main problem of food supply in the region was low agricultural production. The concerned parties thus aimed at helping the people to increase their food production potential and also to raise rural incomes upon which they could fall in the event of crop failures.

The role of the Missionaries, 1910 - 1939

The Primitive Methodist Missionary Society established a mission station in Mweemba's area in 1901.[1] Within a few years of the establishment of the station, the missionaries realized that the area was a food deficit one. In response to chronic food shortages, the missionaries introduced some measures they envisaged could redress the situation. They designed a school curriculum in which agriculture was emphasized, a curriculum with a strong bias towards skills that were deemed to be meaningful to the needs of a rural economy.[2]

They also introduced agricultural extension work. Furthermore, the missionaries attempted to introduce new drought resistant crops. Each of these strategies is discussed below, but it should be understood that missionary efforts in this regard appear to have been mainly concentrated on the villages which surrounded their main station and outposts. It was thus the villagers around these stations that felt missionary influence. The trend seems to be in line with what obtained in areas studied by Bundy, Wilson, Morrow and Chisenga.[3]

Education for agriculture

As a food security strategy in the areas under its influence, the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society agreed at its Baila-Batonga Mission Conference held at Kasenga, Namwala, in August 1910, that agricultural education should be made part of a broad school curriculum.[4] The agreement made legitimate Rev. Fell's educational approach which had made agricultural education compulsory since he took over the running of Kanchindu and its sub-mission stations in 1905.[5]

In 1914, Fell particularized the need to use the school curriculum to change **Bana Mweemba**'s farming systems. This, he was convinced, could be achieved by adopting a gradual and systematic approach. Fell and other missionaries believed that agricultural change could only be effectively achieved through teaching agriculture to young men enrolled in their schools.[6]

Fell, who was the champion of this strategy in Mweemba, pointed out that because the Valley people were essentially agriculturalists, "education must certainly touch him at this point."[7] However, he was of the opinion that it was hopeless to try to alter the methods of the older people. The only sure way, according to him, was through school children who could be used as modernizing agents, using what is now known as the 'trickle-down' effect.

Thus, throughout his stay at Kanchindu, Fell taught agriculture as a component of the school curriculum. His theoretical teaching was translated into practice by ensuring that his student boarders grew their own food and worked on the mission farm established about 1907. This approach was similar to that which obtained at Chikuni and Rusangu where the student boarders acquired agricultural skills by producing their own food supply.[8]

In 1916, Fell left Kanchindu to build and later open the Kafue Training Institute in Central Province. When the Institute opened in 1918, he transferred to Kafue all those Kanchindu students who had completed Book 3. At

Kafue, these trained as village school teachers. By 1927, when Fell moved to open a Jeanes school in Mazabuka, he had trained twenty teachers from Gwembe Valley, all of whom came from Mweemba or from across the Zambezi in Zimbabwe. Nineteen of these worked in Mweemba and only one worked in Sinazongwe where he opened the first school in 1925.[9]

These village teachers were trained with the view that besides teaching other subjects, upon return to the Valley, they would continue to offer agricultural education at the village school level. Because of this long term strategy, Fell ensured that while undergoing training, these men received theoretical instruction as well as training in practical aspects of general agriculture, cattle management, poultry, husbandry and farm mechanics.[10] Indeed, upon return to their village schools, they continued to emphasize agriculture as part of their schools curriculum. At Kanchindu, Sinangombe and other schools, pupils continued learning crop and animal husbandry and did their practical work at the mission farm as they used to during the days of Fell. By 1928, most of the villages surrounding the main station at Kanchindu and sub-station at Loongo, Sinangombe, had adopted misssionary ways of farming.[11] However, due to land shortages and climatic factors, they were not able to produce a surplus.

The occurrence of famine in 1931-32 compelled the missionaries to review their existing agricultural education curriculum. They felt that the agricultural component of the curriculum needed to be revised in order to broaden its scope in relation to the actual needs and realities of the region. Instead of emphasizing issues such as poultry, crop and animal husbandry alone, the revised programme was extended to teach school children improved preparation of local famine foods.[12] Pupils were taught, for example, how to prepare famine foods such as roots, tubers and wild grain. By so doing, the missionaries believed that the boys could be helped to

keep in mind traditional famine foods they could fall back on in bad years.

Besides the provision of rudimentary agricultural education to the Mweemba young men, the missionaries, compelled by the 1931-32 famine, recommended in 1932 training valley people in various branches of agriculture. Rev. Soulsby, the General Superintendent of the Methodist Missionary Society, hoped to produce a group of agricultural specialists by establishing a professional school of agriculture in Mweemba, where such men were to be educated. Soulsby was optimistic that the much talked about food shortages in the region could be "alleviated if an agricultural school was established."[13] This was because, he argued, the proposed school was going to help meet the needs:

> agriculturally of the Batonga of the Valley by introducing mixed farming which seems to be the most valuable type of training the school would offer.[14]

In line with its broad objective the school was expected to help build a sustainable food security infrastructure by increasing milk supply through providing supplementary feed for the dry season and improvement of food crops and giving a change in diet and eking out other food supplies by planting fruit trees such as lemon, orange, paw-paws and mango and the care of these trees.

The school was also expected to achieve its objective by encouraging a communal spirit and a communal approach as a means of improving agriculture in the villages, for example, encouraging villagers to own communal ploughs so that those who were unable to own an individual plough could have access to a communal one; providing a scheme of dip tanks for cattle, sheep and goats to reduce the losses. Furthermore, the school hoped to teach some improved methods of livestock marketing, particularly the marketing of sheep and goats by trekking them to the plateau and the improvement of

both small and large domestic animals and also the caring for poultry.

In its initial stages the proposal received some favourable support from the Provincial Administration. The Provincial Commissioner, Batoka Province, for instance, had promised total support and assistance towards the realization of the scheme.[15] However, the idea fell through because the Central Government refused to grant the missionaries the piece of land on which they had proposed to build the school because it did not agree that the scheme of building a school came under the rubric of "public purpose" as was provided for in the Order in Council relating to Native Reserves.[16]

Introducing Agricultural Extension

The idea of introducing agricultural extension work was discussed and agreed upon at the 1910 Missionary Conference referred to above. Basically the idea was that extension work should be executed through an agricultural department of the mission whose establishment was recommended at the same conference of 1910. The department as conceived by the missionaries, was to serve a dual purpose of providing extension work to the boys enrolled in mission schools and also of giving practical experience to local men through the establishment of demonstration centres which were to function as modernizing institutions. Through these centres the missionaries hoped to give examples of what could be done as an "object lesson to the natives" in the field of agriculture.[17]

The idea of establishing a mission department of agriculture did not materialize. The reasons for this seem hard to discern. Speculatively one may be tempted to say that the mission, as a major influence of development in the Valley in the period between 1910 and 1930, was not very forceful because of the uncertainty of the future of their station in that area. Since the mission was established in 1901 agitation was afoot by

some missionaries based in Namwala to close down the station. Rev. Buckley pointed out that Fell informed him that he (Fell) could not wholeheartedly develop the Kanchindu station and its surrounding areas during his years of residence in the Valley because he was not sure whether or not the Zambezi work was going to close down or be retained. Even as late as 1925 Buckley noted that:

> even now one hears the question being raised every few months by one or other of the brethren whether or not it would not be wisest to close the Zambezi work.[18]

In 1931, amidst famine, Rev. Curry, then in charge of Kanchindu Mission, came up with the idea of establishing school gardens at each village school and chiefs' gardens at each chief's village (until 1935 there were six chiefs in the present Mweemba Chieftaincy ,but all paid allegiance to Mweemba). He believed that it was important and essential to give greater attention to agricultural training to the local men from a practical standpoint. The school and chiefs' gardens would serve as demonstration centres from which extension work could be provided to the pupils and villagers respectively.[19]

In September 1932, Dr. H.S. Gerrard, then acting in charge of Kanchindu (Curry having proceeded on leave) sent David Syamayuwa, one of the local village school teachers, to the village schools to arrange for school gardens and demonstration plots.[20]

In 1933 the missionary idea of school gardens became part of the Colonial Government agricultural policy, when the latter issued a memorandum on the policy and organization of the Department of Agriculture. The memorandum emphasized the need to improve African agriculture through schools. The memo also pointed out the need for co-operation with the Department of Agriculture on one hand and that of Native Education and mission stations on the other.[21]

While the clergy at the local level were busy with the promotion of school gardens and Chiefs' demonstration plots, the clergy at the territorial level were also busy planning some ways and means of increasing agricultural

productivity in the Valley. Spurred by the food shortages of 1931-32, Rev. Soulsby suggested, in 1932, that the society take agricultural work in the Valley very seriously by engaging a farmer whose function would be to teach the local people how to utilize their "resources and so avoid the constant expenditure on famines."[22] Curry welcomed the idea, after all the farmer would help him execute his idea of establishing an agricultural department whose function was also to carry out agricultural extension among **Bana Mweemba.** Furthermore, the programme of school gardens and demo plots would now fall under the umbrella of the agricultural department.

Towards the end of 1932 Rev. Matthews, a farmer with experience in tropical agriculture acquired from his work in Kenya, joined the staff of Kanchindu Mission. The Methodist Clergy were optimistic that Matthews was going to do "much to help these folk to a more certain and regular food supply.[23]

With Matthews around, Curry's idea of creating an agricultural department came into being. The department under the direction of Matthews conducted agricultural demonstration tours, showing the people improved farming practices and livestock management skills. Matthews' strategy was similar to Father Jean Moreau's. Moreau took it upon himself to demonstrate to the villagers around his Chikuni Mission Station the value of improved agricultural techniques, particularly the value of using the ox-drawn plough, an approach which successfully revolutionalized peasant agriculture around his mission station.[24]

Encouraging Drought Resistant Crops

The missionary food security policy was multi-faceted. For instance, they introduced measures of improving agriculture through schools. They also encouraged the growing of drought resistant crops not grown in the Valley.

In 1917 Buckley requested the BSA Company administration to supply his station at Kanchindu with some cassava cuttings. Optimistic that the mission was going to encourage villagers to cultivate the tuber, the Company Administration quickly responded to the request. These cuttings fell victim to white ant attacks, and we do not come across any further reference to a plant cassava campaign in archival and other colonial sources during the 1917 to 1930 period.

However, the idea of mission introduction of cassava and other drought resistant crops was given a new dimension and impetus following the 1931-32 subsistence crisis. After that shortage, besides attempts at popularizing cassava, the mission sought to introduce dahl, also known as pigeon pea. Curry hoped the two crops would serve as a "stand by" in the event of another drought.[26] He believed that the best approach to popularizing the two crops was, unlike the previous attempts which emphasized that the crops be grown at the mission station with the hope of a demonstration effect to the villager, through the involvement of chiefs by establishing chiefs gardens for both crops.

In 1933 he bought six bundles of cassava cuttings, about two hundred and forty pieces in all. Curry's aim was to make the "Mission a cassava centre from which cuttings could be sent to the chiefs."[27] Besides cassava and pigeon pea, other crops such as bananas and paw-paws were also tried. But cassava was given top priority because the Mission hoped that it would "go far to solve the problem of famine in the Zambezi Valley."[28]

Mission conducted cassava and other crops campaign did not succeed. Curry noted that at the time cassava was showing some signs of success, the Colonial Department of Agriculture was not willing to extend its assistance to the Mission until the Mission could demonstrate "in a small way the possibilities of Kanchindu being agriculturally a success."[29]

The impact of missionary efforts on agricultural production was very minimal indeed. To some extent this

was because the mission efforts were throughout the period between 1910 and 1939 directed towards teaching men and not women. For instance, this was true of education , provision of extension services and cassava growing strategies. Women are the ones involved mostly in agricultural production and most of the food in African households is produced by women. Moreover, Mweemba men were involved in labour migration during the colonial period. This meant that agricultural work was left to women. One colonial report indicated that some village households were "entirely female headed" because men were out in labour migration in Southern Rhodesia.[30]

The economic depression of the 1930s, followed by the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 did not only lead to manpower retrenchment but the closure of the mission station in 1939. This was the time when the missionaries were becoming more forceful in their effort to redress the problems of food production in the Chieftaincy. The closure of the mission meant that it was to be supervised from Masuku on the Tonga Plateau. The schools which were envisaged as centres of agricultural modernization were left to local teachers, who in spite of their training in the discipline did little without close supervision. The department of agriculture led by Matthews did little demonstration work because of closure of the station.

However, even without the closure of the mission station, it is unlikely that the missionary food policies would have been popular among Mweemba people. Some of the things they taught were already known to the local people and did not break any new grounds to convince them that the missionary approach to agricultrure was any better than theirs. **Bana Mweemba** did not need to be taught the technique of trekking their livestock to the Tonga Plateau markets, neither did they need to learn about famine foods. These were activities they had long known before the coming of the missionaries.

Government Food Security Policies, 1931-1987

Although the government was aware of the problem of food shortages in Mweemba since the beginning of its administration, no practical attempts were made to try and solve the problem in the early years of colonial administration. The only measures that were taken were of short term famine relief. The subsistence crisis of 1931-32 marked the beginning of serious government attempts to build a sustainable food security system in the Valley. Between that crisis and 1987 the successive administration of Northern Rhodesia and Zambia tried to make the region self-sufficient in its food needs.

This section addresses the food security policies that were formulated to try and redress the chronic food insecurity situation in Mweemba. During this period the government came up with the ideas of creating communal granaries,introducing cassava and pigeon pea as "stand by" crops, improving subsistence agriculture by popularizing drought resistant and high yielding grain crops, cash cropping, commercial fishing, and relieving land pressure through transfer of excess population from Mweemba to Simwatachela area.

The Communal Granary Scheme

The building of communal grain bins was one of Read's post 1931-32 famine recommendations. He observed that to avoid spending money and resources on relief food supplies during food crises, the government must consider creating a local reserve food supply to be kept by chiefs. Read suggested that the plan should be effected through the native authority which was to be requested to make a levy of grain on all villages, the amount was to be assessed and agreed upon by a District Officer in consultation with the Native Authorities.[31]

In early 1933 Cunliffe-Lister, then Secretary of State for the colonies, approved most of Read's recommendations including that of creating communal

granaries.[32] In April that year the District Commissioners, Kalomo and Mazabuka, met and agreed on the method of implementing the scheme. The Superior Native Authority was instructed to issue two orders through the Subordinate Authorities to the village headmen.

Order number one was to instruct each headman to inform every villager to bring at 1934 harvest and yearly thereafter to the village headman enough grain to feed himself, his family and dependants for four months. The second order was to direct every headman, during 1933, to erect in his village a communal grain bin sufficiently large to hold a four months supply of grain for his village.[33] Because of the susceptibility of other grains to weevil attack, bulrush millet was recommended as the grain for the proposed granaries.

According to the order, opening the bins for grain distribution was to be the preserve of the Superior Native Authority, and only after the same had notified the District Officer. The grain was to be distributed only when hunger hit the area. In the event of no hunger occurring before the 1935 harvest, the order stipulated that the Superior Native Authority would arrange for the distribution of the 1934 grain to the depositing villager in exchange for the 1935 contribution. The process would be repeated each year.[34] In response to the Kalomo District Commissioner's instructions, the Kalomo-Gwembe Native Authorities issued an order under section 13 (1)d of the Native Authority Ordinance to establish communal granaries in early 1934.[35]

However, when another famine occurred in the area in 1941-42 it was found that the order had not been carried out. The economic malaise of the 1930s adversely affected staffing and consequently the government could not find personnel to enforce the order. For instance, Macrae, one of the District Officers, with an intimate knowledge of Gwembe and a profound desire to make Kalomo-Gwembe self-sufficient in food, was transferred shortly after 1934.[36] This left the supervision of the scheme without an officer committed to enforcing it.

Furthermore, the order was not implemented because it lacked a proper framework through which it was to operate. For example, it did not have a provision for issuing of receipts to guarantee the depositors that they would be able to draw out the grain they had contributed in the event of hunger.[37] Suspicions arose among the villagers that they were going to lose their grain. This indicates that there was no groundwork done to make the villagers appreciate the policy. S.D. Facey, a close associate of Read during the 1931-32 famine relief, was dismayed to discover that the order had not been carried out up to the beginning of 1944.[38]

In 1941 the Kunda Native Authority of Eastern Province implemented the idea of communal granaries as part of their food security strategy. Keith Tucker, then Acting Chief Secretary for Northern Rhodesia, was encouraged by the Kunda Native Authority's idea to give, in view of the large sums of money and resources the government was losing in the "famine relief programme", a directive to all provincial and district Commissioners to instruct all Native Authorities in areas of chronic food shortages to make a rule ordering the building of communal granaries.[39]

In response to Tucker's directive the first communal granaries in the Gwembe Valley were built in Mweemba in 1944. The scheme took off with Chief Mweemba contributing two tins of grain to his village bin in the presence of assembled headmen and he was then issued with a prescribed receipt.[40]

Unlike the 1934 Order which required grain bins to be erected at every headman's village, the 1944 Order instructed every headman with his people to build a communal bin at the Chief's village. The order also required every adult person, male or female to contribute three four-gallon paraffin tin each of threshed grain which was to be completed within three years of the year of starting. A receipt was to be issued thereafter for the amount which each person contributed.[41] To avoid deterioration through mixing of several years' grain, the

Order stipulated that a new bin was to be erected for each year's contribution. In order to avoid abuse of the system by the Subordinate Authority and to win the good will of the people, immediately the contributions for each year were completed, the bins were to be sealed and not to be opened without the permission of the Native Authority. The Authority could grant permission to distribute the grain in a bad year only after it had informed and been authorized by the District Commissioner.[42]

In the event of no food shortages occurring, after three years the grain was to be re-issued to the depositors, each according to their contributions. To ensure the success of the scheme, failure to comply with the order was punishable by a fine not exceeding £5.00 or imprisonment with hard labour not exceeding three months. On top of the penalty meted out, the defaulter was still required to contribute his/her grain arrears.[43]

To increase the amount of grain in stock, amendment to the Order was made in 1949. Instead of each adult person contributing three tins over a three year period, each adult was now required to deposit two tins of grain each year. Little attention was paid to the amended Order until pressure was brought to bear on the chief and his people by the District Administration.[44] For example, the Native Authority appointed a clerk to assist the Councillor for Agriculture. His main duties included checking contributions and forwarding frequent reports to the District Commissioner and the Agricultural Councillor so that quick action could be taken against the defaulters.[45]

The scheme had a great deal of success in Mweemba until about 1955 when the Government discontinued it. During the 1947-48 crisis large amount of grain for **Bana Mweemba** came from communal bins.[46] The communal granary scheme was also successful elsewhere in the Valley. Like in Mweemba, the 1947-48 subsistence crisis was in part solved in the Chieftaincies of Sinazongwe, Chipepo and Simamba by issuing grain from the communal granaries.[47]

Furthermore, during the 1951-52 crisis many villagers did not buy bags of maize sold by Messrs Susman Bros. and Wulfsohn Ltd because they were issued grain from the communal bins.[48] The scheme was not attempted after resettlement because the shortage of arable land became more acute to such an extent that contributions to the communal granaries would cause strain on people's food needs even in a good year.

Cassava and Pigeon Pea Campaign

In response to the 1931-32 subsistence crisis, attempts were made to popularize the pigeon pea. This crop was thought suitable for Gwembe conditions because it is drought resistant. It also provides a palatable relish of high food value.[49] The crop was not new in the Valley where it was known locally as **chindolo** or **inyabo**. It had been grown as a Valley Tonga traditional drought resistant crop,but because of the shortage of arable land it was eclipsed by the introduction of maize.[50]
Following the 1931-32 adverse food situation, government thought it wise to re-introduce the crop. In response to Read's suggestion the government instructed the Central Research Station at Mazabuka to supply seed. A total of 600 lbs of seed was supplied and was distributed to all headmen in Kalomo - Gwembe.[51] The crop did fairly well initially in some villages, but soon fell victim to white ant attacks. Yet in other villages it died from the drought.

When Macrae established Ibula Rest Camp in 1932, the cultivation of pigeon pea was tried for the second time. The Central Research Station sent 375lbs of seed in 1933. Of this amount 155 lbs were given to Mweemba for distribution among its sub-chiefs. Mweemba received 58 lbs, Siameja 25 lbs, Siampondo 41 lbs and Sinakoba 31 lbs.[52] White ants and grasshoppers were a menace to the crop. No further attempts were made since then in this area to re-introduce the crop.

In addition to pigeon pea propagation, attempts to introduce cassava as a "famine reserve crop" were made in 1931. Read was optimistic that cassava would "go far to make famine in Gwembe a thing of the past."[53] In December 1931, the government sent some cassava cuttings from Kalomo, Mumbwa, Broken Hill (now Kabwe) and Namwala to Kanchindu. The cuttings were distributed to Mweemba, Siampondo, Siameja and Sinakoba.[54] Once established, cassava was said to have potential to give a yield of "six to ten times more food than if growing grain."[55] Moreover, cassava was ecologically suitable in Gwembe conditions since it has been agronomically proved that best results are obtained in areas of 2000 mm annual rainfall to semi-arid (500-700) and in soils usually regarded as poor and infertile.[56] Consequently, in January 1932 gardens were established and the tuber planted in the four areas named above.[57]

Read's 1931-32 cassava campaign was a comparative failure. Many reasons may be put forward for that setback. One of the major ones was apathy among the local people. During his on-the- spot inspection of village and chief's gardens, Read discovered that although Sinakoba villagers had planted out a considerable number of plants, only ten had taken root, due he thought to deliberate neglect of the plants because the villagers had not yet fully appreciated the idea of planting the tuber as a famine crop. Of seventeen headmen in Sinakoba only ten participated in the planting of the crop. [58]

Furthermore, the drought conditions that prevailed at the time of planting killed the plants. Over and above this, owing to the long distance between the sources and the destination, the cuttings stayed too long after being cut before they were planted.For cassava to be successfully propagated one of the major requirements is that the stakes must be planted while still fresh.[59] Poor and long storage causes poor sprouting, loss of moisture and exposure to pest attacks. These adverse agro-ecological conditions were compounded by the

presence of white ants to which the plant is highly susceptible.

This failure notwithstanding, optimism still reigned among some government officials that cassava could still succeed in the Valley. Macrae argued that the problem of poverty and hunger in Gwembe was mainly a result of lack of continuous administration and pointed out that as long as this remained the case, the area would remain a chronically famine stricken one. Macrae convinced the Kalomo District Administration to establish the Ibula Rest Camp in the escarpment area between Choma and Maamba in 1932. The Camp acted as an administrative centre for Kalomo-Gwembe with Macrae as the Officer in Charge. The centre was established specifically to "enable some attention to be given to the problem of propagating cassava in the Gwembe."[60]

Immediately the Ibula Camp was established, Macrae distributed a total of 3,360 cassava stakes to Kalomo-Gwembe. Of these number of stakes, Mweemba **cisi** received 1280, Siameja 600, Siampondo 840, and Sinakoba 640.[61]

Macrae's scheme never took off. The government allowed it to fizzle out when it transferred Macrae in 1935 from Kalomo District at the "very the time cassava experiment looked very promising."[62] This left the scheme without a committed officer to supervise it, thus the plants were not tended and so they died.

Although the failure of the cassava programme of the 1930s may be partly explained by staffing shortages and also in terms of local people's cultural attitudes to the crop, to some extent it may also be logical to explain it from the contradictions manifest within colonial circles regarding the crop. While some junior officers such as Read and Macrae were optimistic that cassava could succeed in the Valley, the programme lacked committed support from the Headquarters. When Read made recommendations that cassava be introduced in the areas as a famine reserve crop in 1931, the Secretary for Native Affairs seemed not very keen to support the scheme. He wrote to the Chief Secretary for Northern

Rhodesia with a great deal of pessimism as to whether the crop could succeed. He too seemed unwilling to issue orders towards the realization of the scheme. His words below bear testimony to the above analysis:

> Cassava cultivation will not be easy, District Officers have recommended the planting of this tuber for many years without much success. Native Authorities however may be prepared to issue orders in this regard....[63]

Three years later in 1934, after Macrae's attempts at the propagation of the crop in the area, a similar pessimistic view was again expressed by the Secretary for Native Affairs when he pointed out that:

> Success of cassava scheme was doubtful because of its very susceptibility to drought in its earlier stages and it also suffers much damage from wild pigs and other game.[64]

The transfer of Macrae from Kalomo and the failure by the Government to replace him may be seen in light of these contradictions.

The occurrence of yet another severe food crisis in 1941-42 forced the colonial officials to think about the issue of propagating cassava in the area again. In 1942 at the end of the crisis the Chief Secretary approved the engagement of twelve additional district messengers in Kalomo-Gwembe whose main task was to "ensure food production", and some officials saw the move as a provision of a "spring-board from which a campaign to make Gwembe self-sufficient in food supplies" could be effectively launched.[65] Unfortunately we do not see much of these messengers between 1942 and 1947. Moreover, not much was done during this period by the colonial government to increase food production in the Valley.

The appointment of S.P. Bourne as District Commissioner for the newly reconstituted Gwembe District in late 1947 marked the beginning of a serious campaign against hunger in the Valley. Having worked as District Officer for Mazabuka - Gwembe before his new appointment, Bourne was fully aware of the food problems in the Valley. In 1948 he re-introduced the cassava programme. He directed the Gwembe Tonga Native Authority to issue an

He directed the Gwembe Tonga Native Authority to issue an order making the cultivation of the tuber compulsory.[66] To facilitate its propagation and success of the campaign, cassava nurseries were established at the Boma between November 1948 and February 1949.[67]

The Government thought the shortages of 1947-48 created favourable opportunity to encourage the growing of cassava. Thus, it granted some funds to establish nurseries in all chieftaincies and to employ gardener guardians. Thereafter each village in Mweemba and elsewhere in the Gwembe prepared and fenced a quarter acre plot, and fifteen acre plots were planted at the Boma as a nursery in addition to the two that were already providing stakes.[68]

Between 1950 and 1951 large scale distribution of stakes from these Boma nurseries was done throughout most Valley Chieftaincies.[69] Most villages in Mweemba received the cuttings. With additional pieces from the village nurseries, district officers believed cassava was soon going to be a success in most chieftaincies. A n important amendment to the Cassava Order in 1951 made it compulsory for every adult to own an individual plot of one hundred square yards.[70]

Attempts to further boost cassava production were made in 1954 when the Gwembe Tonga Native Authority passed an order trebling the amount of the crop to be grown annually.[71] This move followed the appointment in Mweemba of a Local African Agricultural Assistant whose main task was to encourage, at the village level, agricultural schemes and programmes initiated from above. By 1957 when, due to the resettlement programme, the Cassava Order was suspended "until such a time as when the people shall be settled properly and be able to go back to normal procedure," cassava had already succeeded in Mweemba.[72] During his tour of the Chieftaincy in 1954, H.A. D'Avray, then District Commissioner for Gwembe, was delighted to find that the crop was doing "splendidly in the whole area" (Mweemba).[73] Colson also found that the Upper River people of Mweemba had

responded well to the grow-cassava campaign when in other Gwembe Chieftaincies it was rebelled against.[74]

Resistance to the grow-cassava programme in these chieftaincies was encouraged in the 1950s by the African National Congress politicians, a move which was counter-productive given the food situation in the region. Congress capitalized on the local people's negative attitude towards the crop. In 1953, for example, the Congress was instrumental in instigating some villagers in Chief Simamba's area to rebel against the Cassava Order and attack officers who ordered them to plant the tuber.[75]

Bana Mweemba accepted cassava after some initial resistance, because of the severity of food shortages in their area. This area often had the worst experiences of hunger whenever it occurred. They, thus, quickly realised,when the colonial Government insisted on them to grow the crop, that was illogical for them to reject cassava out of hand. The appointment of a local agricultural assistant and the assistance he got from cassava messengers some, of whom were local men, tended to ease the process of popularizing the crop.

Elsewhere in Africa in areas of food insecurity cassava campaigns were also conducted during the colonial period. In Busoma, Ruanda-Burundi, cassava cuttings were distributed to the locals following the 1922 famine. In the same area a cassava programme was launched in 1930.[76] Tanzania launched in 1949 a successful four year cassava planting campaign in Ugogo despite repeated government attempts which had ended up in failure in the past.[77]

Other Subsistence Crops

Despite the problems associated with the introduction of cassava and pigeon pea, campaigns for improving subsistence agriculture continued.. Attempts were made to popularize other grain crops of drought resistant type with a high yielding quality. This campaign was initiated by S. P. Bourne in 1951. In that

year Bourne set out to find a cereal crop which would help "defeat the recurring droughts in the Gwembe Valley." He distributed some seed of the quick-maturing, ninety day, dwarf sorghum, to Mweemba villagers.[78] In addition, in 1952 the District received from Southern Rhodesia two varieties of quick maturing sorghum seed known as Early Hegari and White Milo. The seed was distributed to selected growers for the purpose of seed regeneration and multiplication in Mweemba.[79] During the 1953-54 season, as a measure to popularize these varieties, the Gwembe Tonga Native Authority established demonstration gardens in the two chieftaincies of Mweemba and Sinazongwe. From these demonstration plots, methods of growing sorghum varieties were taught.[80]

Experiments conducted in the demonstration gardens during the season (1953-54) proved that Early Hegari was a very suitable crop for the Valley conditions. Under the local cultivation practices, without any fertilizer application, the crop gave a yield of 658 lbs per acre compared to a meager 168 lbs yield from the local indigenous variety.[81]

Until 1958 when the resettlement programme interfered with the campaign for subsistence agriculture, most pre-1958 measures against hunger were yielding dividends.

Since one of the agreements on resettlement stated that people were not to be forced to adopt new crops or other agricultural practices, we do not see much of the pre-resettlement enthusiasm with regard to improving agriculture in the immediate post-resettlement period. But there was continued agricultural research on sorghum, maize and other crops on plots at Munyumbwe and extension workers were placed at various places in Gwembe, including Sinangombe and Sianzovu in the southernmost area of Mweemba.

There was re-newed vigour to increase food production soon after independence in 1964. In Gwembe District a serious campaign for subsistence agriculture began in 1968. In this period experimental research on

many sorghum , maize and millet varieties suitable under Gwembe conditions were begun . The trials conducted at Lusitu between the 1968 and 1971 seasons proved that the varieties of millet "EA serere" were suitable because apart from giving high yields, they have also strong resistance against drought.[82]

During almost the same period the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Southern, found that some unnamed sorghum varieties gave very good yields in spite of uneven and highly irregular rainfall in the Gwembe. As a result by 1971 the Department made it a regional policy that these varieties of sorghum be encouraged, particularly those of the early maturing and high yielding types.[83]

It may be quickly pointed out that although sorghum was successful in the pre-resettlement period, the local people retained some kind of resistance against it. Early Hegari for instance did not, despite its high yield, become a very popular crop because its taste was resented by many.[84] This may help to explain why its seed was not 'carried' for cultivation in settlement areas.

In the 1968-1971 sorghum and millet research, nothing was done to ensure that the crops be practically grown in Mweemba or elsewhere in Gwembe. Many reasons may be given for this adverse situation. One of the major reasons for not implementing the 1968-1971 research findings was the fact that there was no co-ordination between the organization involved in research and the government wing which was supposed to implement the cultivation of the crops. Furthermore, the extension workers seem to have put more stress on the growing of maize simply because this was the crop they knew how to grow. Unfortunately even with their insistence on maize cultivation, they did not make any attempts to popularize **kaile** which was an indigenous early maturing variety and other similar local varieties, particularly the hardy low yielding type. Instead varieties such as SR52, unsuitable to the conditions in Mweemba were being

popularized.[85] Besides, their anti-local maize attitude, the extension workers also ignored quick maturing and bird resistant local sorghum and millet.

Scudder explained the failure of most agricultural extension staff stationed in the Valley to advance local crops. He argued that their failure was due to the fact that they had been trained in regions where rainfall was higher than in the Valley and above all that they were trained as demonstrators of cash crop farming and not of subsistence agriculture. This situation was aggravated by the insistence of **Bana Mweemba** and other Valley people on maize growing as their staple crop, a situation which was 'forced' on them because maize alleviates seasonal hunger as it can be eaten before reaching full maturity as green maize.[86]

During my field research, some informants pointed out that the new varieties of sorghum and even maize were not readily accepted in spite of their high yielding advantage over local varieties, because of their susceptibility to weevil attack in storage.[87] This observation is confirmed experimentally. Hindmarsh proved that in Zambia grain losses are relatively low when traditionally developed local varieties of maize and sorghum are stored. His survey of central and southern provinces showed that local varieties of maize stored under traditional methods showed weevil damage level in the range of 27% seven months after harvest. Stored under similar conditions and for the same period, the SR52 showed 43% damage. The local sorghum showed damage of less than 7% whereas damage on the new varieties was higher.[88]

Introducing Cash Crop Farming

The history of government initiated cash crop production in Mweemba goes back to the late 1930s, but the historical developments that led to commercial crop farming can be traced back to 1933. In that year, C.J. Lewin, then Acting Secretary for Agriculture, issued a

memorandum on the future policy and organization of the Colonial Department of Agriculture encouraging the growing of African export crop to ameliorate conditions which were becoming intolerable in some areas of the territory.[89] In 1937-38 cotton growing began in Mweemba with thirty-three growers. The results were very promising as an average yield of 272 lbs of seed cotton were harvested per acre. Yield increased to about 400 lbs per acre in the 1938-39 season and a cotton store was erected at Siatwiinda.[90]

The establishment of the Native Development Board in 1938, which was to work through the Native Authorities as centres of development in the rural areas, seemed to be a positive move towards the success of cotton growing in Mweemba. Immediately the Board was constituted it envisaged the development of a cotton growing venture in the Zambezi valley.[91] At its first and second meetings, the Board urged quick development of an African Cotton industry in the Valley. It was hoped that the move would help the local people to make the income which they would need in times of food crisis.[92]

The outbreak of the war in 1939 was a blow to the project. The war was barely two months old when on October 31 the Secretary of State for the Colonies issued a circular to all colonial governments urging them to increase food production as a war effort.[93] The move adversely affected the production of non-food crops. The Zambezi Valley cotton project was indefinitely suspended. The storage house which had been constructed at Siatwiinda's Village went into ruin as rats caused considerable damage to the bags of cotton harvested in the 1938-39 season.[94]

Plans to revive cotton growing in Mweemba were made in 1949 by Bourne, then District Commissioner for the newly reconstituted Gwembe District. The move was resisted by some colonial officials on the ground that it would be uneconomic to establish a ginnery to serve a population of anything less than 16,000 in a seventeen mile radius.[95] The cotton growing programme was further

dampened by 1951 by the growing determination by the people to grow more subsistence crops or those crops that could serve as both cash and subsistence.[96]

In 1953 when the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was created, African agriculture became exclusively a concern of the Territorial Government while that of settlers fell under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. The first step the Northern Rhodesia Government took towards African agriculture in the Valley was to revive the cotton growing project. In that year (1953) twenty people in Mweemba planted the crop. In 1954 seed cotton was distributed to about one hundred growers in the Chieftaincy.[97] The crop did extremely well. However, lack of market constrained its viability. The crop was allowed to rot, a development that adversely affected the morale of the growers.[98]

Between about 1955 when arrangements to resettle Gwembe people were being made and 1958 when the plans were effected, cotton growing as a commercial venture in Mweemba virtually ceased.

In 1966 barely two years after Zambia became a sovereign state, the First National Development Plan (FNDP) was launched. The Plan was to remain in force until 1970. One of the main objectives of the Plan was the campaign against rural poverty. It set out to minimise the:

> inherited imbalance between the urban and rural sectors and to develop production in agriculture to increase rural incomes.[99]

The Government hoped that once the rural incomes were raised, the people in this sector would be able to buy their own food during periods of food shortages instead of always relying on Government and other sympathizers for relief.[100] In the case of the Gwembe Valley, rural income could be generated from cotton growing and many other ventures.

A stepped up campaign for cotton growing in the Gwembe Valley began in earnest in 1969. By the mid - 1970s the crop was grown by some of **Bana Mweemba**, but

the cotton 'boom' there, was very shortlived indeed. By 1980 enthusiasm had fizzled out. Many reasons may be advanced for this decline.

Cotton growing soon came into conflict with subsistence agriculture. Perhaps the major reason for the decline of interest in the crop in Mweemba was the shortage of arable land. The peasants realized that they could not grow enough food crops because the limited arable land had to be divided to cater for cash crops as well. The people of Mweemba also came to realize that the crop was so labour intensive, especially for small families, that most of the agricultural labour time was spent on caring for it at the expense of food crops. Its weeding and picking times, for example, coincided with those of food crops.[101] In this way the people of Mweemba reacted as peasants have done elsewhere in the developing countries.[102]

In addition to cotton growing, plans to promote tobacco cultivation above indigenous levels were proposed in 1947. The Valley Tonga had been growing and trading in tobacco as far back as the nineteenth century. The Government, however, intended to develop a modern organized industry. The presence of a ready market within reach for the crop - a Greek Tobacco grower from Kalomo was prepared to introduce a fire-cured industry in the Valley on behalf of the Colonial Tobacco Cooperative Society of Limbe, Nyasaland - prompted some people in Government circles to urge that the venture be given "every encouragement."[103] However, Government organised tobacco never took off because of opinion differences within the official circles. While some Government officials were for the venture, others argued that it was:

> Unwise to increase interest to a marked degree in this commodity to the possible detriment of food production in an area scarcely self supporting in essential food stuffs.[104]

While these sentiments may have been genuinely expressed, one may tend to think that the reluctance may have been aimed at serving settler tobacco growers of

Choma - Kalomo, for this was the time settlers in that area were struggling to make the tobacco industry succeed.[105]

In the early 1960s the Colonial Government hoped to raise incomes in Mweemba and elsewhere in Gwembe by introducing a variety of sorghum new to the region, which locally came to be known as **ciganigani**, otherwise called **Red Flammida.** The main value of this was in the beer brewing industry. Although it was not liked as food because of its bitter taste , it could also serve as a subsistence crop.

Initially the market for the crop was found at village level. It was used in the brewing of **Gankata**, a local brew. By 1965 the crop had found a ready national market in the **chibuku** beer brewing industry. Thus it became widely grown in most areas of Gwembe south.[106] **Red Flammida** provided an important "source of income for a minority of village households" in most areas of the Valley.[107]

The crop's local popularity was shortlived because people complained that beer made from its malt lacked the taste familiar to them.[108] Furthermore, **Red Flammida** also became unpopular because of Government pricing policies. Prices for sorghum were far too low when compared to those of other cash crops.[109] These setbacks were compounded by the decline of the national market for the crop when by 1971, the amount of sorghum required for malting had fallen sharply when the **chibuku** beer brewing industry was replacing sorghum malt with enzymes.[110] Although the production of malting grade sorghum continued in some parts of the Valley into the mid 1970s, it was no longer a popularly grown cash crop in Mweemba.

To support and encourage its campaigns for cash and subsistence crops, the Government also carried out some measures to try and improve cultivation practices. Between 1968 and 1970 it conducted research trials at Lusitu to demonstrate methods of land cultivation that could increase food production even during years of erratic and poor rainfall. The results which are

applicable in the whole Gwembe Valley, proved that ridging and tie ridging systems could increase the output of maize, sorghum and millet, even during poor rainfall years. Tie ridges help conserve water. They act as small water basins which considerably prolongs the time for infiltration into the root zone of the crops.[111]
The above research trials were never put into practice through extension work.

Commercializing Fishing

Fishing has been one of the economic activities of the Valley Tonga since time immemorial. They caught fish on a small scale for subsistence using various methods. Different species of fish were caught in the rivers, streams, and in the shallow waters of the Zambezi at different times of the year.[112] However, informants were agreed that no commercial fishing was undertaken then. This may be true of the upper river area where swift water currents might have impinged on large scale fishing.

Commercial fishing was planned well in advance of resettlement when it was realized that in some proposed areas of resettlement, particularly in Mweemba, there was a critical shortage of arable land. There was a general consensus among colonial officials that to ease pressure on the limited amount of land, it was essential that a good number of Mweemba men be able to make a living from fishing.[113] The activity would provide the people of the area with the "protein essential for a healthy diet and furnish a cash commodity...."[114]

Preparing **Bana Mweemba** for fishing began in 1956 almost two years ahead of effective resettlement. In July-August that year a course in draw net fishing was conducted for twenty-eight people in Mweemba. The course participants were drawn from among villagers, teachers and some local businessmen. To ensure inhouse training of fishermen after the move, the Government stationed

fish guards in resettlement areas to work as instructors. Mweemba received one of these in 1957.[115]

In 1958, some months before the move, some Gwembe men were taken on a tour of Luapula Province to help them have an idea of what went on in commercial scale fishing.[116] The Department of Game and Fisheries embarked also on a serious training programme of aspiring fishermen. Fishing classes were conducted in all the different chiefs' areas that were to be affected by the move.[117]

When the lake was finally formed, the Government, through the Department of Game and Fisheries, undertook the stocking of the lake with bream, after the breeding of the specie at the Department's ponds, at Chilanga.[118]

The response among the Gwembe men was overwhelming. Within eight months of sealing the Dam in 1958, about 407 were already fishing in the lake. The number increased to 2,000 by the end of 1962.[119] How many of these came from Mweemba remains a matter of speculation. But it is known that by 1960 a total of 177 men from the area were involved in commercial fishing. These were concentrated around the five major camps of Namazambwe, Chamilindi, Old Kanchindu, Namafulu and Dengeza, all established in Mweemba.[120] In 1961 a European called Ellwood entered into contract with Mweemba fishermen to buy dried fish. The development made fishing a very popular economic activity among the men because they could easily dispose of the catch.[121]

To boost and popularize the industry, a fisheries training centre was opened at Sinazongwe in December 1961.[122] The Centre provided training in improved fishing methods, boat building and other fishing related skills. In 1962 it was extended by funds from the Freedom From Hunger Campaign.[123] The colonial government attempted to encourage Gwembe men to take fishing seriously by providing credits for purchase of nets as well as boats.[124]

Since the promotion of commercial fishing was specifically aimed at helping the Gwembe people raise

income with which they could buy food in bad years, the Government gave a fishing monopoly to the local men. The monopoly was part of the resettlement agreement under a British Order in Council. However when the newly independent Government of Zambia was installed in 1964 it refused to be bound by it and argued that all Zambian citizens ought to be able to use such resources. Consequently, it extended fishing rights to other Zambian people as well.

The strategy of commercializing fishing paid dividends at the time the industry boomed. In Mweemba the men who participated in the venture were able to buy cattle. Besides their role in agricultural production, the cattle played a major role during times of food shortages as they could be sold or exchanged for food.

Commercial fishing was to some extent constrained by some cultural beliefs. Suspicions of magic and witchcraft were common phenomena in most fishing camps. Good and skilled fishermen were looked upon with awe and marginalised from the rest of the fishing community as their colleagues were always scared that they or some members of their family might be bewitched. Colson found, around 1964-65 that a man from Siameja who had become a very successful fisherman was suspected of having killed his mother and his infant children.[125]

The Valley Tonga were not traditionally commercial fishermen. Even their subsistence fishing was on a small scale indeed. Thus, many were not willing to take up the activity. Some men were afraid of drowning because the lake was dangerous. But they also found that they quickly spent small daily gains. The young men who passed through schools preferred taking up jobs in towns and saw a fishing career as inferior despite the obvious cash returns from it.[126]

Later, the Zimbabwe war of independence contributed to the unattractiveness of fishing particularly after about 1968. Boats and nets were destroyed and fishermen lived in fear. This meant that even those Mweemba men who had continued fishing abandoned commercial

fishing.However, the end of war in Zimbabwe in 1980 and the increasing difficulty in getting formal employment in towns and cities after 1975 forced young men, including school leavers to take up fishing. This move became more pronounced during the food shortages of the 1981 to 1984 years and continued through to 1987. Colson and the Scudders had this to say:

> Although the gill net fishery is still depressed and largely in the hands of fishermen from other districts, again the fish are there and the number of Gwembe fishermen is already beginning to increase[127]

During the subsistence crisis of the 1980s, many men from Mweemba sold fish to raise money to buy grain and mealie meal. These went as far as Livingstone, Lusaka and other towns along the line of rail to sell their merchandise. But they were beset with many problems of lack of enough money to buy boats and nets and of transport to make the business more viable.

Agricultural Land Settlement Scheme

In 1934, immediately after the 1931-32 food crisis, the colonial Government made recommendations for an agricultural land settlement scheme outside the Valley as a strategy to relieve pressure on arable land in areas of Mweemba where there was high population density. For some reasons, perhaps because of the economic depression, the plan was not effected.

In 1943, soon after the 1941-42 famine, similar suggestions were also made. This was a part of the total Government strategy to "combat famine conditions" in the Chieftaincy.[128] The Government was optimistic that once implemented, those villages moved to the scheme would be insured against crop failures as well as chronic food insufficiency.[129] But nothing was then done. The idea of moving individual villages out of the Valley never led to any action until thirteen years later after the Kariba resettlement programme was effected. Thus, the plans

could not be executed until they were overtaken by the Kariba scheme.

Thereafter because the Siampondo and Sinangombe people in the southernmost region of Mweemba had been facing severe food shortages since 1958, actually greater than before resettlement, the Government thought a long term strategy to redress the recurrent shortage was certainly needed.

When Zambia launched the FNDP in 1966 the plan emphasized the need for the provision of rural economic infrastructure. Investment in settlement schemes as a solution to overpopulation in some areas was thus envisaged as one such venture appropriate in the rural areas.[130] In the Gwembe Valley the problems of Siampondo and Sinang'ombe were outstanding. Consequently, Government sought for sites with sufficient arable land and with favourable climatic conditions where the people of the two areas could be resettled.[131]

An area in the margins of Simwatachela Chieftaincy of Kalomo District, called Njabalombe was found to be suitable. The Government was optimistic that the Njabalombe scheme was going to:

> provide these poverty stricken people with the means to grow sufficient food and (achieve) better living conditions in general.[132]

The people were to move to this area on purely voluntary basis. This meant that those who would elect to remain could do so.

Njabalombe settlement scheme was not meant to be a commercial scheme. It was aimed at helping these people grow more food to meet their subsistence needs. The first volunteer settlers moved in 1971. By 1974 a total of sixty-two Siampondo and Sinan'gombe families were already farming in their new places[133] Besides the provision of social institutions such as a school and clinic, the Government stationed an agricultural extension worker to provide basic extension education to the peasant farmers.

By 1974 Njabalombe scheme was already doing well and those Siampondo and Sinangombe people who decided to move to join it were talking of a success story.[134] By that year there was also a growing enthusiasm among those who had opted to remain behind to join the resettlees. The scheme is an example of a successful Government food security strategy in Mweemba and indeed in the Gwembe Valley as a whole.

Efforts of the Gossner Mission, 1970-1987

In 1970 the Zambian Government awarded a contract, to undertake development programmes in Gwembe South to a German Missionary voluntary team known as Gossner Mission. The main objective of the Mission was to help reduce the problem of chronic food shortages in that part of the Valley. Within the year the contract was given, the Mission launched the Gwembe South Development Project. It was under the auspices of the Project that the Team hoped to introduce, encourage and support programmes that were aimed at trying to solve the problem of hunger in the region.

Towards the realization of this noble objective, the Mission adopted two approaches: firstly, it envisaged the maximum utilization of the abundant water resources of Lake Kariba by introducing irrigation agriculture. Secondly, it sought to help the people of Gwembe South to exploit to the full their skills and talent through community development based programmes so as to raise some income on which to fall on in bad years. This section looks at these approaches and their limitations in as far as the realization of increased food production in the region was concerned.

Establishment of Irrigation Schemes

Work to establish an irrigation scheme at Siatwiinda in Mweemba started in 1970. In the following year the settlement of forty-six peasant farmers on the scheme was

effected. Farming did not, however, begin until the 1972-73 season.[135] The Siatwiinda Scheme was fundamentally established to provide:

> The subsistence farmer of the drought stricken Gwembe valley with his basic food requirement and some cash crops for local market.[136]

In line with this objective the farmers began growing maize, rice, cotton and sunflower.

Between 1973 and 1974 Kafwambila Scheme was established in the southernmost area of the Chieftaincy. This scheme was established principally for vegetable and fruit production. The Team loaned the peasant farmers pumps for use and also personnel to provide technological information required to make the scheme a success .[137]

In as far as increased food production was concerned,up to 1987, the situation was characterized by much uncertainty. The Kafwambila scheme was short lived. It was abandoned by 1975 because of the lack of spare parts for the pumps.[138] But the war of Zimbabwe's independence was above all the main reason for the abandonment of the scheme. Kafwambila is very close to Zimbabwe and the Lake is narrower there than it is around Siatwiinda or Sinazongwe. This made it easier for both freedom fighters and Rhodesian troops to cross over to both sides of the lake. This turned Kafwambila into a battle arena. Land Communication to this area was also difficult because the road leading to it was land mined. The presence of whites aroused much suspicion and they were often accused of spying for the Smith regime.

Although the Scheme at Siatwiinda, remains functional to date, to 1987 it had succeeded in reducing hunger among only a few people in Mweemba. Only a very small number of people have plots. However, the scheme was not operational in mid-1980s because of the lowering of lake levels owing to drought conditions that prevailed. Longer pipes were needed to make it functional.

Even among plot holders, the scheme remained unsubstantial. This was due to lack of markets,

occasioned by poor transportation and communication systems. The Gossner Mission did supply a lorry, but very often fuel was a problem. The peasant producers thus found it difficult to sell their produce. The market at Maamba Coal Mine, which is the nearest place for them to dispose of the items, was not large enough.

The cropping system developed at Siatwiinda was such that the crops were cultivated during the rainy season. Furthermore, the irrigated plot holders participated also in dry land farming. This meant that there was a labour crisis at peak periods, resulting in strains on available household labour and material resources because both irrigated and the rain fed crops needed attention at almost the same time.[139] More attention was given to rainfed fields because here yields were expected to be more than on irrigated ones because of more acreage.

Introducing Community Development Projects

Broadly speaking community development means that the community must help itself by joining the government or other agency sponsoring some community based development programmes in an effort to improve such a community's economic, social and cultural conditions.[140] The Gossner Mission hoped that by involving the people of Gwembe South in community development projects it would encourage them to utilize their skills which would ultimately enable them raise their income, a development that would allow them to purchase their own food in times of subsistence crisis.

In 1972 a Tailor Training Programme was started as a sub-element of the Gwembe South Development Project. Training sessions lasting one year were organized and the participants were provided with a sewing machine each which they retained at the end of the course provided they paid back to the Team the cost of its value.[141] Unfortunately, the programme was discontinued about 1975 at the expiry of the organizer's contract.

Another community development based policy introduced by the Gossner Mission as a subsidiary of the GSDP was the Rural Work Programme (RWP). RWP was an annual programme where some local people participated in the construction and repair of rural infrastructures such as roads. The programme used to last about six months from the beginning of May to the end of October. The programme participants were each paid a monthly wage of K20.00, of this amount K5.00 was put into a saving scheme so that by the end of the programme in October each year, the participants would have K30.00. This money was used to purchase agricultural inputs - a policy that was aimed at increasing food production in order to resolve the problem of hunger in the area.[142] The programme did not continue long, it had been abandoned by 1976, because it proved a drain on the Mission's financial resources.

The major and most important programmes introduced by Gossner Mission toward its effort to resolve the problem of "periodical famines experienced in the Valley region" was the Tonga Crafts Programme (TCP). The programme was started in 1972 by Mr. Kriebel, the leader of the Team.[143] It was initiated to promote the production of local crafts such as baskets, stools, beadwork etc., with the basic aim of preserving and improving Valley Tonga skills and more importantly to help provide an alternative cash income for these people. The programme found a ready market since the Mission bought the crafts. These purchases actually led to the establishment of the Tonga Museum and Crafts Project whose beginnings are traced to 1972 when the local crafts began being kept in a house located at the headquarters of the Gossner Mission and the GSDP camp at Sinazeze.[144]

The TCP also found a market outlet when a shop, presently housed at the Gossner Mission premises at Kabulonga's Ibex Hill in Lusaka, was opened. In 1979 the TCP became an enterprise of the newly established Valley Self Help Promotion Fund (VSP). The VSP was begun as a programme of the GSDP. Its main objective was to help Valley people of Gwembe South raise their incomes.

Although statistics proved difficult to obtain, during the Programme's boom years it was an important source of income for the people of Gwembe South, particularly of Kafwambila in Mweemba.[145]

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that many attempts were made in the period between 1910 and 1987 to mitigate hunger in Mweemba. The measures, undertaken by the Government and non-Governmental Organizations, were aimed at building a sustainable food security system in the Chieftaincy. The chapter has discussed the missionary attempts to improve Valley Tonga agriculture through the teaching of agriculture and related subjects to boys enrolled in mission schools. It has also looked at why the missionary attempts were a comparative failure. Furthermore the chapter has examined the government attempts to introduce drought resistant crops not grown in the Valley, building food storage system by introducing the communal granary scheme and also by encouraging income generating ventures such as cash croping and commmercial fishing. The chapter has also discussed the Gossner Service Team's attempts to build a food security system in Mweemba by introducing irrigation agriculture and encouraging community based development projects which could help generate income at household levels.

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CONCLUSION

This dissertation has shown that in the period between 1905 and 1987 **Bana Mweemba** were faced with serious food shortages. The study has argued that land shortages began from around the mid-nineteenth century because of increases in the population. There was a subdivision of land to such an extent that the acreage per head was reduced to an extent that it was no longer possible to produce sufficient yields. This meant that even in relatively good years the people of the area were not able to produce a surplus that could be stored beyond the next crop's harvest. Thus Mweemba people's food situation was always precarious.

Shortage of land also meant that the same land was cultivated continuously for many years. This tended to exhaust soil nutrients rapidly and also to cause soil erosion. The soil erosion process was exacerbated by a rapid increase in the domestic animal population. Thus there was an ever diminishing crop yield per acreage.

Further constraints on crop production were erratic and uneven distribution of rainfall over the agricultural season and the threat posed by crop pests during growth, harvesting and storage. Because of the lack of a surplus to cover up for a poor next season's harvest, poor rainfall in one season automatically meant severe food shortages for the people of Mweemba. The study contends that erratic and sometimes uneven distribution of rainfall was the immediate cause of hunger.

The study, however, has shown that because of the harsh environment, the Valley Tonga, over the years, evolved a variety of coping mechanisms which helped them cushion the impact of crop failure. This study has demonstrated that these people were able to take advantage of the changes in their local and national political economy. For example, they were quick to respond to capitalist demands for labour and thus sold their labour to raise money to buy grain or mealie meal in times of subsistence scarcity. They also sold and exchanged their animals, tobacco, traditional wares and

wild products in order to mitigate the impact of food scarcity.

The study has further shown that **Bana Mweemba** cultivated social relations and maintained kinship ties that insulated them against hunger. Also, the people of this region utilized their wild animal and plant resources to their advantage both in times of normalcy and scarcity. They gathered and hunted.

However, very often these coping mechanisms were not adequate. The old, children, women and the lame were disadvantaged in access to food. The colonial and independent governments and non-governmental organizations provided food relief in crisis periods. This food, grain or mealie meal, was either given free of charge to certain groups of the affected community, sold or worked for. This study has discussed the relief policies the past administrations of Zambia employed.

The dissertation has further looked at the various attempts the government and non-governmental agencies made to try and redress the chronic food shortages in the area.These were long term strategies aimed at building a sustainable food security system in the region. Such strategies included the introduction of exotic crop varieties with higher yielding potentials and of drought tolerant type and attempts to build a food reserve for the area with the introduction of communal silos in 1944.

The dissertation discusses the misguided efforts of the Missionaries to change the people's agricultural practices through education and attempts by the Gossner Service Team to introduce irrigation among the people so that they could utilize the abundant water resources of Lake Kariba. It also examines attempts to introduce commercial ventures such as fishing and cash cropping to help the people raise income on which they could fall in times of hardships.

Finally, the study discusses the measure that were undertaken in the late 1960s and early 1970s to voluntarily resettle some Mweemba people in order to ease

pressure on arable land in the southernmost part of the Chieftaincy.

POSTSCRIPT

The proposal for this dissertation was prepared in mid-1991 before we knew that the 1991-92 farming season would end up as one of the most severe drought seasons in Zambia and Southern Africa as a whole in recent years. Throughout the period of gathering data and writing up this work Zambia was facing severe food shortages, necessitating huge imports of maize and other foodstuffs.

This postscript discusses the 1992-93 food shortages in Gwembe with particular emphasis on Mweemba. It is written with reference to some points made in the main text of the dissertation.

The 1991-92 Agro-Meteorological Situation

The 1991-92 farming season had begun with many parts of the country receiving fairly good rains in November and December. However, the situation changed in January 1992 as weather conditions became hot and dry, especially in the southern half of the country. These conditions led to the quick depletion of soil moisture reserves in the affected regions. By the end of January, Eastern, Lusaka, Central and Southern provinces were experiencing serious rainfall deficit ranging from thirty-eight percent of average rainfall in the first two named provinces to forty-seven percent in the last two[1]

The situation was worse in the Gwembe Valley than elsewhere in Southern province. In Mweemba the months of January and February which are the most crucial period of crop growth received only 58mm and 5mm of rainfall respectively.[2] Because of this adverse condition most crops, especially the maize deteriorated. Elsewhere in the country the drought conditions rapidly deteriorated too, widely ravaging crops.

Because the drought was widespread, the President of Zambia, Chiluba, declared Southern, some areas in Central, Eastern and Western provinces disaster areas on

the 12th of February 1992. He set up a drought relief task force to coordinate, mobilize resources and minimize the loss of food.[3] On the 26th of February he declared a total national crop disaster.[4]

The drought had a great impact on agriculture in the Gwembe Valley. In the Southern province the Government officials estimated that by mid-March at least ninety percent of the crop had been destroyed by the drought. Statistics for Mweemba and Gwembe as a district are not available. However, during my fieldwork in April - May, many informants compared the 1991-92 season to the 1930-31 and 1940-41 seasons when they did not harvest any crop because of the failure of the rainfall.[5]

However, I noticed that, in spite of the drought, cucurbits did very well and were in abundance. The cucumbers (**cucumis spp.**), **makowa**; pumpkins (**cucurbita spp.**), **matangazungu**; water melons (**citrullus vulgaris**), **namunywa** and gourds (**lagenaria vulgaris**), **nyungu** were plenty. But these are perishable and cannot be stored for a long period under traditional technology. Maize on the other hand completely failed throughout the chieftaincy as in many parts of Zambia. However, I noticed that those families who planted sorghum were expected to harvest enough grain to last them at least two to three months.

Drought resistant crops of both traditional and exotic types have been grown in the Gwembe Valley. The case of sorghum discussed above therefore, confirms the relative success of one long term strategy.

By April 1992 there were very few, if any, families in Mweemba who had grains in their granaries. I do not remember visiting, during my fieldwork, any one family with stocks of grain from the 1991-92 harvest. The little sorghum in the fields was expected to be harvested in May - June.

Responses

In Mweemba the villagers responded to the food shortage by stepping up the activities they resorted to

in the past. These activities are chronologically discussed according to the development of the food situation and activities associated with the situation. They sold beer to raise money to buy food. The strategy was profitable. A half litre cup of beer sold at between K4.00 and K5.00 in the villages. At Mapatizya, Mbwiko and Maamba mines, the same capacity cup of beer was sold at K10.00.

The constraining ingredient in beer brewing was the grain for malt. To a large extent this was obtained by buying it from the traders many of whom came from the plateau area of Choma. It is likely that late in the year grain came from WFP rations.

The beer was brewed in discarded 55 gallon gasoline drums. The final product is between 45 and 50 gallons.[8] This meant that each drum brewed got between K4,000 to K10,000, depending on where the commodity was brewed and sold. However, not all this was profit. With this money the villagers bought mealie meal from the local shops at Maamba, Kanchindu and Mapatizya. This meant covering long distances especially among those villagers some kilometres away from these localities, but certainly not as long as those villagers covered in the pre- and immediate post-resettlement period. Towards the end of April, however, many traders, some coming from as far as Choma began taking mealie meal bags to the areas remote from the above named places. These traders distributed the commodity to school teachers along Kanchindu - Siampondo road where teachers sold it on their behalf.

There was a lot of profiteering going on. In areas around Siameja, Sianzovu/Siawaza and Siampondo, private traders sold a 25kg bag of breakfast and roller meal at K750.00 and K950.00 respectively. The official price in licensed shops, at least for the Choma Milling Company commodity, was K648.00 breakfast and K434.00 roller.[9]

Bana Mweemba also fished, gathered and hunted as a response to the food crisis that prevailed. With the end

of the fishing restriction period in March,[10] some Mweemba men, especially those in the villages near the lake began fishing with hooks and gillnets. They sold their catch fresh and dried. If fresh, they quickly sold it at Maamba Coal Mine, Mapatizya and Mbwiko Amethyst mines. The dried was sold, to a large extent, in towns along the line of rail and to a lesser extent at the same mines. Some of the fish was sold in villages to the peasant farmers and salaried government officers such as teachers, clinical officers, agricultural and veterinary assistants.

Transportation of fish was done on bicycles if it was to be sold within the Chieftaincy. Those who sold it along the line of rail used the private owned motor vehicles or buses. The lucrative Kapenta trade, in which for some reasons villagers did not participate, enabled the fishermen to find quick transport.

However, this strategy did not continue long. By July the water level in Lake Kariba reached an all time low level and the fish receded with the water to deep levels where they were difficult to catch.[11]

Hunting and gathering were also stepped up. Those who hunted exchanged the meat for grain or sold it to raise money to buy grain or mealie meal as they did during the shortages of the 1980s. Some of the meat was eaten and provided the needed protein.[12]

The fruits that were collected included **Busiika (tamarindus indica), mabuyu (adansonia digitata)** and **manego (azanza garckeana).** Unlike in the previous food shortages when these were consumed to provide direct subsistence needs for the households, most of the fruit was sold, mainly at Maamba Mine to raise money to buy grain or mealie meal.[13]

Later in the year, about August onwards, some villagers began selling their animals or exchanged them for grain or mealie meal. Small stock such as goats were exchanged for a 25kg bag of mealie meal either breakfast or roller. Cattle were sold to private traders and some villagers slaughtered theirs at Maamba to sell to the

mine community. This was usually done when the miners received their wages and salaries.[14]

Some young men and women from the villages of Mweela, Maamba, Siankodobo and Chisoola sought temporary wage labour during the period of wheat harvesting from May to October at the Gwembe Valley Development Company in Chief Sinazongwe's area.[15] In the recent past very few people sought temporary work at the Company and those who did so were mainly the young men.

Like during the shortages of previous periods some families sought help from their better resource endowed relatives. Some boys and girls went to live with salaried and waged relatives.

Beginning about March 1992 when the villagers were sure that the 1991-92 season was a failure, there was a stepped up illegal amethyst trade in the Chieftaincy , especially among the villagers in Siameja, Sianzovu/Siawaza and Siampondo. The villagers sold the stones to illegal aliens. The activity became a public concern as these aliens were resented by the Zambian political leadership. The **Zambia Daily Mail** of Monday 15th February 1993 carried out an article in which villagers around Mapatizya, Siameja, Maamba and Sinazongwe were said to have been "responsible for keeping the aliens dealing illegally in precious stones in Mapatizya."

The presence of the aliens in these villages played a dual role. Besides buying the stones from the local people, the aliens bought, as relish, the small stock such as goats and also poultry from the villagers. Of the money they raised the villagers were able to buy grain or mealie meal to mitigate the impact of food scarcity.

Emergency Food Aid

When it became certain in some regions of the country that within the next couple of months external food supplies would be necessary, some contingency measures to forestall the looming crisis needed to

be undertaken nationally. In Southern Province, the provincial leadership began in early March 1992 to identify food distribution points in the rural areas.[16]

At national level, the government began arrangements to import maize and other foodstuffs. The government provided food relief was sold to the villagers throughout the crisis period.

In the Gwembe south region, the Sinazongwe District Council distributed bags of mealie meal which were left at each school as a point from which the villagers could buy the commodity. In May the same council distributed some 90kg bags of maize which were sold at K1,200.00. The Council continued sending some bags of maize to the region. From July the imported yellow maize was sold at these centres. In July the price was K800.00 per 50kg bag. By October the price had gone up to K1,200.00 per bag.

The government food relief efforts were supplemented to a great extent by the World Food Programme throughout the country. In the Gwembe Valley the WFP's Programme to Prevent Malnutrition (PPM) was introduced in October 1992. This was the opportune time for intervention as some villagers had been relying on their own resources to buy food for about seven months and some even more. In some areas such as Chiawa in the Lower River region, it was by then found that many people were no longer able to buy grain or mealie meal because their resources had been exhausted.[17]

The WFP food relief had to be worked for, although the old men and women and the lame or disabled received free rations. The food for work strategy was employed during the colonial period. The return to this practice demonstrates its usefulness as a relief measure. In Mweemba the Food-for-work programme involved three types of activities, namely: road rehabilitation, water well deepening and latrine construction. Both able-bodied men and women were involved, although women did not participate in water well deepening and latrine construction.

By February 5, 1993 the WFP had distributed a total number of 86,700 50kg bags of maize throughout the Gwembe areas of Sinazongwe, Mweemba and Munyumbwe. We, however, do not have information on specific figures for each of these Chieftaincies.

The WFP was helped at local level by the Gossner Service Team which provided personnel such as drivers and trucks to distribute the maize throughout the village centres in Mweemba and Sinazongwe. Unlike in the previous food relief distribution operations when transportation was a problem, the 1992-93 operation seem to have been well planned, organized and coordinated. The operation was expected to continue until May 1993.

Post - Drought Recovery Assistance

By January 1993 the 1992-93 farming season was described by the meteorological experts as fair, consequently a good harvest was anticipated in many regions of Zambia including the Gwembe Valley. This, however, would depend on the management of the post-drought situation. Because of the hunger situation that prevailed throughout 1992 and would continue to about April-May 1993 in many areas of the country, the farmers' resource base was exhausted as their money, draught animals and other resources used in agriculture went to help them stave off the hunger. This meant lack of agro-inputs such as fertiliser and seed.

To forestall a crisis, the WFP through its PPM provided some seeds to villagers as part of the food-for-work programme. In some areas where farmers lost most of their drought animals, the WFP initiated communal field cultivation in order to maximise labour required to cultivate large areas. The participating villagers worked in each cooperation member's field in alternating days. Never was this approach adopted in the past. This programme was encouraged in the Central, Eastern, Southern and Western Provinces. In Southern province the

scheme was restricted to the areas of Namwala, Chikankata and Siavonga.[19]

In Mweemba and Sinazongwe Chieftaincies the WFP post-drought recovery assistance was supplemented by the SADCC - ICRISAT sorghum/millet project in conjunction with Mt. Makulu Agricultural Research Station. The three, using the Gwembe Valley Development Company (GVDC) land and facilities, embarked on a seed regeneration programme under irrigation in early 1992. Upon maturity some of the sorghum and millet seed of the drought tolerant varieties were given to the GVDC. The Company, distributed, through its Out-growers' Project, the seed on credit to be paid in kind to villagers in Mweemba and Sinazongwe. Each interested villager was advanced between 2 - 5kg of the seed and was expected at 1993 harvest to return double the amount.[20]

The 1991-92 drought confirms our earlier conclusion that drought has been the direct cause of food shortages in the Gwembe Valley during the present century, therefore, inevitably necessitating food relief and dependence on external aid.

NOTES

1. **Quarterly Food Security Bulletin,** no. 2 (15 April 1992), 2.

2. The Data was provided by the Meteorological Department, Zambia.

3. **Zambia Daily Mail,** Thursday, February 13, 1992.

4. _____, Thursday February 27, 1992.

5. AT 6, Smart Syanjoka Makuba 23/4/92; AT 16, Rev. M.Malyenkuku; 27/4/92; AT24 Siamwiza Simukabe,5/5/92.

6. See for example Virginia Bond, How Chiawa people coped with the Drought',**The Weekly Post,**no. 76(December 18-23, 1992),8.

7. Lancaster, **The Goba of the Zambezi,** 231

8. **Quarterly Food Security Bulletin,** no. 2 (15th April, 1992), 7.

9. In Zambia fishing is prohibited during the period from December to March to allow the fish to breed.

10. **The Weekly Post,** no. 53, July 10-16, 1992.

11. Billion Syantanga Syazwaala, verbal communication, 21/01/93.

12. Mary Chipumbu Siabwanta, verbal communication, 25/01/93

13. N. Siambuli and S. Siantongole, verbal communication, 2/2/92.

14. Mayo Njoolo, verbal communication, 3/2/93.

15. **The Weekly Post,** no. 58 August 14-20, 1992.

16. Bond, 'How Chiawa coped with the Drought', 8.

17. The information was provided by the World Food Programme.

18. Mayo Njoolo, verbal communication, 3/2/93.

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