

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **War legacy: A reflection on the effects of the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) in south eastern Zimbabwe during Zimbabwe's war of liberation 1976 - 1980**

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**As its central thesis, this paper discusses the effects of the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) operations during Zimbabwe's liberation war on the Hlengwe/Shangaan (a minority group in the south eastern Zimbabwe) from 1976 to 1980. Their homeland was a deeply contested terrain (part of what was dubbed the Gaza province by ZANLA) between the RSF and the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA). Supported by archival, published and unpublished documentary evidence, oral interviews and internet sources the study argues that the Hlengwe/Shangaan area is laden with sites of wartime violence, its inhabitants were; terrorized largely by the RSF, susceptible to the chemical and biological warfare and the deplorable conditions of the protected villages and lost a significant number of cattle to the contending forces. Furthermore the establishment of the Malvern-Crooks Corner minefield displaced and separated them from their kin on the Mozambican side. As a result of the establishment of the lethal anti-personnel minefield, which continues to kill and maim people and animals long after the war ended, socio-economic development can not take place in the mined area until the anti-personnel mines are removed.**

**Key words:** Rhodesian Security Forces, Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army, south eastern Zimbabwe, PVS, landmine, Shangaan.

## **INTRODUCTION**

During Zimbabwe's war of liberation, South Eastern Zimbabwe was part of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA)'s operational area called the Gaza province. The area was deeply contested between ZANLA and the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) who employed 'Operation Repulse' or 'curb the go east spree.' Through the use of secondary and primary sources (archival and in-depth oral interviews), the paper argues that as a result of the serious contestations the war of liberation left deep scares and wartime sites of violence and destroyed livelihoods of the inhabitants (the Hlengwe/Shangaan a minority ethnic group) of South eastern Zimbabwe. It contends that the inhabitants of the area were forced into the Protected Villages (PVs) as a strategy designed to cut the interaction between civilians and guerrillas by the RSF. The PVs had deplorable sanitary and health facilities. In a desperate attempt to

curb the freedom fighter infiltration, the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) employed chemical and biological warfare which killed and maimed thousands of people and animals. It concludes that the minority ethnic group was terrorized by the contending forces as the RSF laboured to contain the ZANLA guerrillas' infiltration. Furthermore, those who live along the border areas cannot freely interact with their kin on the Mozambican side and cannot engage in sustainable economic development due to the lethal minefield many years after the achievement of independence. The once deeply contested terrain lost and continues to lose people, livestock and wild game as a result of the deadly minefield established during the war of liberation. Policy makers and implementers including other stakeholders will benefit immensely from this presentation and subsequently hatch lasting solutions to ensure

development in South eastern Zimbabwe

### **Significance of the study and reflections on literature**

Despite the large volume of studies very few focus on the effects of the liberation war in south eastern Zimbabwe inhabited by the Hlengwe/Shangaan people. This is a disservice to the literature, which seeks to validate Zimbabwe's struggle for independence. By focusing on the Shangaan, it is the purpose of this research to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by discussing the effects of the liberation war on the Shangaan terrain. More-so, policy makers and implementers could gain insight on challenges faced by the Hlengwe/Shangaan people especially the deadly anti-personnel mine legacy which curtails socio-economic development.

Manungo writing on Chiweshe emphasized the participation of the civilians in the liberation struggle through voluntary co-operation caused by the resentment of the Ian Smith regime (Manungo, 1991). On the contrary, Kriger's work, dealing with the experiences of the war in Mutoko, argues that guerrillas used coercion to obtain support from the civilians (Kriger, 1992). My point of departure from the preceding scholars is the evaluation of the effects of the war of liberation in south – eastern Zimbabwe. This is so, especially given J. Alexander's argument that, studying the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe is unique to the areas' geography, experience of the war and the impact of colonialism on the area (Alexander, 1993).

Bhebhe and Ranger (1995) have identified some areas of the country where little research has been carried out. They acknowledge that the Hlengwe/Shangaan contribution to the liberation war is still un-researched. This research endeavours to fill this gap identified by the two scholars adding to the existing literature on the effects of liberation war in south eastern Zimbabwe.

The South Eastern Zimbabwean terrain is harsh; it is prone to Malaria transmitting mosquitoes and is susceptible to drought. This encouraged the author to find out what the impact of the war in the Hlengwe/Shangaan terrain was. The study takes place in a terrain, which is closer to Mozambique, and as a result this study begins from 1976 a year when the Gaza province became operational, following the independence of Mozambique in 1975 (Martin and Johnson, 1981; Bhebhe, 1999; Stiff, 1984).

Furthermore, the Shangaan country was a deeply contested terrain by the guerrillas and the RSF (Godwin and Hancock, 1993). The Mozambican south eastern border with Rhodesia had no natural barriers, as compared to the Zambia-Rhodesia front which was marked by the crocodile infested Zambezi River. The guerrillas used the Shangaan area to deploy into the country from Mozambique and this vital route was called

the 'Gaza province' (Godwin and Hancock, 1993). On the contrary the RSF fought to curtail this guerrilla incursion through "operation repulse," (Mazarire, 2000) or what J. Tungamirai has explained as the government effort to curb the "go east spree" (Tungamirai, 1995)". Thus, this highly contested terrain became a focal point of the war and subsequently had major effects on the people there. Therefore the focus on the Shangaan is an effort to reveal how the war of liberation affected the people of South Eastern Zimbabwe.

More-so, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) deplored, in strongest terms, the violence that was perpetrated against the innocent civilians in Rhodesia by insurgents and counter-insurgency forces. They rejected the use of violence in any form, either to entrench the status quo or to bring about change (CCJP, 1999). The CCJP work gives a general picture about the situation during the war of liberation whereas my study investigates the effects of the war in South Eastern Zimbabwe.

### **METHODOLOGICAL INDICATIONS**

This study was a product of interdisciplinary approaches which were used to collect data between 2003 and 2010 among the minority ethnic group the Hlengwe/Shangaan of South Eastern Zimbabwe. The Hlengwe terrain was a deeply contested area between the RSF and ZANLA during Zimbabwe's war of liberation from 1976 to 1980. Primary sources in the forms of official documents parliamentary debates, archival files and newspapers deposited in the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) and the ZANU PF Archives were also consulted. Secondary sources, from the libraries [in Zimbabwe] were used. These sources were significant in obtaining evidence of the RSF's atrocious operations among the Hlengwe. The researcher also used the in-depth oral interviews and personal observation to augment the dependability and legitimacy of the argument (Denscombe, 1998; Jick, 1983). The researcher won the respondents' buy-in by elucidating the purpose of the study. The Hlengwe area is home to 120 000 people. Only twelve respondents were involved in the in-depth oral interviews because they had vivid memories of the liberation war in Zimbabwe. They were chosen through the snowballing sampling technique, where by one key informant led the researcher to another principal informant. Snowballing sampling was chosen in an effort to produce a broad base of qualitative data. The key informants chosen were made up of former guerrilla and RSF fighters, collaborators, restrictees and community popular opinion leaders with in-depth knowledge and experience of Zimbabwe's war of liberation from 1976 to 1980. The study worked with respondents aged between 43 and 71 when data collection commenced. The data collected was translated by the author from Hlengwe into

English the official language used in Zimbabwe. The in-depth interviews frequently included closed and open ended questions connected to the socio-economic effects of Zimbabwe's war of liberation in that period. The personal observations were a vital component in the identification of the sites of war-time violence and were also central in examining the effects of the war of liberation in south eastern Zimbabwe as they augmented the existing archival sources.

### Study area and its inhabitants

The Hlengwe language belongs to the south east Bantu (the Tsonga) descendents of Matsena who lived in Mozambique (Bannerman, 1978). Appendix 1 gives genealogical details on the Hlengwe. The Hlengwe migrated into south eastern Zimbabwe and conquered its inhabitants between 1750 and 1850 (Smith, 1973; Beach, 1980). The Hlengwe preponderance was challenged by two Nguni groups firstly by that of Nxaba and secondly by that of Soshangane Manukosi and his Ngoni followers. Nxaba was forced to flee northwards by Soshangane who absorbed some of the local clans as others became tributary to the Gaza Empire (Liesegang, 1970). The Hlengwe and other defeated groups adopted the Victor's culture. In the Gaza Nguni Empire some Hlengwe occupied a secondary status in the social stratum as *baShangane*, subjects of Soshangane (Liesegang, 1970). It was in this social pyramid that the Hlengwe and other conquered groups began to identify themselves as the Shangaan. The Hlengwe adoption of Shangaan identity was orchestrated firstly by their right of conquest, secondly by the middle level positions they obtained from the Soshangane victors and thirdly by the need to get descent employment south of the Limpopo where the Shangaan had a good reputation as miners (Bannerman, 1978). For the purpose of this research the term Shangaan refers to all inhabitants of south eastern Zimbabwe (Ndebele, Shona, Pfumbi and Hlengwe) who have been assimilated into Shangaan culture and refer to themselves as Shangaan.

The study area is south eastern Zimbabwe an area predominantly inhabited by Shangaan speakers. It is a very hot area averaging 30°C, with little rainfall of between 300 and 450 mm per annum and is faced by water scarcity in summer (Vincent and Thomas, 1961; Mugoba, 2000). However, the area is good for cattle rearing. Only the physically fit who have adapted to its environment can exploit its terrain with limited setbacks. The people had relied on rivers for their water supply before colonial occupation. Thereafter the people were evicted and their lives began to revolve around 'a hand pump borehole in a Mopani scrub' (Bannerman, 1981). Its soils are mainly heavy clay and sandy with the former making movements difficult during the rainy season.

The white owned sugar estates at Hippo Valley, Triangle and Mkwasi, the cattle Ranches such as

Nuanetsi and Edenvale, and the Gonarezhou National Park (established during the colonial period during the land usurpations) constituted some of its vital economic lifeblood for the inhabitants. After 1955 Malvern railway line (named after Lord Malvern) now called the Limpopo Corridor and the Rutenga to South Africa railway line via Beit-Bridge became of economic significance [(NAZ, MS308/31/1, 1976-1977)].

### SITES OF WAR VIOLENCE

Findings revealed that South Eastern Zimbabwe is laden with many sites or traces of wartime violence such as minefields, former bases of the ZANLA guerrillas, destroyed structures, graves of war victims, burnt down ruins of homes, sites of ambush and derailment as well as bombed targets. According to one of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) nationalist Titus Mukungulushi (Councilor of Chikombedzi in 2003 when he was interviewed) who was detained at the Gonakudzingwa restriction camp (located in the area of the study) together with the late ZAPU president Joshua Nkomo, some of the sites of war-time violence are located at; Chilohlela, Chilonga, Sengwe, Gezani, Ngwenyeni among others (Mukungulushi, 2003). Added to this many schools were destroyed after they were forced to close due to insecurity and the intensity of the war. Hundreds of people were killed in the area, which was named 'the slaughter area' or 'the red spot' by the ZANLA freedom fighters and the Shangaan because of the number of people killed in the area during the war (Mukungulushi, 2003). Most of the casualties were ZANLA recruits from the interior of the Gaza province and those who fled from joining the PVs set up in the area. Hundreds were killed by poisoned clothes, food and water points carried out by the RSF and their agents. Titus Mukungulushi puts the figure of those who were killed in the area at about 3000. ZANLA also engaged in targeting water points which saw hundreds of RSF perishing. ZANLA freedom fighters and their recruits were endangered by the 61 kilometre Malvernia (now Sango border post) to Crooks Corner (Now Pafuri which is at the Zimbabwean-Mozambican-South Africa border) minefield. Dozens of ZANLA guerrillas as well as their recruits were killed during combat as they crossed the 3 kilometre wide minefield (NAZ, MS308/31/1, 1976-1977). The evidence of violence is outlined in Table 1, (Hove, 2011).

In view of the sites of violence presented in Table 1, (Hove, 2011), Ranger, McGregor and Alexander came to the conclusion that 'the lowveld was and remains scarred by memories of violence' (Alexander et al., 2000). This is true given the fact that there has never been any significant change on infrastructure and the war victims were not rehabilitated. Moreso, many people were killed in the area during the struggle for the liberation.

The Gonakudzingwa restriction camp, which was well known for detention of prominent politicians such as

**Table 1.** Gives examples of the sites of violence as a result of the war of liberation, Compiled by the researcher from data collected during fieldwork, 2011.

Form of violence	Approximate casualty figures	Area/Location
Poisoned water sources	200	Chilohlela and Masukwe Communal Areas and the Gonarezhou National Park
Minefields	400	Malvernia to Crooks Corner
Battle sites	2600	Zhou School, Farm No. 4 and 5 water points, Mwenezi River Bridge, Mpagati police post, Mukaradhi
Farm homesteads burnt	200	Gonakudzingwa black owned farms No. 1 – 29.
Protected Villages		Chiteya, Boli, Chikomedzi, Rutandare, Chironga, Chicualacuala
Attacked Bridges	400	Chipinda, Mwenezi, Lundi along Binya road
Centres of Incarceration	200	Gonakudzingwa restriction camp and PVs
Graves as a result of the minefield	3000+	Chilohlela, Ngwenyenye Masukwe, Chikomedzi and Samu all along the border area
Schools	300	Pahlela, Chanyenga, Zhou, and Makambe schools
Derailment sites	5	Rutenga and Chilugwi

The Chinamano, was shattered by the war. A visit to the site late Joshua Nkomo, Willie Musarurwa and Josiah of the camp reveals the ruins of the war demolition which can be seen to this day. These ruins prompted one of the former restrictees at Gonakudzingwa camp, Titus Mukungulushi to comment that:

Although formerly a symbol of the oppressive regime or the colonial administration's brutalities, the place can be reclaimed as Joshua Nkomo College of Livestock and Wild life. The tourists I believe will take interest to visit the area during their tour of the Gonarezhou National Park. This would be an investment in the correct direction since the adjacent areas are laden with livestock. It is also crucial for posterity so that the significance of the struggle can be transcended from one generation to the other in its totality (Mukungulushi, 2003).

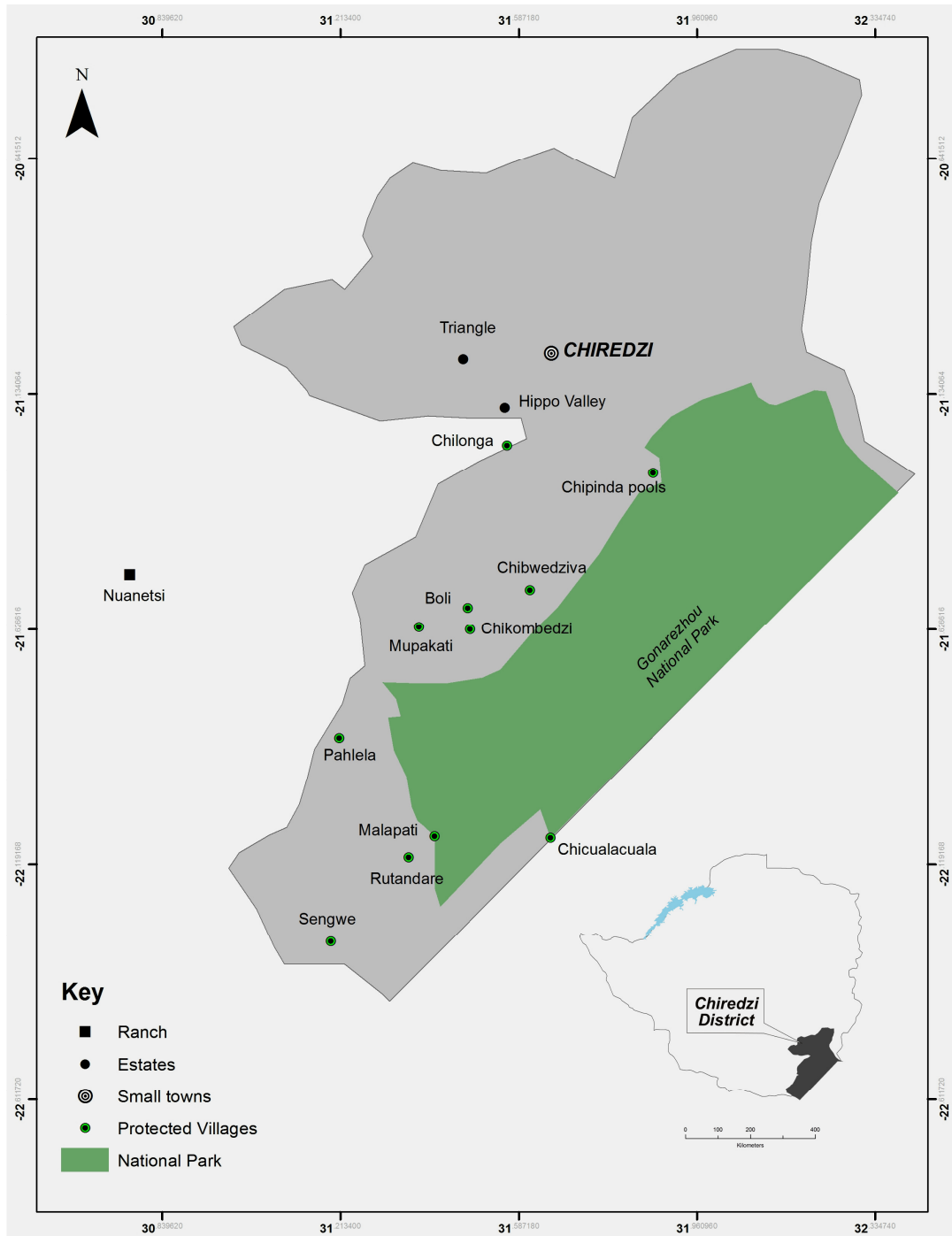
It is evident from T. Mukungulushi that the reclamation of the Gonakudzingwa restriction camp would if undertaken contribute to the development of tourism there by creating employment opportunities for the Hlengwe people. The Shangaan of south eastern Zimbabwe share the border with South Africa and the furthest are located about 160 kilometres away from the border. Given the area's proximity and its lack of economic development, it will continue to haunt the victims of the war of liberation

especially as their offsprings continue to migrate to South Africa in search of gainful employment. Furthermore, the existence of land mines in the area continues to prohibit economic growth and opportunities there.

### Protected villages

In an attempt to counter the Maoist, 'fish and water' guerrilla tactic, (where Mao noted that the people are the sea and guerrillas are the fish which swim in the water when there is need. Accordingly the guerrillas in south eastern Zimbabwe depended on the people for sanctuary in the event of RSF operations) used by the freedom fighters, the Rhodesian Ministry of Internal Affairs introduced protected villages (PVs) in war zones especially those along border areas in 1976. The Rhodesians who were also veterans of armed conflicts in Malaya and Kenya anticipated that PVs would cut the contact between guerrillas and the rural people. They believed that such a move would in turn deny guerrillas material supplies, food and intelligence information. In the long term it was hoped the tactic of using PVs would pacify and persuade the allegiance of the rural civilians by protecting them and giving them services there (<http://www.rhodesia.nl/wood2.htm>). In South eastern Zimbabwe several PVs were set up and some of these are shown in Figure 1 (Hove, 2012).

These villages however, were never effectively



**Figure 1.** A map (digitalised by M. Hove, 2012) of Chiredzi District showing areas used in the research.

managed especially given the fact that civilians were not involved in their management or informed and convinced of their necessity. The chronic deficiency of finances led to shortages of; food (at Chicualacuala the diet was mainly meat), salt, sugar, medicines, shelter and water (<http://www.rhodesia.nl/wood2.htm>). The PVs were often constructed too far from the peasants' villages. The most

vivid example was the removal of the Chilohlela people away from their ancestral burial sites, where they venerated their ancestors (Mapengo, 2002). The two reasons why the Chilohlela people were relocated was first to deny interaction with ZANLA guerrillas and secondly to establish the Malvernia-Crooks Corner minefield.

The PVs caused suffering on the inhabitants of the area in an effort to capture the interests of the minority whites. To this end Wood, noted that, 'in Malaya the concept had worked because it protected a Malayan majority against a Chinese minority, whereas in Rhodesia the guerrillas were sons of the village' (<http://www.rhodesia.nl./wood2.htm>). The shooting of cattle, burning of granaries and the use of defoliants on crops in areas from which the peasants had been removed contributed to the suffering of the people in the protected villages as shortage of food worsened (ZANU-PF Archives, Operational Department, Department of Defence, Southern Province, Gaza).

The Internal Affairs District Assistants (DAs) and the Guard Force (modelled on the Kenyan Emergency Kikuyu Guard) who protected the PVs were shunned for their morally decadent behaviour such as rape and prostitution of the Shaangan people. The conditions in the PVs were exacerbated by the introduction of 'dusk to dawn' curfew and the 'free firing zone' regulations. The curfews stipulated times when people in the PVs would be allowed to move for example at Mpagati was 6 O' clock at dusk that people stopped loitering until the following morning at 6 O' clock (The Rhodesia Herald, 26 March, 1976). The 'free firing zones' ranged from 1 to 5 kilometres in which case if one violated this prohibitive regulation would be shot dead (The Rhodesia Herald, 26 March, 1976). People were between 7 and 10 kilometres away from the fields since these distances differed from one PV to another. To worsen the situation of the Black civilians the imposed dawn to dusk curfew made proper tending of crops and cattle difficult, thus food became scarce.

In addition, the establishment of PVs, impoverished people of South eastern Zimbabwe who lost a lot of wealth such as farming equipment (tractors, trailers disc harrows, ox-drawn and tractor drawn ploughs, shovels, picks, mattocks and hoes), livestock (goats, cattle, donkeys, horses, pigs, sheep, ducks and chickens), cooking utensils, boreholes, homes, fence and orchards. In 1976 when people were forced to relocate to the PVs they were only permitted only 5 bags of grain, clothes and no livestock or farm machinery was allowed into the PVs (Mapengo, 2002). The farming equipment was lost and homes were set on fire. The PVs are therefore a place where memories of violence, impoverishment, home destruction, separation of the ZANLA guerrillas and acts of cruelty occurred. All the Native Purchase Areas of the Gonakudzingwa area from farms number 1 to 29 were razed to the ground. The people of Matibi II Reserve had their homes destroyed as everyone was compelled to join the PVs (ZANU-PF Archives, Operational Department, Department of Defence, Southern Province, Gaza).

The PVs had poor sanitary facilities and other PVs had no sanitary services at all and the levels of morally decadent behaviours such as prostitution rose alarmingly (Mapengo, 2002). Furthermore, conditions in the PVs

were extremely horrible; accommodation was overcrowded, sanitary and water facilities few, lacking repairs and often constituted a health hazard (NAZ, GEN-P, September 1979). Medical facilities were rudimentary in most PVs except at Chikombedzi where a mission hospital remained operational. Due to the absence of comprehensive medical support systems most people who had contracted a disease such as malaria, measles or whooping cough died (ZANU-PF Archives, Operational Department, Department of Defence, Southern Province, Gaza). When PVs were closed for people to return to their homes in 1978 they found their homes and grain storages burnt down, and their cattle; killed, stolen or gone astray thereby impoverishing thousands of people (Mazoje, 2006).

### CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

Outside the PVs people encountered deplorable conditions such as the absence of safe drinking water (Stiff, 1999). In an effort to neutralize ZANLA troops, the RSF used hazardous chemicals to poison clothing, canned food, drinks, and aspirin, and biological agents such as the bacteria vibro-cholerae and anthrax bacteria which were used to infect farmland and water sources (Flower, 1987; Mangold and Goldberg, 1999; Nass, 1992). The first elaborate proof of the use of poison can be traced to 1975 or 1976, in spite of the claims that it was in use as early as 1973. The Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), instructed doctors and chemists from the University of Rhodesia (now University of Zimbabwe) to research, identify and experiment a variety of chemical and organic agents that could be used as a secretive "terror feature" in the war against guerrillas (Gould and Folb, 2002). The head of the clinical program in the university's Anatomy Department, Robert Symington (Professor), recruited a trained number of trained workforce (including his colleagues) and students to carry out this research (Stiff, 1999).

M. J. McGuinness, who headed the Chemical Weapons (CW) program and other clandestine operations originated from the Selous Scouts Headquarters in Bindura noted that, "...25-gallon drums of foul-smelling liquid were supplied to the base many times in 1977." The chemicals were poured into huge pieces of tin for sun backing and the residues were grounded into powder. The powder was applied onto stock piles of denim commonly known as jeans which were taken to the Selous Scouts' André Rabie barracks, where it was soaked into chemicals (Gould and Folb, 2002). The deadly powder was then mixed with manufactured foods such as meat and beans before being re-canned or applied into bottles of alcohol with a micro-needle (Gould and Folb, 2002). Numerous prisoners were taken against their will to the Selous Scouts at Bindura and were allegedly used as "human guinea pigs" to test the usefulness of the poisons and their bodies were clandestinely

buried (Flower, 1987; Brickhill, 1992).

In Musuku area 10 civilians and livestock died after drinking water from a poisoned borehole believably targeting the guerrillas (Mbiza, 2006). Indeed, in 1976 a Zambian newspaper reported that RSF had began to poison water sources as a weapon against ZANLA guerrillas in South Eastern Rhodesia in one of their atrocious operations (Zambian Daily News, 1976; BBC Monitoring Services, 28/29/04/78). This was 'an inhumane exercise' because the poison killed civilians, livestock and wild game in addition to its intended target, although the Rhodesian authorities rejected the report in its entirety (The Rhodesia Herald, 1976, Zambian Daily News, 1976). One hundred and fifteen Africans were reported dead in November 1977 after drinking poisoned water in South Eastern Rhodesia and were buried in a mass grave (Anti Apartheid Movement, 1979). More civilians died after buying poisoned clothes from unscrupulous local agents, who had been recruited by the Special Branch and Selous Scouts. The agents were paid one thousand Zimbabwean dollar (\$1,000) bonus for each "confirmed" death of a freedom fighter (Ellert, 1989).

When the anthrax plague began to kill cattle in the white owned farms and ranches the Rhodesian Army psychological operations officers accused infiltrating guerrillas for its outbreak and spread. The black nationalists argued that the original outbreak was a result of the white administration designed move to starve the guerrillas and their supporters. Three decades after independence the area continue to be affected by repeated outbreaks of anthrax believably introduced in the area during the war of liberation (Makondo, 2002).

## WAR INDUCED POVERTY

Disillusioned by the increased guerrilla infiltration the RSF introduced a scorched earth policy strategy where they destroyed anything which could be of use to the enemy. The aim was to starve the civilian population and force the guerrillas into submission or cause desertion of civilians (who had fled from PVs to rejoin because of hunger) from guerrillas (Dhliwayo, 2007). Overall the scorched earth policy strategy was meant to cripple the civilian ability to sustain their support to the guerrillas.

Prior to the beginning of the war, south east Zimbabwe was popularly known as a good cattle country, pastoral land or the sweet veld (Fort Victoria News 6 January, 1950). Consequently, the inhabitants of the area were named cattle people. The Assistant Native Commissioner acknowledged the viability of the beef industry in the area in 1948 by noting that:

I doubt if any district in this country have better native stock than Naunetsi: No doubt this is excellent cattle country, but I am convinced that exotic blood introduced through contact with the ranch bulls over a period of years has much to do with it (NAZ, S235/518; ANC, Naunetsi,

Annual Report, 1948).

This consideration compelled the whites to alienate land from the people of the area to establish ranches and later the sugar industry which was secondary in the area. The outbreak of the war in the area adversely affected the livestock industry to the degree where it has not yet recovered to the pre-Second Chimurenga (war of liberation) levels up to this day (Rukanda, 2003).

In Matibi 1 in Chief Mpapa's area from the beginning of February 1976 to November 1977 over a hundred homes were destroyed, cattle, goats, sheep and dogs were shot and 7 tones of food were burnt to ashes. As many as 60 to 70 people were shot or tortured to death (ZANU-PF Archives, Operational Department, Department of Defence, Southern Province, Gaza). To force the civilians into the PVs the RSF destroyed boreholes and poisoned food if they did not burn it (ZANU-PF Archives, Operational Department, Department of Defence, Southern Province, Gaza). This led to the death of people as a result of poisoned food or simply due to its shortages. Livestock was reported to have died of thirst as the owners were driven into the PVs (ZANU-PF Archives, Operational Department, Department of Defence, Southern Province, Gaza). At times the RSF used the French built Mirage and Vampire jets, Canberra bomber planes and helicopters to bombard homes, granaries and livestock. The aircraft were also used to lite grass in a desperate attempt to flush out the guerrillas from their hideouts (Zimbabwe News, 1978). Thus, the entire ecology suffered as a result of the RFS's initiatives in the area.

Linked to the war-time suffering of Zimbabweans like Henry Nyanga the owner of farm No. 3, Gonakudzingwa area, who supported the guerrillas voluntarily, noted that the liberation war reduced livestock in the area to alarming levels. He complained that:

I had more than 400 herd of cattle, 150 goats and 70 sheep at my farm No. 3, Gonakudzingwa. But at the end of the war I did not recover even one beast. All efforts I have made to recover from the loss of the war have not even taken me beyond 100 cattle and 50 goats (Nyanga, 2006).

Wolmer (2001) echoes Rukanda and Henry's sentiments when he writes that "between 1979 and January 1980 two properties South of Bubi River and Mateke Hills lost between 3,000 and 4,000 heads of cattle". This evidence is complimented by the loss of livestock in Sengwe Communal area where 80% cattle were killed during the liberation war 1976 to 1980.

Most cattle were lost because they were left unattended as people were forced into PVs. Added to this the guerrillas encouraged *mujibas* (these were African guerrilla aides (boys) who were mobilized and politicized to support ZANLA forces by providing intelligence about

the RSF drawn among the Hlengwe/Shangaan people) to rustle cattle from the white owned properties, partly to sabotage the whites as well as to meet their food needs. Livestock were also depleted by the RSF shootings in their desperate attempts to deny ZANLA guerrillas and their supporters food.

### Natural hardships intensified by the war

The area was described as a disease endemic area to animals and people respectively since the area was susceptible to mosquitoes and tsetse flies. The report of the commission of inquiry on Human and Animal trypanosomiasis in Southern Rhodesia described south eastern Zimbabwe as; “perhaps the most serious of all ... It is a focal point from which the fly could spread back over the whole 20 000 or so square miles of country which is infected north of the Limpopo before the rinderpest” (Thomas, 1955). Animals and people could only live in the area with limited threats when the Veterinary Department and the Ministry of Health controlled malaria and sleeping sickness. The war of liberation disturbed all these operations and as a result cattle died from *nagana*, (a livestock disease) transmitted by tsetse fly. Furthermore, dip tanks were destroyed by the ZANLA guerrillas and their supporters and as a result cattle died from tick borne diseases. Veterinary control of livestock diseases had been abandoned contributing to the loss of cattle as nagana, foot and mouth, heart water fever and tick borne diseases were wide spread.

The guerrillas can not be exempted from the destruction of the livelihoods of the area. Some of the civilians (especially *mujibas*) who had been liberated from the PVs which were set up by the Rhodesian front government were sent in groups of fives into the black (they targeted those farms whose occupants were forced into PVs) and white owned ranches and farms for cattle rustling. Most cattle rustling operations were carried out at night after thorough reconnaissance by the team to avoid attacks by the RSF. At times the civilians were escorted by armed freedom fighters to rustle cattle from the white owned properties leading to the collapse of their livelihoods. For example in 1978, the freedom fighters rustled 120 cattle from a white farmer who allegedly refused to stop exploiting farm workers. ZANLA forces supported by the people's militia rustled 126 head of cattle from a white farmer on 10 October, 1978 near Mpakati in the Gonakudzingwa area (Zimbabwe News, 1978). The white farmer had been supporting ZANLA but turned to support the counter revolutionary activities. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1978, 45 cattle, which had gone astray during the RSF aerial bombardment, were rounded up by ZANLA forces and brought back to the owners living in the Pahlela PV in the Gonakudzingwa area. According to Stubbs (1984), a researcher in his work titled, “Feasibility study to rehabilitate the livestock economy in Sengwe Communal land (Chiredzi District)”,

stock thefts and attacks on white ranches and farms were deliberate freedom fighter tactics to destabilise the white community's economic pillar.

Realising that they were fighting a losing war, the RSF embarked on poaching big game in the Gonarezhou National Park a development, which led to the dismissal of General Hickman (Jenkins and Palmer, 1978). There was loss of income by the people who were employed in clinics, schools, hospitals, agricultural development projects, the Gonarezhou National Park and the sugar estates which were forced to down size their work force due to the war.

### The deadly mine Legacy

To the present, South Eastern region is one of Zimbabwe's most heavily mined areas still infested with the anti personnel mines. In the Hlengwe area the minefield stretches from Malvern (Sango) to Crooks Corner (Papfuri). It was established to prevent the continued infiltration of the guerrillas under the co-ordination of the Cordon Sanitaire Committee (CORSAN) chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister including commanders of the army, air force, police and senior officers from Internal Affairs, the Trypanosomiasis and Tsetse Department. Civilians were removed from the areas where the minefields were established at the height of the war and the places were declared 'no go areas' (Rupiya, 1989). The 61 kilometre stretch of mine field was a deterrent to border violators and was also designed to psychologically prevent those who attempted to cross. Despite its toll during the war of liberation the minefield continues to kill and maim innocent souls and animals three decades after independence from colonial rule. In addition, no socio-economic development can be initiated due to the man induced barrier, the anti-personnel minefield.

The minefield separated the Hlengwe in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The people of Chilohlela, Samu, Ngwenyeni and Chicualacuala are barred by the minefields from interacting with their relatives and friends in Mozambique (Moorcraft and McLaughlin, 1982). Before the mines were planted there was freedom of movement across borders even after the establishment of the Anglo-Portuguese boundary of 1891. In a desperate attempt to rekindle their interaction, people opened their own entry points where they sometimes get killed or injured in the process. The people of Chilohlela and their livestock were separated from their water sources, grazing lands and fields by the minefield. To worsen the Chilohlela people's plight, their water sources were allegedly poisoned maybe as part of the RSF desperate bid to curb the ZANLA guerrillas (Wolmer, 2001). The RSF poisoned or closed artificial water points and set on fire large parts of the Gonarezhou National Park. After independence the government realized the challenges posed by the catastrophic minefield and planned to relocate all families



in the mine infested Chilohlela Communal Area (The Herald, 11 June, 1998). This move if executed will distance the Chilohlela people from their kin on the Mozambican side and remove the people from their ancestral land, which they greatly venerate. During the war the people of Chilohlela were evicted from their area into the PV at Chikombedzi and only returned to the area at independence (Sadomba, 2006). To this end anti-personnel landmines continue to negatively impact on Zimbabwe's border communities in the minefield areas leading to social dislocation.

The total number of mine casualties is not known because no comprehensive statistical records are available. It is however estimated that 53 people were killed and 260 injured between 1980 and 2003 (Sadomba, 2005). Even after independence people continued to be hit by the mines as they searched for their livestock and gathered firewood (Dube, 1999). For example a landmine hit one man in 1998 while looking for cattle and a young man had his foot blown off during the same year (The Sunday News, 12 April, 1998, Zimbabwe).

Some of the landmine victims whose feet were amputated after independence are Elina Josiah Nyaunda, Houssana Dzikiti, Mazvambule, Gezani Makause and Chengwiwa Chizenyisi. Furthermore, the headman of Dumisa area Samu Mashaba, reported that 5 people were killed and more than 10 maimed in his area since independence in 1980 (The Sunday News, 12 April, 1998, Zimbabwe). He added that an estimated 500 cattle and wild game were killed along the border by land mines. The situation was so hopeless that Chief Sengwe concluded that people were living like prisoners in their area because of the 'death traps', which killed 'everything except birds' (The Sunday News, 12 April, 1998, Zimbabwe). Some people also died because of the limited medical facilities along the South Eastern border areas with clinics at Duvati and Malipati and Chikombedzi hospital some 58 kilometres away. The Mozambican side at Pafuri and Lower Espungabera did not have any medical facilities to treat anti personnel mine victims. To rehabilitate the victims is costly because one artificial limb was Z\$15 000 in 1989. The fence and the markers of the minefields were long removed by the people who put them to personal use locally.

Economic transformations continue to be hampered by the existence of the man-induced barrier- the minefield to this day as long as the minefield exists. The menace of anti personnel minefield prevents the building of schools, roads, bridges and sinking of boreholes whether donor funded or government driven (Nyanga, 2006). The rural development programmes such as; electrification, agro-forestry, livestock breeding and tourism can not be kick-started due to the hazardous minefield. The possibility of huge infrastructural development projects is lost due to the mine menace. For example the anti personnel minefield has retarded the growth of Sango border town.

It is costly to clear mines. By May 1998 more than Z\$750 000 were needed to clear just a 20 kilometres stretch, and costs have since risen alarmingly (ZIANA, 6 May, 1998).

The effort to establish the Great Limpopo Trans – Frontier Park, which would be Africa's largest Wildlife preserve, is partly retarded by the minefield area (Nyanga, 2006). The construction of roads, hotels, lodges, and other crucial infrastructural development cannot be initiated under the present conditions until the mines are cleared. Mines pose a threat to the people and the Zimbabwean government noted that it was committed to their removal to ensure "the successful and full utilisation of the Great Trans frontier Park, a joint tourist venture with Mozambique and South Africa" (The Daily Mirror, 10 August, 2005). Besides financial hurdles to clear the mines another challenge is lack of information such as maps showing where the mines are laid. The absence of maps makes the task of removing them a gamble with death (The Financial Gazette, November 25 to December 1, 1999). The RSF, which planted the mines, destroyed the maps of the minefield at the attainment of independence in 1980 (The Financial Gazette, November 25 to December 1, 1999). Given this development most of the operations done are speculation, a catastrophic development indeed. Furthermore, some mines have been repositioned as a result of rain erosion.

The war of liberation beset a number of development projects, which had been planned for the area. A memorable example was the Malikango irrigation scheme in Chikombedzi area. It was set up in the 1950s when a small dam was built on the Mwenezi River to redirect water into the sand bed (Wright, 1972). The irrigation facility was disengaged by the war of liberation only to be rekindled in 1994 with the financial and material assistance from a German based non governmental organisation (Wolmer, 2001). Although the sugar estates suffered severe loss the controversial sanctions which were imposed on Rhodesia led to the establishment of an ethanol fuel plant at Triangle as a drive toward self-sufficiency, not withstanding the fact is that post independence leadership failed to keep it running.

### **War Atrocities**

The civilian population in south eastern Zimbabwe was subjected to increasing physical and psychological torture of unprecedented levels, greater than any they had known before from the RSF and the ZANLA guerrillas' conflict (Nyanga, 2006). There were beatings with whips, fists, sticks and hose pipes. Others were compelled to run for long distances in front of cavalrymen. The fact is security forces of the white minority state wanted to exterminate the guerrillas and the civilian population who supported the guerrilla cause (Hansard House of Assembly Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 95, No. 13, 23

January 1977). Acknowledging the RSF use of physical torture Mbiza (a Black medical orderly at Chikomedzi hospital who supported the ZANLA freedom fighters) noted that, "some youths picked at Chikomedzi by the cavalymen were forced to run all the way to farm No. 3 a distance of close to 7 kilometres in early 1977" (Mbiza, 2006).

According to Gumbo a war veteran, it was the physical abuses by the RSF, which cemented the already long-standing grievances such as the reduction of the number of cattle or the accusations of poaching (Gumbo, 2002). In addition, Gumbo asserted that physical torture compelled him, his two sisters and two cousins to flee to Mozambique for fear of reprisals after a report had been made to the RSF that their father had become a guerrilla. Furthermore, Gumbo was recruited into ZANLA because he feared the mounting beatings, "...you could be beaten two to three times per week by different groups" (Gumbo, 2002). Any beatings or use of plastic bags and wet towels to suffocate victims were punctuated by questions such as "Hupi wena bonile logandangas?" (Where have you seen the terrorists?) (Gumbo, 2002).

Some civilians were forced to drink large quantities of water until they vomited in an interrogation process which was punctuated by questions on the operations of freedom fighters (Mabuzane, 2003). Civilians became victims of the Grey's Scouts, Selous Scouts, District Assistants, the Second battalion of the Rhodesian African Rifle, the Guard Force and later the Shangaan army (Gumbo, 2002). Most people could not endure the flow of harassment and they joined guerrillas or fled either into towns or to some inaccessible areas such as the Musimbiti forest of the Gonarezhou National Park. These atrocities were confirmed by Mrs Joram Gumbo when she noted that, "when the brutality of the RSF mounted and given the fact that my husband and most of my children had fled into Mozambique, I went to Harare. I stayed with my sister who had bought a house in Harare until independence in 1980" (Gumbo, 2003).

Both the security forces and the insurgent forces tortured civilians psychologically. ZANLA Guerrillas threatened to beat, kill and destroy property belonging to 'sell outs'. The security forces used the same threats including those of arrest, burning homes and confiscation of livestock, and "Collective Punishments" (NAZ, MS311/15: CCJP, 1973). In the Chilonga, Chikomedzi, Chibwedziwa and Sengwe areas the security forces burnt several homes (Makondo, 2002). By 1980 all the 29 black owned farms had been destroyed and a large number of their livestock were shot in an attempt to deny guerrillas food (Nyanga, 2006). In the PVs propaganda films, which revealed horrendous image of guerrillas being over powered and murdered were shown to men, women and children (Frederikse, 1982). The major aim was to intimidate the civilians, and convince them that they were supporting people (terrorists), who were being defeated and that those who persisted with this support

would be disciplined.

The people of the area suffered from atrocities committed by both sides, which increased alarmingly from 1978 to 1979. There was torturing, demanding food and clothes, raping and killing of innocent civilians especially in the protected villages (Mbiza, 2006; CCJP, 1979). Some civilians in the Boli area betrayed an individual called Innocent Muzezewa who had loaned them cattle so that he could be killed, a move they thought would leave them as the custodians of the loaned cattle (Rukanda, 2003). Fortunately he was alerted and he fled for his dear life leaving all his wealth behind. The people looted his wealth but their benefits were short-lived with the introduction of PVs, when the affected people were allowed to carry limited quantities of their belongings excluding cattle. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace compliments this when it reported that 'war deaths increased by over 500% between 1978 to before the April 1979 elections. After the elections 1000 deaths were reported per month. The wounded were 3 times the death rate (CCJP, 1979; Parker, 2006).

Women provided support to the guerrillas and in the process some of them entered voluntarily into relationships whereas others were forced into them (Alexander et al., 2000). Despite the availability of the ZANLA Code of Conduct for its fighters at the war front which protected females, women were seriously abused during the war (Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 2000; Mhanda, 2011). The clause cautioned that, "Do not take liberties with women" (ZANU-PF Archives, File: Commissariat Department, Document: ZANU Political Education, People's Army Lesson 4: Democracy). It was believed that violation of this code of conduct could insult the spirits of the land and in turn endanger guerrilla operations especially by exposing them to enemy attacks (Mukungulushi, 2003). Urgent actions were taken against those who abused women as soon as the misdeeds reached the ZANLA leadership. One of the immediate reactions was the withdrawal of the violator of the code of behaviour from the war front to the rear base for disciplinary action. Women and girls became victims of rape by ZANLA guerrillas and the RSF especially the Selous Scouts and the Guard Force who were in charge of the PVs. The fighting forces both demanded sexual favours from young women and accordingly young girls hardly passed puberty because the RSF and freedom fighters forced them into womanhood before they were geared up (Gumbo, 2003). Some of the consequences of war-time rape were pregnancy, disease (especially the sexual transmitted infections), injury to reproductive organs, stigmatisation and desertion, challenges which were not addressed after independence (Gumbo, 2003). In the area of this study Mukungulushi asserted that, 'it is imperative to confront the war-time abuses of women and girls even many years after independence through the provision of different support systems ranging from economic to psychological services.' More-so marriages

were ruined where the sexual favours demanded from married women culminated into pregnancy which could not be escaped by the victim (Mukungulushi, 2003). Elsewhere many girls tried to escape from the abuses by members of the fighting parties by taking asylum into marriages of convenience (Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 2000). There were no significant efforts made after independence to rehabilitate the victims of rape through various strategies such as financial and psycho-social support.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To this end the study established that south eastern Zimbabwe was an area of serious contestations between the RSF and the ZANLA forces. More-so, the RSF operations through the use of conventional and unconventional tactics had adverse effects on south eastern Zimbabwe and its people. Thousands were killed in the area, dubbed 'the slaughter area' or 'red spot' by the Shangaan. The people of the area had their homes and equipment destroyed and livestock killed. The memories of war-time violence are still evident in the area including the ruins of the Gonakudzingwa restriction camp. Furthermore, the situation of the border communities in south eastern Zimbabwe remains grim until the perpetual minefield which killed and injured, persist to kill and maim people, livestock and wild animals is demined. Given the devastating effects of the war on the area and cognizant of the fact that the people who participated in the war are still serving, government should be encouraged to commit resources towards removing the notorious mines. Given the economic challenges Zimbabwe is facing, it is imperative for the government to involve other stakeholders such as the Non Governmental Organisations in; demining the affected areas, the provision of post war reconstruction and psycho-social support to the victims of the Second Chimurenga. One form of rehabilitation can be done through capacity building the inhabitants of the area to start sustainable development projects. Such projects as cattle breeding, basketry using the local *murara* (is a *shona* word which refers to a wild plant which is used for weaving baskets, mats and hats), timber production using the local Iron wood (*Musimbiri* or *Masimbiri*) and damming rivers to irrigate the rich clay loam soils may go a long way in alleviating the plight of the Hlengwe/Shangaan caused largely by the liberation war.

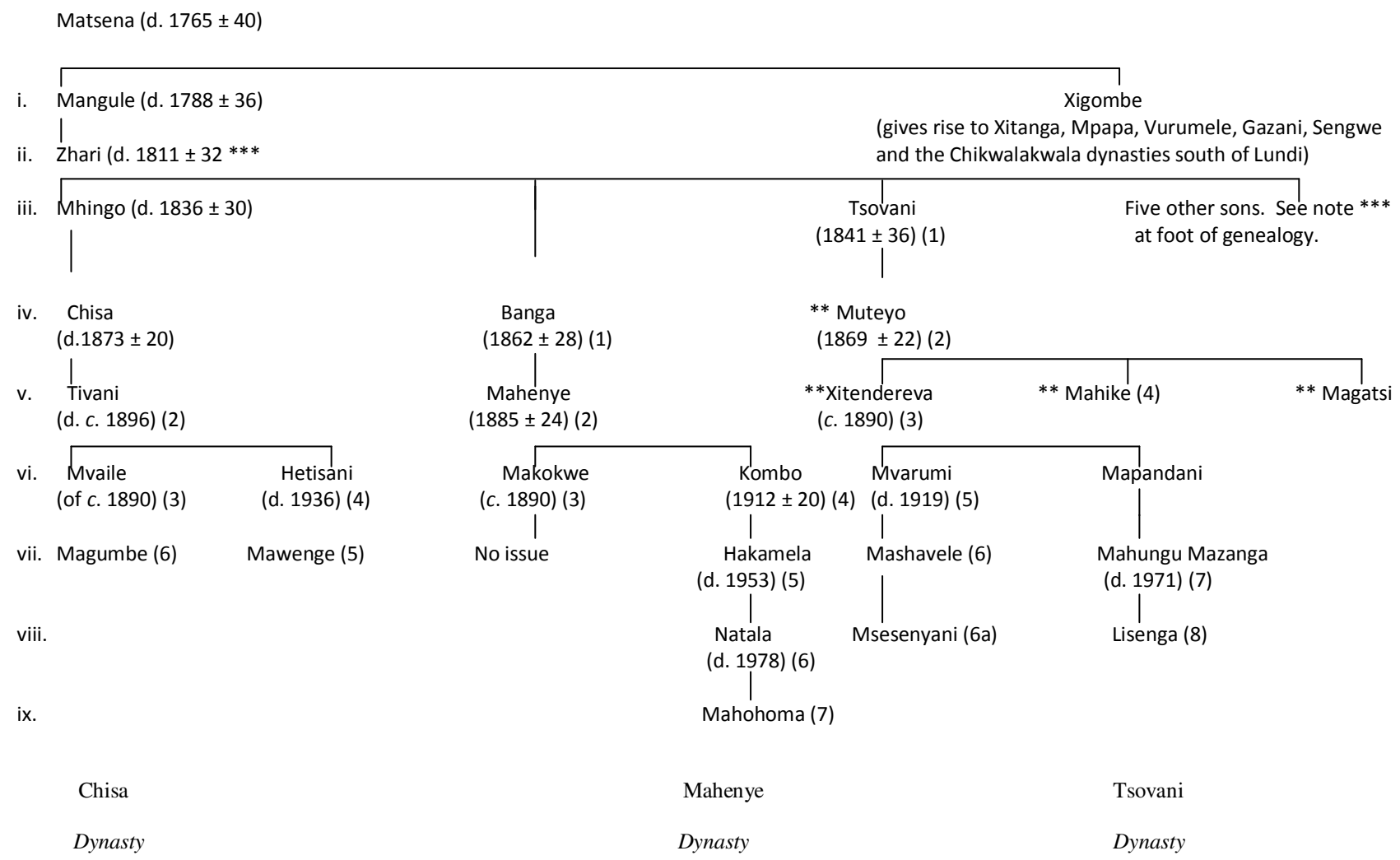
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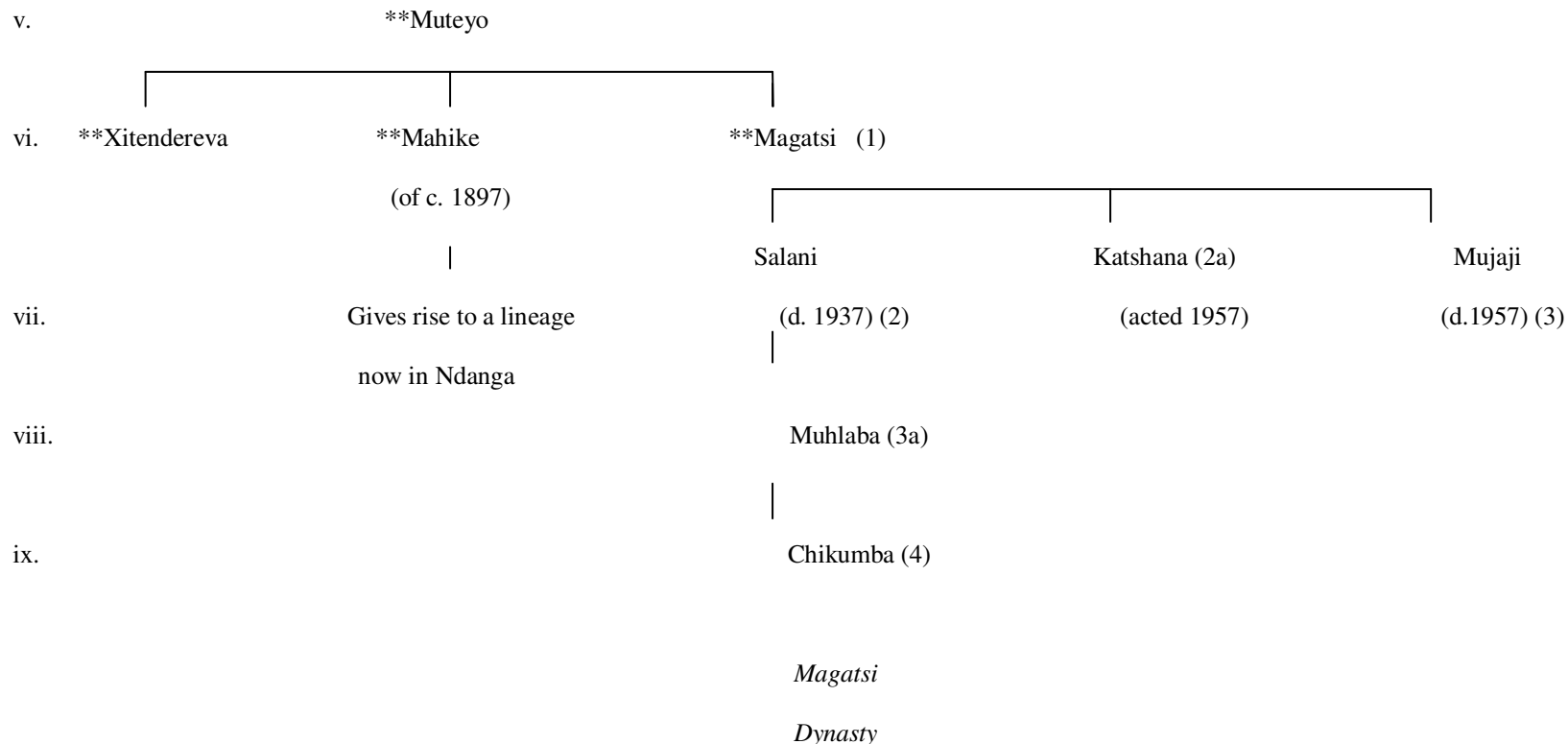
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**APPENDIX 1**

**Genealogy of the Chisa, Mahenye, Tsovani and Magatsi Dynasties of the Ndanga, Chiredzi and Chipinga Districts\***





NOTES:

\* The generation dates are very tentative and should be treated with great caution. Generations (i) to (iv) are averages and the rest are worked out by using a combination of Beach’s method of generation dating worked with Junod’s average of 30 years for a Tsonga generation. Arabic numbers in brackets after names refer to the order of succession; an ‘a’ after means that the person referred to was only acting.

\*\* All recent genealogies state that Mahike and Magatsi were sons of Tsovani, whereas earlier genealogies state that they were in fact sons of Muteyo, and I have taken this to be correct. See for example Tsovani Genealogy in N/3/33/8. Dated 1902. At one time rulers of the magatsi lineage were in fact recognized by the Government as rulers of the Tsovani dynasty – in my opinion wrongly, and in this genealogy I have kept them separate.

\*\*\* As well as Mhingo and Tsovani, Zhari had the following sons who founded dynasties in neighbouring Mozambique: Makovele, Salani, Mavhuve, Ximise and Makulunje. Ngwenyenye is descended from Mahuve.

Sources: N/3/33/8, N.C. Ekstein to C.N.C., [1903-4]. Hist. Mss Collect., TH10/6/8. Min. Intern.Affs. Delin.Reps, “Touwani”. ‘Zaka District: Delineation Reports,’ ‘Report on the Chitsa Headmanship and Community: Chief Towani: Songwe T.T. Land: Zaka Distict’: Zaka District:Delineation Reports’, Report on the Magatsi Headmanship and Community’, : Ndanga Tribal Trust Land: Zaka District’, and Per/5, Tsovani, Chisa and Magatsi. N/1/1/8 (for early reports in 1898 on the Tsovani dynasty), and NVC/1/1/1, N.C. Chibi to C.N.C., 10 Nov. 1898 (on the Chisa dynasty); and enquiries made by author in the fieldwork.