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MWARI AND THE DIVINE HEROES :
GUARDIANS OF THE SHONA

Pan Shona Religion as an
Inspiration for Nationality

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C.J.K. LATHAM

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PREFACE

Research techniques vary considerably depending upon two main parameters. These are the time span during which research is undertaken and the position of the researcher in relation to his subjects. Within these parameters are a host of variables which influence both the student and the society he is studying. Obviously the longer the project, the more variables there are that impinge on the project. Longitudinal studies are, therefore, fraught, by definition, with considerable technical difficulties. These include the changing perspectives of the researcher as his knowledge and experience develops and the social and political events which take place within his research field. Add to this not only movement through time, but the movement of the researcher through a large geographical area and further complications may arise. All this and more leads up to one final problem, one which faces all researchers but is perhaps magnified in the case of the prolonged longitudinal study : that is the sheer volume of data collected and how to best arrange it into a coherent model for analysis.

My research exemplified all these problems. It is therefore essential that I explain in some detail the methods employed in the field work upon which this thesis is based. To do this I must, perforce, introduce the subject by means of an autobiographical section, in order to put in perspective what follows.

Chronology

In 1963 I was seconded from the Southern Rhodesian District Administration to head a small research team which consisted of three other district officers supported by between four and six assistants. The latter were selected from the ranks of field extension workers - people whose background was in agricultural, health or community extension services. I was the only member of the team with any anthropological training. For the first six months of the programme I worked, together with two field assistants, under the guidance of Dr. James Green, an applied anthropologist (1) who at that time was the adviser to the Rhodesian Government on community development. Once this phase was completed selected D.O.'s were brought into the "team" and were oriented into the research techniques which had been developed over this initial period.

The programme was designed to "delineate the communities throughout the 'tribal trust lands'". In essence this meant discovering the basic units of people who regarded themselves as a group for purposes of common action with particular emphasis on local government structures, and demarcating (delineating) the area within which they lived. The delineation programme ran for four years - from mid 1963 to 1966 with some of the writing up extending into 1967. I left the field at the end of 1965 though I continued to involve myself in the programme and to edit the work of my colleagues until the final

reports were completed. I will discuss more fully below the methodology of the delineation programme and the compilation of the delineation reports (Del. Reps. 1963/67).

After my return to administration I served for a period of 18 months at Binga as Assistant District Commissioner. During this period I undertook the delineation exercise in that vast district stretching south from Lake Kariba, inhabited mainly by Tonga speaking peoples (Colson 1969). This was a useful period for it helped me to develop methods of combining normal district administrative duties with my wider research interests.

In mid 1967 I was posted back to Salisbury as a regional (provincial) community development officer with duties which consisted largely of training brother officers in the ideas of community development as propounded by Dr. Green and by the British authority in this field (Batton). In essence I was, during this period, testing the ideas that I, together with others, had evolved during the delineation programme, concerning the functional dynamics within rural communities which come into play for programmes of rural self-help and betterment : action anthropology, (2) as opposed to pure research. Would our ideas of the headman's dare (council) perform as our research had indicated or had our research been founded upon totally false premises? This was an exciting time - so much so that after only four months I begged to be allowed to test my theories,

not through others, but on my own. Thus, towards the end of 1967, I was moved to Chibi in the south of the country, near Fort Victoria (Masvingo) where I was to remain for eighteen months as district commissioner. Using the delineation report (I had not done the field work in this district) as a bench mark I was able to establish community boards (ward committees) throughout the district which led to a request for the formation of formal councils (local government bodies in terms of the African Councils Act). Community dams and weirs, a piped water scheme leading to an improved grazing area, roads and clinics were the visible evidence of action anthropology giving proof to the findings of our field research. These were self-help schemes embarked upon by the communities we had defined and theorised were legitimate organs for social development.

My next move was to Buhera, as district commissioner. Here my experience was much the same as that in Chibi. Both were large "tribal areas" inhabited by Shona Karanga speaking peoples. Buhera was one of the districts in which Holleman had done his field work (Holleman 1953). Much of his analysis of Shona social arrangements had been incorporated into our definition of communities based on the tribal ward (dunhu) (Colson and Gluckman 1961 : 367). In Buhera I had my first opportunity to research in some depth the activities of spirit mediums (svikiro pl. masvikiro) in the dynamics of chiefly succession disputes and the struggles to gain or retain power. (Chapter 7).

My interest in masvikiro had been aroused during the delineation period and the Buhera data served to widen my data base as well as kindle an awareness that Shona religion was more than a system of "ancestor worship" associated with the mysterious and "romantic" high god cults. My move to Marandellas confirmed this. In 1971 I was able to study the Chioto Tribal Trust Land where Fry (1976) had conducted his field work. Of particular interest to me was the major mhondoro (spirit) cult of Ambuya. During 1971/2 nationalist insurgents were becoming active in the north-east. This led to an increase in activity by masvikiro which I was able to observe in Chiota and neighbouring districts.

My research coincided with Government's own interest so I was transferred back to Salisbury as Research Officer (Anthropologist) for the Ministry of Internal Affairs (District Administration).

For the next twelve months my programme was to be the identification of all the spirits of whatever sort that were of functional importance throughout Rhodesia, as well as the living agents through whom they worked (mediums and diviners). Of paramount importance was the need to identify major cult centres and sacred places.

At the conclusion of the field work necessary to accomplish this and before I had completed the cataloguing of the data the insurgency war had begun and I was drawn into the cauldron of operations in the

north east as both sides were anxious to gain the support of the masvikiro in the area. By August 1973 I had completed my field work and was immediately posted to Mt. Darwin as District Commissioner. I spent the next five years in that district where I established a unique relationship with the svikiro for Parengeta. This provided me with material which assisted me to understand how mediums use charisma and situations to acquire power.

My research fell into four clearly demarcated phases, each having its own unique conditions. Phase one was the "delineation of communities" which culminated in the publication of the delineation reports (del reps 1963/7) for each district of the country. Phase two was the period 1967 to 1971 when I was district commissioner for the districts of Chibi, Buhera and Marandellas. Phase three was my recall to the research section of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The fourth and final phase was the five years at Mt. Darwin, as D.C. Mt. Darwin was the district first effected by major incursions and became the centre of military operations from late 1972 until 1980. It is necessary, therefore to describe the methods adopted to conduct my field work during each phase.

PHASE 1 : DELINEATION

Delineation involved field work in every district of the country. To start with I conducted this on my own with the field assistants. I

was later joined by another D.O. who after orientation training conducted all the field work in the two Ndebele provinces. Two other D.O.s joined the team and worked in the Shona speaking provinces tackling a district at a time. I visited each team from time to time whilst also conducting my own field work. The method by which a district was delineated was as follows.

Before we arrived in a district the D.C. was asked to prepare back-ground ethnological data on his district. This included making available the district files on each chief (ishe) and subordinate 'headmen' (ishe or sadunhu). These files contained much useful historical information including genealogies. On arrival the delineation officer would acquaint himself with this data and then commence field work by a formal visit to a chief. The purpose of the exercise would be explained i.e. to determine the extent both geographically and demographically of his following and the number of communities that comprised his nyika (chiefdom). Communities had been previously determined as being a dunhu whether such dunhu was represented by a government recognised headman or not. Information was sought on the history of the chiefdom, including the genealogy of the chiefly lineage. This was followed by enquiry into the chief's perception of his wider community and its division into matunhu (wards). In order to determine the criteria for the latter we examined a number of functions within the nyika and its matunhu. These included power to hear judicial matters; power

to allocate land; authority to sanction developmental processes; authority to convene religious ceremonies such as harvest thanksgivings. (General introduction to delreps 1963/7).

Because the very nature of the interview was an invitation to the chief and his senior councillors to embark on exaggerated claims to territory and people the next step in the process was obvious. (No attempt was made to bridle the ambitious claims). We would leave at the conclusion of the interview with the request that we meet with the masadunhu (ward headman) in the same way as we had met with him. A similar interview would be held with a sadunhu. He too would outline his ward and list the villages of which it was comprised. As with the chief these were sometimes exaggerated. To test the information visits would then be paid to random villages but with the emphasis on border areas. The samusha (village headman) would be questioned on his allegiance in terms of land allocation; to whom he forwarded appeals from his village dare (court) etc. and from this a firmer picture would emerge. Each sadunhu would be tackled in this fashion and the results plotted on maps. Eventually a composite of the whole nyika would emerge and areas of conflict resolved by closer questioning or as sometimes happened simply recorded as being unresolved. We avoided entering into the resolution of boundary disputes though naturally we tended to be drawn into them. Once each nyika was completed we would move to the next and repeat the process. Obviously at this stage differences of definition between

chiefs would emerge and these we would again resolve by what Dr. Green had defined as "reconnaissance research". (Random visits to villages in the area).

At the end of the district field work a report would be compiled. This included a district map (1:50000 topocadastral series) with the location of all villages. It showed the boundaries of the matunhu and the nyika of the chief or chiefs.

The district delineation report consisted of a report on each chiefdom and on each community within a chiefdom. (3) Attention was given to its 'history', the functions of the chief or headman, the grouping of the people and how they organised themselves for local action. Naturally, this included from time to time, reference to the activities of the masvikiro though in the earlier reports little mention is made of them as we were, as yet, not fully aware of their role. However, as time went by and our knowledge increased more research was conducted into this aspect. I personally became very interested in the oral traditions that were recounted in the course of interviews and began to use this subject more and more as a means of access into the communities I was researching. This led me, inevitably, into the domain of the spirits for who knows more of past events than the people who shaped them? The svikiro when possessed by his mhondoro or mudzimu (spirit) is living history.

I also became involved with masvikiro when there were disputes over lineages or boundaries. And although I have said we tried to steer clear of contentious issues not unnaturally as our knowledge expanded, we were drawn into such matters by both the administration and the people. It was in these issues that my research techniques evolved a new dimension. No longer was I relying only on the interview/interviewee (4) situation to gather data. I became a participant observer - or as I suggest in the main body of my thesis, more an observant (I hope) participant.

The delineation reports became part of district records and were distributed to the Ministry's Secretariat where they were available for use by other government agencies. Finally, they were lodged with the Central Archives, where the information they contain has been drawn on by other researchers (e.g. Beech (1980) Lan (1985) et al). It may be stated that in this regard they became definitive ethnological material on the so-called "tribal areas" of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and their inhabitants. They certainly formed the basis upon which my later research was built. The data so gathered gave me my first insight into the pan Shona arrangements which form the main thrust of my thesis.

PHASE TWO

During phase two I was primarily a district administrator. The districts of Chibi and Buhera were similar in that they were both large tracts of communal land, (then called "tribal trust lands") in parts heavily populated. Both districts were low rainfall areas and prone to drought. Both districts had two large chiefdoms and a number of smaller ones (del reps Chibi and Buhera 1966/7).

My administrative goals in both areas concerned establishing local government councils through community development techniques. This in essence was action anthropology in which we applied the principles of community action which we had established as theoretical models during phase one. In both districts the application of our empirical studies seemed successful and community boards and councils emerged as an expressed popular movement. However, with the growth of parochial interests, inspired by community identity a great deal of energy was spent on challenging existing structures and community boundaries. The right to chiefship was challenged. Certain headmen's communities claimed their right to independent chieftainships. It was a period of dynamic movement amongst the people and emotions at times ran high. Concurrently with this parochial dynamic was the growing groundswell of nationalism which had already culminated in insurgency activity in 1966. Both the parochial and the national activity re-vitalised interest in

traditional values and in particular religious matters. One example will suffice.

One chiefdom was headed by an irregular appointee. This is not uncommon in terms of the Shona system of collateral or adelphic succession. However Ningi Nasinga was an avaricious and unstable character, an alcoholic and a womaniser. With the evolution of local government his arbitrary and usually self seeking decisions became insufferable and a move was made by the vachinda (royal elders) masadunhu (ward headman) and makota (tribal councillors) to have him removed from office. This meant that the tribal mediums became involved and an intriguing power struggle developed between Nasinga, his close followers and the 'rebels', who had popular support. The mhondoro (spirit) of the tribe pronounced against the chief and he in turn denounced the svikiro (medium). As district commissioner I acted as a referee, consultant and arbitrator though my objective co-incided with that of the svikiro, and the mass of the people. I was able to observe and record the whole process of the struggle including Nasinga's attempts to discredit the svikiro and introduce his own protege. (I left the district before the Chief was finally deposed but was kept informed of developments).

There is really nothing unique in the methodology of this period. I took extensive notes and tape recorded meetings and arguments so that

I could then better make my recommendations to head quarters. But it gave me an opportunity to observe the dynamics and reality of secular versus religious power in action. While on the one hand I was involved, participating in the events, on the other I was able to take advantage of my central position to collect invaluable data, not by formal interviews but simply by observing. I was also sometimes able to test my observations and hypotheses by making certain moves myself which influenced events.

The Nasinga case study is only one example of a series of exciting dramas in which I was both observer and participant. In Marondera (Marandellas) district, Chiota communal land I became absorbed in the serious conflict between the Chiota chiefdom and its neighbours over council representation, assets and ward boundaries. This led me indirectly into contact with the svikiro called Ambuya who was possessed by at least two powerful mhondoro. My association with these people provided valuable data on the inter-relationships of the senior spirits and their mediums.

By this stage I had established a position for myself in both Shona society and within my own organisation. Because of the unique opportunity delineation had given me to become familiar with Shona traditional history and the global inter-relationships of the royal lineages, re-inforced by my slowly growing intimacy with a number of svikiros, I was able to gain access to more and more data which I

believe would normally be withheld from researchers less well known. The fact that I was very well known throughout Shona country made my research much easier. Indeed, the only problem that it posed was that in many cases it was I who found myself the subject of polite interrogation and flattering attempts to solicit my knowledge, instead of the other way around. Whilst on a personal note I feel it necessary to state that I had become over the years completely fluent in Shona - I was the Government Shona language examiner. This asset was I believe of immense value in that it allowed me to merge into discussions, arguments and svikiro seances without being intrusive or having to interrupt the flow of conversation for interpretation.

My general interest in matters relating to svikiros led some of my constituents to suggest that I was one myself - a suggestion I neither admitted to nor denied. Amongst my colleagues, as my enquiries necessitated research in districts other than my own, my interest and "expertise" in the field also became well known and was useful in that often they would put me in touch with data that I would not otherwise have acquired, by consulting me on matters in their own areas.

This process led up to my re-appointment to full time research.

PHASE THREE 1972/3

As soon as I was appointed to the post of research officer (anthropologist) I was instructed to identify and catalogue all the spirits and their mediums, if such existed, throughout the country. In the process I was to attempt to construct a model of their relationships and their hierarchical arrangements. In addition I was briefed to gather data on "peripheral" spiritual functionaries such as diviners (ngangas), acolytes (nechombo or vatapi) and messengers (vanyusa or vanyai). Time was of the essence as it was believed, correctly, that the Z.A.N.L.A. High Command had directed that their forces should gain the assistance of such people in the pursuit of their military campaign against the Government.

In order to pursue this programme I adopted the following methods.

First, as in the delineation exercise, district staff were asked to compile basic data from their own records, broken down into rough categories. Secondly, I moved from district to district investigating the more prominent 'cults' and attempting to establish the national and pan Shona relationships as the data became available. All my research to date had been unaffected by time. In this phase the whole programme was dominated by a frantic speed which meant that I was unable to attend to detail.

This meant that the definition of what constituted a nganga and what a svikiro depended largely on the whim or opinion of the field officer collecting this basic information. However, the district staff involved in this work had a sound grounding in Shona ethnology so I was confident of receiving fairly consistent results.

This data, married to the data already available in the delineation reports gave me a wealth of material on which to begin creating the models which have finally emerged in my present thesis.

The data collected in this programme was catalogued into volumes by province and district with an introductory overview and distributed under "secret" cover to all provincial and district commissioners, the Secretariat and the psychological warfare branch of the military (psyops). Unfortunately, with the demise of the Smith regime, all copies were ordered to be shredded, though I did manage to salvage most of my own material. Thus this data is not, to my knowledge, now available in the Zimbabwe central archives.

Towards the end of this programme, I was directed to the operational area of the insurgency war in the North East of the country. A more detailed investigation was needed as there was clear evidence that ZANLA (Zimbabwe National Liberation Army) was energetically involved in their own "psyops" campaign with the powerful mhondoro centres in that region. This led to phase three overlapping into the final research phase.

PHASE FOUR 1973/78

Phase four involved substantially the same methods as in phase two. Once again I was an observant participant in events. The only difference was one of degree. In Mt. Darwin I occupied a central position of considerable power and influence. Because of the focus of attention on the war I was far more exposed to public scrutiny as were the subjects of my research. This so much so, that I have deemed it better to include in the body of my thesis one very full case study conducted during this period which exemplifies the synthesis of research and action anthropology which became my modus operandi.

I must conclude this explanatory section by making some obvious but necessary observations.

My association with the Shona spanned a total of 28 years though not all of this time was devoted to active research as detailed above. Rather was much of my time spent absorbing, as it were by osmosis, the culture and values of the people I lived with, many of whom became my dearest friends and others, alas, my war time foes. Over such a long period involving so much change it is a testimony to the religious aspects of Shona life that so little altered in either my perceptions or those of my informants, of this important and all

pervading ingredient of society.

One of the major problems attendant on a longitudinal study, as I said at the outset of this section, is the fact that the researcher himself must change through time. Further, it seems to me, the longer one is closely associated with a society so must it become more difficult to retain an objective detachment from ones research field. Throughout the writing up of the data contained in this thesis my constant problem has been to stand back from the material. This has only been possible because of the consistent and definable patterns that have emerged. My other major problem - dealing with so vast an amount of data - was for this same reason overcome without too much difficulty.

Such an enormous array of data, collected over virtually the whole pan-Shona area during the space of over 20 years gave me the unique opportunity of constructing a model of the larger society. In effect the data could only be used in this way.

- (1) By applied anthropologist I mean a person who applies anthropology to advise, guide and/or set up programmes.
- (2) Action anthropology I define as active involvement in the programmes designed by applied anthropologists.

- (3) Reports varied in length but tended to be comprehensive documents running into, for some of the districts over 100 000 words.
- (4) Field interviews were usually tape recorded in addition to extensive notes being taken. Standard questionnaires were also employed.

INTRODUCTION

The people who form the subject of this book fall, for the most part, within the geographical boundaries of the present state of Zimbabwe. But because the boundaries of Zimbabwe were delineated by colonial powers at the turn of the century, they do not necessarily encompass the total area of Shona influence, either historically, or in terms of present day ethno-political considerations.

It is therefore as well to define the expanded area to avoid confusion associated with modern political or ethnic boundaries. Thus the areas which will be referred to in this thesis fall within the following geographical boundaries: (see map, page 1(a))

In the north, the Zambezi valley from the Victoria Falls to approximately the locality of Tete, thence southwards following the general line of the Eastern escarpment of the Plateau and to where it bisects the Limpopo Valley, thence up the Limpopo but to include the area to its west forming the Zoutpansberg range, and the present Venda republic; thence north along the eastern borders of the Kalahari drylands, the Makarikari pans, the Chobe swamps and thus back to the starting point.

The central core of this area coincides roughly with the present state of Zimbabwe and is, for convenience, referred to by one writer as the Plateau. (Beech : 1980) Use will sometimes be made of this term in this thesis.

Within this area, the people are presently members of the Shona cluster - apart from the Ndebele.

The Shona may be defined as those people speaking a group of dialects which are mutually intelligible, who maintain a set of basic institutions and socio-political arrangements which are comprehensible to the entire group and who have common oral traditions (charter myths), which are validated and mutually re-inforced by a religious system centred upon a belief in a high god (Mwari), in association with historical hero figures, who are in constant communication with the living population through ritually identifiable spirit mediums (masvikiro - singular svikiro).

The word Shona needs some explanation.

In the recent past, few single Shona identified themselves primarily, if at all, as Shona. In the period 1963/64 during field work conducted throughout Rhodesia, (Latham 1963/7) which involved the necessity for informants to identify themselves, in terms of their community allegiance, the percentage that first indicated their being a part of

the generic Shona 'nation' was infinitesimal. Rather, (for example) an informant was a Hera (of the Buhera nyika).

"Ndini Muhera. Ndinogara munyika yoBuhera" - "I am a Muhera and I live in the nyika of Buhera."

Nyika needs definition. It means the area of land and the people occupying such land and falling (usually) under the jurisdiction of a chief. (Latham : NADA Vol XI NO. 1 : 1974:96). "Nyika vanhu", is a saying (tsumo) which means - the country (chiefdom) is the people. It implies that without people a nyika is nothing; empty bush or desert. Nyika can be applied to areas greater than single chiefdoms. It can be used to identify an area in which a major group of people live - "Nyika ya Makorekore" - "The land of the Korekore", "Nyika ye Zimbabwe" - "The State of Zimbabwe". It thus defines the land, the people living on it and identifies the members ("us") from the non-members ("them").

Considerable speculation exists about the origin of the word SHONA, (Latham : 1982). It was popularly believed that the word was a derogatory term applied to the Karanga/Shona peoples by the Nguni. (Bullock : 1927:12). This was then adopted by the early administrators (who were almost all siNguni speakers) and became almost synonymous with Musvina (Dirty person) and consequently a deliberate insult.

(Posselt : 1935 :12). Again, Shona derives from SiNdebele (SiNguni) TSHONA - SET, as in Sunset (Latham; Summarising in Herald 24/3/82). The fact is, however, that the word Shona, pre-dates the Nguni invasion. It is almost without doubt a variation of the word Sena, which is associated with the town and district of that name in Mocambique. Von Sicard states that Sena, Sayuna, Suina, Syouna, Swina and Shona are all the same. Thus, "Ibn Said spelt it Seyouna, Dapper, Sajona and Jansson on his map (1639) Sahona". (Von Sicard 1950 : 138).

There are references to Shona in documents dating back as far as 1634 (Baretto de Rezende in Theal Vol. II Page 411, as quoted by Von Sicard 1950 : 138). There are even more ancient references. (Ibn Said [1214-86]). Avelot (1912) speaks of "Pays du Ma-Shona" in reference to Sofala. Moffat refers to Shona repeatedly from 1854 (Moffat R. 1945). (Primary reference Von Sicard 1950).

"Thus we arrive at the following conclusions. The name Shona was originally identical with Syuna - Sena and designated the 'Oriental' traders of the Zambesi ... and their ... descendants". (Von Sicard 1950:141).

' After the 15th Century the names Sena and Karanga became almost synonymous (Ibid Page 142). Thus the "Shona" included people living in Botswana and Southern Rhodesia.

(Korekore, Zezuru, Manyika, Ndau, Kalanga, Karanga and Venda speakers), as well as Sena in Mocambique.

The Rev. Marconnes in his "Grammar of the Central Karanga" says: "Etymologically the whistling fricatives sv and zv are closely related to sy, zy. Hence it is not at all improbable that the old name of Shona Sena which the Arab geographers, or their translators, write SIYUNA, SYUNA, is the real origin of SVUNA, SVINA, SHUNA, SHONA. Historical evidence strongly supports this derivation. Sena designated originally not only a town, but also a whole district, from which ... traders spread over the whole of present Mashonaland." (NADA 1932:11).

In summary:

The word Shona is not of modern origin.

It may well have derived from Sena in various forms.

The Nguni and early Whites used the word in a derogatory way.

Because the Nguni and British tended to use the word Shona in a derogatory way, it seems to have fallen into disuse, local tribal and clan names being preferred. However, Von Sicard (1950:140) states that "up to about a hundred years ago the names were synonymous" implying its general use and acceptance over a wide area.

With the advent of independence in Zimbabwe and the ardent desire to create unity (at least amongst the Shona groups) the term has regained respectability and in fact takes precedence over such potentially "divisive" "clan" or linguistic descriptions as Mbire, Karanga or Rozvi. Perhaps appropriately then, the term Shona, to describe the peoples occupying the area described in this thesis has re-emerged co-incidentally with the re-birth of the Shona people as a nation after something more than a hundred and fifty years of domination by the Ndebele and then the British.

The Shona people and their related clans occupy the whole of Zimbabwe and spill over into the neighbouring countries of Mocambique, Botswana and the Republic of South Africa. This is a very big piece of real estate. There are a great many people : over 7 million.

The Shona indigenous system of Government is based on hundreds of autonomous and semi-autonomous chiefdoms. Chiefdoms are based on patri-lineages identified by a mutupo (totem) and chidau (clan name or praise title).

Thus the Rozvi chiefdom of Gumunyu has the totem Moyo - heart and the chidau Mondizvo (the true heart.) The Mbire chiefdom of Soswe has the mutupo Shoko (vervet monkey) and the chidau Vudzijena (white hair). "Clans" or lineages with the same mutupo and differing zvidau may inter-marry.

Marriage between people with the same mutupo and chidau is taboo.

The system of inheritance is such that segmentation of polities is inevitable, inhibited only by lack of space as population growth fills up the land. There is a constant pressure, never theless, for political units to hive off from a parent body to form separate and self-governing units. This expresses itself in geographical mobility where this is possible - and in the past it was a practical option - or in constant bickering over rights to chiefly power or separate recognition. This tendency surfaces when a dispute is caused by the death of a chief. Because of the collateral (adelphic) system of succession candidates for the vacant position are numerous and can run to as many as 80 to 100. (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Chiefs personal files).

The Shona system of worship is based upon a general belief in a Supreme Being - Mwari. Mwari is all powerful and (except at his shrines in the Matopos hills) is not approachable direct, but rather through an elaborate hierarchy of spirits. Everyone on death, joins the world of the spirits. This is closely associated with and concerned about the lives of the living. In fact the 'tribe', clan or lineage consists of the living, the deceased and the yet unborn. On death, one's spirit, after a transitional period, joins the company of the shades and thereafter, may

rejoin the corporate life of the community. It takes an interest in and maintains an influence over the lives of its relatives and other living associates. As such it has to be cared for (at least) by the provision of beer and food at shrines dedicated to its sustenance. Here it is communicated with, and prayed to. Requests are made to it for help and understanding. Appeals may be directed to it to intercede with more important and powerful spirits - even with Mwari Himself. The more desperate the problem the more urgent will be the pleas for the intervention and influence of more influential spirits. Thanks are offered for assistance and constant reminders given not to be ill-treated or forgotten.

The Shona believe that the spirit world, like that of the living is inhabited by a society which is strictly hierarchical. Those who occupied powerful positions during their lifetimes similarly occupy positions of authority in the spirit world. Associated with this is a reverence for control over territory. Thus autochthonous leaders of the remote past - Varidzi Vepasi - (owners of the ground - earth) occupy particularly important positions amongst the spirits.

! Because the spirits are regarded as playing an important and influential part in the lives of the living it is to be expected that there exist numbers of people who become

mediums for the spirits. Spirit mediums, (masvikiro - sing. Svikiro) in a state of possession by their hosts, play a vital role in that they are the channel through which flow the articulated thoughts and wishes of the living and departed members of the community. Naturally, the more important the spirit, the more influential is the medium. Though he is said to have power only when in a trance state, the distinction is hard to make in reality. Because spirit possession is a dramatic and exciting phenomenon, it also follows that mediums gain and retain status through the effectiveness of their trance performances. Thus personal charisma and histrionic ability influences a svikiro's popular appeal and hence his power over the living.

All communities throughout Shona territory are to some extent involved in this form of religious experience and belief.

Researchers have identified a number of major "cults" within Shona territory. The Mwari cult with its centres in the Matopos hills, influences a huge tract of country in the southern and western parts of Zimbabwe, the Venda area of the northern Transvaal, south-western Mocambique and eastern Botswana.

In the north-east of Zimbabwe, the mhondoro (lion spirit) cult, dominated by the Mutota and Dzivaguru supra-spirits,

holds sway over most of the Tavara and Korekore speaking peoples (Tavara and Korekore are dialects of Shona).

In the south east, Musikavanhu is another supra-spirit controlling a network of lesser spirits. And in the central provinces are to be found hierarchical arrangements of spirits related to the resident polities, as well as to extinct or mythical structures such as Goronga and Chaminyuka, associated with the Rozvi and Mbire.

Most work on Shona religious practices has been concentrated on one or other of the major groups or cult areas. Invariably the writers have viewed their research from their particular perspectives and set out to show that there are major characteristics which distinguish the systems in their area from those pertaining in other areas. Indeed Fry (1976) Garbett (in Werbner 1977) and Werbner (1977) actually try to illustrate that the interpenetration that exists between the Mhondoro Mutota cult of the "Korekore" and the "Zezuru" systems to the South is somehow superficial and transient.

These writers seem to view the various 'cults' in isolation. For example, Fry (1976) and Garbett (1977) emphasised the differences between the cults rather than the similarities. Werbner (1977) in his treatment of the high god, seems to point to the exclusive nature of the Mwari "Cult".

All my observations, and indeed participation, in the Shona religious experience, lead me in the opposite direction. My data seems to point to the differences in cult rituals and observable cognitive belief patterns being of less significance than the broader similarities of action which serve to bind this large but diverse people together.

Throughout the Pan-Shona area, apart from a similarity of language which allows of general communication between any two disparate communities, the overriding cohesive force is what Garbett, in another context has called the "interpenetration of cults". (1977 : 55).

The Shona system of inheritance tends towards the creation of segmentation of communities. Shona religion, I believe, provides a corpus of belief and ritual which in the larger society, cements the fragmenting segments of the chiefly polities into a firmer matrix of common unity. The differences that exist between the major cults are of less functional significance than the over-riding unifying beliefs of the people. Some knowledge of the mythical kinship of the supra-spirits is part of this belief system. Their oral histories and traditions, given validity and sanctity by the pronouncement of the shades, are the only charters that encompass a supra-tribal national ethos. In the final reckoning, no matter what the local differences

are, it is the commonly held beliefs, behaviour patterns and rituals which outweigh the differences. ("I will fight you over a piece of disputed territory, but we will combine forces to defend our land.")

Just as a Shona stranger entering a new community for the first time can regulate his behaviour patterns to those with whom he comes into contact, by adopting a classificatory kin type through the known relationship of his mutupo (totem) to those of his neighbours, so too can individuals and communities relate to one another through the perpetual kinship relationships of the ancestral hero figures personified in their spirits.

Furthermore, because of the fluidity and pragmatism which marks much of Shona life, there is a leniency and tolerance which accepts local variations in belief and ritual. Thus a Karanga from the South has little difficulty in adapting to the changes in perspective concerning origin myths when he moves from a Mwari (Matopos) cult area to the territorial domains of the Mutota or Dzivaguru cults. Indeed, the common beliefs and legendary kinship of the shades help him to become a part of his new environment. For example, a Karanga, of the mutupo Shava, under chief Nyashanu, in the heart of Karangaland might move to Chesa in Mt Darwin to take up a farm there. He re-affirms, once he arrives that he can identify with the Tavara clan under Chief Chigango,

also of the Shava clan and with the people of Hwata who are an off-shoot of the Nyashanu people. He also has an immediate relationship with the clans with which his Shava clan has, in the legendary past and through time, established a perpetual kinship relationship. This relationship too is validated and personified in the manifestations of the spirits and their mediums. He thus can incorporate his spiritual and religious practices into the new territorial hierarchy of spirits. Even mediums may settle in areas far from their homes, there to be possessed by spirits with local hierarchical and territorial connections without compromising their original possessing spirit. All are accommodated within their wider kinship perceptions.

I propose to demonstrate the spheres of influence of the major cults. I will need to show how they operate in terms of their beliefs based upon legendary historical charter myths. But I wish to do this only as a prelude to concluding that they all form part of a universal Shona system of interpenetrating sub-systems, this interpenetration forming the sub-stratum or foundation of a national identity and unifying force.

That in a sentence, is the purpose of my thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY AND MYTH

Thirty thousand years before the birth of Christ this high rolling plateau was home to the San (Bushmen) peoples. In its valleys, on rock walls or on the high domed granite monoliths, in caves and rock shelters they left their mark. (Gann, 1969) Perhaps more than any people who have followed them, they were at one with the land. Their rock paintings show a rich mystical relationship with their environment. But above all else, their rock art depicts as no other artist to follow has been able to, the spirit and the beauty of this lovely land with its rich and varied animals, birds and plants.

That these people appear to have attained such ecological harmony with the living lands is hardly surprising. They had a long apprenticeship. They evolved their relationship over many centuries. For some thirty thousand years they roamed the countryside hunting the animals for food yet retaining a symbiosis that left no trace of gluttony or greed, no evidence of destruction or carnage. After thirty thousand years they left the land as they had found it, enhanced only by their beautiful and enchanting art.

Some two and a half thousand years ago, the Khoi speaking people seem to have drifted down from the north. These were herders as opposed to hunters - the Hottentots as they came to be known. Considerable speculation took place at one time as to their origins and genetic composition. It seems to be acknowledged now, however, that they were a pastoral segment of the same peoples that comprised the San (hunters) or Bush peoples. With the introduction of an improved diet brought about by their pastoral existence they became perceptibly taller and more robust. (Gann : 1969).

By the time of the Christian era they were dominant in this part of Africa, if not for some time before that. Graphic art in caves has shown the advent of Khoi and the slow dispersement of the San. A magnificent and dramatic rock painting in the Mutoko district, Zimbabwe, shows the introduction of the sheep and cattle herding Khoi, as seen through the eyes of their San, hunting cousins. (Gann : 1969).

At about the beginning of the first century, the first manifestations of the Early Iron Age become evident on the plateau and may be attributed to Khoi elements. Some three hundred years later, however, fairly extensive early iron age artifacts become evident. These belong to a single industrial complex which manifested itself through the greater part of Bantu Africa (Phillipson : 1975 : 328) and

which is capable of various sub-divisions. There were two broad streams of migration. The Plateau group consisted of one. Another western stream was found mainly in Zambia west of the Luangwa (Phillipson : 328). "Of all the great cultural movements of the world, the Bantu migration is one of the most striking and impressive" (Huffman 1970 : 3). Huffman points out that the term "iron age" must be taken in context and includes other traits besides the use of iron, for example the use of pole and dagga huts, agricultural production, animal husbandry and the use of distinctive pottery.

(Huffman : 1970 : 3).

By reference to the detailed archaeological evidence, however, it can be safely stated that the early iron age settlers who moved onto the plateau region from the third century AD were Bantu speakers and those that remained became the proto-Shona and the modern settlers of this country.

Detailed archaeological evidence of the early iron age may be found dating from about 320 A.D. at Mabveni (Beach : 1980:12). These were early iron age settlements. For a while these people lived side by side with the San and Khoi but their more aggressive culture, their weapons and their livestock caused the former to drift away. By the year 1 000 A.D. their long reign had ended.

It is on the new-comers that we must focus our attention. For it was these early iron age peoples who gave rise to the Maxton and Harare cultures subsisting until about 1 100 A.D., identified by archaeologists by their pottery and other distinctive artifacts.

From these cultures, that developed in the central and northern part of the Plateau, later emerged the Harare and Musengezi cultures of the fifteenth century that can be linked to the modern Shona.

However, around 900 A.D. another and culturally different people entered the area. These were the later iron age people. Thus the terms "early" and "late" must be seen only as they refer to their initial appearance, i.e. the "early" first appear around about the time of Christ; the "late" arrive on the scene about A.D. 900. They differ from each other in regard to a number of traits or characteristics (Huffman : 1970). Thus the earliest sites of the late iron age peoples of Leopards Koppie are identified as a new and different people by their artifacts. These are the same people who also later lived at Gumanye in the year 1000 AD and gave birth to the first Zimbabwe state between 1100 and 1200 AD (Beach : 1980).

From Leopard's Koppie two branches descended. The northern branch gave rise, by 1300 A.D. to the progenitors of the Mutapa state which was introduced to the world as the Monomatapa empire by the first Portuguese explorers in the 15th century. The north east and eastern Shona today, derive from this branch. The other branch of the Leopard's Koppie peoples gave rise to the Manyoli culture and the modern south western Shona, including some Venda peoples. (Beach : 1980).

In simple terms, whether one selects south, central, eastern, western or northern Shona, there can be little doubt but that all the people whose common generic description is Shona, have occupied the central plateau since they bade farewell to the departing Khoi and San well over a thousand years ago, either as early or late iron age people, or both.

If there should be any doubt of this fact as traced by archaeological evidence, study of the oral traditions and genealogies gives further evidence of the ancient occupation by these peoples of the country. There is room for doubt, however, that at any one time during this long period, whether the country approximating to the present Zimbabwe was ever one consolidated state. Rather was it a number of autonomous states, sometimes allied to one another, at others actively hostile, depending upon their particular

economic and political dispositions through time. (Beach : 1980)

As the centuries rolled by the plateau witnessed migrations and movements, wars and industry, peace and periods of stagnation. To a degree life went on without undue influence from the outside world on the vast inland plateau.

The people toiled at their agricultural tasks, they tended their cattle and they sharpened their spears and axes. The metal for these was readily available and the necessary skills for its mining and smelting were developed and refined. In the process other metals were discovered and these were mined. And so, over the span of time, the value of gold, copper and silver as a means of obtaining necessary imports became understood. Precious metals and ivory were exchanged for cloth, beads and ceramics from as early as 1300 A.D. (Beach : 1980)

This trade was initially with the east coast Arabs and Indians. (Gann : 1969).

Later the Portuguese, in the fifteenth century, settling and colonising the East Coast, replaced the Asians. From the middle of the fifteenth century their presence on the east coast and the central plateau began to play a considerable part in the politics of the region. But their influence

over the Shona never extended to direct political domination. The people were never "colonised" and their political autonomy was only partly impaired. Rather, the Portuguese confined themselves, for reasons of trade and also Christian missionising, to attempts to influence political events in their own favour.

Wars there were aplenty. By the early part of the nineteenth century, much of the strength of the Changamire, Mutapa and Torwa states had been weakened by internecine strife and struggles with the Portuguese. Thus when the great upheaval took place to the south, the Mfecane which stirred the Nguni hordes into a swirling migration and took some of their people northwards again, Shona resistance to this new threat was vastly reduced. Up the east coast swept the "Shangaan" impis under Gungunyana, finally settling in the Gaza area of present day Mocambique and Zimbabwe. (Gann : 1969). For the first time an alien people exerted their authority and control over Shona (Ndau) peoples, influencing their language and culture to some considerable degree.

Nguni elements under Zwangendaba passed through Shona territory before crossing the Zambezi in 1835 (Barnes 1951 : 194). Rozvi oral tradition marks the event by reference to their defeat at the hands of Zwangendaba because the ruling mambo (King) had turned away from Mwari. Tumbare, his general, was thus unable to invoke his war magic as Mwari

withheld his patronage and Zwangendaba was victorious. Nevertheless, he passed on through Shona territory to settle eventually on the shores of Lake Tanganyika.

Similarly, in the south west, the peoples of Mzilikazi, another Zulu offshoot, who raided and plundered their way through northern Natal and the north eastern Transvaal, after skirmishing with the Boers, moved into Shona territory and set up the Ndebele military hegemony in the third decade of the 19th century. (Gann, 1969) As had been their custom, they dominated the people into whose area they had moved and then absorbed them into their military system, taking their women to wife and their men into the burgeoning battalions. Thus the whole of what is today termed Matabeleland, though still populated largely by Shona, became the Ndebele state.

The Kalanga (Shona) in present-day Matabeleland, either permitted themselves to be completely absorbed, culturally and linguistically, or, maintaining their language and traditions, became subject peoples of the Ndebele. However, to the east the position was less changed. Raiding parties of adventurous Ndebele, from time to time moved through the region, exacting what tribute they could, but by and large, their influence and domination over the vast bulk of the Shona was not so extensive. (Beach : 1980).

The last years of the nineteenth century saw the first serious penetration of the plateau by the British. First, they entered Matabeleland and, through treaties and chicanery, extracted concessions from the Matabele king. (Gann, 1969) Then, using the rather tenuous argument that Lobengula had sovereignty over the Shona to the east, Rhodes moved into, and occupied, Mashonaland in 1890. At no time did he enter into any form of contract or treaty with any Shona chiefs, though a few half-hearted attempts were made to negotiate with Chief Mutasa in the far east of the country in an effort to thwart the Portuguese.

It is most important to appreciate that the Shona believed, initially, that the visitors were nothing more than that. They quickly came to realise, however, that this was not the case. This new breed of white man, unlike the Portuguese, quite obviously had come into their country to settle, to set up government, to take over and monopolise the trade in gold and precious minerals which had been theirs for a millenium and which was a cornerstone of their economy. Furthermore, the British were, with typical Victorian arrogance, assuming ownership of the land, carving it up for themselves much as if the Shona did not exist at all. To people who had for over a thousand years lived in political autonomy, masters of their own land and destiny, bewilderment must have, and indeed soon did, turn to anger. This fact cannot be too strongly emphasised. The Shona believed that they had neither been conquered, nor had they

signed away their land by dubious treaty. Yet they were no longer masters of their own homes. The British, in the guise of the B.S.A. Company, with the self-confidence that characterised the age, with total self-assurance and ethno-centric arrogance genuinely believed that they were settling the country for the best. They were establishing the new order for the betterment of trade, protection of the natives and to bring civilisation and Christianity to the heathen. (Beach : 1980). The stage was set. It remained only for the players to take up their roles for the long struggle to begin.

The chronological sequence of the settlement of the plateau by the proto-Shona as outlined in the previous paragraphs gives only the bare bones of the migration and settlement of the country. To obtain a fuller picture, to put meat on the skeleton, one must leave the cold science of the archaeologist and move into the disciplines of history and ethnology.

Perhaps the most vivid understanding of the movement through time of the Shona cluster of peoples is obtained from oral traditions, the oral literature of the people themselves. Certainly if one is to get an appreciation of what the people understand as their history, it is in their myths that one finds the authentic flavour of the past and a validation of their presently held perceptions - "the

process whereby such accounts are endowed with explanatory and moral force in relation to present events and concerns" (Whisson : 1984 : 1).

Myth as an ingredient for the determination of cultural values and influence over political and current events, is not the exact, authenticated and documented chronicle of a people's past. Rather it is the story of a people as they believe it to be.

This notion gives rise to the concept of great oral traditions being characterised as charter myths, and it is in this light that the events that are recorded in the next chapter should be viewed. No attempt is made to record the history of the various segments of the Shona people with academic, historical accuracy. My own personal knowledge of the country's history is largely based upon the collection of oral traditions over many years. I accept the historian's reservations about oral traditions, the main and obvious one being that the story becomes distorted through time by human error, quite obviously influenced in each rendering by the bias of the narrator.

This to me is no disadvantage, but in fact an asset in helping to understand real, present-day attitudes in any particular area. Even more, when a general belief, with variations which are of parochial content only, is recorded

over a wide area, then obviously it must be of enormous importance in determining current attitudes. To the student of human behaviour this is of more importance than say, the exactitude of a genealogy or pin-pointing the date of some historical event.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PAST IS THE PRESENT COUNTRY

Shona belief in the reality of a spirit-dominated world is a central article of faith. Thus when they say "Nyika Vanhu: The land is the people", people includes both the living and the spirits of the first people who settled the land: the varidzi vepasi - the owners of the earth. From them devolves power to rule. For example when chief Nerutanga, of the Buhera district, was installed in 1970, the tribal spirit (mhondoro), pronounced, through his medium (svikiro):

"Tongai enyu nesimba yavaridzi vepasi; tongai nokutya."

"Rule ye with the power of the owners of the land; rule awesomely."

Political authority, at all levels of society, is dependent upon the sanction and consent of the spirits. It therefore follows that the power and influence of a spirit is in direct proportion to its status enjoyed at the time it still formed part of the earthly community. By simple deduction the most dominant spirit must be the one who is the original "owner of the land" and the ultimate progenitor of all the (Shona) people.

Such a one is Musikavanhu, the creator of people, who is also Dzivaguru, the Great Pool - the provider of all water and thus as the rain provider is Nyakudenga, The Lord of the Skies and the Heavens above. As Sororenzou he is the all-wise, male hero-figure of antiquity. And all these manifestations are merged as one in Mwari: the Supreme Spirit : God.

Beneath Mwari stretches an infinity of genealogies and generations of the great dynasties and hero figures that people the past, down eventually to one's own.

What Cohen (1974 : 69) calls "mythologies of descent" become "charters for action" (Ibid) yet more than this, they are the foundations upon which belief systems are built and through which influence and status are translated into power and power into authority. Thus it is of interest, indeed of vital importance to everyone to be able to transport the events and people of the past into the reality of present dispensations. It may be convincingly argued that this applies in some degree to all societies. Within Shona society, however, the historico-mythical charter is sanctified by religious faith and vice versa.

Whisson (1984) (quoting L.P. Hartley: The Go Between) has referred to the past as "another country". Shona belief is that the past is part of the present country. It is not

physically separated from the present but forms part of an integrated whole.

Cohen has it in another context (page 63) when he says:

"In place of the unknowable we substitute a belief in a symbolically constructed universe....."

The Shona universe does not differentiate between the now and the then - the living and the dead. To make sense of the "present" it is therefore necessary to review the "past" as generally perceived and understood by those who rely upon it to validate their attitudes and current perceptions. Thus it is necessary to record those main charter myths that bear upon my efforts to construct a model of Shona religious practice. In the previous chapter I concluded that archaeologists (Phillipson, Huffman et al) and pre-historians have pieced together a story of migration from the north of an early iron age Bantu speaking people followed by another group (late iron age) and that amongst these were people that settled the plateau and later emerged as the Shona. Throughout Shona traditions there is a common theme reflecting these migrations. One dramatic account of these stories I recorded in 1964. This is a Rozvi version of the migration told by Misi Gumunyu (Latham : 1970 : 24) which I collected in the course of field work in the Bikita district. It constitutes one of the charter myths which give substance to currently held views, authenticating

religious beliefs, cultural affinities and the revolutionary inspiration for the emergence of the (Shona) nation of Zimbabwe. I give it in full to illustrate how detailed is their perception of past events.

"We start with Samangai, that is where we came from, down below Ninivah. That is where the Varozvi were. They left Rozvi saying: 'We want to cross the water'. Samangai is down below Ninivah. If you look down from Ninivah towards the sea you will come to Samangai. There, is a small town, and that is where they came from and said, 'We want to cross the water'. They made their boats, they built boats, and they made big torches. They put stones and sand in the boats and they built fires. They entered into the boats.

"At the time they entered the boats, Sororezhou was the great leader. He was grandfather of the grandfathers of those coming from other countries; those who had been left behind coming from Samangai, coming from Kainaan. Having left Kainaan, they reached Samangai and built houses there. Then they said: 'Oh! This nation (rudzi) is big. It is better that we cross the water.' Then they built their boats.

"The greatest who was there was Sorerezhou. He was the King (Ishe). Munhumutapa, otherwise known as Chigwangu, was a priest. He was then named Munhumutapa, which they say means

Chigwangu, the name he bore over there. It was here that he was given this new name. They made fire for sacrifices (moto unopira), so that they could be carried across the water by our God, Mwari.

"They prayed to their God to carry them across the sea. It was their God to whom they prayed for assistance in crossing the sea.

"Now they left and crossed the sea, sailing across the ocean to the south. When they reached Dabini they settled there. When the rest of their kin arrived they also stayed there. Even the grandfather of all the Waduma, was there." (Waduma: neighbouring tribe to the Bikita Rozvi).

"At that time Sororezhou had many people with him, machinda (royals) makota (councillors), they were with him when he crossed the water. They travelled until they reached Giri Hill. Then they stopped and said: 'Now we have arrived here, what shall we do?' Chigwangu said: 'We cannot stay together. 'We have discovered a country. I will go this way, following the ocean northwards. What will you do?'

"The other Sorerezhou said: 'I will go that way'.

Gumunyu then goes on to say: 'I will follow the history of our grandfather (Tateguru), leaving that of Chigwangu.'

"Those followers of Sorerezhhou followed that way going to Biyedi . They travelled on and reached Rukomororukungubwe. At the Rukomororukungubwe hill they stayed, then, and built a stone wall (ruswingo). There is a passage written in Rozvi there that we cannot read, like the one at Zimbabwe that you will see if you look there.

"You educated people, you Europeans, you could go there and see it there. If you could get there you can look at it 'over-that-hill" and find where it is written and read it. You will see that the side which has been written and see it is very hard to read, like at Zimbabwe. It is the same at Rukomororukungubwe, where the stone walls have been built."

"The people stayed there at Rukomororukungubwe, but after they had stayed there a long time their God, Mwari, said 'Ah! But this is not the place I said. Move on!'

"So he, Sorerezhhou, went on, leaving the Bavenda behind in that area. There is a relationship between the Venda and the Rozvi. They are his children whom he left there. He left there and came to Great Zimbabwe, and then they stayed at Great Zimbabwe and they used to visit each other and brew beer and sacrifice together to their ancestors. They used

to come also and slaughter cattle to celebrate the coming from their place."

"Now they left that place also after staying there. Then a voice (hwi ravo) said to them: 'Leave here! This is not where I told you to stay!'

"So they left and went to the Matopisi (Matopos). And they stayed at Matopisi. After they had been there a long time they woke up one morning and saw buffalo calves in the valley. Now the voice of Mwari said: 'Do you see those buffalo calves there?'

"And they said: 'We see them.'

"And the voice said: 'Take those buffalo calves and tame them and when you have tamed them you are going to give them to me for Njerere.'

"Do you know what he said of this hill, Njerere, when Njereres are born?

"'And', he continued, 'there the Njerere lack food. It is better that you take those calves and tame them. Once they are tamed they will be like your cattle. One of these days take cattle and sheep and drive them to Njerere hill and slaughter them instead in time of slaughter. Start slaughtering them at the beginning of February. The cattle

will stay among the Njerere, who can eat them and breed well.'

"They stayed here in the Matopisi and built another stone wall. They stayed a long time and started the taming of cattle. And that is when they named this man Chirisamhuru."

The Gumunyu version differs from the majority of accounts of the settlements of the plateau by the Shona people. Gumunyu suggests that the main migration took place down the coast - even possibly in boats - to a point well to the south. Thereafter he claims, two further movements took place back to the north. The one wave marched back up the coastal plain and then inland to settle the Zambezi Valley and hinterland. This was led by the (junior) Munhumutapa segment of Chigwangu.

The other (senior) segment moved inland via the (present) Transvaal and Vendaland, reaching Great Zimbabwe after dropping off the Venda and building Mapungubwe en route. Finally, at the behest of Mwari, a last move was made to the west and the Matopos (Khami) area.

The possible inspiration for this version may have come from one M.V.J. Rukara who had worked in Messina in the Transvaal in 1940/2 and from there visited Venda country and heard

oral traditions of the Venda rulers Mphephu and Tshivhase (Beach : 1983 : Pages 9/10) (Rukara became a keen Rozvi historian with great credibility). Had Rukara's research revealed that the Venda myths give a northern origin one wonders if Gumunyu's version might not have followed more closely the conventional account of direct settlement from the north? One suspects that there may have been a jealous desire to claim Mapungubwe as another exclusive Shona-Rozvi creation while at the same time showing Sororenzou (Thohoyondou) as their common heroic inspiration and divine generic genius. On the other hand the version may have greater warranty. A paragraph by Posselt (1935 : 144) suggests that because of the Rozvi claim to kinship with the Venda, Rozvi traditions include a southern origin. However, Posselt also records the more popularly rendered version of a movement south involving the crossing of a nyanza (great water: lake) in which they were assisted by "Neanda the daughter of Mavudzi" who "took off her apron and struck the waters which parted and the people crossed." (Ibid : Page 142).

This apparent confusion is in fact fairly easily explained. On the one hand an attempt is being made to explain the rise of the Rozvi rulers (the Changamire dynasty) who rose to power on the south western plateau and extended their influence northwards. On the other hand the myths relate to the much earlier Shona (Karanga) movement from north of the

Zambezi. The amalgamation and intermingling of these myths permeates much of oral tradition and indeed confuses genealogies and distorts the location of people and places in both time and space. Nevertheless, an examination of the corpus of myth does suggest a fairly consistent picture of how the Shona people generally regard their settlement of the plateau and their subsequent dispersal and residence.

What follows is a construction of oral traditions which validates present perceptions, which I have based on hundreds of accounts which differ in local content but which have the general pattern.

Ningi, the elder, (Ningi means "What's his name" and is used as we would use "A.N. Other") said: Shona traditional histories are full of stories about migration from the north to settle in Zimbabwe. Many say that our first home was in Tanganyika. It is from there, our elders tell us, that we were led to the south by Mambire, Tovera and his son Murenga Sororenzou. Many people today no longer associate these names with once living people and regard them simply as titles or praise names for Mwari. Similarly Dzivaguru is thought to be another name for Mwari. Yet Dzivaguru is the name of the founding ancestor of a pre-Mbire-Shona group who settled in Zimbabwe in very ancient times, perhaps as long ago as the third century A.D.

The first mention of Nehanda is in relation to the migration from the north. This original Nehanda is thought by some to be the daughter of Murenga and the younger sister of Chaminuka. Others say she was the daughter of Mavudzi Shava and thus of the house founded by Mushavatu, another younger son of Murenga. In any event she is the royal daughter of our divine ancestors.

Nehanda is the person who revived the flagging spirit of the people on their move to the south and the new land of Guru Uswa to which Mwari was leading them. When these pioneers reached the great expanses of water of the great lakes and of the Zambezi, Nehanda used her divine power to part the waters. She struck the surface with her leather apron and the waters parted leaving a path for the people and their live-stock to cross dry-shod. By this inspiring deed the people were revitalised and given encouragement.

When she died, Nehanda became revered as the great ambuya of all the Shona-speaking people, though her name had been altered to Senwa or Hanawu in some dialects of our language. Because her spirit is a powerful force in Shona life, from time to time it has settled in the person of a living woman and through her svikiro has been able to guide and influence her people. One such famous Nehanda was Nyamhita the daughter of Mutota Munhumutapa, who lived at Tuuyu Tusere on

the escarpment above the Dande. When the Mutapa died, his successor was compelled to perform kupinga pasi. Only his son Matope Nobedza was prepared to perform this dangerous ritual incest, thus showing that Mwari and the spirits of his fathers approved of his nomination to the crown. Nobedza chose Nyamhita, his half sister to join him in the ritual. It is thus we see Nehanda (for this Nyamhita was also the svikiro of Nehanda) again performing a task for her people so that by her sacrificial deed, the traditions, values and strength of the nation might endure.

After the kupinga pasi, on the same day, Nehanda was so disgusted with what she had done that she returned to her village near a ruware on the Kadzi River. There she used her magic apron to strike the rock face of the ruware and enter into the earth, taking with her some of her retinue. Others say that she deceived people into believing she went into the ruware. Rather, they say, she created a mist and, hidden in this, she fled to her relatives in Chief Hwata's country at Shava Runzi, near Harare.

But to return to the main story.

When the Mbire Shoko peoples arrived in the country, as I said, they found the Hungwe Dziva people already living here. These people were not as advanced as the Shoko and did not know how to make fire and so had to content themselves with

eating their food raw. The Shoko people overpowered these original owners of the land (Varidzi Vepasi) and caused many to scatter from their homes in the north east near the Zambezi, to the west and to the south. But despite this the invaders looked to the older settlers for wives so that even today they are the Vasekuru (wife-providers) and the Mbire Shoko are the Vazukuru (the sons-in-law).

Because of the need to inter-marry the original mitupo (Singular: Mutupo) of the two groups (that is Shoko Mbire people) and Dziva (Hungwe people) were split into many. But the totems today that relate to water, water animals, birds or plants are known to be those of the original Dziva people. Mitupo which refer to animals or parts of animals are normally ones which derive from Shoko (Mbire).

In due course the Mbire people controlled the country. Their rulers were guided at all times by Mwari.

Mwari spoke often from a tree which was unknown to his people so they called it Mutiusinazita, (the Nameless Tree). This tree is near the present Waddilove Mission about twenty miles south west of Marondera. Later he spoke from another Mutiusinazita much further south on the banks of the Nyamashanga river which flows into the Sabi above Birchenough Bridge in the Buhera district. This is because the leaders were moving south towards Great Zimbabwe which

was built on instructions from Mwari and became his headquarters.

From Zimbabwe Mwari directed his people and spoke to them from the air or wind (mweya/mhepo) or from the lightning (mhene), or through his acolytes (vachombo). Chaminuka's medium (svikiro) would also be possessed by this great spirit and in this way could interpret the cries of the hungwe birds (fish eagles) which are the bright shining birds (shirichena); the birds of the heavens (shiriyedenga); the bird of God (shiriyamwari) and sacred to our people but particularly to the Dziva clans.

In due course Mwari resolved that the capital be moved from Zimbabwe to Matonjeni also called Mabwe Machena (Bright or White Rocks) and by others Mabweadziva (the Rocks of the Pool) which shows that they were the great rocky mountains of the pools of Dzivaguru - the Great Pool; the founder-creator of the Hungwe people and the father-in-law of the Shoko people.

Not all the people moved to the Matonjeni. Just before this, the one known as Mutota was responsible for leading a group of his people to the north-east where he re-conquered Hungwe, Tonga, Dzimba and other clans still living there.

Mutota was the son of the then ruling king and on the latter's death claimed the title. Some would have it that he was not the true heir because his legitimacy was in some doubt. Others say he was sired by God on a Moyo woman - a Nehanda person. Nevertheless he founded the Munhumutapa dynasty which the Portuguese discovered in the fifteenth century. His daughter Nyamhita, was the Nehanda Mhondoro (supra-spirit) who performed the sacred ritual we call kupinga pasi with her brother Matope so that through this ritual incest he could succeed his father as the Mutapa (Mambo) or king.

But in the south-west at Manyanga, near the present Ntabazinduna the leader of the group who had responded to Mwari's demand to move to Matonjeni set up his capital. This was Torgwa or Torwa.

This resulted in both groups claiming to rule all our people and we can remember vague stories of their wars. Neither succeeded in dominating the other, though we believe that the Mutapas were generally more powerful. In due course a junior relative of the ruling Mutapa rose to power in the central areas of the country. There is a lot of confusion about his origins. Some say he was a younger brother of the Mutapa. Others claim he was a bastard son. Those who descend from the house he established claim that he was the

son of a Nehanda person: that Mwari himself was the father.

This person we believe was called Lembeu or Dlembeu, the Seed-Eater, and there are many stories as to how he received this name. However, the dynasty he established is known as Changamire, for this was the name that he became best known by and which was used as the royal title of his successors. Changamire called his followers Varozvi and they took Moyo (the heart) as their totem name. It should be mentioned that our Mbire royal women tabooed Moyo (the heart) rather than the Shoko (vervet monkey) of their men-folk.

In due course the Changamire Rozvi overthrew their cousins at Manyanga and replaced the Torwa rulers. The Rozvi were fierce fighters and, apart from the nuclear Mutapa kingdom, they succeeded in dominating all the people of the plateau region. They even successfully fought the Portuguese and raided as far north as Tete. During this time, the Rozvi kings (mambos) ruled with the guidance and assistance of Mwari, whose main centres were in the Matopos hills where his shrines were cared for by his priests and religious followers. These people were closely related to the mambos and they kept in close touch with one another. Because Mwari maintained contact with all his people throughout the area by means of messengers you can be sure that the mambos

were well-informed of events throughout the country (nyika).

This was a time of great prosperity and expansion. Magnificent buildings were erected at Khami, Dhlodlo Nanatali and other places throughout the country, in honour of great leaders and to the glory of our God. Apart from the problem of the Portuguese who were a nuisance in the north-east, trying to monopolise the trade in gold, silver and ivory, and the need to discipline the odd chief who failed to pay tribute to the Rozvi, this was the Golden Age of the Shona. It is true of course that there was some movement of clans, either for fear of the Mambo's wrath (when they had transgressed), or at the request of the Mambo for political reasons (expansion of territory, dynastic marriage, conquest). Thus for example, the Musikavanhu/Mutema people moved into the eastern highlands and the lower Sabi valley.

In fact if one traces the movements and migrations of any Shona chiefdom one will find it has migrated across the plateau area from end to end and back and forth as groups seceded and broke away to occupy new territory, or to form new alliances. This is why we have a common history and why so many of us can trace kinship through our clan totems and the relationships that exist between the Great Mhondoro and chiefly houses.

After the mambos had ruled for a very long time one of them became corrupt and lazy. He failed to appease Mwari and make sacrifices to him. He was cruel to his people. In fact, he was called Rupengo which means The Mad One, because of his irrational behaviour. So bad was he, that Mwari became angry and announced that unless Rupengo reformed, he and his people would be punished. And so it came to pass. The Nguni invaded our country and without Mwari's divine assistance the armies of the Mambo, led by our famous war lord Tumbare, were conquered and the Rozvi put to flight.

In due course the Ndebele settled permanently in the western part of our country from where they raided and plundered all over our land, stopping only at the Mtelikwe River in the east. This was because they had an agreement with the Shangaans under Gungunyana that the land east of the Mtilikwe was theirs from which to extract tribute.

This was a bad time for our people, many of whom became holi (slaves) of the Ndebele. Then later Chaminuka, our Great Spirit predicted the coming of new-comers - a people with no knees (Vasinamabvi) who had strange wagons (ngoro) which ran on iron ropes. These were the Vachena or Varungu (white people) who would overthrow the Ndebele and become the rulers of the whole country. They would stop the fighting between the Ndebele and Shona.

In due course this came to pass, the British (Vasinamabvi - those with no knees - wearing their long trousers) came to settle. But although they halted the Ndebele atrocities, they themselves took much of our land from us and refused to let us rule ourselves in our time-honoured way. They even brought religious teachers to tell us that our worship of Mwari, the mhondoro and midzimu was contrary to their laws and in defiance of their God.

Mwari was greatly angered by this and inspired his children to rise up with the aid of Murenga and Nehanda. Even the Ndebele, some of whom acknowledged the power of Mwari and paid tribute to him, were part of this rebellion. Nehanda became the focus of national resistance in the face of British oppression. In due course she was captured whilst encouraging the people of the Mazowe to resist the brutalities of the settler forces. She was tried by a British court which sentenced her to death. Thus was the brave Nehanda murdered. She went to her death singing our songs of resistance and refused the insult of baptism into the Christian faith by a Catholic priest.

After our defeat by the British Imperial Forces we became a subject people of the British Empire. For many years we remained thus and let it not be said that all was bad, for there was peace. We gained much but also we lost much that was essential to Chivanhu. Furthermore, much of our land

was taken away and given to settler farmers. We had no say in affairs of state. We resented being classified as inferior people in our beloved nyika. As is our way we made reasonable protest but our cries were not heard and so eventually we, the Shona people, rose again in rebellion against our colonial masters.

Again, as in the first chimurenga, it was our religious fervour that inspired us and the great Mhondoro that spoke out against our oppressors. And so with their support, and with the help of Mwari, after great sacrifice and loss of life, victory was ours and the land of Zimbabwe once more the free domain of the Shona peoples."

In summary, the simplified picture of Shona history is thus.

The Dziva people settled the country in ancient times, so ancient that they can almost be regarded as having been here always. Dzivaguru was their creator and their God. His descendents may generally be identified because they are associated in some way with water.

The Dziva people were overrun by the Shoko (Soko) people, also called the Mbire after one of their founding ancestors who came from Mbire somewhere in the north-east, perhaps Tanganyika. The early Mbire leaders were led by their God, Mwari to seek the land of Guruuswa, south of the Zambesi. Tovera, Sororenzou, Murenga, Chaminuka, the sons of Mwari led the migration. Nehanda, the daughter/sister figure inspired the people in times of adversity. By her selfless acts she welded dynasties and ensured continuity.

The Mbire conquered the Dziva people and took their wives from them so that in time they became one people, ruled from Zimbabwe by the Mambo (who was a Mbire/Shoko).

In due course Mwari enjoined his people to move their capital to Matonjeni. This was achieved under the Torwa Mambos who ruled from Manyanga near present Bulawayo. But before this move took place another son of Mambo led a segment of the people back to the north. This was Mutota, who founded the Munhumutapa state.

An off-shoot of the Munhumutapa under Changamire (Lembeu) founded the Rozvi nation which overran the Torwa rulers and ruled most of the country from there, although they never fully broke the Mutapa State's control of the north-east and Zambesi Valley. The Rozvi ruled over the confederacy of stratified polities split into paramountcies and chiefdoms.

This was the Golden Age of the Shona which was finally smashed by Nguni invasions from the south. The Nguni were finally overthrown by the British who ruled the Shona and Ndebele until they in turn were finally overthrown after two chimurenga wars.

The synthetic myth I have constructed by distilling literally hundreds of accounts into one gives, I hope, a generally acceptable concept of current Shona perceptions of their history.

My thesis will show how the religious organisation and belief system of the Shona relies heavily on an acceptance of this mythology. The Mwari sphere of influence is thus not simply defined as that area directly influenced by the organised cult centred in the Matopos but is rather that pan-Shona area embracing all "cult centres" which subscribe to the belief in Mwari as the High God with his various emanations being revealed as his sons or as part of a holistic deity.

Thus Dzivaguru's shrines at Mitimichena in the Zambezi Valley are a manifestation of the Mwari religion; as are the

Musikavanhu shrines in the south-eastern Sabi Valley and the Mutota cult centre on the Zambezi escarpment in the Guruwe district.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HIERARCHY OF THE SPIRIT WORLD

The name most commonly used by the Shona to identify their supreme being or God, is Mwari. It is the name Christian missionaries have used throughout the country as synonymous with their Christian God.

"Mwari is now the most common name for the high God, spread by Christian missionaries from the cult in the Southern Shona country and explicitly associated by many with Christianity". (Bourdillion : 1976 : 321).

However, the Shona concept of their God is by no means identical to the Christian or Hebrew Judaic concept of God.

The Shona believe in a creator (Musiki or Musikavanhu). He is the "arbiter of life and death. They approach him in the same way they approach any senior living elder.... in their daily lives, that is to say through an intermediary." (Gelfand : 1977 : 3).

i "The Vazezuru and others (sic) refer vaguely to Mwari as the creator of the physical world." (Posselt : 1935 : 77).

The Shona believe in an ultimate, infinite being, who created the world and all its inhabitants. They do not regard him as an arbiter of morals. Rather is he an arbitrary dictator of life and death, sickness and health, famine and harvest, rain and drought and the cause of all major natural events.

"The great number of names designating the Supreme Being reveal a variety of functions and the associations of the divine with different phenomena of nature rather than suggesting the existence of a number of deities." (Daneel : 1970 : 80).

Indeed Mwari is everywhere and in everything, not so much in the Christian sense of the all-seeing, all-wise Jehovah but more in the Pantheist ethos of revealing himself and actually BEING the element or phenomenon experienced by the observer. Thus he manifests himself as, and is, lightning. (Bullock : 1950 : 145).

He is worshipped as Sororenzou and as Tovera (Tobela) and as Murenga (Mulenka) and as such identifies, and is, the founding ancestor or ancestors of the Shona. He is addressed as Soko, or Shoko the totem of these early apical ancestors. He is thus an ancestor though clearly only as the divine progenitor of heroic lineages. He is thus

similar, but superior to the great mhondoro such as Chaminuka (also called the gombwe or jukwa spirits).

The word or name Mwari is probably derived from the root ARA or ALA sow (Urbantu Vyala). Mwari is the "Sower". His seed procreated the living world.

The obvious association of ideas between Mwari and Lembeu cannot be ignored. The legendary ancestral figure Lembeu, mentioned in Chapter two is but another manifestation of the same theme, though legend has associated his name with a period of conflict. Thus Mwari may also be Chikara : The Awesome One, the Reaper. Mwari is associated with the fertility of crops and women. He is thus concerned with rain and water - perhaps this more than anything else in a land subjected to periodic and sustained droughts. Dzivaguru, The Great Pool, denoting a permanent supply of water and of the fertility associated with water and of the damp fecundity of women, is another name for Mwari.

"When they approached the caves ... they all use Mwari's most popular praise name, Dzivaguru which is directly associated with the idea of rain." (Daneel : 1971 : 81).
And again:

"The terms Dziva, Mbuya (grandmother) and Zendere (the name of the young women who are regarded as Mwari's emanation) represent the feminine attributes of the deity, who is both

male and female. As the male, he is Sorerenzou (head of the elephant and as such: father)". (Daneel : 1971 : 81/2 supporting Von Sicard 1944 : 150).

While this explanation is trite and convenient as well as symbolic, and highly attractive to theological (Christian) scholars such as Daneel, never did any of my informants articulate their concept of Mwari in such specific terms. Particularly in the north-east they were more likely to associate Dzivaguru with Karuva, the Tavara founding figure and the mhondoro cult centered at Miti Michena in the Choma area of Mt. Darwin district, which depicts Dzivaguru as competently masculine. However, these two seemingly contradictory interpretations are not necessarily so at all. Dzivaguru is the founder figure of the Dziva associated clans. They are generally believed to have predated the Soko and Moyo clans and it was from these clans that the Soko people claim they drew their wives when they first moved into the country. Thus Dzivaguru can and does represent the female (mother) aspect: "The Dziva people are our mothers".

Essentially then, Mwari is the apical spiritual being recognised as, and welding all the mythical genealogies into one identifiable presence. All lineages finally derive from him. (The kupinga pasi rite - ritual incest - may be a further ritual fortification of this concept.) He is

concerned with matters of national importance such as fertility, crops and the rain and thus the survival of his people.

Daneel asserts that Mwari claims to have created everyone, including Europeans (Varungu) but this does not equate to the attitudes displayed towards whites and their ways. (Chirungu).

Mwari is not approached direct. Nor are individual prayers generally offered up to him either by way of supplication, for guidance, or in penance. Mwari does not generally pronounce on moral issues. He is not the epitome of "goodness" as is the Christian God. Indeed, he can be capricious and vengeful if the mood takes him.

"He can be ill-tempered and is sometimes believed to 'cheat' his people for no justifiable reason". (Bourdillon : 1976 : 321).

Generally, he is not concerned with personal and individual problems. He is more concerned with national, tribal and community matters. However, individuals may and do approach him at the Matopos Shrines with personal problems and gain audience - this has resulted in (or is the cause of) a certain "commercialisation" of his functions which does not equate with the conceptual model described by informants.

This will be dealt with more fully in the section devoted exclusively to the Mwari Cult.

Mwari is the ultimate spiritual power. In this regard he is acknowledged as such by both laymen and spirit mediums (masvikiro). This does not reduce the functional authority and power of the mediums. In practice, while they acknowledge their subservience to Mwari, they enhance their own powers by being seen to be in communion with him through their host spirits.

Mwari is the infinite power and is thus capable of anything. He is lightning, falling stars, the rain, the drought, the cold of winter, and the searing heat of summer. He is day and night and the huge vastness of the granite monoliths. He not only manifests himself in spectacular demonstrations of power, he is power. He is that huge granite dome; that deep perennial pool. As such he is obviously all powerful and omnipotent. All the spirit world and through the spirits all living people who have a kinship relationship with the spirits are thus within the orbit of Mwari's power. This explains why people who are not spiritually part of the total pan-Shona kinship conglomerate are not Mwari's children e.g. whites and other aliens, though many so-called Ndebele now are because of their interrelationship with Kalanga-Shona lineages.

Within the Shona religious system there is a hierarchy of spirits, central to their religious and social organisation. There is also a profusion of alien (peripheral) spirits, who play various parts in the lives of the people. Whether central or peripheral (Lewis : 1971) all form part of the cosmic arrangements controlled by Mwari.

I will now outline a theoretical model of the hierarchical arrangement of the spirit world beneath Mwari. This will enable me to then proceed with a description of the territorial distribution of power exerted by the spirit cults.

If Mwari is the infinite spiritual presence then gombwe, jukwa or mhondoro are the next most important figures in the spirit world. The great mhondoro (translated as lion spirits - mhondoro also means lion and amongst some, usually northern Shona, these powerful spirits are thought to "walk in the forest as lions") are found in two main groups. First are the mhondoros (also called gombwe or jukwa) without any territorial claims. Principal amongst these may be named Chaminuka, Murenga, Tovera, Sororenzou et al. They are often addressed as if they were Mwari himself.

They are referred to as spirits of the wind or air (mhopo kana mweya) and are revered either through recognised mediums or simply by general invocation. Murenga is

regarded as the spirit of war and violence, hence the use of the word chimurenga to denote revolution, rebellion, war.

In the eyes of many Shona these spirits of mweya are not traceable to any known ancestor. However, tribal historians and the mediums of other important spirits will identify them as being part of a genealogy known to them. Thus Chaminuka has been described to me (by the medium for Mutota) as being one of the children of the person Mutota. He has also been regarded as being the son of Nembire (see Chigwedere : 1980) and in Rusape, where an active medium for Chaminuka practiced until killed in 1978, Chaminuka was associated with the local Rozvi dynasty.

Arguably of as much influence as (if not more) than the mhondoro dze Mweya are the great territorial mhondoro. Garbett has discussed territoriality amongst the spirit hierarchies of the north-east. (Garbett : 1966). Spirits control territory, the size of which and the degree of independant authority exercised over depends on their hierarchical status.

One of the most celebrated and influential of these "spirit realms": (Garbett : 1966) is centred around the reverence of their spirits of Mutota and Nehanda. Mutota is credited with being the first Munhumutapa. Nehanda in the legends

surrounding this dynasty, is regarded as being his daughter.

(I prefer to describe these spirit areas as "commonwealths").

Overlapping the territory of the Mutota/Nehanda commonwealth to the east, is the more ancient (Shona-Tavara) cult of Dzivaguru which is also associated with his son Karuva.

In the south-east is the Musikavanhu territorial spirit which together with Mutema holds sway over much of Ndau-speaking country. Musikavanhu claims a relationship with Dzivaguru.

In the north and east is Nevana, whose influence extends over much of Tonga country and the ethnically mixed districts of Gokwe, Kwe Kwe, parts of Lupani and Nkai. (Shona, Ndebele, Tonga).

Amongst the Southern Karanga-Shona the Mwari cult centered on the Matopos largely replaces and provides a substitute for the territorial mhondoro found in other parts of the country.

In central Zezuru-Shona areas there is an area of supra-spirits including Chaminuka, Foto and Goronga, the latter two associated with the Rozvi dynasty of Changamire.

In the extreme north-east of the country in the highlands of Inyanga there seems to be a far less developed adherence to the mhondoro cult and people tend to revere only their more immediate family spirits (Latham 1965) (See also Gelfand : 1977).

Following after the major territorial mhondoro who are the supra-spirits of legendary hero figures and founders of major dynasties, come the lesser mhondoro. In some cases they are the spirits of the earliest known descendants of the apical founder ancestor. Examples of these would be Mukombwe and Chiwahwa, direct descendants of Mutota. In some cases these spirits exert their influence over a clearly defined territory equating generally to a known extant political entity. For example Chiwahwa claims jurisdiction over the portion of the Zambezi Valley and escarpment associated with the Mzarabani chiefdom. (It is noteworthy that there is also a Mzarabani spirit which represents the chieftaincy, and that Mzarabani was also a

lineal descendant of Mutota but junior to Chiwahwa. Chiwahwa never established a chieftaincy, however).

This brings us to the next rank of spirits i.e. the spirits (mhondoro) who are directly associated with a particular extant chieftaincy. The Mhondoro of Mzarabani is an excellent example. Every chiefdom in the area studied, professed to have at least one mhondoro representing the senior spirits of the chiefly lineage. This does not of course pre-suppose that all these spirits always or in fact ever, have mediums with whom they associate. (However, if a mhondoro does not have an active medium, he may "come out" (buda) at any time in a svikiro (medium)). Chiefly or tribal mhondoro may thus be regarded as representing the apical ancestors of all the chiefdoms in Shona country. Thus, many of the mhondoro have a traceable kinship relationship with one another.

Below the major tribal and chiefly mhondoro may be identified midzimu (sing. mudzimu) who are the spirits of important elders within a community. In many cases, for example, the spirit of a ward headman (sadunhu) will be shown considerable reverence, within the territorial confines of the ward (dunhu).

As in the case of the tribal mhondoro, midzimu may be revered either for their association with territorially

important people or lineages, or simply because of their rank importance within a lineage.

Below these midzimu, we meet the family or village spirits (midzimu wapamusha or midzimu yomuri). These are the clearly identified spirits of members of the village community (for example a deceased village head (Samusha)) and are invariably easily identified genealogically, with living members of the village (musha).

Finally, at the bottom of the spirit hierarchy of identifiable central, personalised spirits, are "close" family and personal spirits. Each individual has a personal mudzimu with whom he identifies. Very often this is the spirit of a grandfather. It is to this spirit that an individual offers gifts and to whom he makes appeals in regard to personal matters in the first instance.

SPIRIT HIERARCHY

MWARI

(GOD)

JUKWA; GOMBWE OR MHONDORO DZE MHEPO

(Non-territorial and territorial supra-spirits)

MHONDORO DZAMADZISHE

(Chiefly Dynastic Spirits : Territorial)

MHONDORO/MIDZIMU

(Lineage spirits of 'royals' e.g. Headmen and 'lesser'
chiefs)

MUDZIMU WAPAMUSHA

(Village Spirits)

MUDZIMU WOMURI

(Family Spirits)

MUDZIMU WANGU

(My personal spirit)

Before going on to enumerate and describe the next category of spirits, those classified as peripheral (Lewis : 1971) it would be as well to point out here that all I have done in the preceeding pages, is to give an outline of the hierarchy of spirits, so that what follows in the ensuing chapters may be viewed within the overall framework of this structure. The highly stylised description above, which is as the Shona see their arrangements, does not always conform exactly to the actual de facto patterns woven by the living communities and individuals.

People perceive the structure in general terms as I have described it. In practice they do not necessarily approach the "correct" spirit in terms of the model but will deal with the one most efficacious to their needs (Fry: 1975).

PERIPHERAL SPIRITS

The most spectacular and therefore the most publicised of the perepheral spirits are the ones known as shave (pl mashave) spirits. These are the "alien" spirits. They fall into several categories.

A person may be possessed of a shave spirit which is identified as the spirit of a deceased "foreigner" or alien. For example a Shona may be possessed by the spirit of a "European" (Murungu) and when thus possessed will talk in a fashion identifiable as "European" (Chirungu), i.e. he will use English or other European language words or even sentences. More specifically a person possessed by a chirungu shave will behave in a fashion identifiable by the community as "European". He will strut arrogantly and angrily about, shout and be abusive to the assembly. He may attempt to kick or assault his companions whilst possessed by his chirungu shave. (All in all a chirungu shave while possessing its host gives a most unflattering demonstration of the community stereotype of a white person).

Shave spirits may also be of persons who were possessed of some noteworthy skill, such as hunting or carpentry. One informant was possessed of a shave which gave him the skills he displayed as a tailor. His shave was a Malawian tailor. He did not know anything about his shave other than that it gave him a skill often associated with Malawians and that he had, prior to being taken over by the spirit, little if any skill in the tailoring trade. Sometimes a shave spirit will remain with a particular family or lineage, until it becomes difficult for the current shave holder to differentiate between original (alien) shave and the spirit of a known lineal ascendant who was possessed by the shave. He may

thus claim that he derives his skill, say as a hunter, from his grandfather's spirit. Only on closer inspection of his statement will he qualify this by explaining that his grandfather had a shave which helped him as a hunter, and which is now imparting its skills to him.

Many ngangas (diviners) are possessed of hereditary shaves which invest them with skills such as the ability to identify wild herbs, how to mix and use medicines which often assist them in the delicate art of interpreting dreams and the hakata ("bones").

Yet another type of shave that can possess a person is the spirit of an animal. Thus a person possessed by a baboon spirit, (bveni) will behave as a baboon is thought to behave. Often a group of people all possessed of baboon shaves will come together as a troupe and will perform for audiences, as an entertainment spectacle whilst theoretically possessed by their spirits.

Correspondingly, one may be possessed by the spirit of any animal and will behave with the animal's characteristics while possessed. It is generally considered that people who have a baboon shave are entertainers: those who have an unusual skill in hunting may be said to have the shave of a leopard.

It is a fundamental Shona belief that all living creatures are destined for the spirit world. Indeed, the spirit world is not divorced from and alien to the world of living creatures but is part of that world. All living creatures (and nowhere is this more easily identified than in man himself) are part of a cosmos which includes the spiritual as well as the physical members of mankind. Thus, as a member of a clan, tribe, community, one is a member of a group which consists of the living, the dead and the yet unborn (for is it not true that the children that come into the world are the ones who will inherit the spirits of those departed and keep the *ropa* (blood) of the lineage in a state of continuum?)

I will return to this aspect of the Shona concept of the cosmos at a later stage. Here I simply make the point that there is a total acceptance. Even amongst Christian converts (a fact emphasised to me by many missionaries as well as Shona informants) it is accepted that the spiritual world permeates all facets of life. It is part of life.

It follows therefore that a person may be possessed by any sort of shave spirit, be it animal or human. Thus Gelfand lists shave spirits of Mangoni (sic) or Madzviti (Nguni), Tavara, Rozvi, Chikunda and Sena amongst the Manyika (Gelfand M. : 1977 : page 120/1 and 158).

Amongst some observers and their informants the spirit of witchcraft (uroyi) is said to be a shave uroyi (Ibid page 122). This is, I believe an oversimplification of the Shona concept of a muroyi. ("Antisocial person who inflicts harm on others generally by witchcraft") (Hannan, 1974)

A muroyi is a witch. That is to say a muroyi is a person who by the use of occult and other means (for example the use of poisons and other malign actions) brings about illness or misfortune in others. This can be deliberate and intentional as a result of some definite evil desire to destroy or incapacitate an enemy or rival. It may be professionally contracted. That is a person wishing to bring harm to an enemy will approach a person known to be a witch, (nganga ye uroyi) and commission him to bring about evil on his enemies; or it may be that a person is taken over by the spirit of a person who was a muroyi. Only in the latter case would one accurately describe the individual as being possessed by a shave reuroyi.

When a person dies, his spirit leaves his body. After a year or so the spirit is laid to rest by the deceased's kin at a ceremonial beer party and feast. This is the kurova guva ceremony (to hit the grave) - see also bona ceremony (Holleman : 1953).

If a person is killed in circumstances of violence or in such circumstances that his body is not laid to rest in a secure grave and later subjected to the kurova guva, or for some reason a deceased's family neglects to perform the ceremony, then that person's spirit becomes ngozi. That is to say the spirit becomes angry and malevolent and it will then deliberately inflict damage upon its kin. A person afflicted by an ngozi spirit may become ill and die, unless reparation is made to the offended spirit either by the belated holding of kurova guva, appeasement by other means, or both. In these circumstances the person afflicted by illness will seek the advice of a diviner (nganga) who will diagnose the requisite solution, once he has identified the ngozi as being responsible.

There are thus strong sanctions in favour of settling the spirit of a deceased relative after the requisite period has elapsed. It should be noted that at the kurova guva, the estate of the deceased is distributed and his heirs succeed to his titles and possessions. I will return to this presently.

Another aspect of the ngozi's actions which works as a sanction for normal relations within a community and as a safeguard against unlawful action is the belief that a person who dies as a result of neglect or omissions on the

part of his kin group will return to inflict damage upon them.

An example of this might be someone who as a result of not being informed of the risks involved put himself in such a position that he caused himself to be killed. For instance, a group of insurgents were operating in the area close to the village of a Chief , in a North Eastern district during the dry season of 1974. It was known to the authorities that they were receiving support from the chief and his village. It was believed that at least some members of the gang were related to the chief or members of his village. Attempts were made to get the chief to contact the gang and warn them of their imminent demise if they did not surrender or switch their allegiance. Not unnaturally, the chief professed total ignorance of the presence of the gang and it must be assumed did nothing to warn them of the dangers of their continued activities in the area. In due course, the gang was contacted by security forces and some members were killed. In an attempt to bring the chief into line with the government forces, security force members, visited him by helicopter late one afternoon. With them they took the body of one of the deceased insurgents. In order to create an effect of maximum trauma they landed at the village at dusk, offloaded the body and called the chief to witness the fact that one of his kin had been killed as a result of his having failed to give them timely warning of the danger that

they had been facing. He was thus almost certain to be assailed by the ngozi of the deceased relative. Should he wish to make amends and avoid similar threats, it would be advisable for him to report the presence and whereabouts of the remainder of the gang or any fresh presence of insurgents. They then left in a dramatic roar of rotor blades and dust, leaving the chief to deal with the (supposed) problem of his relatives' ngozi and the unpleasant business of disposing of the body. Needless to say, the chief's co-operation was not won.

[For that day he and his villagers avoided the body. They seemed at a loss as to what to do with it. They then buried it under cover of darkness. They had presumably decided that by burying the victim they were observing the norms of society and placing the body in such a position that the deceased spirit could be finally laid to rest in due course without the risk of it becoming ngozi.] As the person concerned was a son of the village, and as the village was more or less generally in favour of the insurgent's cause the "psyop" had in fact had the complete opposite effect of that intended. By possessing only a partial idea of the ngozi belief, the security forces had given the chief and his villagers an opportunity to bury one of their heroes and avoid his angry spirit returning to curse them (or someone) for the violent way in which he had died. They had also confirmed the villagers' belief in the inhuman and barbaric

attributes of the whites (varungu) in so shamelessly treating the body of a deceased member of their community.

As a footnote to this anecdote it is interesting to note that in February, 1984, it has been reported (Star : Johannesburg) that chiefs and elders, including mediums, in the southern province (Karanga) of Zimbabwe had admonished the government of Robert Mugabe for creating conditions favourable to angering the spirits, who had thus withheld the rains for the last two seasons. They suggested according to the article that the Mugabe regime had ignored the chiefs and headmen, diminished their powers and scorned the necessity for ceremonies to appease the midzimu. In particular, they had not held the necessary ceremonies to lay to rest the countless "children" who died anonymously in the bush war. As a result people were searching the bush for the remains of their fallen kin so that they could be given a proper burial in the hope that in so doing they would appease their spirits and thus prevent their intercession with Mwari to withhold the rains.

There was much talk along these lines in the Mazowe area in December 1983 which was witnessed by myself, when the rains were late in starting. It is unclear how Z.A.N.U.'S scientific socialism intends to cope with the problem. But it does indicate that it is not only an alien 'colonial administration' that can, through ignorance or arrogance or both

fall foul of popular belief. It may also be a significant method of articulating popular disgruntlement of the masses with conditions brought about by the new regime, in a way that is socially acceptable and lacks the risk of negative sanctions.

During the latter part of the sixties, the then chief T in the Charter district died. This is a large and powerful chiefdom, controlling a vast territory in the upper Sabi catchment where Njanja clans (Moyo Sinyoro) are interspersed with Hera (Shava Museamwa) peoples.

On T's death, one of his sons, as is correct in terms of customary law, stepped into the regency, to act as chief until the tribe had held the kurova guva after a year or so. At that time the new chief would be named. In Shona law, the successor would be chosen by means of the collateral system (adelphic) and thus could be anyone of a number of men, of his, the deceased's own generation level, or senior men of the next generation, if all the deceased's own generation are deemed to be either dead or ineligible.

In an important chiefdom, where the status, economic and social advantages of acquiring the mantle are not inconsiderable, it is not unusual for the struggle between claimants to be protracted, dirty and dangerous. In this regard it is again not uncommon for the acting chief to take

advantage of the situation, and by a process of "divide and rule" retain power in his own hands for a considerable time (e.g. Jiri and Mazungunye in Bikita for over five years; Chibi in the Chibi district for over six years in the sixties). (Chiefs personal files, Ministry of Internal Affairs)

In the case of the T chiefdom, the acting chief was a progressive, hard-working, intelligent man. He embarked with the Administration's encouragement and support on an ambitious programme of land reform mainly in the field of soil conservation. "Tribal Land Authority Committees" (matatare) set about the systematic mechanical conservation of arable lands. Grazing schemes were initiated. These obviously encroached on the area of land allocations and thus inevitably caused considerable interference with traditional and claimed land rights of individuals and communities. Thus, while the acting chief became the darling of the government officials, his popularity as a "tribal" leader diminished. Nevertheless, as he was in a powerful position as a result of the tribal divisions and the manifest support he was given by the Administration, he retained his position for five years. During this time he was given a seat on the prestigious Natural Resources Board, became an influential and outspoken member of the Council of Chiefs and generally received a lot of public exposure.

After about five years, he became ill. Word spread rapidly throughout Hera and Njanja country that he was ill and that unless he called the kurova guva ceremony, he would die. Not only was the spirit of his deceased father ngozi and so naturally angered at his continued sojourn in "limbo" - but the tribal midzimu and mhondoro were also agitated at the continued delay in the settlement of the chiefly succession. The acting chief steadfastly resisted the calling of the kurova guva. His health continued to deteriorate and observers commented upon his increasingly neurotic behaviour. Where as he had been a decisive and forthright administrator, he became tremulous and hesitant. As one commentator remarked (Head Messenger Buhera): "He is being troubled by the spirits and they have caused him to be ill in his body (muviri) and in his head (musoro). He cannot survive for they have royad (bewitched) him. He must hold a bira (ceremony to communicate with the spirits) and appease them with beer and even a mombe nhema (black ox). He must apologise to the midzumu and mhondoro and appease them. Otherwise he will go mad and then die. If he does this and they (the spirits) are appeased, then they will tell him to hold kurova guva. But I think he is already too mad to do this and so he will shortly die. But there is nothing really wrong with him, in his body (muviri). Everyone knows this. It is just the ngozi of his father and the anger of the mhondoro".

Shortly afterwards - less than a month later - the acting Chief died. Local beliefs were vindicated.

After considerable delay, a new chief was appointed. This appointment also ran foul of the people. Divisions within the tribe were too deep-seated for any appointment to receive the acceptance of the whole chieftaincy. Shortly after independence, the matter became prominent in the national press, his opponents claiming that the present incumbent was an irregular appointment and a stooge of the previous colonial regime. Government held widely-publicised meetings and announced after a suitable investigation that the matter was resolved and the rightful chief selected by the people with its sanction. However, by 1983, the whole controversy erupted again. It was unlikely that a satisfactory solution could be found. There were two, if not more, masvikiro (mediums) claiming the authority of the mhondoro, representing rival "houses". There were also strong lobbies within the tribal local political organisation for each of the main contenders.

It would seem that the situation was irreconcilable. Population pressure in the area is high. Cattle have little or no grazing land, as it has all been allocated to individuals for cultivation. Erosion is chronic (witness the fact that the Sabi River is rapidly silting up). The normal solution of segmentation does not seem to be

applicable as there is nowhere for anyone to go (this may change with the government's re-settlement policy). The only other "traditional alternative" - violent conflict - remains a possibility, but not a solution.

Thus it can be seen that the ngozi sanction, is a strong deterrent to people illegally usurping the estate of their deceased antecessors. That it may not be sufficient, in larger issues, to resolve problems of social tension does not detract from its inherent effectiveness as a device for restricting the ambition of avaricious or overly ambitious individuals.

NJUZU and MIDZIMUDZANGARA

I have made mention of the Shona religious ethos having an almost Pantheist character, when I outlined their ideas of Mwari. (Page 50) The complementary ideas they have about njuzu and midzimudzangara further exemplify this.

Njuzu are "water spirits". They have been described by informants as akin to mermaids, with long fish-like tails and human torsos. They are even at times attributed with long black hair. Like the Sirens they sing enchantingly and attract humans to their watery homes. Njuzu live in perennial pools (dziva), but may also inhabit wells (tsime).

There are certain pools that are famous for their njuzu and others which attract only casual attention from them.

Seemingly, they can transport their ethereal bodies from pool to pool. Informants point out that some njuzu are identifiable kinsmen or historical figures. An example of the latter is the Nyamakati pool near Miti Michena at the Dzivaguru cult centre in Choma, Mt. Darwin. Into this pool, according to legend, walked Dzivaguru's son Karuva and his followers, rather than be captured by Nyabapa a neighbouring chief.

On moonlit nights the njuzu of this pool may be heard singing and playing their drums. They are reported to have been seen dancing and playing near their pool, but it is never the informant that has seen them, always someone that he has heard of. If one does see them, one has immediately to turn one's back on them. Otherwise one is irresistibly drawn to them and thence into the water.

Njuzu, though thought of as fatal in this way are nevertheless seen as friendly spirits. (Whisson and Went, 1975 : 20 - 23) If they do entice one into their pool or well, one may stay there for several years - or forever. In many cases, however, after sojourning with them for a lengthy period, people are released to go and practice as svikiros or ngangas. The knowledge imparted to such gifted

mediums is held in high regard. Others are less fortunate and may remain with the njuzu forever, or be released by them only as midzimu. If a person falls into a pool and drowns, relatives and friends must not mourn and shed tears. If they do the njuzu will become angry and jealous and not give the person up. He will be drowned and even the body may not surface. If they rejoice and show gratitude this may be reciprocated by the release at some later stage of the living body or of the spirit of the person, intact, as it were.

In the dry season of 1970 a child fell into the Sabi River, into a big pool, just below the causeway linking Northern Buhera with Wedza. Relatives and friends saw the child "walk off a rock". When the girl's mother arrived on the scene, she immediately began to wail and cry out, damning the njuzu for taking her child. This was viewed with concern by others present and she was admonished that she was killing her child "murikuuraya mwanasikana wenyu". After several hours she was prevailed upon to stop.

An elder from the nearby village who had witnessed proceedings then instructed all present to turn their backs on the river and to throw offerings of small change or other items (a pocket knife, snuff box) into the pool to appease the njuzu following the mother's rash actions. If they did

this perhaps the njuzu would relent and release the child. All parties complied without demur.

Shortly afterwards the child's corpse surfaced. This was seen as a partial forgiveness by the njuzu. Had the mother not behaved so rashly, they would probably, it was considered, have released the child as an adult to be a powerful nganga, underscoring the point that the njuzu are essentially kind hearted.

In the drier parts of the country people rely heavily upon wells (tsime) for their domestic water supplies. In Chibi district, for example, apart from government supplied boreholes, those living inland from the two main rivers (Tokwe and Lundi) use wells exclusively for their water requirements. Wells thus play a significant part in the social and economic life of the communities. They take on a territorial significance and can be the cause of considerable animosity between rival claimants of the precious water, particularly in droughts and dry seasons.

It is not surprising therefore to find that the wells are protected by njuzu who resent any tampering with them without their sanction. In the years 1967/68 the Ministry of Health, through the agency of their "Health Demonstrators" embarked upon a campaign to improve the potability of water in this and other districts.

Typhoid was endemic, so their intentions were of the best. However, with the typical enthusiasm of the technocrat, they moved into the district and started their campaign by selecting a well in a central area and without further ado proceeded to clean it out, line it and cover it with a patent device for keeping sun, dust and dirt out of the water.

No one would go near the well. A deputation to the District Commissioner indicated that the well cleaners had better depart post haste as their lives were in danger, so irate was the local community. Furthermore, the njuzu were disturbed for the water was reported to be drying up. This was their way of indicating their displeasure, for "could they not move elsewhere if they wished - but what would happen to the people of Masunda?" It goes without saying that the well-cleaning campaign faltered.

Later a more sympathetic health officer was sent in. He approached villagers and requested them to consult with the njuzu as to how best the wells could be modernised without offending the spirits.

The njuzu it transpired were not against modernisation and hygiene. In fact, once they understood what was intended they gave their support to the campaign and the villagers in

their turn gave what help was asked of them. The njuzu tradition had been used as a means of expressing community alarm with the original team and again as a means of ensuring that the whole community was satisfied with explanations offered by the government health team as to what they intended.

(The first well never regained its supply of water - testimony to the powers of the njuzu spirits over the mystery of modern technology).

MIDZIMUDZANGARA

The midzimudzangara are ill-defined spirits that inhabit caves and high cliffs. They are territorial in that they offer protection to the places they inhabit. They are not related to any known living people. Nor are they identified other than very vaguely as being the spirits of deceased people. They have either always been there or else they are thought to be the spirits of people who lived there "kare kare" or "chinyakare" (remote and unknown past). If one visits places where the midzimudzangara are situated it is advisable to acknowledge their presence and speak to them. One should address them and explain why one is in their domain and that one intends them no harm. One should ask their permission to pass through their territory. If one

does this they will cause no harm, but failure to do so could result in mishap - a fall from a cliff, a rock fall in a cave or simply getting lost.

CHAPTER FOUR

Mwari the "High God"

In this chapter I shall give some idea of the constructs and perceptions of the "High God", Mwari. I shall demonstrate that Mwari is the ultimate deity to whom the pan-Shona people refer.

I shall examine some of the conclusions rendered by investigators of the Matopos shrines and offer some new evidence of my own. I will also, for purposes of clarity, and in order to assist in the construction of a larger model of Shona religious organisation, identify the areas which are influenced by the Matopos Mwari.

In most Shona areas Mwari is not approached direct but is approached through a hierarchy of identifiable spirits. However, in the southern pan-Shona areas (including Transvaal, Venda, Ndebele, "Ndebelised" Kalanga, Kalanga from Botswana's eastern areas as well as Shona-Karanga areas) an elaborate cult system exists and permits of direct access to the God, centred in the Matopos hills.

The conventional model of Mwari that has come to be academically accepted, is one which has been heavily influenced by writers with a strong Christian bias. For

example, Bourdillon is a Jesuit academic, Von Sicard a Roman Catholic missionary; Daneel a missiologist. Other writers, not necessarily Christian theologians, have also sought, perhaps unconsciously, to relate Mwari to their own Christian/Judiac experience of a supreme deity. (Bullock, Posselt, Gelfand). Thus the model they construct shows Mwari as being a "Supreme Being" or a "High God" who, though not otiose, is nevertheless more remote than their Christian stereotype. He is approachable through appeal to ancestral spirit guardians, hero and royal spirits, through the services of mediums; or more positively and dramatically, through direct contact at the Matopos shrines. Here, God, Mwari, can be communicated with where he is seen as being (in some way) a trinity.

Mwari is the High God. (Bourdillon 1976 : 320) But he is also Sorerenzou - the "male element". And he is also Dzivaguru - the "female component". (Daneel 1970) Both Daneel and Bourdillon emphasis the "syncretic" nature of the God: a mystical trinity.

This attempt to create out of the Mwari cult beliefs, an almost complete replica of Christian belief, thus by implication revealing the religion as "sophisticated" is an almost perfect example of Leach's assertion (1969) that anthropologists and theologians often tell us more about themselves through their theories, than they do about their

subjects. In this case, most of the theorists are attempting to show that the Shona were/are not "primitive" peoples; that they are either a highly sophisticated indigenous African society, or that through some myth of diffusion, they have clung to a vestage of racial, caucasoid philosophical heritage. Mwari, they say, is neither otiose and totally remote, nor is he a lineal extension, or part of the ancestral hierarchy of spirits. (Mbiti, John : 1970)

None of the writers examined has totally grasped the concept quite as it is comprehended by the Shona themselves. This is partly because, I believe, they are looking at the proposition through "theocentric" eyes. (P'bitek, Okot) But perhaps it is also because not enough attention has been given to the fact that the Shona traditional histories, myths and legends are a simultaneous expression of their religious beliefs. Put another way, their religious conceptualisation unfolds in their dramatic expression and explanation of their past.

That the general ethno-history reflects a highly dramatised and romantic account of the settlement and government of various dynasties (and the groups they represent) is natural and to be expected. That this indicates two major migrations of people into the Plateau area and that these two waves, may, and probably do, correspond to the early and later Iron Age settlements is a surprising testimony to the

veracity of oral traditions. (See Chapter 1) That they provide a charter for and become part of the religious belief of the people is entirely acceptable and consistent with the similar growth of beliefs in other peoples and other religions, for example, the Bible. Finally, that this historical charter is reflected in the holistic concept of the Spirit, Mwari, and his entourage of integrated and associated spirits should be accepted.

Mwari, as described in the last chapter, is everywhere and is in everything. He is thus party to and in an indefinable way part of all the spirits throughout their hierarchical structure. The most senior spirits thus become merged with Mwari and in this sense make him a syncretic god. As one commentator on African concepts of God suggests, "God is far (transcendent) and men cannot reach him; but God is also near (imminent), and he comes close to men". (Mbiti 1970 : 12)

However the fact that the elaborate system of worship of Mwari, developed at the Matopos reflects perceived (understood) or implied kinship relationships between the various founding hero ancestors seems not to have been understood nor to have been explained. Indeed Daneel actually denies any such possibility.

"(Mwari became) the Personal Being beyond and above the hierarchies of ancestral spirits". (Daneel 1970 : 18).

Although Mwari may well be "beyond and above" the hierarchies of ancestral spirits", he is nevertheless also perceived of as embracing the beings of such hero figures as Sororezhou, Tovera and even Dzivaguru. This is what I mean when I say that the "historical charter is reflected in the holistic concept of the spirit, Mwari."

Mwari is nevertheless the original creator of his universe (in so far as this is conceived as having been created as opposed to having "always been"). Thus he is The Sower (Urbantu : Muali) found also amongst the Chagga of Kilimanjaro - though this does not necessarily suppose any direct association between the two cults as suggested by Daneel (1970 : 16).

As the Sower, Mwari created all living things. Therefore he is the MUSIKI : the Creator, from the verb stem sika - create fire. Fire and its domestication form an integral part of many Shona myths and folk stories emphasising the superiority of the fire users over their conquered autochthons.

Mwari is also the creator of people : Musikavanhu. So too, in an indefinable way are the founding ancestor heroes. Dzivaguru is the anthropomorphic progenitor of all the Dziva tribes - that is all the clans with totems (mitupo) associated with water and aquatic life. These are also

collectively referred to as the Hungwe (fish eagle) people. (Chigwedere 1980 :iv).

The Dziva people were overrun by the Mbire. Nembire or Mambire was the creator of his people - Sikarudzi. But the distinction is felt rather than stated that Mwari created Nembire (alias Tovera, Murenga, etc.) Mwari is the creator of all life; the creator of fire and the creator, specifically, of people. The first people to rule ("own") the country were the "Dziva", personified in their creator - ancestor (sikarudzi) Dzivaguru. (This establishes a further implication - i.e. that Mwari's concept of people is essentially Shona People, for the Khoisan are not included in this concept of creation). Thus, as the original perceived autoclthon Dzivaguru is the "Muridzi we Pasi" - the owner of the Earth.

Worshippers at the shrines in the Matopos mostly come from southern Shona country, Matabeleland and Venda speaking country (see map on page 108A). As such they have no memory of Dzivaguru as an identifiable founder figure. This is because these areas were settled by several waves of migrants who imposed their own oral traditions and legends upon the earlier populations. Thus recalled genealogies of any depth reflect either Mbire or Rozvi dynasties. But in the north east, amongst the Tavara clans in the Zambezi Valley, for reasons which will be explained in a following

section, the name Dzivaguru is revered as that of an apical ancestral, anthropomorphic God-person, and is directly associated with pre-Mbire Hungwe/Dziva people.

It is assumed that the original "owners of the land" were the Dziva people and the laudatory titles attributed to Dzivaguru support this:

Muridzi we pasi: Owner of the Earth

Muvumbapasi: Sometimes Muvambapasi:

the founder of the Earth/Land (Daneel's translation): or the first in the land (my translation).

All these praise names are now regarded as appropriate to Mwari, but their specific reference to the Dzivaguru aspect must be recognised (as they are by Shona informants).

The Dzivaguru people were overcome by the Shoko Mbire. The latter's remembered hero ancestor and founder is Sorerenzou. (He is also regarded as a founding figure by the Rozvi, but as the Rozvi are a definitive section of the parent Mbire Shoko this is to be expected).

Dzivaguru is identified as being associated with the female aspect of the Mwari deity. Daneel (1970 :16) has refined

his definition to show 'him' as the female of Mwari and claims this is how Dzivarugu is seen by the Shona themselves. In fact I do not think this is quite the case. He has misunderstood the symbolism and language associated with Mwari/Dzivaguru. Dzivaguru is rather seen as the mother's patriline. The invading Shoko took Dziva women to wife and thus Dzivaguru, in the context of Mwari belief symbols, is the sekuru or ultimate "wife's father" or wife provider to the Shoko. This places him in an ambivalent position as revered, 'senior', always one (imputed) generation above the Mbire Shoko, (Holleman : 1952), yet because his daughters were taken from him, his status is also diminished in the eyes of the new rulers.

When worshippers approach the Mwari shrines they call on the spirit as Dzivaguru, in the first instance, thus acknowledging him, even if unconsciously, as the senior spirit element - as the Muridzi, or original owner of the land. They then address him as Shoko, referring to the Mbire element as personified by Sorerenzou (or Murenga, or any of the other Mbire ancestor names). This address switches the worshipper's appeal from the autochthons to the conquerers. And as if to underline that the Shoko dynasty was eventually supplanted by its Moyo offshoot, it is observed that many of the powerful cult officials at the Matopos shrines are of the Moyo totem.

Identification of the spirit Mwari with the political and dynastic interpretations of the past can be further exemplified by the cult in the eastern plateau area, which portrays the divine spirit, Musikavanhu, as an apical hero ancestor. Similarly the Tavara peoples of the north east (Zambezi Valley) who are pre-Mutota autochthons, see Dzivaguru as their apical divine ancestor.

Dzivaguru (and Musikavanhu) when addressed at the Matopos shrines, or in relation to appeals to Mwari, are regarded as part of the deity, synonymous with the Supreme Spirit, yet at the same time, there is an unspoken understanding that they may have a finite origin before their absorption into the holistic affinity of the ultimate Spirit: Mwari, the Sower or Planter - the Creator, thus, of life.

In order more readily to comprehend the Mwari beliefs and to put in perspective their significance in our overall understanding of the Shona it becomes necessary to examine the corpus of accumulated knowledge of the structure of the Mwari religious organisation. In tackling this task one is again faced by the problem of interpreting the available material. Paradoxically the biggest difficulty one faces is that "--- the cult has probably received more attention from scholars than any other traditional religious institution in Central and South Central Africa". (Schoffeleers J.M. : 1973)

Even if Schoffeleer's statement is accepted as it stands, it is, ironically, true to say that apart from himself, Bourdillon, (1976), and Werbener (1977) none of the researchers was an anthropologist. (Note that this observation relates only to the core cult in the Matopos, not to pan-Shona Mwari related studies). So we have the interesting situation of a variety of studies by individuals from a wide field of disciplines. Von Sicard is a Jesuit missionary (theologian). Daneel is a "missiologist", Bhebe, Beech, Abraham and Ranger are historians, Blake-Thompson and Summers, archaeologists and Gelfand a medical doctor. In addition to the above there is the work conducted by Cockroft, a retired district commissioner, and my own enquiries. (The research I conducted, apart from a study of the available literature, includes the analysis of data collected in all districts of Rhodesia. Apart from Cockroft (1972) and A., a district officer on my research team in 1964, none of the observers had firsthand experience of visits to any of the shrines. Indeed, this shortcoming applies to the other sources as well, with the exception of Daneel).

Let me therefore attempt to catalogue what facts do pertain.

Throughout Shona speaking territory, Mwari is the accepted word denoting the Supreme Being or God. People will, for

example, say "Na Mwari" in much the same way as English speakers say "By God". In the courts Christians will "take the oath" by saying:-

"Ndinopika naMwari"

"I swear by God"

Amongst Christians, God is translated as Mwari and Christians conceive of Mwari and God as synonymous. (This has some interesting dialectical spin-offs on matters of theological interpretation, particularly in the independent churches (see Daneel (1971).)

The accepted centre of Mwari worship is the Matopos. This does not detract from the general access to or presence of Mwari throughout the Plateau. Mwari is appealed to as the Ultimate Authority, a being supreme over all the spirit world, whose influence is manifested in all things, but who is more concerned with national matters than the problems of individuals. This general acknowledgement of Mwari's presence is widespread, (perhaps total would be a better word) throughout the Plateau. Thus the Venda revere Tobera and Raluvhimba, (Vhimba; the eagle is another association with Hungwe, (Shona - fish eagle) which is closely associated with Shona spiritual concepts).

"A shooting star is Raluvhimba travelling ; his voice is heard in the thunder; comets, lightning, meteors, earthquakes, prolonged drought, floods, pests and epidemics - in fact, all the natural phenomena which affect the people as a whole - are revelations of the Great God." (Stayt H.A. : 1933 : 232).

"Every year, a special messenger, used to be sent to visit Raluvhimba, or Mwari in the Matopo hills." (Bullock C. : 1927 : 525) My own investigations indicate that this practice persisted certainly up until 1972, though cash had replaced cattle and black cloth as offerings. By 1985, however, border restrictions seem to have finally stopped all movement (personal communication). (Prof. Ralushayi, Venda University).

"But Mwari is not a fetish God bound to some stick or stone. He may not only move from cave to cave, but if so disposed can pass like a shooting star over the breadth of the land, manifesting his presence perhaps on Mt. Rungai, a hundred miles away from the caves". (Bullock : 1927)

Thus there is a widespread, general belief in an omnipresent being, Mwari. Mwari in this configuration is not concerned with individuals. Thus appeals to him on personal matters are not made, though a person might ask his personal mudzimu

to appeal to Mwari when directing requests for spiritual assistance.

In addition to Mwari's general existence as the overall spirit governing the cosmos, he is also to be found in a far more identifiable and concrete form in the Mwari cult centred in the Matopos, which has a far-reaching organisation spread out over the southern and eastern Plateau area.

MWARI AND THE MATOPOS SHRINES

In the Matopos there are a number of shrines. There seems to be a general belief that at one time, in the past, there was one central Mwari religious capital and that this was at Great Zimbabwe (Blake-Thompson and Summers 1956 : 45; Abraham : 1966 : 34; Weinrich : 1969 - 70 : 398; Daneel : 1970 : 41). The argument runs that this centre changed to the Matopos at a time co-incidental with the decline of Great Zimbabwe and the development of Khami. However, there is no supreme shrine at the Matopos and certainly within the period of recorded observation of the Mwari cult in the Matopos, there does not appear to have ever been one.

Schoffeleers (1973) subscribes to the view that the lack of a centralised and unitarian cult centre, far from being a recent deviation, is a "structural feature which has been

part of the cult organisation for the entire period on which there exists reliable factual information". (Schoffeleers : 1973 : 1)

Schoffeleers lists four active shrines in the Matopos, one "dormant" shrine and one "dead" shrine, though he offers no distinction between "dead" and "dormant". Of these, the best known are Dula, Wirirani and Njelele, with Njelele being described as "dormant". (By the time of my last enquiry, Wirirani was in a state of collapse, indeed near dormancy - 1972).

In general the shrines are supervised by a coterie of officials.

There is someone who, covertly, acts as the medium (voice) of Mwari. This person is usually a woman. The medium has a guardian, a man, described by Daneel as "High Priest". In addition the guardian supervises the logistics and administration of the cult centre, a not inconsiderable task. In this he is assisted by another male, in the case of Wirirani a younger brother. Supporting this hierarchy are a number of male (nyusa) and female (hosana, bonga) acolytes who are people who have been attracted to the shrine from outlying districts - or have been "dedicated" to Mwari by their families or chiefs. Generally their selection is based on their inclination towards ecstatic possession.

Supporting and complementing the central cultists, is a network of messengers - vanyai - who act as emissaries between Mwari and the outlying districts. In those districts whose people and leaders believe in the personification of Mwari's presence in the Matopos, men (there are no female vanyai) are chosen to perform this task. The position is onerous but influential. Upon the vanyai depends the whole survival of the cult in that they mobilise their parishioners to contribute to the yearly (cash) offerings which are taken to Mwari for the pre-rainy season ceremonies. With the sponsorship of their chief, they formulate and transmit the messages and requests from their districts to Mwari. At the Matopos they present these petitions and receive, interpret and transmit Mwari's replies back to their people.

In many of Mwari's cult districts there are others who are regarded as his special children (vana va Mwari). These are banyusa and hosana who practice at home as opposed to at the Matopos shrines.

There are various conceptions of the hosana. They are described as virgins dedicated to Mwari. More commonly these women and girls are called bonga and live at the shrines in the Matopos, sometimes from as early as birth, in response to some covenant of their parents. As virgins they are seen as being married to the God and as such there are

strong sanctions against forming sexual liaisons with mortal men. Others see hosana as local girls or women who display a tendency towards spirit possession. Because of this they are dedicated to Mwari and may be sent for a time to one of the shrines at the Matopos. Here they serve the cult officials, performing and dancing at ceremonies, cultivating their fields and attending to domestic chores around the village. In return they are helped to identify their host spirits and to develop their occult powers and the quality of their performance as mediums. They eventually return to their home districts unless, as occasionally happens, they are selected by male cult officials to remain as wives or associates (or both). There is a contradiction here as hosana are perceived of as taboo to all men, but their entering into sexual union or becoming the wives of cult shrine leaders is not only accepted, but is perceived as a prestigious and powerful position.

During 1971/72, using the methods described in the section on methodology, evidence revealed that, in so far as the Mwari shrines are concerned, every district in Matabeleland sends messengers (vanyai) and/or hosana to the Matopos. (With the decline of Njelele, people simply reported to Dula or Wirirani).

In addition to the hosana, there are also Nyusa 'dancers'. They are prominent both in their home districts and at the

Matopos shrines, dancing, playing drums and entering into possession by spirits. These spirits are identified, sometimes, as those associated with local families or hierarchies, but very often are regarded as jukwa - spirits of past heroes and leaders very often unidentifiable to their hosts or audiences. Informants refer to them, in fact, as "jukwa dancers" - or even as shave dancers. Some vanyusa may also fill the role of vanyai (messengers).

Investigations in the Victoria province revealed that with one exception (Ndanga) all districts have a connection with the Matopos shrines by means of institutionalised vanyai. Daneel (1970) describes the activities of Vondo, the messenger for the Gutu chiefdom.

Into the Sabi river flows the Nyazvidzi after its confluence with the Devuli. West of this river system is the huge block of communal area called Gutu.

From Gutu to the Matopos is a distance by road of some 300 kilometres, yet annually, if not bi-annually, vanyai are despatched to the Matopos to consult at the shrines (alternative names Matonjeni, Mabwe Machena (White Rocks) Mabwe aDziva [Rocks of the Pool]) and report back to the chief and elders.

The most important of these in Gutu is one VONDO (Daneel page 87/88).

"Most of the Mwari messengers (vanyai, manyusa) belong to the chiefly lineages of their home districts" (Daneel page 87).

"VONDO : (of) Chief Gutu of the Gutu District. His father Mude is the chief, his son Mukojho, is his deputy for long (have) been messengers and regularly visit Matonjeni" (Latham : 1973 : Entry No. 520)

From even further afield in Melsetter and Chipinge (Ndau Shona- speaking areas) messengers ply between the Matopos and their home districts.

"Simon Chokoto a high priest at Matonjeni estimates that messengers (came) also from Melsetter and Chipinge." (Daneel : 1970) This was partly confirmed by our research in Chipinge, "all acknowledge the existence of Mlimo/Mwari" (Latham : 1973)

However, we were not able then (1973) to identify any single messenger, although some ten years earlier (1964/5) during other investigations (Latham : 1965) mention was made of visits to the Matopos. However, in the light of the very

strong Musikavanhu cult in this area it seems unlikely that Chipinge district falls for practical purposes into the Matopos' sphere of influence. Rather is there a clearly enunciated connection with the Dzivaguru cult centre in Mt. Darwin and "Musikavanhu and his spirits claim relationship with Dzivaguru in Darwin" (Latham : 1973).

Similarly my research in 1973 revealed no contact between Melsetter district and the Matopos. Indeed, the information given to us was that the Melsetter tribes consulted Musikavanhu.

Daneel like us, excludes the district of Buhera from Matopos influence.

Reference to the map (page 108A) shows the general area that was found to send vanyai to the Matopos.

In short my research confirmed Daneel's recording of Simon Chokoto's claim that vanyai visited him from the southern Shona districts (1970 :87)

"(Others came) from further south from Venda-inhabited territories, on both sides of the Limpopo River". (Ibid).

That Simon Chokoto told Daneel that some 40 vanyai visited him might tend to refute his (and Daneel's) claim that he

was the "high priest of Matonjeni" (the Matopos). My investigations indicated that throughout the area influenced by the Matopos shrines, the vanyai plying back and forth run into hundreds. Clearly the other shrines are also popular.

Mention must also be made of the country to the west of the Zimbabwe border, in Botswana. (For practical reasons I was not able to extend my investigations into that country). However Werbener (1977) makes good this deficiency in his study of the special arrangements of oracular figures associated with the Matopos shrines. His maps do not, unfortunately, relate the areas of his study to any place names or overlay of the surrounding country so one has to content oneself with the fact that areas in "north eastern Botswana" are included in the sphere of influence of the Mwari shrines in the Matopos. (Page 179). However, a clue on page 180 reveals that the area of his research also included "Botswana's central and eastern districts". Suffice it to say that substantial parts of Kalanga speaking Botswana's eastern border areas should be included in the Matopos Mwari territory.

I may have created the impression that it is only religious officials (vanyai, vajukwa, hosana, vana va Mwari) that journey to the Matopos shrines. This is not the case. Individual petitioners may and do make their way to them too.

Cockroft (1972 : 83) states that he remembers in his youth during the years 1909 - 1922, the annual pilgrimages of "many elders during September to November ... from many parts (who) traversed our farm en route to Njelele, to deliver offerings to the priests and to ask for rain."

And again, on page 88.

"The more modern concepts, with the introduction of cash gifts is that many and varied requests of a personal nature can be taken to the Mlimo" (Mwari). I do not believe that the "varied requests of a personal nature" reflects anything new - though cash in place of traditional offerings of cloth, food and livestock obviously is. Clearly the whole dynamic of a cult centre would always have depended upon admitting petitioners.

In 1964, one of my research team (A.) visited the Njelele shrine at my behest. A. is a fluent siNdebele speaker and at that time our understanding was that he would gain the acceptance of the cult officials more easily using that vernacular. Be that as it may, after some delaying tactics and several weeks of prevarication, he was permitted, together with his sponsor a local Ndebele speaking headman, to approach the oracular cave. To do this they had to set off before day light and climb the bare granite slopes in the pre-dawn. They were guided by cult officials but A. was

unable to identify them. They reached the cave mouth in the early dawn and were instructed to sit down facing eastwards towards the rising sun.

An acolyte announced their presence and informed the god, in siNdebele, that the petitioner was a white man. Presently the voice spoke in Karanga from the cave and enquired what gifts had been brought for him. A. informed the spirit that he had brought ten shillings and a small bag of meal (left at the foot of the mountain). The spirit complained that a white man's presence at the cave was unheard of and in any event whites could afford much more than this meagre tribute to the God. In consequence it was unlikely that any but the smallest favour could be considered. What was the nature of A's request? A. replied that he had two problems. The first was that it was very dry and the rains were late. Where he lived at Kezi, the drought was becoming serious. His second problem was that his mother-in-law had come to stay with him and was proving a nuisance and prolonging her visit beyond the limits of his patience. What could he do?

The voice answered on both scores. First, on the matter of rain, he (A.) must realise that everything must be done to satisfy him (Mwari) that he was being correctly approached. His children would dance for him and please him and then if there were no great sins being perpetrated which angered him he would bless them with good rains. The request from A.

was most unusual - his first from a white. He was pleased by this indication of acceptance of his power and presence. Nevertheless he was mortified at the paucity of the offering presented. As if to drive the point home he went on to the second petition. Let A. return home and take a suitable black heifer to his wife's mother's village and give it to her guardian men (husband/son) and tactfully suggest it was time for her to go home. (This bit of advice and the irony of the hint over the black heifer amused the Spirit which was observed to chuckle).

A. thanked Mwari and retired, promising to send further gifts of thanks.

This case study graphically illustrates Mwari's accessibility despite the aura of mystery and the initial difficulty in approaching him. It also demonstrates his willingness to advise on trivial personal matters. Finally, it underlines the pragmatism of those involved. Although they had clearly not received a white into their midst before, A. was permitted to talk to the God - indeed he was even made the butt of a subtle joke!

I am compelled to conclude this case study with the report I received from A. some days later. Half an inch of rain had fallen at Kezi - a very isolated shower which covered little more than a few acres around his house. Delicacy caused me

to refrain from asking if his mother-in-law was still staying with him!

Conclusion/Summary

In this chapter I have tried to construct a model of Mwari which accords with that of the pan-Shona belief system.

First there is Mwari the ultimate generic spirit conceived of by the Greater Shona group of peoples.

In the Matopos hills, there are cult centres at which Mwari is worshipped through the services of various functionaries, some of whom act secretly as mediums for the voice of the god. The importance and influence of these various shrines ebbs and flows with the corresponding ability and charisma of the ranking officials of the shrines. It would appear that this is a structural feature of the Matopos Mwari cult. In this it differs little from cults in others parts of Shona country.

The Mwari revered at the Matopos - and indeed in the less ritualised worship by people outside the central cult area - is seen as the Supreme Spirit. Though not otiose he is more detached than the Christian concept. Nevertheless, many Christian observers have appeared to model their interpretation of indigenous concepts upon the Christian

idea. This has led to their construction of a trinity based upon Mwari, Dzivaguru and Sororenzou. This trinity they merge into a "syncretic" God - Mwari - who may be worshipped as such or as either Dzivaguru or Sororenzou. They claim that neither Dzivaguru nor Sororenzou are deified as ancestral figures, but as part of, or synonymous with, God. While this may be true for those who wish it to be so, the more acceptable model in Shona eyes is based on the mythical genealogical understanding of their past. This is the belief that the main migrant groups that moved into the Plateau were the direct offspring of certain mythical divine ancestor figures.

The first "wave" of immigrants all descended from Dzivaguru of the Hungwe totem. The second "wave" all stemmed from NeMbire Sororenzou Murenga of the Shoko totem.

Each of these groups can be identified with historical dynasties and polities. Each divine hero ancestor may be worshipped or revered elsewhere, either through mediums at cult centres, or by appeal through local svikiros representing lesser midzimu. Thus at the Matopos shrines appeals are made to Mwari/Dzivaguru/Sororenzou, collectively or individually. But at Nhenene hill in Chomo, north eastern Zimbabwe, for example, can be found the cult of Dzivaguru identified as the divine god-ancestor of Hungwe.

Investigation of these various manifestations reveals contradictions and inconsistencies which can best be explained in terms of Leach's definition of myth (Leach E. : 1969) "Myth has been defined as 'the expression of unobservable realities in terms of observable phenomenon.'"

"The non-rationality ... is its very essence, for religion requires a demonstration of faith by the suspension of critical doubt."

Thus for example, Mwari is everywhere and is everything. But Mwari is also an anthropomorphic god in the Matopos and Dzivaguru in Choma.

Mwari can only be approached through known ancestors. Mwari can be conversed with directly.

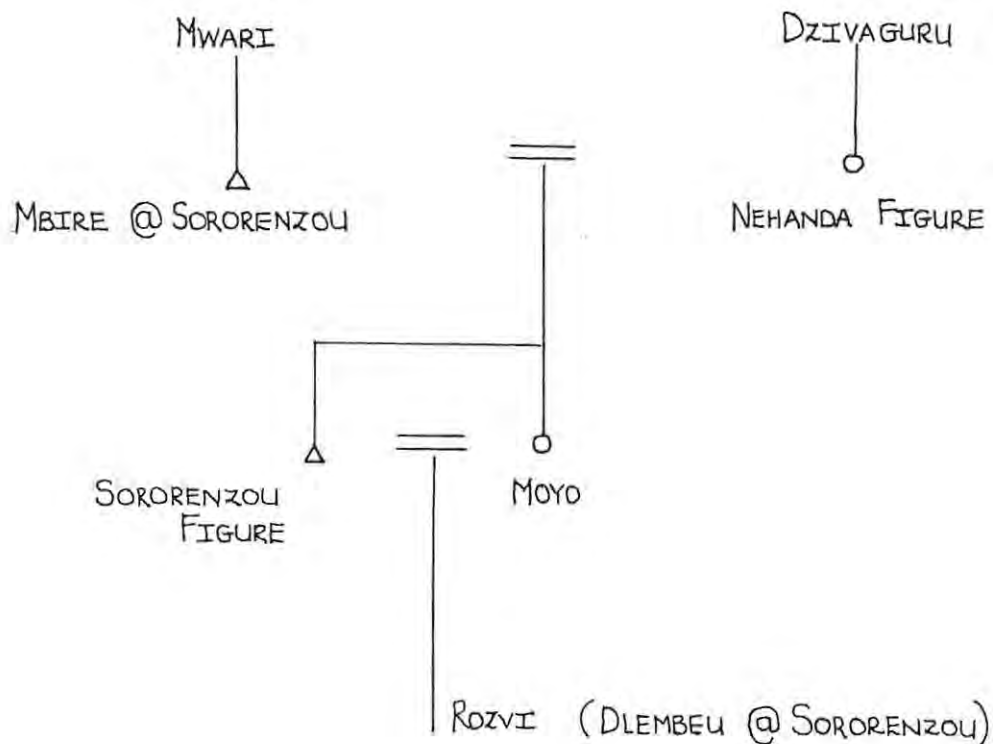
Dzivaguru, Sororenzou and Musikavanhu may be apical ancestors.

Dzivaguru, Sororenzou and Musikavanhu are synonymous with and part of Mwari. Dzivaguru, Musikavanhu and Sororenzou are manifestations of Mwari and are intrinsic to the Mwari presence in the Matopos.

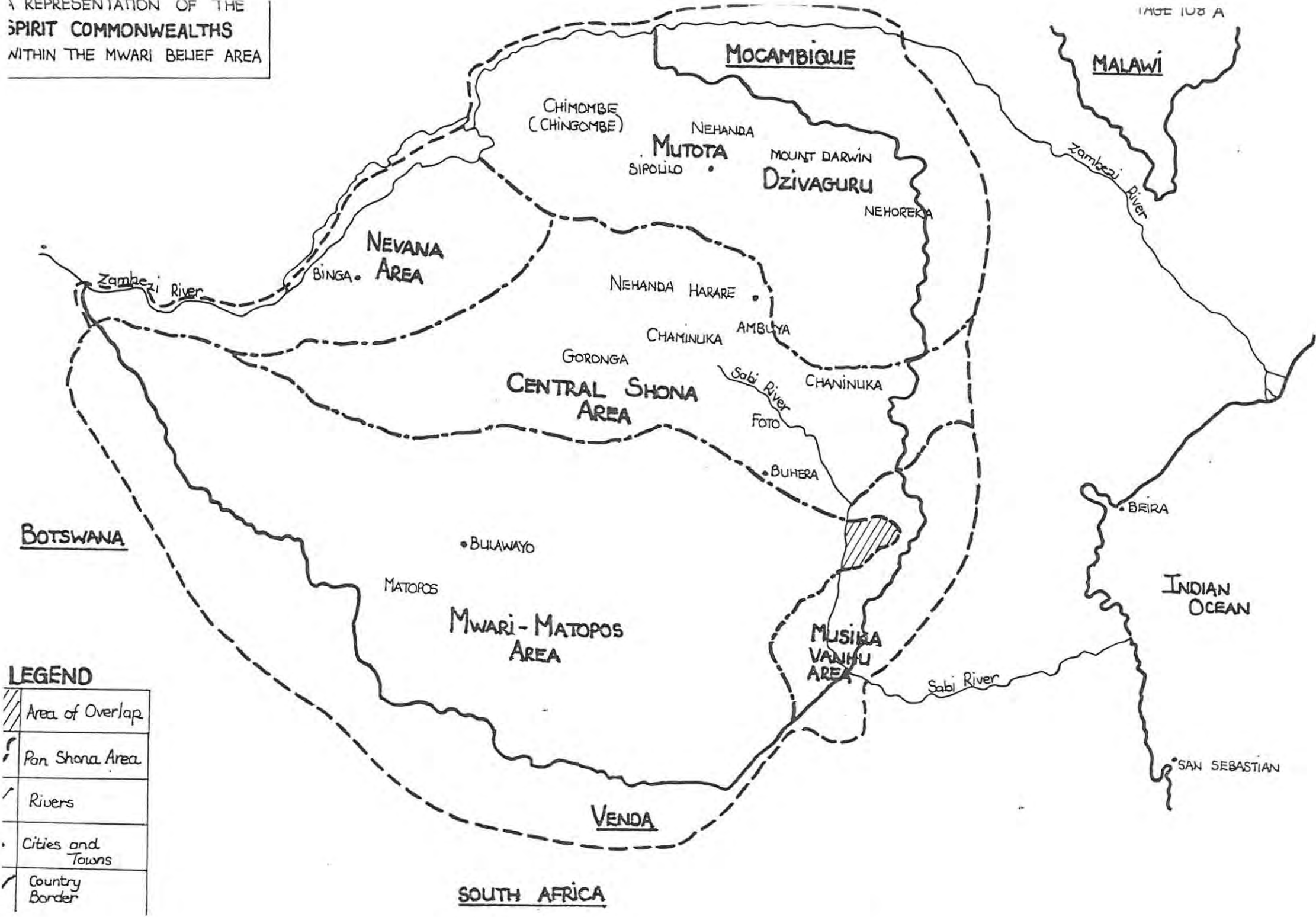
Absorbed into this syncretic being are other hero spirits and mythical ancestors. (jukwa spirits) such as Murenga

and Tovera. Mwari is the impossible. He is comprised of the totems Dziva and Shoko. Yet he is none of these and is only Mwari, the Almighty ; Mwari Nyadenga : the Heavenly One.

The autochthons were Dziva/Hungwe (Dzivaguru). Mbire Shoko took Dzivaguru women to wife and succeeded (and overthrew) Dzivaguru. In turn Moyo people (a Shoko house) succeeded Shoko.



REPRESENTATION OF THE
SPiRiT COMMONWEALTHS
 WITHIN THE MWARI BELIEF AREA



At each level we get a clear emergence of the incest myth.

This incest myth, (kupinga pasi which means literally to fortify the ground with medicine) seems to be a device to try and rationalise changes or breaks in dynasties is encountered in the oral histories of most major dynasties. It also is a device to explain the retention of the God essence in restricted genealogies.

Superimposed upon the Mwari model so far presented one must somehow conceive of Mwari and the other emanations distributed not only through time, but spatially. This is best shown by way of a diagrammatic map. (Page 108A)

Thus we have the Mwari shrines in the south west, Musikavanhu in the south east and Dzivaguru in the north east. In association with these, however, is Chaminuka in the central Plateau, Mutota/Nehanda in the north east; Chingombe in the north and Nevana in the central north west. Each in turn is related to or associated with one or the other or some of the other cults. Indeed a perpetual genealogical relationship exists in most cases, with the possible exception of Nevana about whom, unfortunately, almost nothing is recorded. My model of the Greater Mwari area of worship (the pan-Shona area) will show that the Shona perceive of these emanations as part of a related whole. Further, the mode of worship and the political,

social and religious roles of the different cults (including Mwari-Matopos) are played out in all these areas and centres in ways which bear more striking similarities than they do differences. Indeed they form part of one large pan-Shona religious belief system with many common perceptions and rituals.

CHAPTER 5

MUTOTA

The Mutota cult, centred in north-eastern Zimbabwe, is not directly associated by other writers (Garbett, Bourdillon, Fry, Lan) with the Mwari traditions in the south-west. The Mutota cult is popularly referred to as a mhondoro ("lion spirit") cult and the inference is that this differentiates it from the cults in the central and southern areas. Indeed Fry (1976) goes so far as to propose that there are major conceptual differences between the mhondoro cults of the north-east (in Mutota "territory") and the spirit cults in the central Shona area of Chiota near Harare. Garbett (1982) endorses this concept.

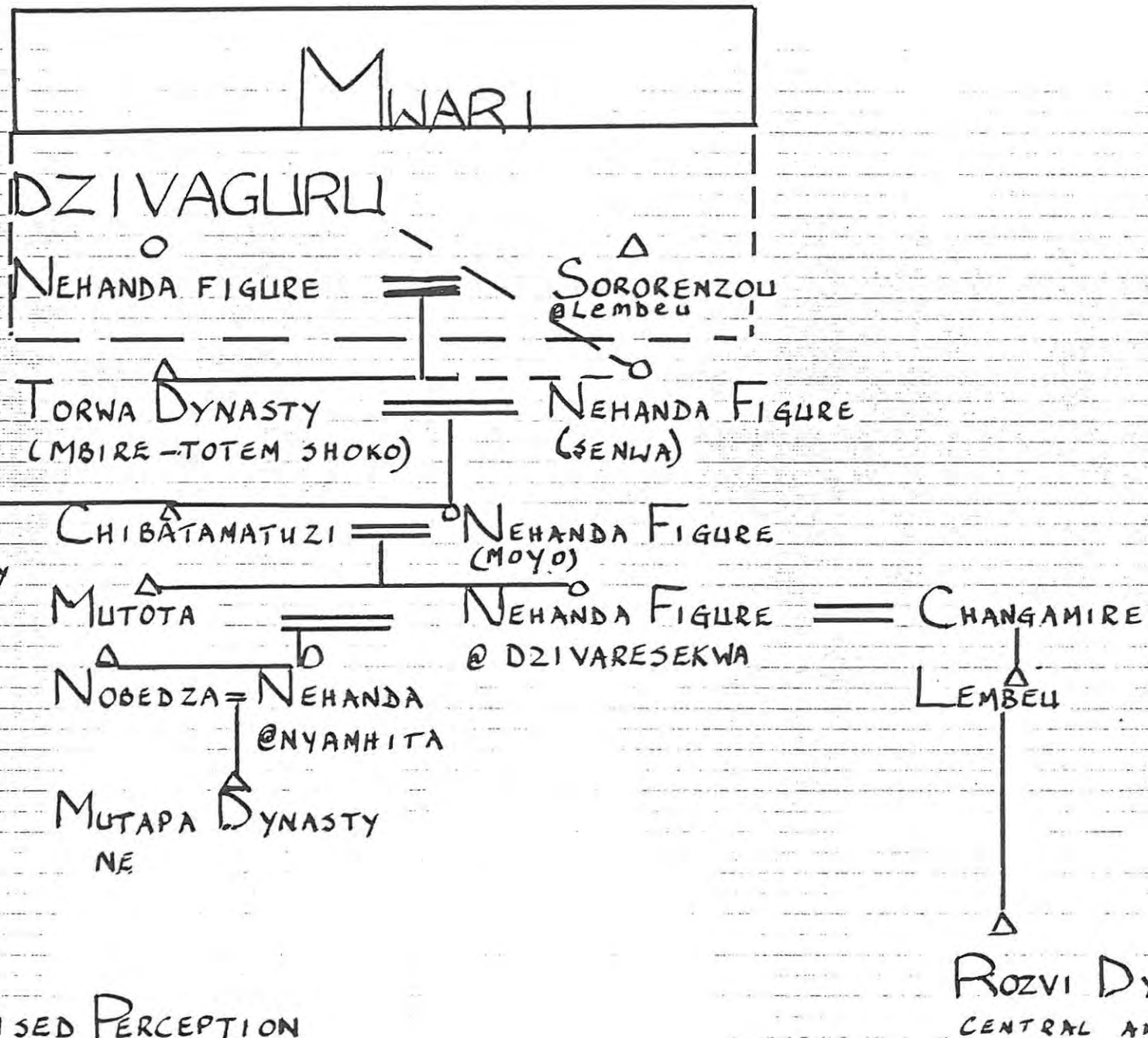
This chapter will show that this view is substantially incorrect. My analysis reveals that similarities of religious belief, of cult organisation, generic kinship perceptions and territoriality far out-weigh the differences perceived by researchers who have worked in one or other area without benefit of comparative orientation or a global overview of the pan-Shona Mwari area. I will attempt to further my thesis that the Mutota cult, just like any of the other major cults (Dzivaguru, Musikavanhu) is part of the wider Mwari belief system and such local differences as there may be are merely idiosyncratic, rather than demonstrative of major structural variances. The most obvious way to put my postulation into

perspective is to examine the origin myths which give the Mutota figure his authority/charter.

Mutota is said to be the offspring of a person called Chibatamatosi (the "Turd Strangler"). One writer (Chigwedere : 1980) asserts that this extraordinary name must have been a nick-name signifying a person of capricious nature. One legend also has it that his true name may have been Baswi - an early Rozvi hero figure (Del. Rep. Mazoe 1965). More frequently, however, it is hinted that Mutota's true progenitor was not his earthly father but Mwari himself (Chigwedere : 1980, Posselt : 1935). Legend is firmer when it comes to his mother. She was a royal Rozvi and thus of the mutupo Moyo. It is she who received the divine seed from Mwari that gave rise to Mutota's birth.

Chigwedere (1980 : 43-45) makes an interesting claim in the light of his interpretation of the oral history surrounding the birth of Mutota and of Lembeu (Dlembeu). He claims that (D)Lembeu was the son of Chibatamatosi and in turn the father of Mutota. He gives credence to the belief that the birth was irregular, may even have been the result of an immaculate conception (see also Posselt : 1935 : 141).

Another name linked with his mythical genealogy is that of Torwa (Abraham : 1959: 61).



A RATIONALISED PERCEPTION

When he rose to manhood Mutota is said to have succeeded to the kingship (Umambo) at Great Zimbabwe. But this statement is only made by the Northern Shona. Southern Shona do not acknowledge this at all. Mutota's oral historians go on to elaborate on his rule by stating that he became dissatisfied with life at Great Zimbabwe and that he yearned for salt with which to garnish his food. He had become tired of eating goat droppings (from the ashes of which meagre salt flavouring was extracted). For this reason he sent a trusted messenger (munyai) to seek the salt pans of the North. (Del. Rep. Sipolilo District 1965).

What emerges from all these collections of oral history is a picture of a central power based at Dzimbabwe in a country called Guruuswa. At Dzimbabwe the old King (Mambo) died. His son inherited the kingdom, and inspired by a desire to move away from the decaying capital, either went to the Khami area (Torwa-Dlembue origin myths) or north to the Dande (Zambezi) (Mutota-Changamire myths).

Both Mutota and Lembeu are believed to have been the subject of unusual births. They are seen either as illegitimate or as the divine offspring of Mwari. Both founded new kingdoms. Neither recognises the other and they remain in enmity down through the generations, though they recognise that they are related. In due course Changamire the 'son' of Mutota - also an illegitimate - breaks away from Mutota and creates the central Rozvi polity. He too is in

a state of enmity with both the Mutota and the Torwa states. There is much fighting. Changamire is never able permanently to conquer the Mutapa kingdom but he does, in due course, either overthrow or succeed the Torwa.

Returning to the Mutota saga, we see Mutota leave Dzimbabwe because of much quarreling (obviously the disputed succession to the Umambo) though legend associates his departure with a desire to move north to the Ivu Repinde Rimwe (the soil that surpasses all others) where the pans of the Dande produce an abundance of salt. Mutota is accompanied by a host of followers, mostly relatives ('sons' and 'brothers') some of whom he allocates principalities on the long march to the north. Finally, the party arrives in the promised land of abundant salt. Mutota conquers the Tavana clans in the area, who acknowledge him as the Munhumutapa - the Conquerer - which name becomes associated with his kingdom from henceforth. They also change their name from Karanga to Korekore. (The Tavana said they despoiled the land like a hord of locusts - korekore).

In the fullness of time the invaders consolidate their rule over the autochthonous Tavana, such consolidation being achieved by Mutota's son Matope Nobedza. In order to enforce his authority ritually and demonstrate his divine connections, Matope fortifies his accession to the kingship by performing the kupinga pasi ceremony with his half-sister Nyamhita, who is also the mhondoro Nehanda - whom we have

met before. This ceremony involves a ritual incestuous intercourse. The symbolism is significant. Nehanda is closely associated with Mwari and is the female vessel that in mythical accounts from other areas is the receiver of the divine seed. Indeed Mutota, it is hinted, may well have been the child of Mwari and a Nehanda-like figure. God-like, Matope continues the intimate process : through the kupinga pasi ritual the divine spirit of Mwari's infinite self-regeneration is symbolised.

In a recent brilliant analysis of the mhondoro spirits in the Dande, David Lan (1985) examines the symbolism of the Mutota-related myths. Perhaps what makes his study so interesting is that he worked in the Mutota area soon after the death of George Kupara, who had been the svikiro of Mutota for over five decades. His study shows how the people have adjusted to this traumatic event and made provision for the religious organisation to continue to function, by re-emphasising certain aspects of their mythology. Lan's comprehension, understanding and explanation of myth and ritual is outstanding. His sympathetic, sensitive interpretation of imagery could only come out of a sound knowledge of the vernacular and the obvious empathy he had with the people of the Dande. His playwright's eye too, was able to capture the high sense of drama which is so essential a part of the religion of the Shona.

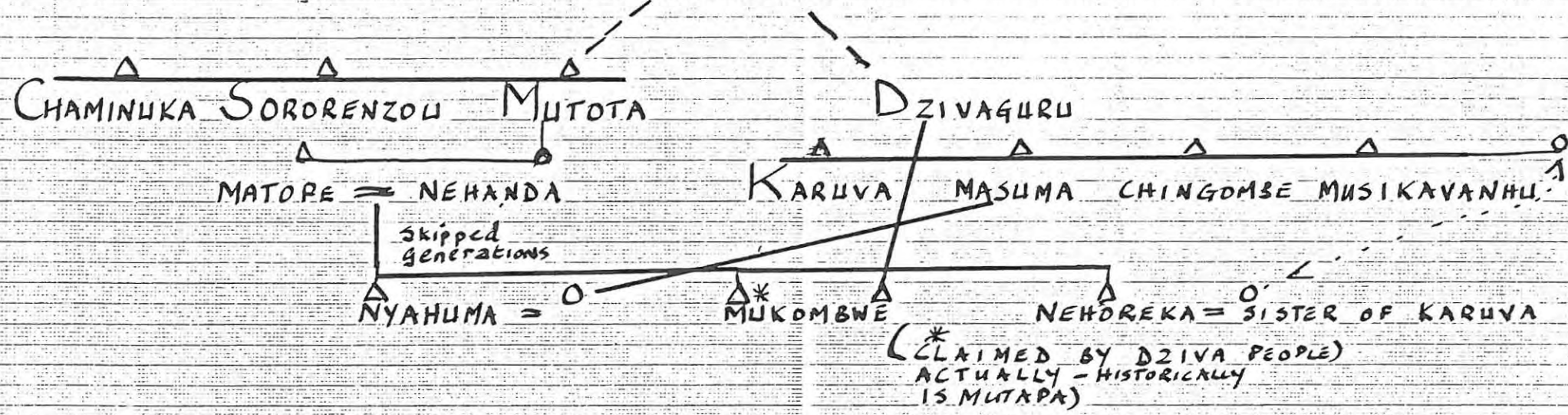
Lan shows how with the death of George Kupara a vacuum is created.

The apical figure of Mutota is no longer represented by a medium. This particularly effects the annual rain supplication rituals, for it is to Mutota that requests ultimately came. Without him represented by a medium the rituals cannot be concluded. Catastrophe could result. Mwari could withhold the rain. However, myth provides the solution. The figure of Musuma comes to prominence. Now, it transpires, Mutota was never the final link with the infinite world of Mwari and the mhondoro.

Musuma, an autochthonous 'Tavara', lived in the Dande. His daughter was married to Nyahuma, a descendent of Mutota's. Musuma is the son of Dzivaguru. (Lan 1985 : 82). Despite the myth belief that Musuma was treacherously killed by the Mutota-figure, Nyahuma (implying a contemptuous dismissal of his importance), with the death of Kupara, his medium becomes vitally important - at least locally. Only through Musuma can final penetration be made by the living into the world of the supra-spirits and thus of God.

(A similar interpretation of mythical genealogies allowed for Parengeta to represent access to Dzivaguru at Nhenene - see chapter on Parengeta). In support of Lan's thesis, I would suggest that the device is entirely satisfactory because it also re-enforces Mutota's divinity. Who but a divine person would through the power of his son's treacherous but ingenious action, 'kill' the son of Dzivaguru and take Dzivaguru's grand-daughter to wife? Moreover the

MWAR I



A N.E. PERCEPTION

'incestuous' relationship is also implied. Mutota is the 'son' of God (Mwari). Musuma is the son of God (Dzivaguru). Musuma's daughter (a Nehanda figure?) married Nyahuma, a "son" of Mutota, thus re-uniting the essence of divinity in their marriage.

Only god(s) could behave in this way, murdering one another and then marrying within the prohibited limits of consanguinity. Heroic stuff indeed.

Lan makes another new and interesting statement about the Mutota myth. Mutota, it will be remembered, migrated to the Dande from Guruuswa, a mythical land to the south. Guruuswa means "big grass" or literally "long lush grass". Because Guruuswa always seems to be indicated by directing the enquirer to the source of rivers, Lan suggests that it symbolises a place of moisture, of birth; in short the vagina - the damp place covered with verdure - pubic hair. (Lan 1985).

He fails to carry the symbolism to its ultimate conclusion, however. Other writers, as well as myself, have indicated that Dzivaguru is the 'female' attribute of Mwari. The "big pool" is also an illusion to the source of life - the vagina.

So here again, if we are to accept Lan's perceptive interpretation, we have myth and symbolism converging in the many faces of the god,

Mwari who is Everywhere and is Everything : is Life itself.

From all this confusing myth and legend emerges a clear picture of the genesis of two new polities being created out of the collapse of the Zimbabwe state. Both claim to have been founded by Mwari figures. The Torwa state founded by Dlembeu Sororenzou is the divine off-spring of Mwari. Indeed Sororenzou is a synonym for Mwari himself.

Mutota is vaguely associated with origin myths which suggest that he was sired by Mwari. He moved to Dande and there through his off-spring he returns to and reunites with the body of Mwari. Through the ritual incest of his son Mutope with his divine 'daughter' Nehanda and by the marriage of his 'son' Nyahuma to the grand-daughter of Dzivaguru, Mutota symbolises the reunification of the Godhead after the migration from the south and the conquest of the north. (And in doing so he unites the Tavara Korekore under one Divine Ruler).

Re-examination of the mythology of the Matopos' Mwari reveals much the same structural devices.

The autochthonous Dzivaguru element is fused with the invading Sororenzou element to unite invader and conqueror under the divine leadership of Mwari's sons.

Referring back to the sections on the Matopos Mwari, certain features of the cult organisation at the Matopos may be recalled.

There is a medium who (albeit covertly) is possessed by the Spirit and through whom the Spirit talks. This Spirit has a guardian described by Daneel as "High Priest". In addition there are a number of acolytes and apprentices (nyusa, hosana and bonga). Finally there are 'vanyai', messengers that ply between the cult centre and the outlying districts; as well as chiefs and ordinary citizens who make their way there either to petition for rain or to resolve some personal problem.

Examination of the practitioners at the Mutota and other north-eastern mhondoro cult centres reveals a total similarity of cult officials. They may go by different names and may even describe themselves in different terms. Nevertheless the functional performance and the practical application of their roles are identical. Mutota's medium, George Kupara differed only in that he did not hide his possession by the Spirit, unlike the Mwari mediums, who conspire in a poorly concealed fiction, that the God is speaking directly to the people from a holy place.

In all other respects the Mutota mhondoro fulfils an identical role and is served by a coterie of attendants no different from the Matopos officials.

Simon Chokoto, called High Priest by Daneel, is no more than the mutapi or care-taker of the mhondoro and his svikiro, described so eloquently by Ian (1985), or the nechombo (described by myself and others) who practise in central Mashonaland.

The Mutota cult also has numerous folk resident at the medium's village who are akin to the bonga, hosana and nyusa of the Matopos. These are the people possessed by spirits that have yet to be authenticated, or fully to have "come out" in their hosts. Both cult organisations rely heavily upon vanyai : messengers that ply between medium and medium and from chiefdom to cult centre. Again the only difference discernible is that the Mwari vanyai as exemplified by Vondo of Gutu are perhaps more prominent, more strongly institutionalised.

Examination of the myth of the two cult centres shows an identical symbolism, save that at the Matopos the presence of Mwari is acknowledged in person. In the Mutota belief structures Mutota's fusion with the God is created by the myth perceptions of his origins and his son's behaviour.

At Matopos, Sororenzou, the mythical genealogical father-brother of Mutota has become confused and fused with the Mwari figure so that his name is synonymous with that of Mwari. With Mutota this has not

occurred, perhaps because the Mutota dynasty continued to rule effectively long after the original Torwa Sororenzou rule had been replaced by the Rozvi dynasty, albeit the latter also claim descent from Sororenzou. This means that the similar and divine aspects of the God-King have not blended quite so thoroughly. Despite this, however, the analysis of the Mutota myths so ably initiated by Lan (1985) and perhaps rounded off by my contribution, show Mutota to be divine. In particular Mutota's relationship with Dzivaguru accentuates this. Dzivaguru is the first and ultimate progenitor of mankind, the creator of the autochthons, the owner of the earth (muridzi we pasi). His position is so remote genealogically, when it is associated with descendants, that, like Mwari, his alter ego, he is never portrayed as having a named wife or of having a father before him. He is God. The Great Pool, the source of Life itself - the Mwari is the sower and the seed which, placed in the Great Pool, creates man. They are both Musikavanhu - the creator of Man.

In this sense is Mutota, (who through his 'son' impregnates Dzivaguru through the latter's 'grand daughter') revealed as identical to Sororenzou.

The symbolic interpretation is identical, as is the perception by his adherents, of his divinity.

Mobility VS Bureaucracy

The Mwari shrines in the Matopos display features of a structured bureaucratic organisation. The organisation of ritual appears to be highly developed with a hierarchy of cult officials and well defined procedures. This tends to conceal the high degree of mobility which exists regarding the power and attraction of the individual cult leaders. As I have pointed out in the last chapter, cults are born, grow and die around the dynamics of cult leaders and their charismatic ability to attract followers.

This to a large degree, is mirrored in the mhondoro cults of the north east. Both Bourdillon (1982) and I disagree with Fry (1976) who asserts that the north eastern cults are rigid and "bureaucratic". I shall show in the chapter on Parengeta just how dynamic and fluid they can be and that charisma, organising ability and other qualities of leadership play a large part in determining the people's attachment to, and reverence for, a particular svikiro, as the representative of a mhondoro. This of course must be taken in the context of the relative seniority of the mhondoro. A senior mhondoro who has possessed a medium who lacks charisma may well lapse into dormancy. Chirimanyonga at Nhenene (see next chapter) may have been such a case. A weak svikiro possessed of a junior mhondoro will die - cease to be taken seriously. Conversely, a charismatic and energetic svikiro possessed by a supra-spirit - Mutota for example - will flourish and grow. He will use every device in his

religico-political arsenal to enforce his authority and to enhance his status. His own authority, once established, will be used to manipulate myth to enhance his position and denigrate any opposition. His knowledge of the political dynamic of his region will be put to good effect by the sensitive manipulation of his own and other political leaders' authority.

Mutota is a good example of this. By the time the liberation war broke out in the north east his authority was almost unchallenged. People came from as far afield as Bulawayo (near the Matopos-Mwari shrines) to consult him. In the Valley and the spirit provinces that make up much of the old Mutapa polity he had almost no real challengers. However, Ian points to one - Enos Pondai, the svikiro for Chiwahwa, a lineal descendent of Mutota's.

Ian's study is based upon his interviews with ex Zanla guerillas, with Zanu politicians and with Pondai. He gives the impression that Chiwahwa was a victim of Mutota's prejudice and that he had a large following who recognised him as the legitimate medium of Chiwahwa. I have no quarrel with this. Chiwahwa did gain considerable support and, as has been recounted elsewhere, (Ian 1985) he was able to use his influence in the Kasekete and Muzarabani chiefdoms in such a way as to offer substantial support for the insurgents. Ian's account, in fact, although given from a different perspective to my research, supports the central point of my argument. Ian agrees that Mutota

would not give him the ultimate recognition he needed to be accepted, without reservation, as the true medium of Chiwahwa. Yet despite this he had remarkable success by using the political resources available to him. (Lan 1985 : 176-202).

Shortly before the first insurgents moved into the valley, Pondai had made yet another attempt to gain Mutota's sanction. For some months he had hung about Mutota's village to no avail. Mutota was not likely in any case to recognise him in the light of the dispute they had had over spirit territories in the past. But perhaps more to the point the old man may well have seen Pondai as a potential threat to his own supremacy - despite his seemingly unassailable position as the medium of the supra-spirit. For Pondai was young, alert, energetic and charismatic. He was probably keenly aware of the groundswell of political frustration and anger manifest amongst, particularly, the younger people.

In any event, Pondai eventually gave up and returned to Muzarabani and continued his practice without the blessing of Mutota. It is at this stage that Lan's informants made contact with him and received his support. Having interviewed Pondai myself, I have formed the opinion that one of his motives was to spite the Mutota mhondoro's svikiro and in a sense, challenge him. I might point out here too that the Nehanda svikiro had also denounced Pondai as an imposter, as she did Chipfene, another of the pro-Zanla mhondoro. (This is also

contrary to Lan's version and I shall touch upon this a little later as it is not germane to my present argument.)

Had Pondai not been arrested for his active part in mustering, organising and guiding peasants carrying war materials from the Valley over the Escarpment, it would have been interesting to see how his career might have progressed. Would he have forced Mutota to recognise him or would the superior spiritual power, political skill and influence of the latter ultimately have discredited him? It is hard to say, but one fact must be acknowledged and to do so I must again take up the cudgels with Lan.

Mutota decided - for whatever reasons - to oppose the insurgents' moves into his area and into the areas he influenced. Lan gives the impression that in this he was almost alone and that the insurgents had the full support of the other mediums and of the masses. I do not propose to argue that from Lan's perspective and that of his informants this is not true. However, I make two points. The one is that the guerillas blundered in removing the Nehanda svikiro from her home. By Lan's own admission she was reluctant to go. (Lan 1985.5). All my information points to the belief that she was abducted against her will. This coupled with Mutota's opposition to the Zanla forces did have a profound effect. It is not coincidental that the insurgents moved eastwards from central Mutota territory until they made successful inroads into the Muzarabani area and

established contact with Chipfene and Chiwahwa, both of whom had failed to receive Mutota and Nehanda's sanction and both of whom were young volatile nationalists. From 1971 until 1975/6, some time after Mutota's death, the Sipolilo (Guruwe) district had been almost devoid of insurgent incidents. Insurgents had moved into the neighbouring Mt. Darwin district, away from Mutota's power base. (1)

The Mutota/Chiwahwa confrontation is an excellent example of the interplay and mobility that exists amongst mhondoro. Mutota was subjected to enormous pressure from both sides in the war. Both sides claimed to have his allegiance (Lan 1985 : 188) which points to his situation - the meat in the sandwich! He lived in considerable physical danger. (I myself visited him in early 1973. A day or two later a tmh 46 land mine was unearthed in the road within a few

hundred yards of his village. Fortunately for me the detonator had been put in incorrectly, (which I may say greatly enhanced Mutota's powers in my eyes and those of my immediate staff!) But apart from the physical dangers, he must have been under great stress from the conflicting forces at play in his domain. My experience suggests that he, like so many other people, both humble and prominent, simply wished the whole sorry business would go away. His tactic, like that of other leaders, was to try by whatever means were available to him, to keep the violence and the disruptions to life to a minimum. He therefore permitted his name to be linked with Government messages demanding the end to violence perpetrated by the insurgents. And because of his undeniable authority and prestige he could do this without undue risk to his status, unlike others who were simply ridiculed as stooges or "sell outs" (Lan 1985 : 189).

On the other hand Chiwahwa for a variety of motives opted to join forces with the insurgents. There is no doubt but that in the short run this gave him considerable muscle. Had he not been arrested, tried and imprisoned one wonders how much further he would have prospered in the face of Mutota's opposition. It is quite likely that he would have ultimately gained the supra-spirit's sanction in the light of his popular support. In the long term, with George

Kupara dead and his own release from prison as a martyr-hero of the revolution, his status is almost guaranteed to grow. Already Lan's perception of him, which one must assume mirrors that of his informants, is that he is a powerful leader figure in the Dande. At the time of his arrest in early 1973 he was still a minor figure in the overall perspective of the north eastern districts.

I will dwell no further on the dynamic nature of mhondoro spirit possession as I propose to air this topic at greater length in the chapter on Parengeta with whom I had a far closer relationship than with either Mutota or Chiwahwa. Suffice it to say here that even at the summit of the spirit hierarchy of the mhondoro cult system, there is a constant power game being played which negates any suggestion of a static bureaucracy and points to startling parallels in the Matopos.

Territoriality

To conclude my Mutota model as a clone of the Matopos Mwari organisation I will touch briefly on one last feature, that is territoriality.

Garbett (1963, 1966) has pioneered the territorial aspect of the mhondoro in the north east. Bourdillon (1970, 1976) myself (1975) have endorsed his thesis. I do not propose to repeat all that has

been said but I must, if only briefly, re-state the basic organisational principle. That is that royals upon death become mhondoro - that is senior spirits - and are seen to have sway over spirit territories which correspond in area to the perceived mythical nyika of their living polity. Because there is a hierarchy of the living there must be a hierarchy of the spirits. Thus just as the living are resident in villages, wards and chiefdoms so too are the spirits whose districts, provinces and realms co-incide with the general hierarchical arrangement. But because the past included larger political units controlled by kings or paramounts, what Garbett calls realms are very much larger than present chiefdoms and because the areas ruled by the mhondoro when they were in earthly guise do not co-incide with modern political boundaries, realms, provinces and districts - and even neighbourhoods - do not match neatly the present-day dispensations. Territories may alter too with the ebb and flow of the power and influence of masvikiro, and the changing perceptions thus created of myth and oral tradition. But the principle remains. The largest spirit area I believe is larger than Garbett's concept of spirit realm. To stay in line with his metaphor I call these Spirit Commonwealths. These are the areas embracing the territories of more than one spirit province and even spanning more than one spirit realm. Such a commonwealth is that of the Mutota/Nehanda supra-spirits and includes much of the Dzivaguru organisation as well. The further away one gets from the epicentres of the cults the more blurred are the distinctions between them; or more correctly the more brightly burns the power flame of one or the

other depending on local tradition and mythical kinship ties. This aspect I consider in more detail on pages . What I want to demonstrate here is that just as in the southern plateau area a general area or sphere of influence for the Mwari Matopos cult has been illustrated, so too can we delineate a sphere of influence for the Mutota-Nehanda and Dzivaguru cult centres (see map page .

Within both the Mwari-Matopos area and the so-called "mhondoro" area a similar pattern of subordinate spirit territories can be discerned as well as a spider's web of cross cutting spirit kinship patterns which bind them together.

Finally the commonwealths can be similarly drawn together by mythical genealogies and legends, uniting the whole people in a brotherhood under their creator (Musiki) whose seed, (Mwari) linked with the moisture of its other self (Dzivaguru) moulded (Muvumbapasi) his people into the Vana Vevu, the children of this earthly place, the Varidzi Vepasi, the ultimate Owners of the Land.

Such a charter can withstand invasion, subjugation and dispersal, ideological onslaughts and demagogic hegemonies and yet retain a spirit and a freedom that prevails to emerge triumphant - battered and bent a bit, perhaps, but essentially unchanged.

Conclusion

I hope that this chapter has proved, through the illustrations I have given, that in their essential dynamics there is a striking similarity between the Mwari-Matopo organisation in the south west and that of the mhondoro organisation in the north east. I have tried to take the reader inside the minds of those whose belief systems give life and continuity to the functional religion of the Shona in an attempt to show how the concepts of the Infinite Spirit that is God are given definition in myth and symbolism. This is no easy task. To construct models of this sort must take the builder beyond the articulated, expressed explanations of his informants into an area which runs the risk of developing a momentum of its own and which comes perilously close to fantasy. But I believe that to evade the issue and take the safe way out by not trying, lacks integrity and denies the reader opportunity of sharing an interpretation of this rich field of faith.

- (1) One last small point. Lan states (Lan 1985:187) that Mutota's voice (spirit talk) was tape recorded and used in sky-shouts. To the best of my knowledge this is not so. I checked this recently with the then District Commissioner Sipolilo who was closely associated with Mutota. He shared my opinion. Parengeta was taped - see next chapter - so perhaps Lan's informants were confused. But it is true that Psychological Warfare Operations (Psyops) published leaflets purporting to quote Mutota. I do not think that anyone took these seriously - Mutota, the security forces or the peasantry.

CHAPTER 6MITIMICHENA : THE HOME OF DZIVAGURU

The Zambezi valley dominates the topography of the country north of the plateau. Away from the main flow of the river stretches a flat plain, in places a good 200 kilometres across. This is dry, very hot country, covered by endless miles of mopani forest reaching southwards to the escarpment mountains that rise sharply from the valley floor. In contrast these steep slopes are verdant and, on the uplands, cool and moist by comparison. They are called, appropriately, Mvuradonha. The Hills of Falling Water.

Off the Mvuradonha tumble the upland rivers, cascading down through thickly wooded gorges to emerge on the valley floor, there to seek a path across the plain to the Zambezi. Only in summer, in the rainy season from November to March, do they succeed. For the remainder of the year their waters are sucked up by the high valley temperatures, or they seek refuge below the surface of the sandy river beds. There they percolate slowly down the wide meanders of the rivers' courses towards their destination. Where rock barriers form weirs across their paths, pools remain, sometimes as surface water, more often as

sand lakes - dry on the surface but containing reservoirs of water trapped in the compact tonnes of sand.

Along the banks of such rivers the population of the Valley is found. The best soils are along their banks; shade trees provide relief from the sun and fruit for harvest. Game lies up along the rivers and provides meat. But most important of all, the settlements can draw water from their pools and water holes. Small wonder then that here too, definition is given and thanks offered up to the Divine.

The Mukumbura river rises in the upland "Kandeya Communal Land" - traditionally the land of the Dotito nyika, called Nyombwe. It flows east to skirt a huge buttress of the Mvuradonha and then drops down, northwards into the valley before swinging westwards in its quest for the Zambezi. For much of its westward course it forms the boundary between Zimbabwe and Mocambique. Into the Mukumbura flow small tributary streams that rise in the Mvuradonha. There, perennial pools along their courses provide water in the dry season. One such is the pool of Nyamakati, near a low gravelly hill called Nhenene. On Nhenene hill is a grove of trees - Mitimichena. Mitimichena means white trees, pale trees or even bright trees. In this case the trees in question are *Kirkia Acuminata* or, in the local dialect, Mutuwa (pl. Mituwa). Beneath these grey barked trees on Nhenene hill is the

dongo (deserted or abandoned village) of Karuva. Karuva was the mythical son of Dzivaguru. His mhondoro is a powerful rain-maker. Nothing can be seen of the dongo save two rocks shaped roughly like seats. These are the zvigaro (seats) of Dzivaguru and Karuva.

Nearby the hill of Nhenene is the village of Chigango. Chief Chigango rules over a small nyika called Choma. He is significant not for this, however, but for the fact that Chigango is the guardian of the Dzivaguru-Karuva shrines and their mhondoro.

This then is the setting. A small, dusty village scattered along the river, with its perennial pool, Nyamakati; a low tree-covered hill, Nhenene, with its sacred dongo ra Karuva under the mitimichena. This is the centre of the cult of Dzivaguru-Karuva.

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The Mythology of Dzivaguru

Most versions of the Dzivaguru myth are silent about where he came from and when. He is assumed to have always been in Choma and the neighbouring districts. Bourdillon (1972:114) gives one version (that of Chief Chigango) as stating that Dzivaguru and Mutota parted company at Guruuswa.

Another version, quoted by Bourdillon (ibid : 143) states "He was found here and this is his country. Nobody knows where he came from : he did not come from Guruuswa, but was the owner of Guruuswa and all the country." This is the most commonly held view of informants that I questioned not only in central Choma but throughout his area of influence.

Dzivaguru is said to have had a son. This is Karuva. Karuva's mother's name has never been elicited, nor the manner of his birth. One is left with the bare fact of his existence and that he was sired by Dzivaguru.

Little is recounted of Dzivaguru's activities and this is because he is not thought of as an earthly person. Karuva, his son, on the other hand was an earth person and his deeds are recalled. Recollections of Dzivaguru are confused with the activities of one of his last known svikiros, who was active in the first two decades of this century. This man, Kamoti, is said to have moved about a great deal and provided rain for those who supplicated him during his travels. He was not confined to the single shrine at Nhenene because "Dzivaguru is everywhere. He can appear anywhere at any time."

Dzivaguru is the one who can provide rain. His son Karuva is the one to whom appeal should be made at Nhenene and who is himself also

regarded as a powerful rain-spirit. Karuva is appealed to for rain, but as the spirit closest to Dzivaguru. Even in Central Shona areas when appeals are directed to local Zezuru midzimu or mhondoro, they are asked to intercede with Dziva or Dzivaguru, the Ultimate Rain Provider.

Dzivaguru represents the original Sikarudzi or Musikavanhu - creator of the nation and of the people. Karuva represents the Adam figure; his first son. The invading Korekore under the mythical God-son Mutota found the descendants of Karuva already living in the country they now wished to settle. The nearest Korekore nyika to Choma is that of Nyombwe to the south west above the escarpment. This is the chiefdom (ushe) of Dotito which was founded by Nyabapa Nyanehwe who was married to a Mutota-figure daughter and who adopted his wife's mutupo. Nyanehwe is given credit for the conquest of Karuva (N.B. - not of Dzivaguru). Several attempts to defeat Karuva met with failure because Karuva envoked his magic to hide himself and his people in thick, wet mists. It was only after his brother Chirumbi, divulged the secret of the magic to Nyabapa that he was able to attack Karuva without the latter being able to take evasive action. In disgust at his betrayal and imminent defeat Karuva, rather than fall into the hands of the invader, led all his wives, and all his herds into the pool of Nyamakati. Karuva and his people live in a watery heaven with Dzivaguru, beneath the surface of the pool, where

his herds graze on lush pastures and all is perfect. On clear nights when the moon is full one can hear them singing as they dance to their drums. They even emerge from the pool, but should you disturb them by coming too close, they instantly submerge.

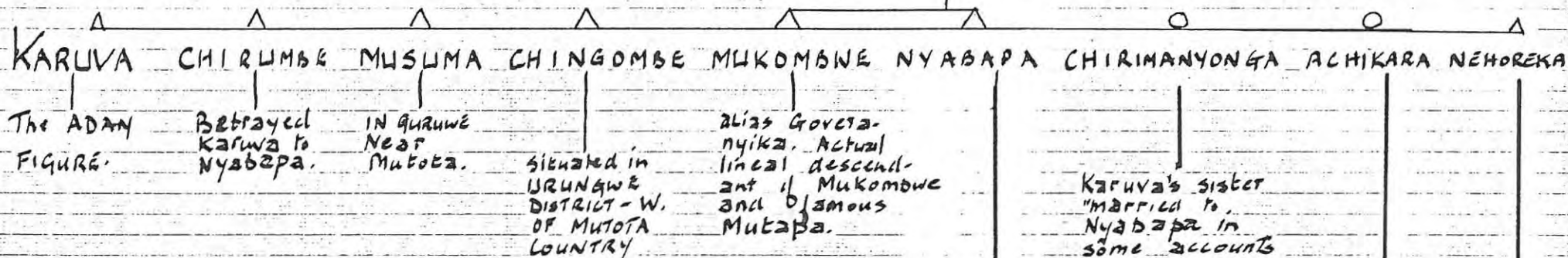
One other feature of the myths needs to be mentioned. All of them attribute kinship relations to other central figures, which do not necessarily accord to the myths of those people. For example Nyabapa is classified as a brother of Karuva, a relationship which does not get mention in the Dotito genealogies. Nyabapa is also said by some to have had intercourse with Chirimanyonga, Karuva's sister and thus by inference his too, on the instruction of their father. Mukombwe, one of the most famous of the Mutota lineal descendants is said to be a son of Dzivaguru. Genealogically this is not possible if the Mutota myth gives him as a clear descendant of that dynasty. (Abraham 1959). But Mukombwe, whose praise name Goveranyika, identifies him as the powerful Mutapa who allocated the various chiefs their nyika within the Mutapa state, is claimed as a Dzivaguru descendant. Goveranyika means literally - to divide or cut up the country. His authority to allocate land, they seem to suggest could only have come from his 'parent' the Muridzi we Pasi, Dzivaguru.

Mutota's 'son' is married to Masuma's daughter, another Dzivaguru

DZIVAGURU

* MUSIKAVANHU

MUTOTA (sons or brothers)



* Alternate (praise) name;
or son
or mother.

A RATIONALISED
PERCEPTION - FOR
CLARIFYING TEXT.
FOR ACTUAL PER-
CEPTIONS SEE
APPENDIX.

child. (See last chapter - page 116).

To the east the powerful mhondoro Nehoreka is married to a daughter of Karuva. And as we shall see shortly, Parengeta, whose svikiro Muwonda lived at Nhenene, has a sister who is Karuva's wife.

Further afield the Musikavanhu spirit in the Chipinge district in the south east, is identified as related (son or brother) to Dzivaguru, (Latham 1965, 1973) as is the powerful autochthonous spirit figure Chimombe to the west. (The genealogy found in the appendix to this chapter portrays in graphic form the relationships I refer to. The next chapter will deal in more detail with what I call the genealogies of the divine. See also Latham 1975 : 175-6).

The Cult Organisation

I will, at the risk of labouring a point, briefly sketch the cult organisation at Nhenene to re-enforce my statement that in essence it is a replica of that found at Matopos and at the Mutota cult headquarters.

In the place of the Mutapi found at the Mutota and other mhondoro cult centres is Chief Chigango whose position as custodian of the

shrines, the mhondoro and their masvikiro, has become institutionalised and hereditary and is in turn given ritual sanctity in the cult mythology. (Bourdillon 1972).

At Nhenene tradition existed until recently that a virgin girl be dedicated to the mhondoro as a child-wife to the mhondoro Karuva. Called the Nechiswa she had to be provided by Chief Gosa of the mutupo nguruwe (wild pig). She lived on Nhenene hill, protected from contact with men by an old woman, a senior 'wife' of Dzivaguru (Woollacott 1963 : 117). It was believed that if any mortal man dispoiled the nechiswa, Karuva would vent his jealous anger on the people by causing drought and pestilence. So jealous was he that for the child to be seen talking to a man was considered dangerous. Those thought guilty of seducing the nechiswa were burnt to death. The last known case of this nature took place in 1922 (Devitt, 1930 : 181-94) when the son of Chief Chigango was seen talking to the nechiswa. He was caught and burnt alive. Government action followed and those principally involved were tried and convicted.

Since that time no new svikiro for Karuva has 'come out' nor has there been a nechiswa. Ironically, however, the secondary legends that have grown up around this incident have tended to enhance the reputation of the Dzivaguru/Karuva cult. (Bourdillon : 1979 : 235/55 : Woollacott R.C. 1963 : 116/121).

So, since 1923 there has been no medium for Karuva nor has there been a nechiswa. Even before this, there seems to have been no medium for Dzivaguru. The description of his last medium (Bourdillon : 1979) suggests that this medium, Kamoti, may have become confused with the spirit of Dzivaguru himself. Yet despite all this Nhenene survives, indeed thrives, as a cult centre. Though there has been no known nechiswa for the spirit, yet there are other acolytes and individuals who serve the spirits. Chief Chigango remains the official custodian of the cult. He has even been described as 'High Priest' (Woollacott 1962 : 117) a title used by Daneel (1970) to describe Simon Chokoto at Matopos. Although Bourdillon (1972) says that Nhenene is primarily the shrine for Karuva he concedes that it is known more widely as the place sacred to the worship of Dzivaguru. My own enquiries support this perception.

"Dzivaguru, also known as Musikavanhu, is the alternative description of the Shona Godhead or Mwari. In this case Dzivaguru was the spirit revered by the Vatawara peoples and whose cult was absorbed into the Munhumutapa Kingdom. His influence is very far-reaching and extends over all the Nhari Nhuka Nyandoro peoples (a clan totem) both in Portuguese East Africa and Rhodesia." (Latham 1975 : 176). Indeed Dzivaguru is more widely known than this. Even people as far afield as Chipinge will tell you that his home is in Mt. Darwin. (Kudaweni). Woollacott, writing in 1963 whilst

stationed in Mt. Darwin records the myths surrounding Nhenene in direct relation to Dzivaguru and not Karuva showing that both he and his informants must have been 'outsiders' according to Bourdillon. "The name of Dzivaguru is better known than Karuva's and is often associated by outsiders with Karuva's shrine" (Bourdillon 1972 : 113). My own informants, closely associated with the shrine, would often use Karuva and Dzivaguru indiscriminately. Two reasons can be put forward to explain this. First, Shona often do this when talking about "father " and "son", particularly when the subjects are both dead. Secondly, and this is more common than observers have commented upon, a medium is often possessed by more than one spirit. Only on very important and dramatic occasions will the more senior spirit 'come out'. It is possible that Karuva's last medium may also, on occasion, have been used by Dzivaguru himself - or at least been perceived to have been used, particularly by people not present at the seance; or by those present whose critical faculties were impaired either by alcohol or emotion. (Spirit ceremonies are characterised by lengthy drinking sessions and dancing).

Although there are no mediums representing either Dzivaguru or Karuva at Nhenene there are (or were) nevertheless mediums representing other senior mhondoro. The two most important are Chirimanyonga and Parengeta. (Latham 1975 : 176). Serving them, in addition to Chief Chigango, are vatapi or acolytes, as well as other attendants such as drummers and mbira ("African piano") players and aspiring mediums;

indeed all the *dramatis personae* one finds at Matopos or Mutota.

The Cult Territory

The cult centre is at Nhenene hill at map reference US 843837 (Zimbabwe topocadastral series, scale 1:50000). This is well within the area falling into the Mutota sphere of influence, which is acknowledged as being part of the old Munhumutapa state. This is acceptable if one recalls that myth and legend account for the overthrow of Karuva by the Dotito chief, Nyabapa Nyanewe, representing the Mutapa. In terms of Mutota mythology, therefore, the Dzivaguru system became incorporated into the Mutapa state.

Dzivaguru mythology manages to accommodate the Mutapa as well, by incorporating Mutapa figures into the Karuva genealogies. The two organisations become compatible as opposed to antagonistic. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest, that in time of extreme drought or disaster, the Mutota *mhondoro* would actually appeal to Dzivaguru figures as the ultimate rain provider (Bourdillon, 1979 ; Lan 1985 : 88).

How then does the territorial aspect get resolved? In order to provide an answer I must stress an obvious and important formula in

space and time by means of an illustration. We walk approximately 6 kilometres an hour at best - but we drive a car at an average of 80 kilometres an hour. A man will walk 40 kilometres a day. He will drive 400 kilometres in the same time.

An hour = 6 kilometres on foot

An hour = 80 kilometres by car

What I am trying to emphasise here is something every infantryman knows only too well. Walking is a slow business, but only if compared to faster means of locomotion. If you talk to a peasant in the Zambezi Valley and ask him how far it is from point A to point B, he will not say it is "so far" in lineal distance. He will say "it is a day's walk, or morning's walk" distant. He will indicate the time of day it will be when you get there in relation to the sun's place in the sky.

Nhenene hill is thus one to two days' walk from Mukumbura D.C.'s camp. It is about fifty kilometres - under an hour by car.

Because of the time taken to move from point A to point B, the local territory covered is better known, is more important and takes on a far greater significance than territory that is a remote five days march away, for example. To the peasant in the Zambezi Valley

Mukumbura is as distant from Nhenene as Grahamstown is from Cape Town to people who have come to judge space and time in terms of the speed of a motor car.

Thus it is that territorial disputes are fiercest at the micro level and tend to become inconsequential at the macro. In order to accommodate this fact, mhondoro areas are specific and well demarcated by natural features, usually rivers. Masvikiro are prohibited by ritual sanction from crossing each others' boundaries, thus minimising possible friction. At local level it is important to acknowledge the territorial supremacy of the supra-spirit. To the individual, or to the local neighbourhood community, this is a matter of survival. Thus, living in the shadow of Nhenene, one acknowledges that it is Dzivaguru/Karuva who is the ultimate spirit authority. If asked about Mutota, one replies that one knows of him as a powerful mhondoro - perhaps the son of Dzivaguru. But he is kurekure (far, far away) and you do not know much about him. If you have need of help Dzivaguru is close at hand and as he is the father of all, the Sikarudzi, what need of his son.

Further afield from the centre of the cult, one would have an

intellectual choice as to who was the most important for you. Convenience, kinship ties and the reputation of the mhondoro would determine your choice. Five days walk in either direction to get to the shrines is a long time. One would choose the centre with the greater reputation and which in your area was supported by the most convincing myths, in relation to your own kinship position.

Thus it is that the cults of Dzivaguru/Karuva and of Mutota/Nehanda overlap in the territorial aspect but are able to accommodate each other. This is further ensured by the distance that exists between the two cult centres. Unlike the Matopos, where, historically the invaders set up their capital at the home of the autochthonous god, the Mutota kingdom was first established many days' march away from the home of Dzivaguru.

We are now in a position to examine the Dzivaguru mythology in the context of its position as a major cult in the north east of the pan-Shona area. At the same time it will be possible to illustrate the other characteristic of the Shona cults which seems to be universal, namely the mobility and dynamism of the cult mythology in its accommodation of the character of the cult officials, particularly the masvikiro, and its relations with other cults.

But let me first examine the core genealogical arrangements as portrayed in the mythology and compare these to the other two centres

so far examined, as well as to the pan-Shona perception of their past.

First of all there is Dzivaguru. He is born of no one, nor did he come from anywhere. He has always been. He created the first person, namely Karuva his divine son. Karuva has no named mother. Dzivaguru is thus both father and mother. This is in contrast to the other cults where the direct sons of God are seen to have been sired by God, but who have a mother albeit one who herself is godlike in that she is possibly descended direct from the High God herself. This suggests an interesting postulation. If Dzivaguru created Karuva out of himself, it graphically highlights his divinity and his presence in the area before anyone else. He is truly the god of the autochthons. The other divine figures that populate Matopos and the Mutapa shrine are seen to have been the sons of a god who divinely places his seed in the wombs of women from known genealogies, women who are themselves royals and possibly divine offspring - women I have classified as Nehanda figures.

Once Karuva (the Adam figure) arrives on the scene it is through him that approaches are made to the High God, and it is about him that most of the mythology is centred.

This latter aspect is very similar to the situation in regard to the

Mutota mythology. Nevertheless, throughout the north east, even in the core areas of the Mutota cult, in times of deep distress it is to Dzivaguru that appeal is ultimately made. Mutota, when giving audience would imply that he was in fact the High God but when in dire need, he would send messages to Nhenene asking for Dzivaguru to help. Or he would approach Masuma, Karuva's brother, whose medium was closer to his village, to intercede on his behalf.

Farther afield, in central Shona areas, it is to Dzivaguru that appeals are directed through the midzimu. Thus, in the Matopos, in central Mashonaland, in the heart of the Mutota area and elsewhere (e.g. Chipinge) it is Dzivaguru that is the Ultimate Provider.

He is God. In fact, it would be appropriate at this juncture to stress again that the name Mwari, for the High God, may only have attained universal currency with the spread of Christianity, for it was the missionaries that selected this name to equate to their Christian God. Thus the name became widely proselytized. But as I have pointed out before, God is known by many names, not least of which is Dzivaguru. It is through Dzivaguru that life germinated.

Bourdillon has stated that he believes that the Dzivaguru of Tavara mythology should not be confused with the Dzivaguru of the Matopos or of central Shona practise. He suggests that Dzivaguru of Nhenene

mythology, must have been an autochthonous chief. (Bourdillon : 1979). I think that I have shown that this is less plausible than my construction. Dzivaguru at Nhenene is no different from Dzivaguru at Matopos in his central position in ritual and in the people's perceptions of the Divine.

I will go into more detail in my next chapter when I examine mythical genealogical relationships and how these justify, strengthen and give substance to popular religious perceptions of the holistic kinship of the divine supra-spirits.

Here for purposes of comparison with the other cult beliefs I wish to construct the Dzivaguru genealogy as perceived by its central adherents. The genealogy on page 137A will help what follows.

As already stated Dzivaguru is the Supreme Being. Even his name re-inforces this. The symbolism is obvious; he is the Ultimate Provider of Life through water. He is the womb and the vagina of mankind.

He creates his first son Karuva and his first daughter Achikara. (Note that Chikara¹ is a synonym for God (Hannan 1974 : 70) - the prefix 'A' simply indicates plural of respect).

Karuva is thus in a similar genealogical position to Sororenzou, Lembeu or Mutota. Mutota even becomes part of the divine connection as well, by implication. Nyabapa, the founder of the Dotito chiefdom, the nearest Mutota Korekore polity to Nhenene, is incorporated into the genealogy as another son of Dzivaguru who came from Guruuswa. Dotito informants claim Nyabapa as a brother or son of Mutota (the fact that this is disputed by others need not concern us here).

The perception is then that Mutota must also be a son of Dzivaguru, a fact with which, in a crisis, Mutota seems to have no quarrel. He sometimes claims to be God himself or at least to be all powerful - until his powers are insufficient to bring the desired results. Then he appeals to the Muridzi we Pasi, Dzivaguru, his father. Thus we see all three cult centres (Matopos, Mutota, Nhenene) revering Dzivaguru as the Ultimate, Supreme Spirit and all three cult centres producing mythic sons to administer the people, first as human rulers and then as the great mhondoro.

Other figures of historical renown are incorporated into the genealogy to explain their divine authority. Thus Mukombwe, a lineal descendant of Mutota, is also claimed as a son of Dzivaguru. (Logically of course, this is all justifiable if one accepts that as God all and anyone can be his son).

Achikara is the first woman created by Dzivaguru. Beyond this and the interesting connotations suggested by her name - she too is God - little if anything more is said of her.

Chirimanyonga too plays no part in mythology except to explain the relationship between the people of Choma and those of Nyombwe under Dotito. By the Chirimanyonga device, Karuva is sekuru - wife provider - and thus an imputed generation higher than the Dotito people, even though Nyabapa is a 'brother' to Karuva, as a younger son of Dzivaguru.

Viewed either way Dzivaguru is the Creator and the Muridzi we Pasi, the original one who owns the Earth.

Mobility versus Bureaucracy : Parengeta : A Case Study of the Rise and Fall of a Svikiro

Bourdillon produced a telling paper (Bourdillon 1982) to demonstrate that Fry (1976) had created "a misconception in Shona ethnology" (Bourdillon 1982 : 181). This "misconception" was that Northern Shona "Korekore" spirit mediums were typically "bureaucratic" in contrast to the "charismatic" Zezuru Central Shona mediums. As Bourdillon points out this definition was accepted by Lewis, Garbett and Werbener (Bourdillon 1982 : 181).

I do not propose to go over Bourdillon's ground. He has, I believe, clearly shown that Fry's analysis was based on insufficient data, or a misinterpretation of the available data. The impression given by Fry that the power of Korekore mediums is fixed by the genealogical position of their mhondoro into a hierarchical status from which their authority and influence can never grow, I have already shown to be faulty in the Mutota-Chiwahwa conflict.

However, it is very important for our full understanding of the nature, function and perception of Shona religious belief and organisation to examine actual cases of mobility and growth of mediums so that these can be seen for what they are - functional demonstrations of a working religion, which is fully integrated into the everyday life of the people. Because this religion is so much a part of their lives, and because the mediums are the living symbols of their religion and of the powerful forces it embraces, they become inexorably involved in the business of power. This is a very obvious conclusion to draw and one by no means exclusive to Shona religious leaders. Bucher (1982) in his analysis of Shona cosmology has dealt with this simple truth in some detail. Like so many simple profundities, however, we tend to lose sight of its significance in constructing the models which justify our hypotheses. Such is the case in Fry's definition of Northern Shona mhondoro being static, fixed by their place in some mythic genealogy, dominated by the

mhondoro Mutota. This, I believe, is impossible if one remembers that the participants are human and therefore their pursuit of power develops its own dynamic. Mediums cannot be 'static'. Depending upon how they manipulate the symbols and paraphernalia of power - and are in turn manipulated - so will they wax or wane in popularity and influence. (Bailey 1969 : XI).

Of particular interest is how the overall religious system (institution) copes with the dynamics of medium mobility. Fry has shown how this is done in Chiota. Bourdillon has demonstrated that amongst the Korekore, the manipulation of the symbol of hierarchical power (genealogical position) can be used to support various stratagems (1982 : 192).

A dramatic and detailed record of this is my study of Parengeta, a spirit which came to prominence at Mitimichena during 1973, through its medium Muwonda.

The Parengeta case study which follows reveals a great deal about the dynamics of Shona religious belief and practice. It is for this reason that I have dwelt in such detail on the events surrounding his rise and ultimate fall. I have also tried honestly to record my own part in the drama of those five years for two reasons. First, I believe it is necessary to declare my own central position the

better to show that I was more than mere observer. Secondly, the case exemplifies how sensitive mediums utilise intrusive forces, to enhance their positions. By virtue of a series of circumstances I found myself well placed to further my research into mediumship whilst at the same time I was charged with administering a district torn apart by a war. As will be shown, we used each other to further our own ends. I recorded Muwonda's progress and in some instances wittingly, in others unwittingly fostered it. No doubt too, I was the main agent who placed obstacles in his path to power and influence - notably when, reluctantly, I was forced to move the Valley people into the 'wire' (protected villages). Most important of all, Parengeta appreciated my interest, understanding and indeed sympathy and he used this to further his career. My patronage may well have been vital to his endeavours, no matter how subtly this was granted or received.

Notwithstanding my contribution to the saga, there remains no doubt that Muwonda's personal charisma and acumen were the main ingredients of his success. Lan refers to him (1985) as a "sell-out", presumably because this is what he was told by his informants - and to them no doubt he was. Lan came perilously close to being Chiwahwa/Pondai's hagiographer (Whisson 1985).

"No political power on earth could ever chain Chiwahwa down"

(Lan 1985 : 202).

Yet Chiwahwa was seen by some - notably Mutota - as an upstart and a fraud who had failed the crucial mhondoro tests.

Perception and personal opinion is everything. Also what really matters is success. Even though Pondai was not accepted as the true medium for Chiwahwa by Mutota he nevertheless has achieved great success despite a temporary setback in a Rhodesian gaol. He turned the advent of the guerillas to advantage in his personal feud with the authority of the Mutota/District Commissioner alliance. He sided with Murenga, God the Warrior. In so doing, he hastened the penetration of violence and disruption into his area of influence. The first half of 1973 saw a great deal of bloodshed and misery in his territory. Many people died, many were herded into temporary camps before being hastily re-settled in poorly designed protected villages. Collective fines were imposed on whole villages. Life became very unpleasant indeed. Muwonda/Parengeta chose another route, one similar in motive to that of Mutota. His objective was to keep the war out of Choma, as was, I suspect Mutota's purpose in his immediate area. Both were partially successful. At least, by taking this route they staved off the worst effects of the war. I suspect that Parengeta made this his aim in the light of what had happened and was happening in Chiwahwa's area. My observation of local

politics throughout the war has convinced me that the overlying motive governing peoples manoeuvres was survival - "what best suits me locally? What expedient is most likely to further my/our little community?" I do not deny for one moment that this sort of decision-making overlay an intellectual commitment to freedom from white domination. But local influences could and did easily suppress this, particularly when they were strongly felt and were given articulate expression by forceful, powerful or charismatic individuals, such as Muwonda/Parengeta.

Muwonda, the medium for Parengeta, lived at the village near Nhenene. Previous investigators into the Dzivaguru cluster of spirits make no mention of him. He first came to my attention in early 1973.

J O C Hurricane (Joint Operations Centre. In this case the J O C for Operation Hurricane, the name given to the counter insurgency (COIN) operation in north eastern Rhodesia in 1972/1980) had been established at Centenary in December 1972. Although my primary task at that time was the identification of all persons in any way associated with occult practises throughout Rhodesia, I inevitably

became drawn into the activities in the North East. The urgent need to provide information on the mediums in that area, my own personal attraction to the excitement and the obvious need to gain the support of the powerful logistical and administrative machinery concentrated at the J O C meant that more and more of my time was spent in that area.

Throughout the districts affected by the insurgency offensive, mediums were being contacted or referred to, by the guerillas. I was involved in a sort of personal race with them to identify those of importance.

On the 18th of January, 1973 a captured diary was handed to me. In it repeated mention was made of Karova (sic). Another passage stated-

"NEHOREKA will send you to NYAMAKAVI" (sic) (Nyamakati it will be re-called is the sacred pool in which, legend has it, KARUVA committed suicide).

Another sentence, presumably an "aide memoire" said:-

"Mostly send people who believe in mediums" (i.e. recruits or incoming insurgents).

Reference was also made to "Chaminuka medium possesses a young girl".

(My own diary at that time stated: "Phylis Gweverende is thought to be a medium for Chaminuka and Tumbare" which graphically indicates our joint objectives!).

The repeated mention of Dzivaguru, Karuva and associated spirits lent urgency to my need to investigate the cult at Nhenene.

The first mention of Parengeta is in my diary for 19th January 1973.

"Parengeta was son-in-law of Karuva. Lives at Chigango's village - Muwonda".

However, his relative importance and position was not given any priority. In fact the District Commissioner's sergeant at Mt. Darwin indicated to me that he could be discarded because he was practising only as a nganga - prescribing cures for personal ills and misfortunes.

"Arikurapa chete" "He only effects cures"

I was more concerned to meet a woman called Matiwodza who was the medium for Chirimanyonga who had recently moved back to Rhodesia

after spending eight months in Mocambique. "Of the svikiros in this district she is most important", I noted on 22nd January, 1973.

My intention was to visit Nhenene as soon as possible, my prime purpose being to make contact with Matiwodza. My objectives were to give her a gift of ritual "hungwe" cloth, to attempt to question her on any guerilla-related activity in her area, to point out to her the dangers of getting involved with them and the need for her to join my efforts to thwart them. I hoped by so doing simply to buy time and to confuse the insurgents as to whether she was "for or against" them. This may sound pretty naive, but in the rapidly moving events of January and February 1973 it made some sense. Both sides were very unsure of their support and the guerillas' communication network was as yet rudimentary. Much of their information was passed by word of mouth and was subject to wide interpretation and distortion.

I appraised the J O C of my intention and received the immediate support of Lt. Col. "Derry" MacIntyre. He promised me an escort of troops and his support when and if necessary, in persuading the Air-force to helicopter me into Choma - and any other area I needed to visit if need be. Thus a day or so later, I flew by helicopter into Nhenene with an escort of four soldiers. This must rank as truly the most unusual encounter of "researcher" and "subject" that can be imagined! Although the troops melted tactfully into the

thick "jesse" bush surrounding the village, nevertheless, quite obviously, conditions were not suited to a leisured, confidence-building meeting.

After some preliminary questioning of some of the villagers I was led to Matiwodza. My memory is of confronting a stout, heavy woman in her middle years, who was almost totally unforthcoming and sullen. She was, without doubt, in a state of nervous shock and terrified of being bullied or arrested. She had only recently come back to live at Nhenene, having been in Mocambique for the last eight or nine months. This alone, she must have thought would place her under suspicion. Furthermore, intelligence had come to us that three guerillas had visited the Choma area (and almost certainly Nhenene) very recently though this incident had not been reported. If I could associate her with this she could be arrested for failing to report their presence.

Instead, I tried to get her to relax by assuring her that I was visiting primarily to pay my respects to her as the medium for Chirimanyonga. Through her assistants I proffered her my gift of a length of black cloth. It was placed near her but was neither accepted nor rejected. I began to talk to her of what I knew of their cult beliefs and legends, as in my experience this formed a useful method of gaining the confidence of my informants. But I

got nowhere. Matiwodza was obsessed by her vulnerability and had obviously decided to present a front of ignorance.

Apart from my escort, lurking in the bush, I was alone with my somewhat captive audience. I had no means of authenticating myself - and began to feel that my objectives were not going to be met in any way. Seeking some sort of lead in, I turned to the thin, bright-eyed man, sitting some yards from Matiwodza, and addressed him. He was dressed in svikiro garb with an elaborate collection of bead and shell necklaces. He constantly sniffed snuff and was plainly alert and concentrating intently on the proceedings. I thought he was one of her acolytes.

I suggested that he might try to explain to Matiwodza who I was. I told him I was a D C from Harare but that my task and interests were in the customs, religion and history of the area, pointing out that I had spent many months in the Darwin district some years previously. I played on the fact that some tribesmen had said (probably by way of flattery) that because I knew so much about their history and beliefs, I must be the medium for Kenny, the first Commissioner of the area. I re-iterated my belief in the importance of the masvikiro and the vulnerable position they were in, as an obvious focus for insurgent attention.

Muwonda, the svikiro for Parengeta, for that is who it was, drew a

little nearer. He spoke very rapidly in the Tavara dialect and I found it hard to follow all he said. In essence, however, he said he knew quite well who I was, that he had been expecting me and that he welcomed my visit. As he talked he threw snuff into his palm and drew deeply on the drug, even putting some of the dust into his eyes. After about fifteen minutes, he began belching loudly and breathing very quickly. More snuff was employed. His body movements became erratic and jerky. Suddenly, he roared and his whole body went into a rigor. He had been possessed. In a different voice and pitch he now began to speak again.

He was Parengeta, the muzukuru (1) (son-in-law) of Dzivaguru. The small gathering of people began to hombera (rhythmic clapping of hands employed as respectful greeting) and some women ululated.

Parengeta then announced that he had a message for the visitor. He told me that some strange men with guns had visited the week before

and that he and all the mhondoro had become alarmed. They abhorred bloodshed. They wanted only peace for their children. He went on and accused a group of white soldiers of having burnt some huts in a nearby village. Violence and destruction were offending the spirits. The people of Choma, his children, the children of Dzivaguru, would suffer the wrath of the mhondoro if they permitted Choma to become a battle ground (nyika ye hondo). This was a dramatic turn of events and I sat very still and listened. However, the trance state did not last long and presently the medium stopped, shook himself like a dog emerging from a pool of water, belched, cupped his hands over his eyes and mouth and sat very still. Only his steady, deep breathing showed the exertion his experience had demanded. An acolyte gave him water to drink.

As is usual, after a svikiro has returned to a normal state after being in an ecstatic trance, the people began talking amongst themselves in low earnest voices. Presently, I addressed Muwonda and indicated that I would like to visit his village again - also that I would like to obtain the co-operation of Chirimanyonga. I thanked him for his hospitality and said that I had heard the words of Parengeta.

Shortly afterwards I left the village and was joined by my escort who radioed for the helicopter to pick us up. One last exchange took

place before I left. I had said to Muwonda that I was sorry my visit had had to take place under such abnormal conditions, with resultant curtailment of many of the leisurely formalities, including, perhaps, a night stop in the village. He replied that it was of no moment and that many more meetings would take place between us - the more so as, when I became D.C. in Darwin, I would be better placed to maintain close contact with the people of Choma. No one, including myself, knew that within a few months, I would be posted to Mt. Darwin as D.C.

Of such stuff are legends made and reputations built.

Muwonda, at this first meeting had displayed the qualities which were to take him from relative obscurity to great prominence over the next few years. Of all the spirit mediums involved in the turmoil and conflict between the Government forces and those of the Nationalists, his career was to be the most spectacular, controversial and tragic. With a whirl and a clatter, not unlike the legendary figures that people Shona history I disappeared in a cloud of dust and fumes with my retinue of retainers: a giant locust carried me away back to Centenary.

I reported to the JOC that evening. This too proved to be an eventful meeting. I had a difficult time trying to dissuade some

of my colleagues from precipitate action. This ranged from a suggestion that both mediums should be arrested for "failing to report" to overt utilisation of Parengeta's "pro Government" stance. Eventually it was agreed that I would re-visit the area. I said I would call for support in a day or two but in fact had determined to return without a military and airforce entourage.

Two or three days later found me motoring down to Choma on the old Darwin-Mukumbura road. I took with me one district assistant. He was armed, I think, with a shot gun. I had a Star 38 mm pistol - a weapon I had never fired. There was some risk of encountering a guerilla patrol or ambush. There was more risk of hitting a land mine which would have surely blown us to pieces, in my unprotected, short-wheel-base Land Rover. It was a long and rather lonely journey and we did not talk much! We left early and got to Choma after two and a half hours' drive, at about 0830 hours. So the whole day lay before us, as we left the Land Rover and walked into the village.

One of the practical problems created by the security situation was that it was never possible to announce one's arrival. This had benefits if you found your subjects at home as they could not prepare a staged reception. But it could also mean frustrating, wasted days if they were elsewhere about their business. But on this occasion I

was lucky.

I was greeted by a somewhat startled headman Chigango (he had been away on my first visit) who knew me from previous meetings. He was a very diffident little man. Although head of the senior Tavara clan in the valley he was regarded by Government as a headman under Chief Chizviti. This was, I believed, a totally incorrect representation. Chizviti was, in tribal terms, junior to Chigango. This anomaly had persisted for a very long time. One researcher (Bourdillon : 1982) reported that because of the anti-white sentiments of the Choma (Chigango) people they were content to allow this situation to continue - unlike other "aggrieved" tribal groups who fought vigorously to gain their rightful recognition.

A little while later, I was seated in the village meeting place (dare) with Chigango, Parengeta, Chirimanyonga and the usual gathering of spectators. As had been the case three days ago, Chirimanyonga was uncommunicative and reserved. Chigango, fulfilling his traditional role of host and guardian of the cult complex introduced me formally to the gathering

I explained my purpose again. I stressed that like the mhondoro Parengeta, I abhorred violence. I acknowledged that the mhondoro had looked with disfavour on developments in the area which eroded their traditional ways (chivanhu) such as schools, clinics and missionary intrusion. I tried to explain that I understood why this view was held so strongly, this being the cult territory of Dzivaguru. I believed that for these reasons they would find it difficult to reconcile with the politics of the guerillas who sought to bring about change by violence.

The guerillas held that the sanctity of clan and kinship had to be submerged into loyalty to the nationalist cause. While this included the ousting of the white man, the ideas they would impose on the people were not Chivanhu but also either European (Chirungu) or even those of their Chinese (Machaina) allies. Schools they would have, clinics and other developments too; and any who opposed the grand design would be dealt with summarily. I urged that the only way to overcome the difficulties that lay ahead was to co-operate by reporting all guerilla movements in the area: thus could the unhappy state of turning Choma into a war zone be avoided. If guerillas moved in and set up bases in the area so too would the Rhodesian security forces.

Did they wish to see an escalation of what had recently taken place (security forces had burnt down three huts in retaliation for locals "not reporting the presence of terrorists") or did they want to be left alone to go about their lawful business? Finally, I told them that the mhondoro Mutota had spoken out against the guerillas and was displeased that his daughter Nehanda had been taken away from her cult centre into the Mocambique bush across the Zambezi where her svikiro (a very old woman) had subsequently died. In fact at that time she was, I now believe, still alive. (Lan 1985).

This second meeting with Chigango, Muwonda and Matiwodza lasted all day. Neither of the mediums went into a state of possession, although Chirimanyonga did give indications of coming out at one stage. Instead of this, however, the svikiro simply displayed the preliminary signs of rapid breathing, snorts and grunts and loud belches. She then stretched out and to all intents and purposes went to sleep. So the stage was, again, dominated by Muwonda-Parengeta.

It is accepted behaviour for mediums to profess to ignorance of their spirit's historical and genealogical position, when not in a state of possession. Muwonda the medium, if he was observing the normal conventions, should not have entered into a discussion on these subjects. Rather should he have become possessed and then, in response to questions, pronounced, as the spirit, and with the

authentic authority of the spirit for whom he was only the mouth piece, on matters relating to himself. Muwonda broke this rule. He talked freely and with conviction both as the medium and as the spirit. I have said earlier that on my first visit he had been possessed and that he entered into a trance state very quickly. I was to learn, as time went by, that he had a facility for entering into a trance very quickly and easily; and as easily to return to normal. Later, when he took to calling at my home or my office, he would often perform in this manner when we were quite alone together. How much of this was "acting" and how much was genuine, I was never quite able to tell - nor do I think it particularly important. It was part of his unique technique and in his case it enhanced his status in the eyes of his audience. It added greatly to the dramatic effect of his performances and gave him a greater degree of flexibility in his manoeuvres.

I was anxious to establish Parengeta's position in the genealogical hierarchy. I also wanted to record the current interpretation of the charter myths of the Dzivaguru-Karuva cult.

What follows is a distillation of what I was told at this meeting and in subsequent discussions.

Dzivaguru was the father of Karuva. He was in fact the Sikarudzi (creator of the tribe) or Musikavanhu (creator of people) and as such came from nowhere. There is no legend of his having migrated into the area from elsewhere. He has always been. Dzivaguru is the apical spirit revered by the Tavana people, who are the autochthons of the area. Dzivaguru, the "Great Pool", is God. He is conceived of as the Greatest, Ultimate Being.

Dzivaguru sired Karuva but there is no reference in any of the stories to the woman who bore this son. People simply state that this was so. Often Dzivaguru and Karuva are referred to simultaneously in an almost holistic way.

Karuva took Achikadzi to wife. She was the sister of Parengeta.



(The name Achikadzi is symbolic in that it means, literally, "She, the respected essence of femininity").

Parengeta's perpetual kinship relationship with Dzivaguru/Karuva is significant and explains his powerful position. He is tezvara or muzukuru (brother-in-law) to Karuva. That is, he is characterised as adviser and confidante, the one person who can fearlessly contradict, challenge and counsel: a close relative who is, nevertheless, no threat to the patriline and who cannot succeed to, or usurp, the authority of his 'brother-in-law'. Indeed, in succession disputes, it is customary for the muzukuru (tesvara or samukadzi) to arbitrate between the disputing agnates of the deceased. However, not only is Parengeta muzukuru. He is also sekuru (maternal uncle - or maternal grandfather demonstrating the implied one generation aggregation of the wife-providing lineage) - 'father-in-law'. As there is no father to Parengeta, he, as the senior male, in his (the wife providing) lineage assumes the position of his (deceased - or non existent) father. As wife provider, he is one (imputed) generation higher than the wife receiving group. Thus in this interpretation of the relationship, Parengeta assumes the interesting status of being one generation senior to Dzivaguru. When I first observed Parengeta, he would state that he was muzukuru. The Nhenene community, similarly classified him as such. Over the years that I knew him, he gradually assumed the mantle of sekuru.

Another powerful spirit in the north east is Nehoreka, whose cult centre is in the Mtoko district. Nehoreka is said to have been the

husband of Karuva's sister. The Nhenene informants could not put a name to this woman. Nehoreka was thought to be the son or younger brother of Mukombwe, a lineal descendent of Mutota and one of the most famous of the Munhumutapas.

In relation to the incorporation of Mukombwe into the Dzivaguru genealogy at Mitimichena, this again makes a senior lineage founder the son of an incestuous relationship i.e. Mukombwe and Nehoreka's mother are brother and sister. (2)

As mentioned earlier no fully recognised mediums have existed for Dzivaguru or Karuva, since 1923, though from time to time there have been claimants to the position. As recently as 1972, a man in the

Mutoko district claimed to be the medium of Dzivaguru but he failed to receive much of a following and my informants gave it as their opinion that he was insane. Certainly, there has been no medium at Mitimichena since 1923. And until the emergence of Parengeta in the seventies, the senior spirit represented at the cult centre was Chirimanyonga.

Chirimanyonga, according to Bourdillon was said to have been a son of Karuva. However, accounts vary and in another version (Bourdillon 1972 : 120) Chirimanyonga is claimed as a sister of Karuva.

My own informants gave Chirimanyonga as being either a son, younger brother or sister of Karuva.

Chirimanyonga's svikiro only became possessed once in my presence, and did not respond to my questions as to the sex and genealogy of the spirit, though I gained the impression from the manner of her speech that she hosted a female spirit. Whether the vagueness as to Chirimanyonga's identity is an indication of its lack of status or can be attributed to the low level of charismatic appeal of the medium Matiwodza is a matter of speculation, though I suspect the latter to be the case. The myths surrounding the whole cult hierarchy are so divergent and open to manipulation (Bourdillon 1972) that the character of the medium plays a significant part in the development

of the spirit's importance and identity.

In his 1972 publication, Bourdillon makes no mention of Parengeta. Previous researchers similarly made no reference to him. In late 1972, I received my first mention of him. Yet by mid 1973 he was the leading figure at Nhenene.

At this our second meeting, Parengeta was very communicative. He vigorously complained about police and army provocations and intrusions into their lives and the fact that White troops had actually walked through the sacred grove. This had caused alarm and resentment. He admitted that insurgents had been in the area but denied all knowledge of any personal contact with them, though they may have seen him while in a state of possession.

The bargaining began. In this Chigango took almost no part and Chirimanyonga lay blissfully removed from any involvement, asleep or perhaps just listening. Put simply the bargain we struck was:

"You keep the security forces from violating our area and customs and we will report the guerillas should they come into Choma. We do not want our lives turned upside down and our spirits abhor violence."

Substantially, this bargain held for the next five years. Often both sides had difficulty (and sometimes even failed) in keeping their principals from violating it, but essentially it worked. The major problem we both had was explaining the rules to the other players. In the process we were both at times viewed with grave suspicion, with threats being made against us, sometimes by both sides! For example, I would be attacked for pleading concessions for Choma which were viewed as playing into the hands of the enemy. I was gullible and being led up the garden path by Parengeta. At the same time a "terrorist letter" would be addressed to me, telling me I was a racist, white pig and that both Parengeta ("sell out") and myself were doomed. Parengeta was similarly treated. He had a far more difficult row to hoe. I was largely protected from violent attack by the forces and weaponry defending me. The power I wielded as DC protected me from the suspicion and derision of those police and army personnel who were impatient of my actions.

Parengeta survived without the physical protection of arms. He was very vulnerable physically; yet he survived, indeed grew in stature and importance during those five terrible years. He relied on the power of his mediumship, his charismatic personality and his quick and agile brain, thus turning his very vulnerability into an impressive display of his power.

On the 27th February, 1973 a report was received that Parengeta had, in the presence of a substantial audience including a District Officer and a Police Section Officer, whilst possessed, made what they termed a pro-Government trance pronouncement. On questioning them it transpired that what he had actually said was that he was opposed to violence and bloodshed, which was taken to mean "terrorist" violence.

Running concurrently with my investigation of Parengeta and the Dzivaguru cult, was my investigation of the other spirits and their mediums throughout the north eastern sector. West of Choma in the Mzarabeni area, a medium was very active in support of the insurgents. This was someone known as Chipfene. Chipfene claimed to be a medium for the spirit of Kagoro (see genealogy of the Mutota lineage). However, there was considerable dispute amongst the local inhabitants as to whether or not he was an authentic medium or a bogus. He was alleged to have visited Nehanda, and in order to do this, had had to cross the Musengezi river. When he arrived at her village, she is alleged to have said: "If you are Kagoro, why did you cross the river? You are obviously a false prophet". She refused to authenticate him.

Chief Kasekete refused to recognise him as Kagoro, though he acknowledged that the spirit medium when in trance displayed many of

Kagoro's attributes. He did not elaborate on what these were. It was after refusal by both Nehanda and Chief Kasekete to recognise the Spirit of Kagoro, that the medium named himself Chipfene (the "Little Baboon"). He continued to be very active in the area, but seemed to confine his performances and immediate following to sub-adults. At his seances, all the dancing was performed by young boys and girls. A young girl who had not reached the age of puberty did all his cooking. Another unusual practice on his part was that he played his own drums and mbira.

By late 1972 and the early months of 1973, Chipfene had sided with the insurgents. His status in the area grew considerably owing to his ability to evade capture by the security forces.

His influence continued to grow. He was active in assisting the insurgents to gain local support by making threatening pronouncements. He frightened people by saying that he would send lions to eat them if they did not co-operate. He was also beginning to exercise some influence over the blacks in the Rhodesian African Rifles, police and civil administration. A letter which was attributed to him came into my hands. It said, "All spirits of Zimbabwe are supporting the war, so that the strength of the whites will be destroyed and they will be killed or run away. Mbuya Nehanda has also given us weapons of war and the knowledge to use them. This

is in order that we, your family, may prosecute the revolution (Chimurenga) that was started by our forefathers." A later communication from Chipfene addressed to the "security forces of Mr. Smith" read as follows:- "I am pleased to write my letter to you Africans. I am Chipfene, who stopped the Freedom Fighters killing you because you Africans are the Sons of the Spirits of Zimbabwe, but you have arrested parents in the villages. If your attitudes become enlightened you must understand we want the Boers to return to their homes or else come to the side of the Freedom Fighters. If you continue doing the sort of things that you are, by the end of next month you will be finished. Those who burned my materials at my home will 'get it'. Return my drums and materials. Rebuild my house. No matter what you do you will not see me, but wherever you are I can see you. Return all the people (referring to people detained for interrogation) and fight on the side of the Freedom Fighters. Zimbabwe is ours. I am Chipfene."

It was this very sort of action on the part of the insurgents and their supporters that I had been instructed to counteract. Thus when I reported the success that we appeared to be having with Parengeta, I was yet again put under pressure to capitalise on this in order to counteract the effects of Chipfene and others. There was a perception on the part of the white administration that the belief in the pronouncements of mediums was absolute on the part of the African

population. It is quite possible, therefore, that they were more alarmed by the pronouncements by people like Chipfene than the African troops themselves. When mediums pronounced favourably towards Government, they felt compelled to capitalise upon this.

The pamphlets distributed by the Government forces in the name of Mutota and others such as Parengeta were largely a response to the literary messages attributed to Chipfene and other pro-guerilla mediums - an example of psyops officers and political commissars employing the same weapons.

Thus began a bizarre and almost pantomime sequence of events using Parengeta and eventually a reluctant Chirimanyonga in the service and support of Government psychological warfare activities.

The same District Officer who had reported on the favourable pronouncements of Parengeta, was encouraged to have another meeting with the medium and to tape record his trance speech. If this proved to be worth using, the intention was to utilise the tape in a sky shout over the operational area. Despite my advising against this rather unusual idea, plans went ahead and in due course Parengeta

obliged. Indeed Chirimanyonga also went into a state of possession and appeared to side with the spirit of Parengeta in opposition to the insurgents; though she said almost nothing.

It is almost impossible to say how much Parengeta understood of the intentions of the authorities when his call for peace was recorded. Whatever he did comprehend, however, must have been associated in his mind with a decision, whether realised or subconscious, to capitalise on the circumstances, by enhancing his status in the eyes of his followers and the authorities. I was not at the gathering but the event was fully reported to me.

To give some measure of authenticity to the proceedings, the District Officer had requested the meeting, in order to meet the tribal elders, mediums and the chief, with a view to explaining to them the current dangers of the insurgency situation and the need for the tribesmen to co-operate with the Government forces. These sorts of "platform" meetings were commonplace and were being held frequently throughout the operational areas, though what actual effect they had on the population is questionable. Nevertheless, they were a means of putting across messages to a fairly large audience. On this particular occasion, there were several hundred peasants present. In addition the District Officer was accompanied by a troop of para-military police. Thus there was a large body of people

assembled - and one which was representative of considerable power and authority.

The resemblance between the ritualised public performances of persons in positions of power and authority, to the conventions of actors in a staged drama is one easily drawn. The District Officer performed his part in the set piece, by delivering an address in which he stressed the benefits of co-operation with the Government forces and the dangers and disadvantages of harbouring the forces of the "enemy". Great stress was placed on their total lack of respect for persons and property, their violence and their tendency to terminate the lives of any local leaders who failed to follow their orders explicitly. The fact that a number of chiefs and headmen had been killed and masvikiro either abducted or killed was used to emphasise this fact. At some stage in the proceedings, the impressive fire power of the Government forces was displayed. The police were all armed with FN rifles and these were brandished before the crowd. A sergeant was instructed to put his weapon on automatic fire and rip off a magazine. This he did to great effect by aiming at a nearby sapling which satisfactorily collapsed in a shower of leaves and splinters.

In order to reinforce his message the district officer called upon people to "tsvinira" his opinion - that is, to publicly endorse and

support his words. By doing this he was hoping to gain a commitment from the people that would help strengthen any latent opposition to insurgent activity amongst them.

After a little encouragement, Headman Chigango made a hesitant pronouncement in praise of the Government forces, stressing their obvious power but in fact not actually committing himself to support for their cause. With the rural peasant's genius for the oblique remark, several others made similar little speeches. This too was all part of a recognised play that was well understood by all parties present.

Throughout this period, Parengeta and Chirimanyonga had been sitting on reed mats, roughly centre stage and slightly apart from each other and the rest of the crowd, at the forefront of the semi-circle of people that faced the District Officer and his party. They had sat in total silence throughout the proceedings thus far - and in the case of Chirimanyonga, in almost complete immobility. Parengeta had been steadily sniffing snuff, and was visibly moved by the sergeant's fire power demonstration. Just as one elderly man was giving a stirring rendition of the FN's noisy demolition of the sapling, Parengeta 'came out'. (Kubuda).

He made an impassioned plea for non-violence. The phrase most

repeated in the spirit's address was: "Hatidi ropa" - We don't like/want blood (shed).

To avoid violence, he advised the people to follow the instructions of the district officer and to report the presence of insurgents in the area, explaining how their spoor was to be covered and protected until security forces could be summoned to follow up on the tracks so preserved. Significantly, as in the speeches of others present at the meeting at no time did the spirit condemn the guerillas. What he did condemn was violence. What he suggested as a remedy was the reporting of the spoor of insurgents passing through the area so that security forces could follow up.

What was not said, however, was probably understood even better than what was. At no time did the spirit advocate the capture of insurgents by locals - nor the reporting of their presence at a particular place so that the security forces could make contact with them with a view to killing or capturing them. Again it was a masterpiece of the oblique "non-message" at which adroit diplomats and politicians are so adept.

Notwithstanding this, the message was recorded on tape. Muwonda was informed that the contents of his trance utterances had been put on tape and the District Officer actually played the recording back to

him. He was asked if he had any objection to this being played over the whole area by means of a voice machine in an aeroplane and I was given to understand that he acquiesced with some enthusiasm and apparent amusement. As so it was! By an extraordinary blend of modern technology and ancient belief, Parengeta's voice was broadcast over most of the populated areas of the north east border districts, in areas indeed, where he had never been heard of before.

The amazing aspect of all this was that he was not killed by the guerillas, ridiculed by all his followers, or diminished in his authority. Indeed if anything he seemed to gain in status, much to my surprise.

Muwonda seemed to be immune to the normal pressures and social forces which one would have expected to operate in a situation like this.

I expect, however, that so abnormal were the circumstances that there were no precedents and therefore no rules that society could apply. So by the very audacity of his behaviour he was making his own rules and establishing a unique place for himself.

The response to the sky shout was predictably negligible. Certainly there was no increase in the flow of information regarding guerilla movements to the security forces. Perhaps the best recorded opinion

of the whole exercise was received from the crew of the Dakota who flew the sky shout mission. They thought the whole episode was a ridiculous and expensive waste of their time - apart from offering up an easy target for enemy small arms fire. To effect a sky shout one has to fly very low in slow circles over a populated area. Later I was to do a number of "live" shouts myself and can testify to the fact that an AK 47 can make holes in a Dakota! Reports from teams on the ground who were asked to monitor the shout were fairly consistent in saying that they could understand very little of it - it sounded rather like the nasal gibberish of a railway station tannoy.

After this epic presentation I was able to get the authorities to leave Parengeta alone. So for a period of several months he was left to his own devices.

I was busy in other parts of the country and it was not until August that I returned permanently to Mt. Darwin, not as a research officer, but as District Commissioner. It was now that my relationship with Parengeta was really to develop.

By August of 1973, it was more than obvious that the insurgents were

embarked on a full scale and lasting offensive. This was totally unlike previous incursions which had been of short duration, by limited numbers of men. "Operation Hurricane" was not like this at all. It was, in fact, a full scale and sustained guerilla war which was being waged against the Rhodesian regime. The penetration routes through the Zambesi valley were sparsely populated and, once away from the rivers, crossed arid and inhospitable country. The insurgents had to trek long distances carrying heavy loads of war materials before they could reach necessary food and water. If this could be denied them, then their task would become that much more difficult and they would have to march on, up the escarpment to the Nyombwe, before losing themselves in the more heavily populated uplands.

To put effect to a scheme to deny the guerillas access to the valley people the following strategies were contrived:

1. To resettle the scattered villages into consolidated, protected villages;
2. To clear the border area along the valley floor and to declare it a 'no-go area', meaning that it would be an offence (in fact people could be shot on sight) for anyone to move about in it, other than with the permission of the DC - excepting, of course

the security forces.

3. To construct along the border itself, a cordon sanitaire in the form of a wide double fenced area, heavily seeded with anti personnel mines and other explosive devices. Quite obviously these plans were going to involve a huge disruption and traumatic change to the lives of the people concerned. Not least among these would be the settlement at Mitimichena the people of Choma.

In addition to the planning of the resettlement of the people involved, I had to supervise the construction of a network of all-weather roads as well as three new bush landing strips. Water had to be found in sufficient quantities to sustain the settlements that were being planned. A design for the proposed villages had to be worked out; one that would provide at least some arable lands for eventual cropping. There were those in Salisbury who believed that the consolidation was a blessing in disguise and that the new settlements would form the nucleus of growth points and assist in triggering off regional development and a march away from subsistence economics to a more sophisticated cash economy. While I did not believe this would happen, I nevertheless felt that it was going to be necessary to develop the areas surrounding the protected villages, if for no other reason than that I considered it imperative in the

circumstances to make life as attractive as possible for the settlers. Thus it was that agricultural holdings were surveyed within the "protected area". A clinic was to be built and even water-borne sewerage was embarked upon, at least in the first protected village. This was sited at Mukumbura, right on the Mocambique border, where I already had a sub-office. I was criticised by the Army for this siting but eventually won the day when I demonstrated that within the time-frame that I had been given there was just no other place where sufficient potable water could be developed for the estimated initial number of two thousand people that had to be moved.

Starting in September, construction of the perimeter fence of the village was got under way and was completed by early October. This was a diamond mesh, eight foot security fence of some four kilometers. Concurrently the levelling of the ground inside the village was under way, taking care to preserve as much of the indigenous timber as possible. A clinic and community hall were also built.

The engineers from the Water Development Department were meanwhile sinking a "spider" in the sandy river bed to extract water from the long, dry sand pool that stretched along the northern border of the village. This sand extraction unit was to work without serious hitch

for the next five years and was a great credit to its designers. They finished it just in time. The last pipes were connected on the day the villagers moved in.

While this was all taking place, I was doing a census of the people to be moved. We had decided to move only those villages that were right on or straddling the border. This involved moving twelve village units, stretched over some forty kilometers along the border and about two to three inland. The people came from the Chiefdom of Chizwiti, Gomo and Kaitano, (headmen under Chizwiti). Both headmanships were de facto independent chiefdoms that had been placed under Chizwiti in the fifties as part of the then scheme to rationalise the size of the chiefdoms. Chizwiti was the Tavara chief with the largest following. None of Chigango's people were to be included in this initial move.

Because the people to be moved lived in such close proximity to the border, I felt it best not to give them any warning of their move. Obviously, they must have known that something was in the wind, but no one knew precisely who was to move and when. I did this for two good reasons. If they had known, many of them would have drifted into the bush or crossed the border. And almost certainly on the day of the move ZANLA would have ensured that the task would be as difficult as possible.

It has been necessary to give the background to this whole programme, in order that my own central position in the drama with Parengeta (and thus the Valley people) can be more readily appreciated.

I was about to turn their lives upside down.

To make matters even more difficult, the company of troops that was allocated to me to help make the move was to be a South African Police unit. These were the dreaded "Mabunu" - the Boers from the south and the very symbol of white racism in the eyes of the masses. Their convoy drove into Mukumbura a day or two before the move and set up camp near my permanent restcamp and sub-office, near to the little fortified police post that my predecessor had built in the shape of a tiny Beau Geste fort, and which was known as Sidi el Mukers.

After briefing the officers and NCOs we, together with sub-unit commanders, briefed every man in the Company, allowing time for translation and questioning. We finished just before midnight - in time for the patrols to move out in their Bedford RMs (the "Big Daddies" as the South African Police called them), so as to be in position for the pick-up at first light.

The move into the village went off better than could have been

expected. There were no accidents, no children got lost or fell off the lorries. The trucks started coming in by about 0800, laden with every conceivable possession from carved stools to old petrol drums. Tired, but grinning policemen, were even seen dandling children on their knees as they lurched down the final track into the protected village.

I had planned the village so that each kraalhead was allocated a street, and each household (i.e. mother and children), received a stand of ten meters by ten. On each stand stood a car port to be used as a temporary shelter until they could build their own huts. I had allowed for the military trucks to spend at least a week returning to the old village sites to bring in anything and everything that the inmates wanted, including dismantled huts (poles and thatch) so that the people could feel that they were actually living in their own houses. This was in stark contrast to the villages to be built in my neighbouring district. There they were confined to their car ports, to which had been added sacking and cement slurry walls. They were lifeless barracks, and indeed gave rise to the inevitable criticism, that the people had been moved into squalid concentration camps.

I deliberately provided as little as practicable, other than their own materials, in the hope that they would build their own houses as

fast as possible, in their own style. It was certainly not Heaven, but they were no more uncomfortable than they had been in their old villages - though they were much more restricted as to space. In addition, though no one was prevented from leaving the village during daylight they did have to go through a check point for identification, and to see that they were not taking out large quantities of food to feed the insurgents.

It took about a week for the people to fall into a sort of routine but apart from a few incurably lazy (and usually alcoholic) members of the community who cared not a fig where or how they lived, the village took shape remarkably fast. So fast, indeed, that we were able to start planning the second and third villages, to be known as Mukumbura II and III. Once we had established a source of water, building of the perimeter fences commenced. The clinic, community hall and office administration for the first village were to serve all three so work progressed at an impressive speed. Mention should be made of the fact that Mukumbura was already in a sense a sort of "growth point", in that, being the border post, it was the site of a permanent sub-office, and there were several stores and a school.

However, no sooner were we well underway than the exceptionally heavy rainy season held up progress for several months. It was impossible to move with heavy vehicles off the main roads, and even the latter

were no guarantee of not getting stuck. So it was not until May of 1974, that the final move of the people destined for Mukumbura was completed. These were the remaining people under headman Gomo, and about twenty villages under Chizwiti. This village housed some four thousand souls and was to prove too big to administer effectively. Mukumbura I, did become a sort of home to its inhabitants - it certainly looked like a settled, quite attractive "native" village. Mukumbura III was always disreputable - and it was far from secure.

Shortly after the move, Parengeta came to see me. Part of our deal was that the Choma people would not be moved into the Mukumbura villages. He was most concerned because some of "his" people had been caught in the net when the troops had collected the people for Mukumbura III. I was not aware of this, and was somewhat puzzled to find that this was so. What I had forgotten, or ignored was that in the Zambesi Valley area many of the tribesmen practise a form of marriage known as "kugarira". A man too poor, or not in possession of the necessary bridewealth in the shape of cattle, goats or even cash, will go and live with the family of his bride, where he will be in service to his wife's father for a number of years. In not a few cases, after his period of servitude is over, the man elects to stay on in the village of his wife's people. Seldom does he bother to inform the authorities of his movement from one village to another, for he still regards himself as a member of his own father's

village, and his absence as only temporary. A temporary sojourn can be almost a lifetime so a fairly large percentage (probably as high as ten to fifteen percent) of the male population will be found living away from their paternal kin, though they still belong to the parent villages or area, particularly in regard to land shrine and ritual purposes.

I had resettled people that belonged to the Choma group of villages under Chigango. Because of their settlement in the new village, they were cut off from their kin and from their land shrines - and perhaps most important of all from the cult centre at Mitimichena.

I had not seen Parengeta for quite a few weeks. Our last meeting had been concerned with the activities of the road engineers, building the new road into Mukumbura. This passed through Choma. In the course of their work, looking for suitable gravel for road surfacing, the engineers had quarried on Nhenene Hill. It was more my fault than theirs. I had forgotten, to tell them not to invade the sanctity of Nhenene or any other sacred places. I had managed to stop them before too much work had been done and I humbly approached the cult officials, in the shape of Chigango as the

guardian and Parengeta himself as the ubiquitous and restless mouthpiece of the gods, and offered my apologies. Parengeta came out and the spirit was very excited, angry and then querulous. It demanded reparation for the desecration of the holy place where Dzivaguru and Karuva lived. It agreed finally that there had been no malice on the part of the Roads Department, and accepted my offer of a bolt of cloth as reparation for the damage.

Muwonda now approached me for the first time at my office in Mt. Darwin. To do this he had to walk the eighty odd miles in from Nhenene.

I had developed the habit of going over to my office very early in the morning, often before it was light, in order to attend to my paperwork before the pressures of the day interfered with my concentration. As time went by this habit became known so that quite often I would receive visits at unearthly hours, from people who had no wish to be seen with me. They usually announced themselves by some small noise in the passage outside my office - a discreet cough, a murmured greeting, a knock on my door, or the traditional Shona request for access "gogogo" and sometimes "Hodi!"

Parengeta gave me a terrible fright. I have no doubt he intended to startle me. I was concentrating hard on some papers when something

caused me to look up. There sitting on the floor against the far wall of my office, silent and unmoving, shrouded in his black robes and gazing intently at me, was Parengeta. At half-past-four of a quiet morning it was very off-putting and I was not only startled, but for a moment or so, extremely frightened. After equally silently staring (glaring might be a better word) at him for what seemed a long time - I remember the amused, alert look in his dark, smoky black eyes - I got up and closed and locked my door. We greeted one another.

With no audience to observe the performance of either party we were on an entirely new footing. Apart from the initial advantage he had gained by sneaking in on my privacy, and putting me off balance, the initiative really lay with me. He was on my turf, in unusual (and for him, dangerous) circumstances. Yet he gave no impression of apprehension as he sat before me. He never sat on one of the chairs. Like many of his generation, he would have felt uncomfortable in one, both physically and mentally, as to do so would have been a sign of bad manners. In the presence of someone respected, or regarded as superior, one had to be seated on the ground. For my part, after I shut the door, I did not return to the chair behind my desk, but sat, instead, on a visitor's chair much nearer to him.

Greetings over we got down to business. He told me that what amounted to three villages of "his" people had been moved into Mukumbura lll. This seriously affected his credibility, as he had both in person and as the spirit told his followers that they would not live inside "the wire" at Mukumbura. I conceded this, but pointed out that my problem would be to justify letting them out. My colleagues in the security forces would raise all sorts of objections as would, I was sure, my Internal Affairs superiors. Generally, in public, we both politely gave the impression that the other was the supreme authority in his respective sphere. There was no need for that now. We were both too realistic to delude either ourselves or each other.

So we worked out a plan.

I would permit a request from the villagers for him to hold a seance in the protected village. At this meeting the spirit would almost certainly support the request of the villagers concerned to be allowed to return to their homes. I would permit them to leave the village on two conditions. First, they were not to return to their old villages, but to build as near to Chigango's village at Nhenene, as possible. Secondly, the reporting of guerillas must be more expeditious. Parengeta would denounce "terrorism and violence".

Our discussion was over in minutes. I gave him a cone of snuff tobacco and opened the door. He drifted along the passage, down the stairs and out into the pre-dawn twilight.

A rather curious and unexpected player now joined the cast.

An editorial writer for the National Geographic Magazine was doing a feature article on Rhodesia. As part of his effort to understand and report on what was happening, he came up to Mt. Darwin. His visit coincided with the planned Parengeta performance and he asked if he could be permitted to witness the proceedings. As a result, our little ploy, designed to resolve a problem of purely local dimensions received the full glossy treatment of this widely read and distributed magazine. What neither of us fully grasped, of course, was that we were both performing in an arena which was receiving international attention. Furthermore, while we both genuinely, I believe, thought that we were not only acting, but directing the performance, we were in reality playing out the inevitable sequences in a play which was being produced by forces beyond our meagre (though locally powerful) resources.

Parengeta, while he no doubt felt he was leading his people, protecting and shielding them, nevertheless in fact did little more than skilfully articulate their wishes. As District Commissioner I

was trying to do much the same thing. And whereas we were able to control to some extent, the pace and direction of events, we were, in the end, powerless before the greater forces and the over-riding political imperatives. Perhaps a better analogy would be that we were directing the play - even ad libbing much of the script, but the plot, the general outline and the inevitable conclusion had been written for us. Our carefully planned scene was suddenly seized by the producers (the people who were paying for the production) and thrown onto the big screen. Two bit players in a country show were suddenly international stars!

It had its effect.

Parengeta was photographed and appeared in full colour. His message was published, having been suitably translated for the Geographic. One wonders what the guerilla high command made of it all in Dar es Salaam and Lusaka? Parengeta seemed to perform more dramatically for the additional audience - the crowd, always conscious of the latent drama of such events responded splendidly. They danced and drummed all night before the meeting started at 7 am on June, 13, 1974, and until the final curtain went down at mid-day. I had agreed to let the villagers return to live in Choma forty kilometres to the east of Mukumbura. They had agreed to settle nearer to Chigango's village as the first step towards consolidated settlement in that area. At

Parengeta's request government would be asked to elevate Chigango to a full chief. The spirit had won the day for the people. Parengeta had increased his status and power.

The position on the Valley Floor now was that nearly all the people living right on the border had been re-settled - apart from the Chigango/Mitimichena villages at the cult centre. I had no intention of disturbing them and argued that the benefits of leaving them outweighed their continued exposure.

By this time I had turned the main thrust of my energies towards establishing and maintaining contact with the upland population in the vast Kandeya area. In the Valley, roadwork continued as did the construction of the border fence. The border at Mitimichena was less than a kilometer from the village. It was an imaginary line running through the endless mopani and until the war erupted was of only symbolic importance. People moved freely backwards and forwards and families and kin groups paid more attention to their relationships than they did to their national status.

Parengeta had a land shrine north of the border under a sort of palm tree. Here he claimed, his spirit was revered and received libations of beer. The border fence with its mine field would cut him off from his shrine and from some of those who tended it.

The Army Engineers left a passage through for him which became known as Parengeta's Gate. Ambushes were placed there from time to time; it also allowed our troops easy access into Mocambique for "clandestine operations". However, much later in the war it was closed because it was felt that it left a vulnerable loop-hole in our defences. Parengeta was very upset about this, but there was nothing he or I could do about it. But a senior member of the Wild Life Conservation Department who was on border duty at Mukumbura, on hearing of Parengeta's deprivation and of the spirit's stated need to have a similar tree for his benediction, proceeded to search the surrounding bush for one. None could be found, so he had one flown in from Gono re Zhou in the south eastern lowveld, which he proudly presented to the now famous medium!

Perhaps as a result of the settlement at Mukumbura lll, with its limited strategic importance against which weighed heavily the negative effects upon the population, I began to voice serious doubts about an extensive programme of resettlement into fortified, protected villages.

I was also more conscious than ever of the need for very careful investigation into every related aspect of any movement of people. I became convinced at that time, that no further movement of people into protected villages should be undertaken. Instead I opted for a

plan of erecting protected "sub offices" throughout the district from which my staff could patrol their areas with a view to establishing maximum contact with the local population. I saw this as vital to the overall aim of regaining the confidence, and ultimately the support of the people. We had much to offer in the short term - in contrast to the insurgents who had nothing except a long term commitment to rid the country of the whites and to share their wealth amongst the people. I may have been naive. There were many who thought that I was. Nevertheless, I did receive support from sufficient people to proceed with my programme. Not least in this, was the then commander of the RLI Lt. Col. Dave Parker, a remarkable soldier and brilliant leader.

A plan was also formulated to build three sub offices on the Valley Floor; one each at Kaitano, Chizwiti and Chigango. Kaitano received priority as it was on a direct infiltration route. Chizwiti and Chigango followed in that order. It was thus a relatively long time (particularly in the frenetic pace of a rapidly escalating war) before Chigango Keep was built. The word "keep" eventually became part of the language - both vernacular and English - denoting a protected village. When I first used it, I intended it to describe the fortified office and field quarters from which my District Officers were to operate. Later, with the widespread construction of protected villages, the "keep" design that we initiated, was adopted

everywhere, as the inner fortress protecting the village - or more accurately the staff running the village. Eventually, sometime in 1976 we built a "keep" at Chigango's. It consisted of an earthen bulldozed outer wall, about ten foot above the surrounding ground, with the office and barracks within. I was careful to erect this away from the sacred hill of Nhenene - as much out of respect for the cult centre as for tactical reasons.

All this activity Parengeta stoically accepted. He continued to have regular contact with me, usually by coming in to see me at my office about once a month. At these meetings we kept each other informed and discussed developments. His attitude had become more that of a respected chief than that of a svikiro, except that on occasion, and quite without any pattern, he would become possessed by his spirit. And of course the meetings were always "secret", in the sense that only the two of us were present. But here the secrecy ended, for it was widely known that we conferred. This caused a lot of suspicion. I was suspected by some of being in cahoots with the insurgents. Parengeta was, as I have stated previously, suspected by these self same insurgents of being a government "sell-out".

But in all that time, he only once informed me of a band moving through his country in a manner that could be followed up to advantage. I got word to the Army and the band was successfully

dispersed. He never actually told me so, but I was given to understand that he was satisfied with the result. On another occasion, Parengeta was arrested by the Special Branch because they had information that he had shown insurgents where to best place a TMH46 land mine. Whether he did or whether he did not, they eventually released him for lack of evidence. I did not interfere. The more he was seen not to be my "stooge" the better. And our relationship was sufficiently developed for us both to know this.

Thus our relationship settled down to an almost humdrum affair until a year or so later. The war had escalated dramatically with the change of rule in Mocambique, and ZANLA were penetrating in large numbers. Despite the fact that my system of patrols and daily contact was having some success I was eventually ordered to proceed with the re-settlement of the entire population of the district. This included Chigango and the people of Choma. Thus despite all my efforts, and those of Parengeta, to avoid living inside the "wire" the fateful day arrived and I was compelled to move them in. Limited concessions were granted to him in that he was permitted to remain outside the wire for ritual purposes on some nights, when he was required to have a seance. But it was an uneasy arrangement, with the seance being observed or ambushed by my men.

Two last episodes in the Parengeta story need to be recalled. The first came as a result of a local farmer approaching me for assistance in sorting out some labour unrest in his farm compound. There had been a spate of fights, drunkenness, theft and generally poor turn out for work. This request coincided with one of Parengeta's periodic visits to my office and I discussed it with him, asking for his opinion as to what I should do. I should mention that, in similar situations it was not uncommon for farmers to seek the services of reputable ngangas to settle the problems in their compounds. But I must confess to being somewhat taken aback when Parengeta offered to settle the matter himself. I arranged for him to visit X's farm and sat back to await results.

Both farmer and Parengeta expressed entire satisfaction. The labour in the compound was reported to be much more stable, drinking and fights had declined and the main thief had been exposed and arrested. Parengeta is reputed to have charged the farmer \$50 for his services and from 50c for an individual consultation. The thief had confessed after the initial group meeting at which the spirit had emerged and harangued the crowd. Particular emphasis had been placed upon the fact that much of the labour came from Malawi. They were in a foreign country and had angered the spirits of their host country by loose living, by taking local women as wives and failing to pay lobola and by even stealing from each other and from their employer.

Death and destruction were promised unless they mended their ways. It was an impressive performance and my informants were quite satisfied that Parengeta had, on this occasion, simulated possession by the spirit, at least to start with.

After observing him and other spirit mediums over a very long period I have formed the opinion that this sort of sequence is quite common. The medium begins the seance while simulating his possession by the spirit. Later, as the excitement and tension builds up, and as his own exertions act upon him, by a process of auto hypnosis, he is seized by his spirit and enters a state of trance. This has been defined simply as "an altered state of consciousness". Trance, Lambeck (1981) claims, is biologically inherent in humans and is thus not either a sign or consequence of psychological pathology. The form that trance may take varies enormously across cultures and peoples, as may be expected. Trance may erupt spontaneously, stimulated by the trancers immediate psychological and physiological condition involving such factors as excitement, stress, hyperglycemia and hyperventilation. Trance usually follows certain cues in the outer environment. In fact, trance appears to be a learned behaviour. The original incidence of trance in an individual is usually induced with the aid of deliberately applied techniques, most frequently including drumming, dance and hypnosis. As Lambeck says "the symbolic structure is necessary to form and generate the

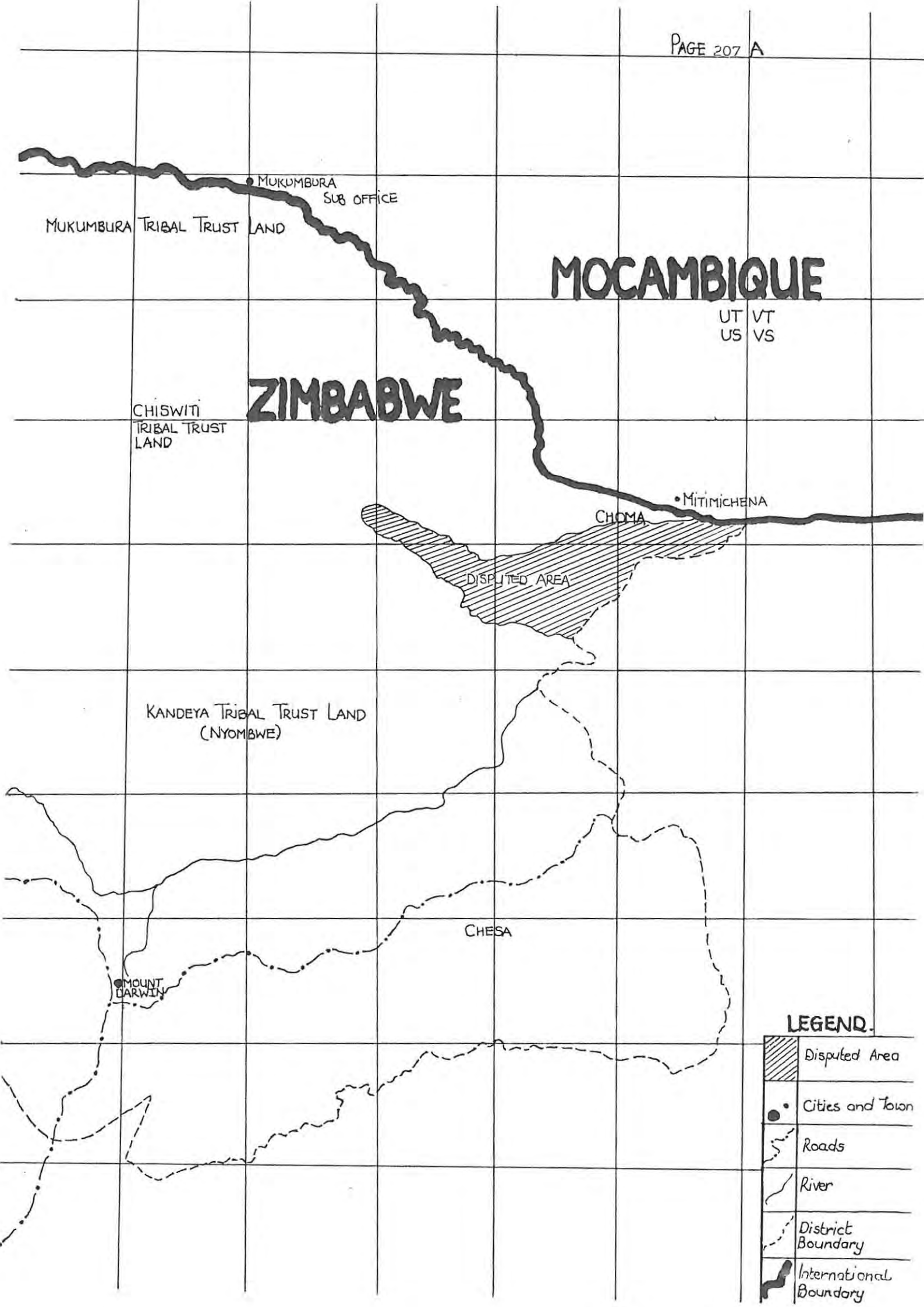
behaviour in the first place." He concludes by quoting Walker.

"It is ultimately the belief systems of the society which determine the existence, nature, and psychological function of the complex altered state known in folk theory as possession" (Walker 1972 : 150 quoted by Lambeck : 1981 : 6).

The other matter concerned the Dotito Chieftainship. South of Choma and stretching back above the escarpment is the region called Nyombwe. This is the chiefdom of Dotito, a Korekore polity, unrelated to the Tavara clan of Chigango. A boundary dispute between the two chiefdoms had been proceeding for many years. In the early seventies, the Dotito chiefship in Nyombwe was in the hands of an acting chief, one Freddy Chafurama. He had held on to power for a period much longer than was customary. He was considered by the then D C to be a progressive and co-operative leader. Allowing him to continue to rule overcame a problem presented by the succession. This in fact went back to the year 1933, when the then Commissioner for the district had bull-dozed the appointment of a pliant and progressive young man, Manyika, into the chiefship at the expense of the rightful successor. The government choice reigned until 1968 when he died a very old man. Freddy, one of his sons took over the regency.

The rival house of Pachanza and its sub-house of Bveke had been agitating since the appointment of Manyika to the Dotito Chieftaincy for their rightful claim to the chieftaincy to be recognised. They never made progress. It was therefore no coincidence that the head of the Pachanza house and many of his followers became disenchanted with the Government and joined the then African National Congress (later to become ZANU and ZAPU). On the death of Manyika in 1970, the svikiro for the Dotito people pronounced while possessed of the tribal mhondoro Nyabapa Nyanewe, that Manyanganya, the head of the Pachanza house should be the new Dotito. Government declined to make the appointment as Manyanganya was an ex political restrictee. The svikiro then pronounced that Manyangaya's younger brother Josiki should act as chief Dotito or be made substantive chief. But again Salisbury declined to appoint him. Freddy Chafurama of the rival house remained firmly in control of the chiefly authority.

Freddy Chafurama took a hard line on a longstanding boundary dispute with Chigango, claiming the boundary to be the line drawn along the water shed of the escarpment hills of the Mvurandonha mountains. Chigango and Parengeta claimed the boundary to be the Nyauriri river, Donga River and up the Ruya river. (See map overleaf). Into the disputed area, Dotito had settled seven of his villages. This, naturally, incensed the Chigango people, particularly the people of villages living in, and claiming territorial dominion over the area.



One of Parengeta's wives came from Bveke, a royal lineage associated with the Pachanza house. It is not surprising to learn, therefore, that Parengeta sided with the Pachanza house against Freddy Chafurama in the chiefship dispute. He gave his support to the Dotito mhondoro's pronouncement regarding the correct choice being Manyanganya (and after his death) Josiki. Josiki, as a quid pro quo, announced that the boundary was as described by Chigango and Parengeta and that Freddy was over-reaching himself by claiming the disputed area.

When I became D C I called a meeting of the Dotito people to try and resolve the appointment of a new chief. I had researched the history of the chiefdom and knew about the 1933 decision. I also knew that the Bveke-Pachanza area produced the greatest number of recruits to the Zanla cause. After many months of meetings which are not pertinent to this account, a final meeting was held at which Josiki was nominated as chief-elect by a majority of elders from the houses and sub houses eligible to vote. The svikiro for Nyanewe had died before this took place and there was therefore no Dotito tribal

mhondoro that could be consulted. But his views were already known.

I managed to convince Salisbury that Josiki (now a very old man) should be appointed Chief Dotito. I wanted to demonstrate that a wrong had been righted. I hoped to reverse, if only by a small degree, the anti-government (and pro-nationalist) sentiments in eastern Nyombwe. Came the day and Josiki was officially installed as Chief Dotito. Parengeta in a seance pronounced his satisfaction with the appointment.

A week later, in a move which did the ZANU cause no good, alleged guerillas murdered old Josiki, chief Dotito. Many of his house now became "my" supporters as a result - but not enough to change the balance of power in the area.

In the absence of an active svikiro for the Dotito polity, a deputation visited Parengeta and asked for him to intercede with the spirits on their behalf on the matter of a successor to act as chief until a new chief could be selected and appointed. Josiki's eldest son should have been the lawful choice - but he was a guerilla and thus not in a position to take up the appointment. Another son was

thus selected but not unexpectedly steadfastly declined the honour. The job was getting distinctly dangerous. Eventually a choice was made who was prepared to accept the appointment. Thus did Parengeta yet again become involved in matters which were theoretically outside his sphere of influence.

Fry (1976) has described the mhondoro cults of the north east as bureaucratic, implying that they were rigidly structured and that a mhondoro's svikiro derived his authority and influence primarily from the relative rank position of his mhondoro in the genealogy of the ruling ancestor royals of the area.

Bourdillon (1982) argues strenuously against this hypothesis, and gives it as his opinion that there is a great deal of mobility and that masvikiro with charisma and popular appeal, rise in status and power and influence despite their supposed position in rank. Parengeta is an excellent example in support of Bourdillon's view. His position in the Dzivaguru genealogy improved as he gained in stature. Indeed his genealogical position may have been fictitious right from the start for as I have noted above, no previous researcher mentions him.

Parengeta's involvement in the affairs of the Dotito chiefdom, as well as his marriage to a woman from Bveke explains why he made

periodic visits to that area but he was far from justified in his intrusion into the affairs of a chiefdom which was traditionally opposed to the Choma people. This may perhaps explain his motive for this final act in the Parengeta drama. Chirimanyonga could justifiably do so as Nyabapa's wife but not Parengeta, unless he was assuming the mantle of Dzivaguru or Karuva - which is what he was doing.

At the end of 1977 I left Darwin on sick leave pending transfer. It was three months before I returned to work in a different capacity, at the provincial headquarters at Bindura, South of Darwin. I had been back at work only a few weeks when I was asked by the police to go up to Darwin. Parengeta had not been seen for some weeks, but this was not unusual. However, a rumour had been circulating that he was dead.

Even in the manner of his going Parengeta managed a touch of the dramatic. An army "stick" (3) had been placed in an observation position overlooking a portion of the Donga river. During the night a violent wind had got up and in the early dawn they looked down into the river bed to see that a tree had been uprooted. In the uncovered

soil beneath it were the unmistakable remains of a corpse. They investigated and realised from the beads and other paraphernalia that this was no ordinary person. The Special Branch were called in and they brought the body and all the regalia into Darwin. I went up to identify my old friend.

The corpse was unrecognisable, but there was no mistaking his beads and other finery.

His body was taken down to Choma for burial, together with his pathetic possessions. I kept his fly whisk (muskwe). I somehow felt he would have been pleased for me to take it. Nobody else would touch it anyway - the muskwe of a svikiro is believed to have considerable power to inflict harm.

Lan states that Parengeta publicly accepted money from a policeman and was killed by guerillas because of this. It is possible - but the money was not "payment" for services. Neither Special Branch nor Parengeta would be so blatant. It was for something else, but may have been perceived as such : he had become careless perhaps - and the policeman, being Special Branch, might have had other motives.

Footnotes:

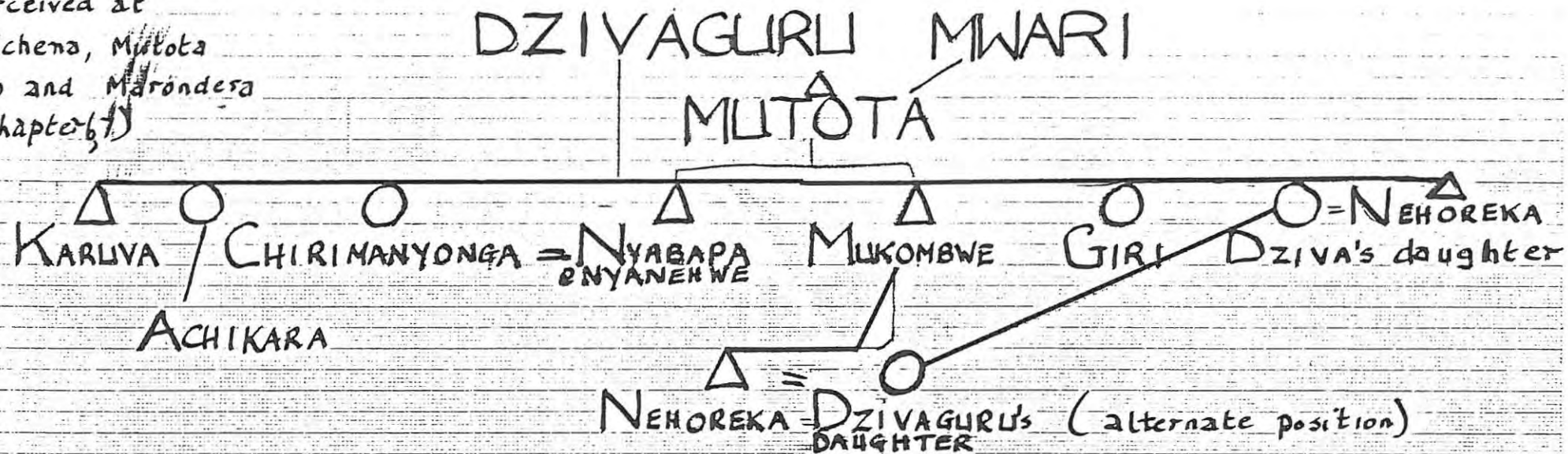
- (1) For the special relationship of the various people classified as Muzukuru in relation to a chief (person of rank) see Holleman JF (1951). Muzukuru need not imply only sister's or father's sister's son. (Hannan M 1974 : 426). The term may also be used to exemplify the privileged position of the male descendants of the wife provider, in their relationship to the wife receiver.
- (2) In line with popular usage of the people I will refer to the medium of the spirit by the name of his possessing spirit - unless the person's real name is necessary for purposes of clarity. This helps emphasise the fusing of the person and the spirit which is so much a part of actual if not theoretical belief).
- (3) "A stick" consisted of our men, the number that could safely be moved into position by an Allouette 11 helicopter.

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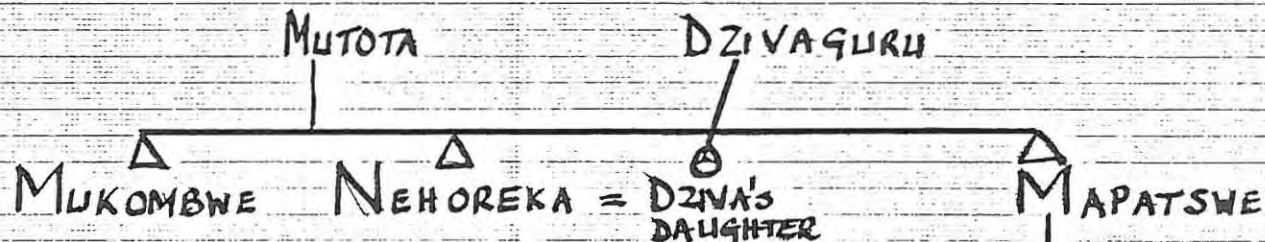
Δ a. Δ O Δ Δ
KARUVA = Achikadzi PARENGETA ACHIKARA CHIRUMBI CHIRIMANYONGA

PARENGETA'S PERCEPTION

As perceived at
Mitimichena, Mutota
Mtoko and Marondera
(see chapter 6)



NEHOREKA PERCEPTION.
(CHAPTER 7)



NYANDORO PERCEPTION
(CHAPTER 7)



CHAPTER 7THE KINSHIP OF THE DIVINE : MYTH AND RELIGION AS THE CEMENTING FACTOR
IN THE SEGMENTARY SOCIETY OF THE SHONA

In chapter five I touched on the relationships that are seen to exist between the major mhondoro and through them with their God. Indeed, I suggested that through this kinship of the spirits, a model of their relationships could be constructed. This model, which is based on the perceptions of believers can be visualised as a genealogy of the divine. The Supreme Spirit figures always at its apex and is conceptualised by everyone in much the same way. I have discussed these perceptions in earlier sections of this thesis. It is the perceptions they hold about the mythical founding heroes in relationship to their God that I wish to touch on first in this chapter because it is important to see how they are perceived as part of the God concept and yet also as mythical human ancestors. Who is God and who ancestor depends upon the position one holds both in terms of lineage and locality.

After briefly re-examining the complex pattern of relationships which exist between God and his closest mythical kin and how they in turn relate to one another, I hope to conclude by showing that it is this intricate net-work of mythic kinship relationships, re-inforced by ties of clan (mutupo) and sub-clan (chidao) and cemented by myth and legend that gives the Shona their feeling of common identity under the all enveloping umbrella of their God.

Shona people believe in a supreme being. The intensity of belief varies as much as in any other faith. The perceptions that Shona people have of their God also vary enormously. A large body of Shona have for example embraced Christianity in one form or another and have thus adapted or absorbed their God into the God of the Bible. But most people have retained their largely independent view of things. This is of a God which, while remote and sometimes arbitrary, yet is also the apical spiritual being welding all the mythical genealogies into an identifiable whole. (See chapter 3:40/41).

A few examples will suffice to illustrate this.

Mutota is regarded as the founding ancestor of the Munhumutapa dynasty, yet Lan (1985) shows that the myth and symbolism surrounding him suggests more than this. Mutota becomes fused with God to the

extent that the mhondoro would actually say that he was identical to Mwari. And so with other figures. Sororenzou is God. He is also a founder of the Rozvi and an early jukwa figure in Mbire mythology. Lembeu is a royal hero figure of the Rozvi. He is also divine. The Musikavanhu mhondoro in the south east is yet another whose very name suggests divinity.

God is the Supreme Spirit but he is also regenerated in his off-spring. Dzivaguru, in Choma, where the name can be linked to genealogies of extant polities, may not be a synonym for Mwari; but further afield it is. At Matopos Dzivaguru is God the wife provider. Throughout Shona country Dzivaguru is God, the Rain, the Great Pool, the giver of life to Mwari, the Seed. At Choma, Dzivaguru is the rain provider but he is more closely identified with his human off-spring than elsewhere and is thus perceived in more anthropomorphic terms. In Chipinge, Musikavanhu is an apical spirit, the genealogical founder of the extant Musikavanhu and Mutema chiefdoms. He is also believed to be a close relative of Dzivaguru (son or younger brother). Elsewhere Musikavanhu is the Creator of People - God the Creator. Sororenzou alias Murenga, is God as is Tovera, his father and an alias for the Mbire founder who is linked in mythical genealogies to known Shoko and Moyo chiefdoms. Tovera is a name for God, especially amongst Southern Shona and Venda. In the Matopos it is a synonym for Mwari.

Each in turn, somewhere, can be named as the founder of lineages. Each is in turn the son, or son-in-law (or both) of Mwari. The further away genealogically or spatially from these perceptions the stronger, generally, is the perception that So and So is in fact just another name for Mwari. Although this may confront the critical with obvious contradictions, it provides believers, paradoxically, with ample room to interpret the symbols of myth in such a way as to re-inforce local and regional beliefs. (Levi-Strauss 1962 : 16).

Mwari, the Supreme Spirit, is everywhere; but particularly in the off-spring whom he sired. The ritual incest of kupinga pasi thus comes into strong focus. Incest (makunakuna) is the most ritually dangerous practise a mortal can indulge in. The anger and vengeance of Mwari is unspeakable. Mortal incest can only be appeased by the guilty parties compensating the whole nyika. They must pay a compensatory fine of cattle to the mhondoro as the Muridzi we Pasi and thus hope for the mhondoro's anger to be abated and for him to intercede with Mwari.

The symbolism seems clear. Only the divine can seek union with each other. For them it is a duty. For ordinary people to do so is to reach beyond their station and assume the mantle of the gods. Such arrogance is not only presumptuous but dangerous to the authority of God and his mhondoro. The divine perform kupinga pasi to retain

their purity and power. By the joining of divine brother and sister is godhood retained and the lineage re-united in one.

Shona mythology tells of the first dynasty being Hungwe (Shiri), followed by Mbire (Shoko) and finally by Rozvi (Moyo). It is not surprising to find, therefore, that the symbolism of Mwari incorporates this mythic trinity in Dzivaguru of the Hungwe and Shoko Sororenzou of the Mbire and Rozvi. Nor is it surprising that the divinity of the dynastic lineages should be enshrined through their genealogical association with these figures and that royal lineages should become linked through kupinga pasi or through the ritual demand for royal males to marry only into specific clans.

The royal Rozvi kings were permitted to marry only women of mutupo Shiri (Bird i.e. Hungwe) from the Newande chiefdom, or from the Shoko clan of Tumbare. Those that did not, took wives from within - that is from amongst their sisters. An off-spring of the latter type of union was called Mwana Mukati (child of within) of Dzivarisekwa from Dziva - pool : ri - is Sekwa - passive of laugh. Thus - "the pool is laughed at". Perhaps this indicates that by producing a Mwana Mukati, Dzivaguru is scorned - by the male element - yet paradoxically honoured as the female element without which there would be no child. This would accord with the oft-repeated theme of the wife-provider being conquered and yet honoured as the muridzi we

pasi.

If one selects a supra spirit and studies his mythology, his close kinship with God and with the hero spirits can be demonstrated. By way of example I wish to examine the Dzivaguru cult of the north east. Dzivaguru, as we have seen in the last chapter, is generally accepted as having "always been". Some recorded myths do suggest that he was a "powerful chief or rain maker" (Simmonds 1964 : 60) but on examination it seems that the observers were either misled or misunderstood his true position. Dzivaguru may have been an associate of Mutota's from Guruuswa but this suggestion is refuted by a dextrous bit of bricolage when Dzivaguru the autochthon is portrayed as a threat to Mutota's authority and has to be overthrown. Karuva, Dzivaguru's son is likewise portrayed as a brother of Nyabapa Nyanehwe the Korekore founder of the Dotito chiefdom and Chirimanyonga his sister is associated with Nyabapa - sometimes confused with Mutota - as his partner in a kupunga pasi ritual.

These devices illustrate how myth is used to develop a common genealogical and historical association between two groups who were (and still are) essentially opposed to each other. The people of Choma are the autochthonous Tavana. The people of Nyombwe represent the invaders from the south. The Mutota lineage, represented by

Nyabapa of Nyombwe has to overcome the autochthons, which it does. At the same time it has to come to an accommodation with the Muridzi we Pasi, the indigenous God represented by Dzivaguru and his son Karuva. This is done in two ways. The God is propitiated by annual offerings of hungwe cloth to ensure the rains come. But to overcome the anomaly that the conqueror has to supplicate the conquered, the myth of genealogical association is developed until Chirimanyonga is seen as sister-wife of Nyabapa. Now Dzivaguru and Karuva are sekuru (wife-providers) and must be shown the respect due to such a position.

This sort of kinship relationship of the heroes is the thread which stitches together the whole Shona tapestry. I propose to show how this is achieved by taking one such thread and following it as it weaves its way through the fabric of Shona mythology starting and ending at Mitimichena with Dzivaguru.

We have already seen how Nyabapa has been brought into the Dzivaguru genealogy. Nyabapa is perceived as a Mutota lineage figure but myth in Nyombwe also shows that he too is an incorporated figure who far from being a 'son' of Mutota's was in reality a son-in-law who changed his totem to conform to that of the Mutota Korekore.

1
Nyabapa was married to Nyombwe, a Mutota lineage daughter.

Mukombwe was the last of the Great Mutapa kings. He was responsible for redefining the boundaries of the vassel polities and provinces of the Kingdom. He was praise-named Maguranyika or Banguranyika for this reason. (The name means "Boundary Cutter"). (Latham : 1975 : 180). Mukombwe was the ruling Mutapa from 1667-96 (Abraham : 1959:66). Throughout the north eastern districts of Mt. Darwin, Sipililo, Rushinga and Mtoko and as far south as Shamva, Bindura and Mazoe his Mhondoro is revered for it was he who "gura'd" - demarcated - their nyika or dunhu.

At Mitimichena Mukombwe becomes a brother of Karuva. Mutota is acknowledged but his authority and position are given reference as being a junior relative of Dzivaguru.

To the south east of Choma lies the district of Mtoko. The dominant mhondoro here is Nehoreka. Nehoreka is identified as a brother or son of Mukombwe. Nehoreka joins the genealogy of the divine because he married Dzivaguru's daughter but is also a powerful figure because of his relationship to Mukombwe, whether the latter is regarded as the Mutapa or as the brother of Karuva. If seen as the brother of Karuva then Nehoreka is the Mtoko area regenerator of the divine seed because his union with the daughter of Dzivaguru must be kupinga pasi.

Myth relates that Nehoreka tricked the autochthonous leader Makati into submission by providing him with a bride in the shape of his sister Nyamungate who, as is common throughout Shona mythology, stole his magical weapons from him and rendered him harmless. Again, as is common in these stories, Makati parted a ruware (granite outcrop) and descended into the earth rather than face humiliation at the hands of Nehoreka but Mapatswe, a younger brother of Mukombwe, helped Nehoreka establish his rule over the Makati people. In gratitude Nehoreka gave him a nyika of his own to rule.

Mapatswe became, in due course, a powerful chief in his own right and oral tradition relates that he was a real threat to Nehoreka's authority. But for the latter's close association with Dzivaguru and his ability to produce rain, tradition has it, Mapatswe would have overthrown his patron - or at least succeeded him.

In the event, this did not happen. By means of institutionalised arrangements not unlike those found at Matopos or Nhenene but which do have unique local characteristics, Nehoreka ensured his dominance. He "set himself up as the tribal "high priest" and trading on his reputation as a "rain god", he introduced the religious ceremonies and rituals (of) the Charewa people He convinced the tribal elders that after his death a woman would be possessed of his spirit" (Simmonds 1964 : 61/62).

Mapatswe's successors would need the ritual support of Nehoreka to succeed, given in trance by this female svikiro speaking for the Mhondoro Nehoreka. In turn Chief Mtoko (Mapatswe's descendant) has to nominate a female guardian - called Charewa - to take care of the svikiro. (cf the Mutapi or Bonga). To assist her (her ritual title is VaNyashe - the Guardian of the Chief) is another woman appointed by Guripira the 'son' of Mtoko. She is always called WaDziva (she of the Pool) thus underlining Nehoreka's close association with his divine father-in-law. The svikiro's ritual title is WaMvura - She of the Rain. (Mtoko Del Rep 1967).

By this system of institutionalised checks and balances the mhondoro Nehoreka enhances his dominion and re-enforces his close association with Dzivaguru. Furthermore the otherwise segmentary ingredient is neutralised by establishing a ritual obligation between the two polities. Nehoreka continues to reign over 'his' nyika through the Vanyashe's guardianship of his medium the WaMvura. Mtoko/Mapatswe can only exist through the patronage of the Nehoreka mhondoro. By these reciprocal ritual obligations the two segments remain firmly joined in their common interdependence.

Some hundred and sixty kilometres to the south of Nehoreka's country lies the Marondera district. This is the home of several chiefdoms, one of which is that of Nyandoro. Nyandoro's mutupo is Nhari. Chizwiti, the Chief adjoining Choma is also of this mutupo as was/is Karuva.

I have already explained the system of classification based on mutupo and chidao. In the case of the Nhari mutupo, their chidao is most commonly Unhendoro or Unyandoro. A further classification is associated with madetembedzo (sing. detembedzo) : praise songs, poems or names. The Nyandoro of Marondera have as their first detembedzo, Mukombwe. They claim that when they lived in the Zambezi valley, Mukombwe was one of their original leaders. Mutota is remembered as his younger brother. Mutota remained behind when they migrated east and then south. Clans of Nhari can be identified along the route - children and younger brothers left along the way.

Finally their chief, Nyandoro, settled in what is now Goromonzi and Marondera districts. The senior medium for the Nyandoro people is (or was in 1972) called simply Ambuya - Grandmother. (Mwari at the Matopos is also praised as Ambuya (Daneel 1970)). I do not propose to enter into discussion on her cult organisation, which is structured and resembles other major mhondoro centres (though Fry (1976) appears to have almost totally ignored her). What is important about her is that she has a large constituency in central Zezuru country as well as amongst her own Nhari people. This is not surprising, for apart from her charisma her success is re-enforced by the fact that she is possessed by the spirit of a woman Biri and by Ganyiri who is Mukombwe. (The name Ganyiri, a variation of Maguranyika, is derived from the verb stem Ganura which is a synonym

for Gura - divide). Biri and Ganyiri alias Mukombwe were brother and sister, which of course means that they are the kupinga pasi heroes for their constituents and this explains why Ambuya is so reverently regarded. And it is to Dzivaguru that Ambuya, speaking either as Ganyiri or Biri makes appeal on behalf of her supplicants. She was also in communication with the Mutota mhondoro and the Nehoreka cult centre during 1972 when I observed her activities. Her vanyai moved between the three cult centres and were particularly active at the time because with the advent of intense guerilla activity in Mutota's and Nehoreka's areas there was, presumably, need for close consultation.

Thus can be seen how the mythical kinship of the hero spirits is not only perceived as a link between the diverse polities but, through their cult organisations, maintains actual ties by the movement of officials and supplicants from centre to centre. This is made possible by the knowledge that all are related and in turn have a direct relationship with and access to the Supreme Spirit. Are they not all merged into the Divine Spirit through the ritual kupinga pasi?

One can take any of the royal hero lineages and follow their weaving pattern through the fabric of Shona society, as I have done with the Unyandoro-Dzivaguru connection. It is these binding threads which form the woof and warp which draw together the segmentary sections of Shona lineage polities into an intricate yet elastic tartan that is

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the Shona State. Myth and legend can be used to illustrate, and justify the fragmentation of lineages, the splits, feuds and migrations. Yet they are also used most dramatically in the rich symbolism and ritual of religious possession cults to enforce the underlying oneness of the people; the vana vevevu - children of the earth, the progeny of the varidzi vepasi; varidzi venyika - the owners of the country, who are of course the mhondoro and the sons and daughters of Mwari.

Thus in times of dramatic national need such as the War of Independence, it is this richly illustrated and dramatically authenticated unity, which is symbolic of the glorious past yet which is a demonstrable fact of the present through the mhondoro/svikiro dichotomy, that supersedes parochial differences to galvanise the people to pan-Shona effort.

In times less urgent the belief system, supported by the elaborate and intricate strands of cult organisation, acts as a force which counters the segmentary tendency inherent in Shona social organisation. This is mythically and symbolically exemplified in the kupinga pasi ritual incest, which in one form or another, seems to be a feature of the religious and political mythology of the Shona peoples.

Mutiusinazita and its Symbolism

I have shown how the genealogical relationships of the hero figures can be used as symbols in the manipulation of myth to create a bond between widely dispersed communities. By being able to demonstrate not only a theoretical, historical association, but a living, meaningful, visible link between the hero figures and their God, persons and groups can identify themselves with a larger Shona nationality.

But in order to crystalise this idea - and the underlying theme that has underscored this whole thesis - I must conclude with the construction of one final model. I have shown that there is a hierarchy of spirits and that at the highest level the supra-spirits become, symbolically at least, fused with the High God or supreme spirit. But it is also necessary to show that in each instance there is a perception of association of kinship, between these hero figures. The perception, as I have shown for the smaller communities, varies with proximity both spatial and genealogical but this is not important in terms of its overall effect. For the effect is to unite otherwise disparate groups into a common nation of peoples. If you as a Venda know that through Thohoyandou (Sororenzou) and Tobela (Tovera) you are in a sense descended from Mwari, and if you know that the southern Shona (Karanga ; Rozvi) have the same perception, this establishes you, collectively, as vana va

Mwari, children of the God – as opposed to your less fortunate Pedi neighbours. Similarly, an Mbire in Central Shona territory knows that Tovera, Sororenzou and Chaminuka, are his genealogical link with Mwari. Mutota in the north east is known to be a brother/son of Sororenzou. And Dzivaguru is God the wife provider to the heroes.

I have shown how various communities manipulate myth to accommodate their perceptions of the divine and heroic genealogy, in much the same way as Christian, Jew and Muslim have done with Abraham.

Throughout my thesis I have tried to develop the theme that Mwari, is a Supreme Being, a superstructure overlying the identifiable (however vaguely) hero figures. Yet at the same time the Mwari image incorporates the heroes into his being as part of himself. This is necessary in order to explain the various perceptions which do not otherwise fit logically into a wider generally agreed genealogy. Obviously local interests must influence perceptions, particularly in a society which comprises chiefly communities created through an on-going process of segmentation. Almost every chiefdom in which I did field work, or from which I gathered data, explained its origin in terms of a split from a parent polity as the result of friction caused by a rift between father and son or brother and brother. In the case of the more recent splits, a feeling of animosity, though muted to some extent, remained. Yet despite this there was a ready acknowledgment that the group were "pamwe chete" (together) in their religious regard for their heroic ancestors. As has been shown,

genealogies will differ in their perception of the relationship existing between these figures, becoming vaguer the higher they reach; but they share common names and a common destination, fusion with Mwari, the Sikarudzi (the creator of the nation).

I have explained earlier that there are identifiable supra-spirits who function in territorial spheres of influence (rather than clearly demarcated zones). Within each area the spirit is worshipped as a Mwari surrogate. I have described this in some detail in regard to Mutota and Dzivaguru. My research in the other cult areas has not been as detailed so I must avoid being too emphatic. However, the indications are strongly in favour of my hypothesis that each cult centre is in general as I have described the others. Thus Musikavanhu's origin myths are predictably about suggestions of an irregular, possibly incestuous or immaculate conception, a struggle for power and final emigration.

Musikavanhu and his closely related chiefdom of Mutema claim they are a segment of the Mbire-Rozvi of central Mashonaland. They also claim that Musikavanhu is a son or brother of the Choma Dzivaguru. So again we find the charter myth and its affiliated religious belief showing two sides of a coin. The segmenting of a lineage group away from the centre of power is indicative of a dilution of power and of a real or potential friction. Yet within the religious belief system we see strong emotional associations linking the wider national community and making the original and dangerous rift into a charter

for belonging to the body politic of Mwari.

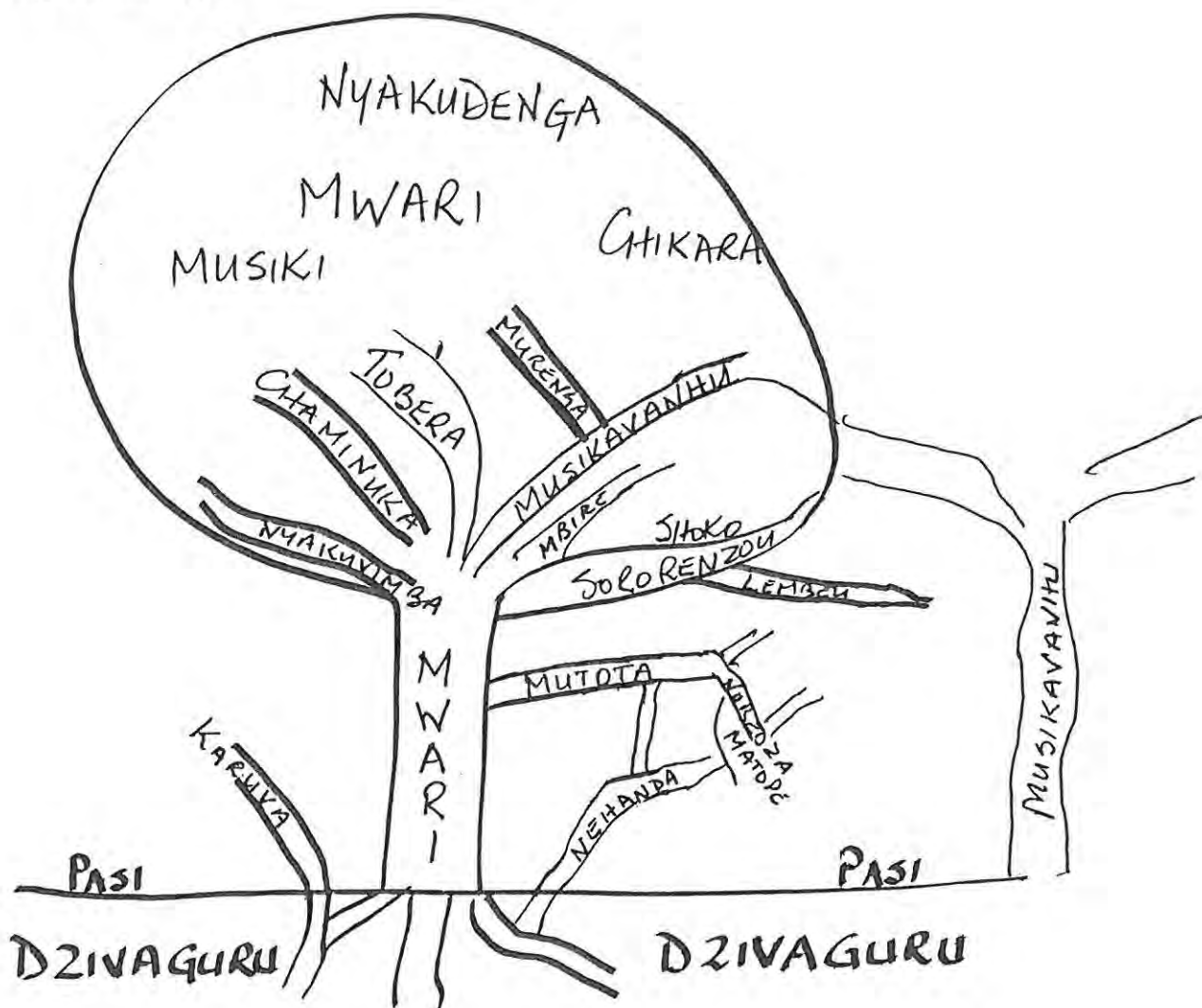
Indeed, the device of the ritual incestuous relationship, kupinga pasi, is usually employed to symbolise a reuniting of the lineage through divine sanction.

I have mentioned, in the course of this thesis, many names of divine heroes. I have suggested that they are perceived as jukwa or mhondoro (supra spirits) or as elements of Mwari Himself. The best known examples are Sororenzou and Dzivaguru. Both are part of the syncretic God, both like Adam and Christ are his divine creations. This may be the symbolism of Mutiusinazita, the tree mentioned in my construction of Shona myth. (Chapter 2). It will be remembered that there are two known Mitiisinazita, one near Waddelove Mission, Marondera, the other on the Nyamashanga river in southern Buhera.

Tradition has it that Mwari spoke from Mutiusinazita - the tree with no name. Petitioners would approach the tree with offerings of food in wooden plates (ndiro), and beer in pots (hari). These they would place at the foot of the tree and then they would respectfully uchira (praise), before facing away from the tree and announcing their petition. Mwari would then speak from the tree and give his council. When the supplicants turned round again to uchira (praise) and tenda (thank), the utensils and pots would be empty.

Very little else has ever been recorded about Mutiusinazita and it

Tree for which there can be no name (descriptive title), The Tree Beyond Naming.



This is the Tree of Life; the symbol of God and Creation, planted in the earth (pasi) that is the nyika and drawing life giving moisture from Dzivaguru (the Great Pool). The branches are the heroes, part of the whole, but, for some, distinct and identifiable entities or lineages. If, like the giant fig tree, the growth and separation can

has always been, for me, just another manifestation of Mwari's ability to reach into the lives of the people. But perhaps there is a symbolism which has hitherto escaped me - or perhaps I am simply creating my own symbolism to explain the concepts of Mwari as I believe the Shona do themselves (without necessarily articulating or even formalising their perceptions).

Their God is, symbolically, Mutiusinazita, the Nameless Tree. More accurately, so manifold are his names, that He, as a whole, is the Tree for which there can be no name (descriptive title). The Tree Beyond Naming.

This is the Tree of Life; the symbol of God and Creation, planted in the earth (pasi) that is the nyika and drawing life giving moisture from Dzivaguru (the Great Pool). The branches are the heroes, part of the whole, but, for some, distinct and identifiable entities or lineages. If, like the giant fig tree, the growth and separation can be envisaged not only as branches of the main trunk, but as new saplings rising from the earth yet from the same root, then is the symbolism more truly reflective of their God image. (Gelfand M. 1962 : 150).

Thus it is that the major supra spirits, though separated by vast distances (distances which before modern transport shrank the time scale, were many weeks of walking apart) yet remain part of a holy kinship with one another. Mortals segment in order to gain access to power and territory. The hero spirits must remain part of the whole or perish. Without the holy connection their power is destroyed, or at best diminished to the status of tribal or lineage spirit. It is this device which in the final analysis provides the cohesion which overcomes the centrifugal forces of segmentation and has permitted the Shona to retain their nationality. This has been dramatically demonstrated in the long struggle to throw off the yoke of British colonialism. Though there may be doubt cast on the extent of the ingredient in the motivation for the liberation wars, there is no doubt, as Lan (1984) and Ranger (1967) have shown (and as I have

witnessed) that the religious organisation and belief system acted as an inspiration, catalyst and common denominator throughout Shona territory.

Ambuya (or Mbuya)	: Grandmother; mother-in-law
Baba	: Father
Bira	: Ritual service for the propitiation of spirits from the stem -pa; give
Bonga	: Woman dedicated to the service of Mwari
Chidao/Chidawo/ Chidau	: Sub-clan name
Chirungu	: European ways, language, influence generally
Dare	: Meeting place; tribal court; any deliberative gathering of representatives
D C	: District Commissioner; Civil Head of District
Delrep.	: See bibliography
Denga	: Heaven, sky, roof
D O	: District Officer. Subordinate to D.C. A district might have several, controlling sub-divisions
Dongo	: Abandoned village
Doro	: Traditional millet beer
Dunhu	: Ward of chief's area under control of sub-chief or headman (sadunhu)
Dziva	: Pool, lake
Gota	: Councillor of commoner stock
Gura	: Demarcate, slice, decide a court case
Hakata	: Diviner's bones; actually wooden slabs
Hari	: Beer pot, round, clay
Hombera	: Rythmic clapping whilst seated; as respectful greeting or sign of homage

Hosana	: One dedicated to Mwari
Hungwe	: Fish eagle; black and white or blue and white panels of cloth worn by spirit mediums
Kalanga	: Western dialect of Shona
Karanga	: Southern dialect of Shona
Korekore	: Dialect of Shona spoken in Northern Zimbabwe
Kubuda	: To come out, to go out
Kupinga	: To use protective medicine
Kupinga pasi	: Refers to the ritual incest between royals to fortify the country/earth (pasi)
Kupira	: To offer, propitiate - from kupa, to give
Mabweadziva	: The rocks of the Pool; i.e. the Matopos Hills where Mwari's shrines are situated
Mambo	: Chief, King. Past Rozvi title for their rulers
Makunakuna	: Incest, the crime of
Manyika	: Eastern dialect of Shona
Mbira	: Small, many keyed musical instrument
Mbonga	: Bonga, woman dedicated to the service of Mwari
Mbuya	: Grandmother
Mhondoro	: Senior lineage spirit ; supra spirit; lion spirit
Mhuri	: Family, extended family
Mlimo (Umlimo)	: Ndebele name for Mwari
Mudzimu	: Ancestral spirit
Munhu	: Person

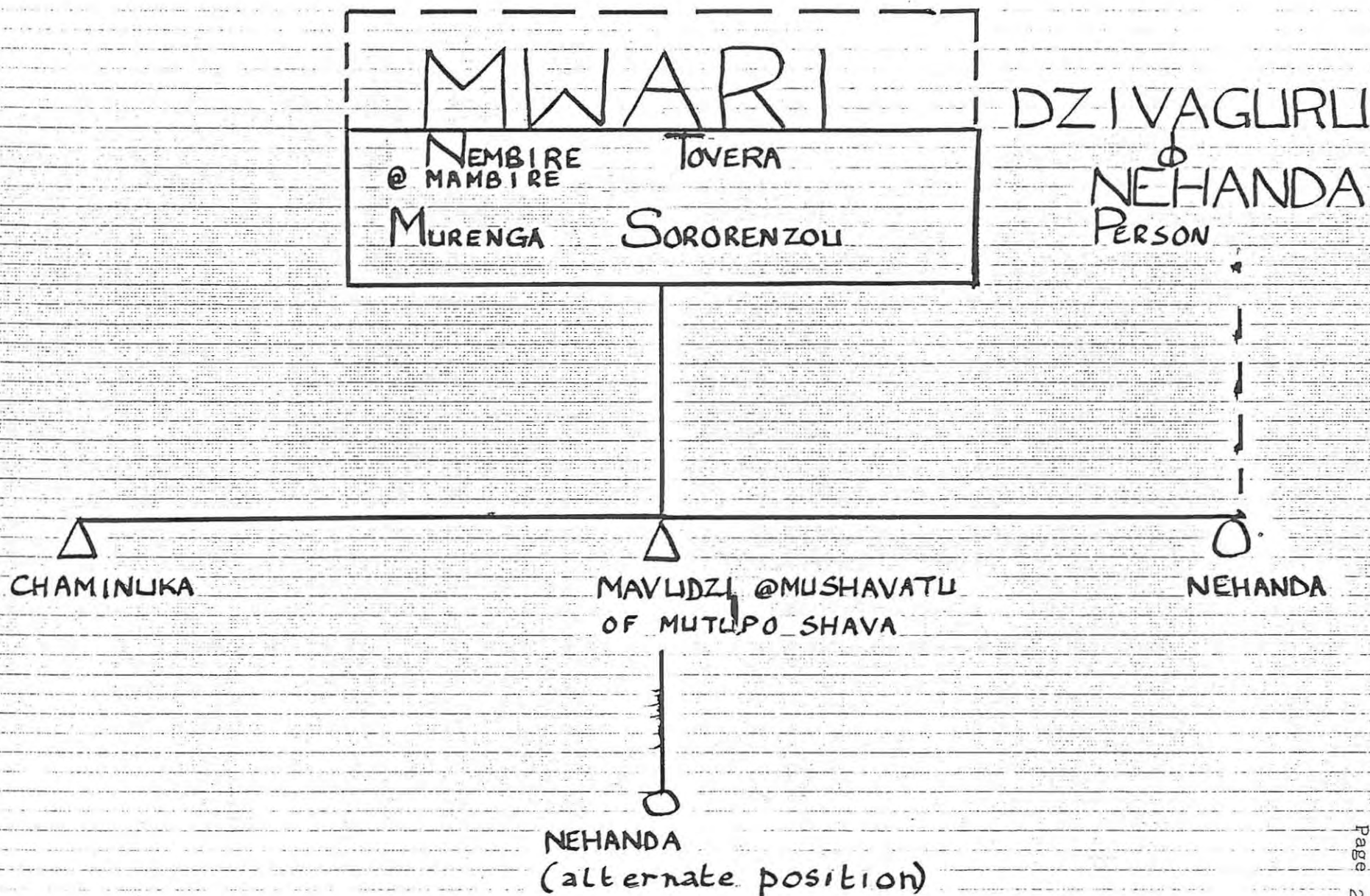
Munyai	: Messenger
Muroyi	: Witch, wizard, sorcerer
Murungu	: European, alien pale skinned person
Musha	: Village, home
Musiki	: Creator
Musikavanhu	: Praise name for God; Creator of mankind
Mushonga	: Medicine
Mutapa	: The king, ruler of north east Shona i.e. the "Monomotapa" or "Munhumutapa" from the verb tapa, pillage
Mutapi	: Svikiros chief acolyte. See nechombo
Mutorwa	: Foreigner
Mutupo	: Clan name
Muzukuru	: Grandchild, sister's son, daughter; son of maternal father-in-law
Mvura	: Water
Mwana	: Child
Mweya	: Spirit
Ndau	: South eastern dialect of Shona - heavily infused with Nguni and Tsonga words but still mutually intelligible with other dialects
Ndiro	: Wooden food platter
Nganga	: Diviner, herbalist, traditional healer
Nechombo	: Acolyte (see mutapi)
Ngombe (mombe)	: Cattle
Ngozi	: Avenging spirit
Nhaka	: Inheritance

Njuzu	: Water spirits
Nyandenga	: Owner of Heaven, God
Nyama	: Meat
Nyika	: Land, country, chief's domain
Pamwechete	: Together
Pasi	: Earth, floor, on the ground, of the Earth
Roora	: Marriage compensation; bridewealth
Ropa	: Blood
Rudzi	: Kind, species, tribe, clan
Ruware	: Rock outcrop, typically granite domed monoliths
Sabuku	: Keeper of the book, village headman
Sadunhu	: Ward headman
Samusha	: Village headman
Sekuru	: Grand-father, wife provider (father-in-law), mother's brother
Shave (shavi)	: Alien Spirit
Shiri	: Bird
Shoko	: Vervet monkey (clan totem) also spelt Soko
Shumba	: Lion
Sikarudzi	: Creator (of clan) progenitor
Svikiro	: Spirit medium
Tenda	: Thank, agree, acknowledge
Tateguru	: Grand-father (paternal)
Tezvara	: Father-in-law (man speaking)
Tsime	: Well

Tsvinira	: To support, second a proposal
Uchira	: Offer ritual praise
Tsumo	: Proverb, saying
ZANLA	: Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army - Military Wing of ZANU
ZANU	: Zimbabwe African National Union (Mugabe)
ZAPU	: Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union (Nkomo)
Zezuru	: Central Shona dialect
ZIPRA	: Zimbabwe (Independent) Peoples' Republican Army
Zvigaro	: Chairs, seats, sing, chigaro

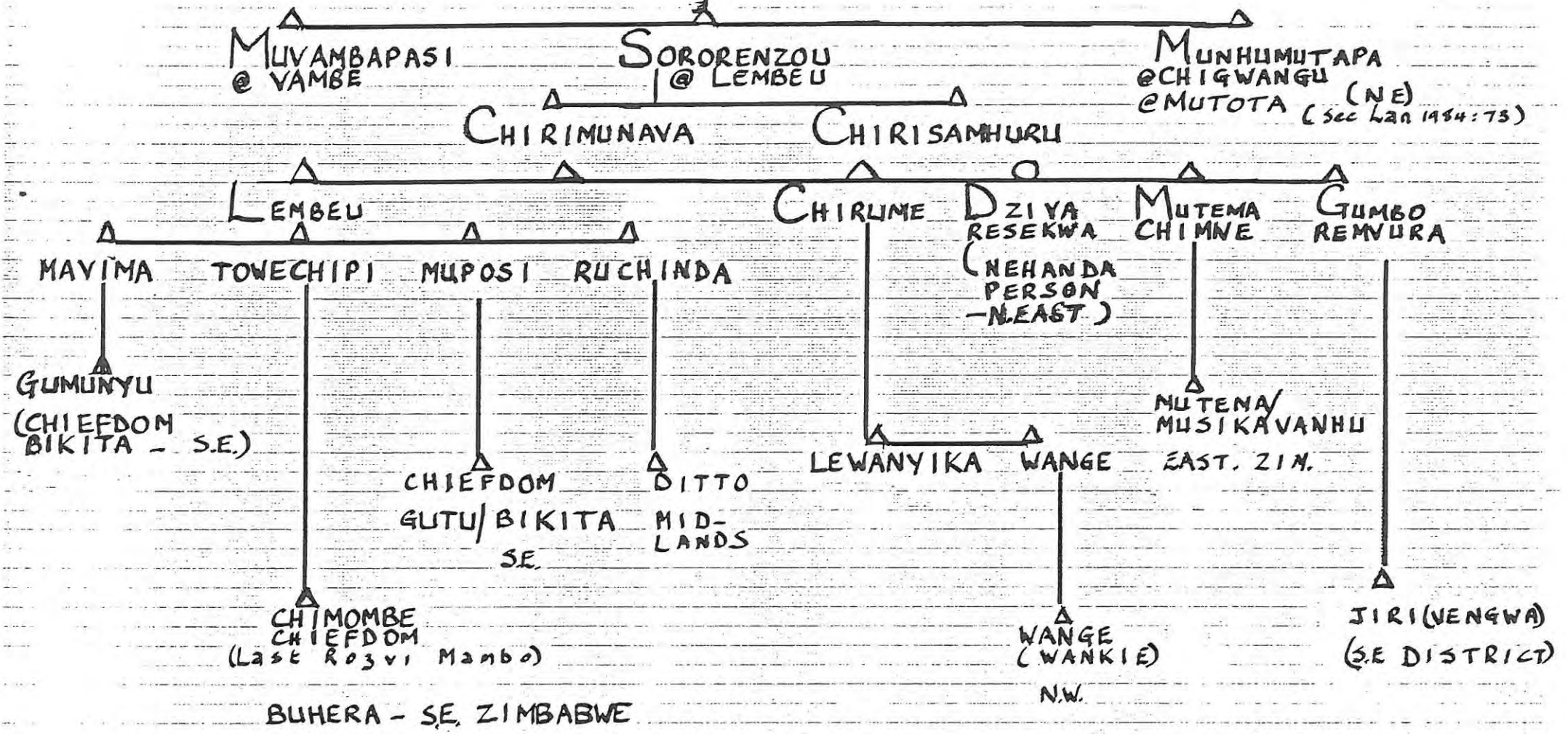
SHONA RELATIONSHIP

Father	BABA
Father's sister	TETE or SAMUKADZI
Father's older brother	BABA MUKURU
Father's younger brother	BABA MUDIKI
Mother	AMAYI
Mother's older sister	AMAYI GURU
Mother's younger sister	AMAYI NINI
Grandfather	SEKURU
Grandmother	AMBUYA
Great grandmother	AMBUYA
Great grandfather	TATEGURU (male line only)
Grandchild	MUZUKURU
Husband	MURUME
Husband's sisters	TETE or SAMUKADZI
Husband's brothers	MURAMU or BABA
Husband's father	TEZVARA
Husband's mother	AMBUYA
Wife	MUKADZI
Wife's sisters	MURAMU
Wife's brothers	TEZVARA
Wife's father	TEZVARA / SEKURU
Wife's mother	AMBUYA
Brother (older) of Boy	MUKOMA
Brother (younger) of Boy	MUNINGINA
Brother of girl	HANZVADZI
Sister of boy	HANZVADZI
Brother's child (girl speaking)	MUZUKURU (who calls her TETE)
Brother's child (boy speaking)	MWANA (who calls him BABA)
Sister's child (boy speaking)	MUZUKURU (who calls him SEKURU)
Sister's child (girl speaking)	MWANA

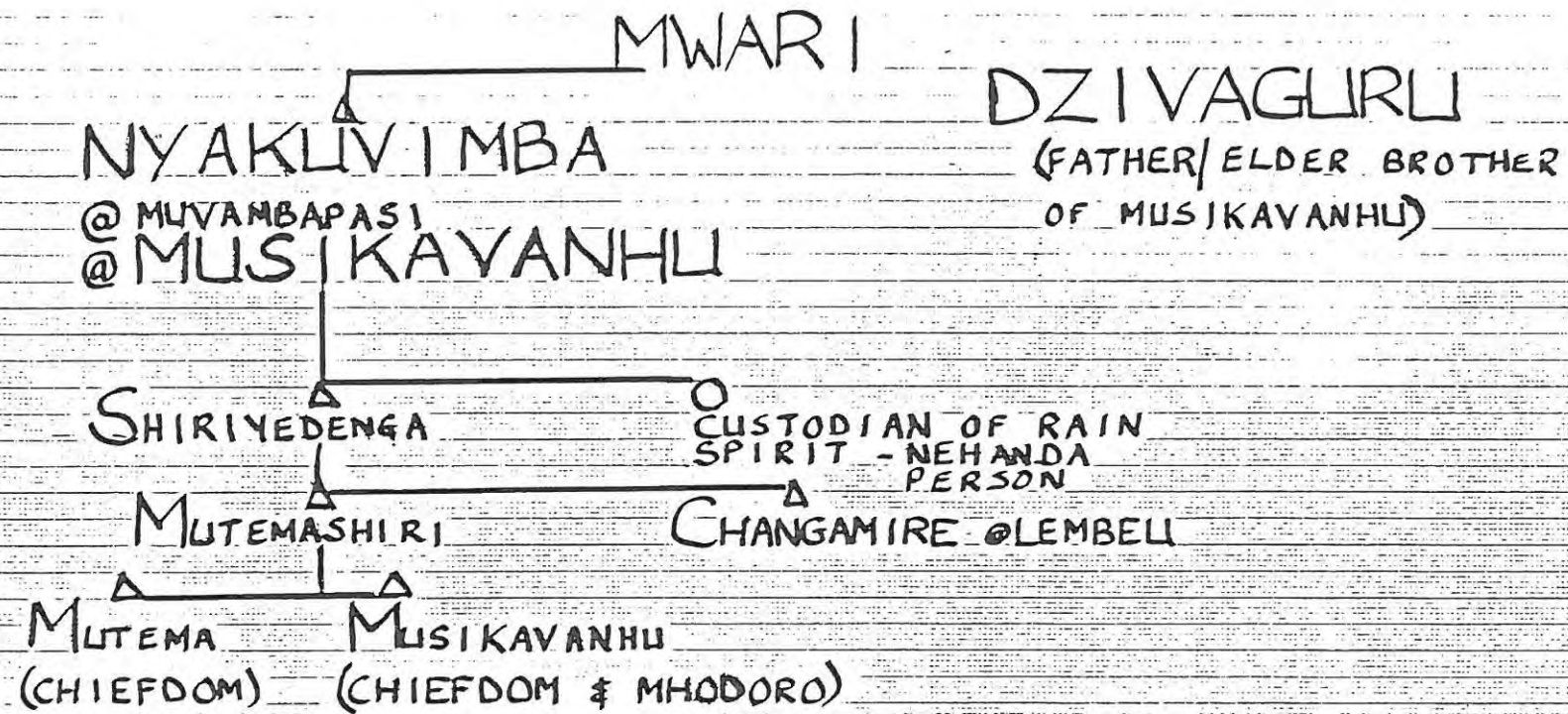


A Rozvi/Mbire Perception
(see Chigwedere 1980)

MWARI



A ROZVI PERCEPTION



AN NDALI PERCEPTION

MANIBO

VAMOYO = CHIMUBATA MATOSI @ Bansi @ GATSKA

NYATSIMBA MUTOTAU

Pbute = MATOPE = NEHANDA
@ Nyanehwe
@ Nobedza
= Anemakoni
@ Nyamhita

CHIKANGA
(Ruled Manyika - founded MUTASA DYNASTY)

CHIWARA KAREMBO (3) NAVURA (4) NYAHUMA (5) KOSWA
@ Nyautande @ Mukombero
@ KAGORO

NYACHENJE

CHIKUYO
@ Chisamangwa

KAREMBERA

CHIVERE
@ Nyasoro

TOMBWE

CHISAMHARU
@ Ndogomo

GATSI RUSERE (9) MAVURA II
= Nomuraya

NYAMBA
@ Kapapidze

MHANDE
@ Musinyari

MUKOMBWE
Kamarapasi
Goveranyika

SITI
@ Kazurukumusa
KAGATSA

QWEERA
@ Chipako

NYAMAEVIRA
Mhande

NYENYEDZI
Zenda

BOROMA
@ Dangwa-rangwa

DZUDZUNGE
@ Sutu

SAMATAMBERA
@ Nyamandu

CHIKOBVORA
@ Chihunganyanga

NYATSUTSHU

GUPO

DEHWE

NYAKATEMBO

NYAMANDU II
@ Chirongomabwa

CHIKWAYO

CHANGARA

KASEKETE

CHIWAHWA

GOMO NYAMUSHAMBA

MVIRIMBO CHUZU

KATURUZA

DEHWE

NYASORO

KANDEYA
1968-1970

CHIKO
1957-1977

DZUDZA
1870-87

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