Kalanga culture and the nature of resistance against the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 in colonial Zimbabwe

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Abstract

In this article the nature of resistance to the implementation of the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 (NLHA), popularly known as *amagandiya* in Bulilimamangwe, in colonial Zimbabwe is explored. It looks at two Kalanga chiefs, Madlambuzi Ncube and Masendu Dube, who were deposed by colonial administrators in the 1950s and replaced by an Ndebele chief, Mpini Ndiweni. It is argued that the implementation of the Act, the demotion of the two Kalanga chiefs and the subsequent imposition of Chief Mpini Ndiweni can be perceived as the imposition of a type of cultural hegemony which was then resisted by the two Kalanga chiefs and their subjects by the reassertion of their own culture and identity in colonial Zimbabwe. It demonstrates how it was not violent or military resistance but rather cultural resistance, which was expressed through various modes, which took the centre stage in challenging both the white colonial government and Ndebele hegemony over the Kalanga. In contributing to the argument over the use of cultural resistance against the NLHA, the article draws from oral interviews which were conducted in Bulilima and Mangwe districts, on archival research and on secondary literature to demonstrate that this cultural resistance drew on a variety of signifiers of Kalanga identity such as Kalanga history, the politics of land, ideas around Kalanga chieftainship, Mwali/Ngwali religion and the possession of cattle.

Keywords: Kalanga chiefs; Cultural resistance; Hegemony; Culture; Identity; Native Land Husbandry Act; Zimbabwe; Colonial.

Introduction and context

The article grapples with the concept of cultural resistance and demonstrates how it was used by Kalanga chiefs such as Madlambuzi Ncube and Masendu Dube as a tool of resistance against the imposition of the Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA) of 1951 *(amagandiya)*.[1] It makes the argument

1 The term *amagandiya* is used by both the Ndebele and Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe and they often refer to *amagandiya* when talking about the period of the implementation of the NLHA. In this article it would be used interchangeable with the term the Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA).

that Kalanga chieftainship, identity, land, and religion were forms of cultural resistance, which were used as a tool to challenge the implementation of the NLHA in Bulilimamangwe. The article further contends that vernacular resistance to the implementation of the NLHA sought first to articulate and assert Kalanga identity, and second, it sought to challenge the hegemonic colonial state policies. It also explores the nature of the support for Madlambuzi Ncube and Masendu Dube from their Kalanga subjects. The article also explores why the Act was not resisted in some parts of Bulilimamangwe district, which were predominantly Ndebele-speaking areas. The Kalanga is one of the ethnic groups found mostly in the Bulilima and Mangwe districts, in the south-western parts of Zimbabwe.[2] Some Kalanga people can be found in areas such as Kezi, Tsholotsho and Botswana. This article focusses mostly on the Kalanga in Bulilima and Mangwe districts who comprise the bulk of the Kalanga ethnic group. It is estimated that they comprise approximately 4% of the total population in Zimbabwe today.[3] The period of the implementation of the Act was popularly known as *Magandiya* – a Kalanga word meaning "ridges" – among the residents of Bulilimamangwe. This was because the Act forced people to construct contour ridges. Indeed, its implementation bordered on the use of forced labour because of resistance from African rural people who detested the amount of labour that went into contour ridge-construction which were a distraction from their own crop fields. The article moves from existing scholarship, which has shown that the NLHA was implemented in different parts of the country and was resisted by various peoples who were against the racist and discriminatory state legislations, as it is interested in how the forms of resistance differed.

It can be argued that the NLHA was devised and introduced by the white settler Rhodesian government in the interest of capitalist economic development, particularly of the white minority. The Act had its roots in the Rhodesian agricultural policies of the 1930s and 1940s that mainly centred on African reserves and the conservation of resources such as soil and water.[4] Under these policies, Africans were regarded as "bad farmers" and removed from their land to occupy the reserves which were dry and arid. Moreover, the NLHA was a consequence of the failed Land Apportionment Act of 1931 and

2 Although the area was further divided into two districts, Bulilima and Mangwe in 2005 for administrative purposes, the name Bulilimamangwe would be maintained for the purposes of this article.

3 Zimbabwe Population Census 2012.

4 VEM Machingaidze, "Agrarian change from above: The Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act and African response", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24(3), 1991, pp. 557-588.

was introduced ostensibly to check land degradation in the crowded reserves.[5] Instead however, of allocating additional land to the overcrowded Africans, the settler government blamed land degradation on the Africans' backward farming practices. The negative effects of over-grazing in the reserves led to the passing of the Natural Resources Act of 1941 which, among other things, called for compulsory de-stocking in many African occupied areas. By 1944, about half of the nation's reserves carried 927,000 large stock of cattle and yet, the estimated carrying capacity was only 645,000.[6] As a result, the colonial state established the Godlonton Commission of Enquiry (1944) to look into the resource degradation crisis in the reserves. The recommendations of the Godlonton Commission on Native Production and Trade, inaugurated two decades of top-down statist experimentation with African agriculture and led to the NLHA in 1951.[7] The key instrument of the Godlonton commission's recommendations was the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951, a piece of legislation designed to scientifically quantify standard land allocations and stocking rates per given area before issuing them out to Africans on individual tenure. In the long run, it hoped to create two distinct populations: rural and urban Africans. The objectives of the NLHA were to provide for the control of the utilisation and allocation of land occupied by "natives" to ensure its efficient use for agricultural purposes, to require "natives" to perform labour for conserving natural resources and for promoting good husbandry.[8]

The Act has received substantial scholarly attention in Zimbabwe and abroad.[9] Much of the literature on the NLHA in Zimbabwe falls into two broad interpretive models offered by W Beinart and I Phimister.[10] Beinart argued that the NLHA was a conservationist measure, while Phimister viewed the Act as a segregationist policy meant to buttress white industrial

5 W Beinart, "Soil erosion, conservationism and ideas about development: A Southern African exploration, 1900-1960", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11(1), 1984, pp. 52-83.

6 VEM Machingaidze, "Agrarian change from above …", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24(3), 1991, pp. 557-588.

7 AKH Weinrich, *African farmers in Rhodesia: Old and new peasant communities in Karangaland* (London, Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 25.

8 Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act, No. 52, 1951 (Salisbury, 1952).

9 The major setback for this article is the scarcity of archival documents on the implementation of the NLHA in Bulilimamangwe district in particular. A lot of archival files on Bulilimamangwe related to the period between 1950s to the late 70s were missing at the National Archives of Zimbabwe and at the district administration offices.

10 W Beinart, "Soil erosion, conservationism and ideas about development:...", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11(1), 1984, pp. 52-83; I Phimister, "Rethinking the reserves: Southern Rhodesia's Land Husbandry Act reviewed", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19(2) 1993, pp. 225-239.

capital, farmers and mining's demand for cheap labour.[11] Phimister observed that the NLHA was not really intended to squeeze Africans into reserves but to stop Africans from acquiring land rights. This meant that Africans could be neither peasant farmers nor industrialised workers. In this way, the Act directly repudiated customary and communal rights to land in favour of individual right holders. Moreover, the colonial government thought that individual land holding rights would also lead to sound farming. In her 2006 book, *The unsettled land,* Alexander depicted a compulsive colonial state that seeks, in the 1940s and 50s, to intervene directly in the affairs of Africans forcing them to conserve what little resources were availed to them under the repressive laws. She charts the making and unmaking of authority over people and the land which they occupied. She goes further to question state-making and the ideology of resistance, coercion and consent.[12] McGregor also shares Beinart's analysis of the Act in her study on Shurugwi where she observes that the NLHA was highly influenced by conservation ideas and policies.[13] While this article acknowledges this literature, it also challenges it by deploying the concept of cultural resistance as a tool used to resist the NLHA in Zimbabwe.

Thompson's study gives a richly instructive account of the economic challenges that were faced by the planners and the contradictory visions and interests of different groups within the white settler population and the government.[14] However, his narrow focus on destocking leaves a yawning gap on other aspects of conversation that were covered by the Act as deemed necessary by the colonial state. Scholars such as Bessant have captured African responses and views on state conservation policies. Using Chiweshe[15] as a case study, Bessant examined the intrusive suite of conservation policies with particular emphasis on soil conservation.[16] Bessant further argues that the reaction to the state policies by the Chiweshe people was influenced by their

11 I Phimister, "Rethinking the reserves …", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19(2) 1993, pp. 225-239.

12 J Alexander, *The unsettled land: State making and the politics of land in Zimbabwe, 1893-2003* (Harare, Weaver Press 2006).

13 J McGregor, "Conservation, control and ecological change: The politics and ecology of colonial conservation in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe", *Environment and History*, 1(3), 1995, pp. 257-279.

14 Thompson's study focussed on the Madziwa Communal area in the north-eastern Zimbabwe. For more information on the analysis of the NLHA see, G Thompson, "Is it lawful for people to have their things taken away by force? High modernism and governability in colonial Zimbabwe", *African Studies*, 66(1), 2007, pp. 39-77.

15 The Chiweshe Reserve is now known as Chiweshe Communal area and it is falls under Mazoe District in Zimbabwe.

16 LL Bessant, "Coercive development: Land shortage, forced labor, and colonial development in the Chiweshe reserve, colonial Zimbabwe, 1938-1946", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 25(1), 1992, pp. 39-65.

demand for land. The article also draws on research that focus on agrarian state policies, to land and belonging amongst the African population in other parts of Zimbabwe and their impact on issues of belonging and identity in the country. For example, J Mujere's study of the Basotho highlights how the farms became important in the Basotho's construction of a sense of belonging and their interactions with other farmers in the area during the period of the NLHA.[17] He argues that the farms played a pivotal role in shaping the intricate process of belonging amongst the Basotho people. Mwatwara has also demonstrated how the implementation of the NLHA gave rise to African nationalism which resisted the state veterinary bureaucracy.[18] E Msindo has also examined the Kalanga and their relations with the Ndebele between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With reference to the NLHA in Bulilimamangwe, Msindo unravelled what led to the demotion of Kalanga chiefs in the district and points out that it was due to their resistance to the Act.[19] In other parts of Southern Africa, scholars have also engaged with resistance to colonial agrarian state policies. For example, WO Mulwafu argued that in Malawi, "much of the resistance emanated from the way agricultural policies interfered with household relations and everyday economies and indigenous agricultural methods and knowledge".[20]

This article differs sharply from the above body of literature on the implementation of the NLHA in that its analysis is focused on the use of the concept of cultural resistance, which has been ignored in the studies of the NLHA in Bulilimamangwe. In order to understand the Kalanga resistance to the implementation of the NLHA, the article draws insights from literature on cultural resistance. Cultural resistance is not a new concept in other country's historiography. For example, it was used in 1922 by Baerlein to describe Slav's resistance to German attempts to impose Christianity upon the Slavic people and stressed the political and cultural resistance against the state of the Franks.[21] In other writings, the term is also associated with the foreign invasion of certain groups and concomitant struggles to maintain their

17 J Mujere, *Autochthons, strangers, modernising educationists and progressive farmers: Basotho struggles for belonging in Zimbabwe 1930s-2008* (PhD, University of Edinburgh, 2012).

18 W Mwatwara, "A history of state veterinary services and African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe, c.1896-1980" (PhD, Stellenbosch University, 2014).

19 E Msindo, *Ethnicity in Zimbabwe: The transformation in Kalanga and Ndebele societies, 1860-1990* (New York, The University of Rochester Press, 2012).

20 WO Mulwafu, *Conservation song: A history of peasant-state relations and the environment in Malawi, 1866-2000* (Cambridge, The Whitehouse Press, 2011), p. 143; W Mwatwara, "A history of state veterinary services and African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe..." (PhD, Stellenbosch University, 2014).

21 H Baerlein, *The birth of Yugoslavia,* I (London, Leonard Parsons, 1922), p. 29.

culture and traditional beliefs.[22] As Scott illustrates, cultural resistance can be manifested as "everyday forms of resistance" such as contesting the issues of personal identity.[23] In Zimbabwe, Hammette explored political cartoons and argued that they represent context-specific power relations, politics and resistance in post-colonial Zimbabwe.[24] Furthermore, in other contexts, scholars have also engaged with religion[25] and gender[26] and how these could be used as cultural resistance to challenge domination and hegemony. This article thus focuses on Kalanga chieftainship, identity, land and religion as forms of cultural resistance tools which were used to challenge the implementation of the NLHA in Bulilimamangwe.

The NLHA was also a threat to Kalanga cultural beliefs and their identity. As would be illustrated, the imposition of a "foreign" Ndebele chief by the state, Mpini Ndiweni can be perceived as cultural hegemony as he was not the rightful chief according to Kalanga traditional leadership customs. This therefore attracted resistance as the Kalanga chiefs and their subjects resented this domination. The resistance to the implementation of the Act led to the deposition of Chief Madlambuzi Ncube and Chief Masendu Dube and the installation of an Ndebele chief, Mpini Ndiweni. Moreover, in order to justify their belonging and legitimacy in the Kalanga land, the resistance drew upon claims to being the first inhabitants of the area, Kalanga religion and origins in order to demonstrate to the colonial regime that the deposition by the two chiefs interfered with Kalanga's very existence and identity. The article considers Kalanga ethnic identity to be the "sameness" of this group of people who share the common stories of origin, language, culture and traditions. It is important to note that this identity can be described as fluid, malleable and dynamic. Nonetheless, this identity is not a fixed, primordial phenomenon that has been in existence from time immemorial, but a dynamic and flexible identity that is tied to complex processes of identity formation spanning the

22 B Bush, "The family tree is not cut: Women and cultural resistance in slave family life in the British Caribbean", G Okihiro (ed.), *In resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American History* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), pp. 117-132; RN Rasnake, *Domination and cultural resistance: Authority and power among an Andean people* (Durham NC, Duke University Press, 1988); DE Walker, *No more, no more: Slavery and cultural resistance in Havana and New Orleans* (Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

23 JC Scott. "Everyday forms of resistance", *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 4(1), 15 May 2008, pp. 33-62.

24 D Hammett, "Resistance, power and geopolitics in Zimbabwe", *Area*, 43(2), June 2011, pp. 202-210.

25 JP de Wet, "Passive resistance to western capitalism in rural South Africa: From "abantu babomvu" to "amaZiyoni", *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 21(2), 2008, p. 57.

26 G Gerbner, "The dynamics of cultural resistance", G Tuchman, A Daniels et.al (eds.), *Hearth and home: Images of women in the mass media* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 46-50; K Weingarten, *Cultural resistance: Challenging beliefs about men, women, and therapy* (London, Routledge, 2013); RM Press, *Establishing a culture of resistance*; RM Press, *Ripples of hope: How ordinary people resist repression without violence* (Amsterdam, University Press, 2015), pp. 233-234.

pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial epochs.

The image below shows Kalanga communities during the Native Land Husbandry Act.

Image 1: Map of Bulilimamangwe district showing Kalanga communities during the Native Land Husbandry Act[27]

Source: E Msindo, Ethnicity in Zimbabwe: The transformation in Kalanga and Ndebele societies, 1860-1990 (New York,University of Rochester Press, 2012), p. 73.

The Native Land Husbandry Act and agents of state hegemony

The NLHA represented the culmination of agrarian policy deliberations that originated prior to the Second World War. Following the outbreak of the war, there was need to restructure the economy and to absorb more Africans in the labour market and to ensure a sustainable labour reserve. As Worby argues, it was a piece of legislation designed to end the migrant labour system with its attendant social dysfunction and political dangers by privatising land in the African reserves and upgrading the skills of the urban labour force.[28] In this way, colonial administrators expected that those individuals made landless by the Act would be permanently absorbed into the urban labour market.[29] The NLHA's prescription involved a comprehensive re-organisation of rural

27 E Msindo, *Ethnicity in Zimbabwe: The transformation in Kalanga and Ndebele societies, 1860-1990* (New York, University of Rochester Press, 2012), p. 73.

28 E Worby, "Colonial power in north-western Zimbabwe", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, *Special Issue: Ethnicity and identity in Southern Africa*, 20(3), September 1994, pp. 371-392.

29 This was made possible by the manufacturing boom following the end Second World War.

society which included significant cuts of stock, fencing lands, concentrated settlements, improved seed and an expansion in agricultural education.[30] It is important to note that these tasks were conducted by white government officials with the assistance from the chiefs. The Land Development Officers (LDOs), (popularly known as *Abalimisi, meaning*,* amongst the Africans) were to "scientifically" quantify standard land allocations and stocking rates per given area before issuing them out to Africans on individual tenure.

The allocation of land on individual tenure was in itself problematic as land was traditionally communally owned, belonging to the ancestors who were the guardians under the supervision of chiefs.[31] Ultimately, as noted earlier, the Act hoped to create distinct classes of rural and urban African dwellers.[32] It did not seek to increase or maintain the amount of land available for use by Africans but to develop it differently to increase its "carrying capacity".[33] All these arguments were mere excuses by the colonial government, which blamed Africans for land misuse and hence the arguments for intervention by the state through the NLHA in order to alleviate land problems in African reserves.

However, in all these top-down prescriptions, African ecological knowledge was ignored.[34] Instead, white LDO and Conservation Officers, with the help of compliant chiefs, were tasked with implementing the NLHA.[35] In some cases, the state used the Agricultural Demonstrators (also known as *abalimisi*) who were usually Africans and tasked to educate their fellow Africans on the "proper" farming methods. Although, these demonstrators dated back to 1927, they were effectively deployed in the 1950s as a result of repressive government racist land policy. Makombe rightly observes that perhaps most ominous of all were the powers the NLHA gave to white

30 E Kramer, "A clash of economies: Early centralisation efforts in colonial Zimbabwe, 1929-1935", *Zambezia: The Journal of the University of Zimbabwe*, 25(1), 1998, p. 85.

31 For a more nuanced discussion on land ownership amongst the Kalanga see , T Dube, "Shifting identities and the transformation of the Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe District, Matebeleland South, Zimbabwe, c. 1946-2005" (PhD, University of the Witwatersrand, 2015), pp. 84-91.

32 T Dube, "Shifting identities and the transformation of the Kalanga people …" p. 80.

33 E Kramer, "A clash of economies….", *The Journal of the University of Zimbabwe*, 25(1), 1998, p. 85.

34 This was not only unique to Bulilimamangwe, but studies on the NLHA indicate that across the country Africans were not consulted. For this discussion see, EK Makombe, "A social history of town and country interactions…" (PhD, University of the Witwatersrand, 2013); VEM Machingaidze, "Agrarian change from above…", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24(3), 1991, pp. 557-588; J Alexander, "The unsettled land: State making and the politics of land in Zimbabwe"; Delineation Reports on various parts of the country have detailed these depositions as well; National Archives (NA), Harare, Reference S2929/6/1-9: Delineation Reports, Bulilimamangwe District, Beitbridge, Matobo and Nkayi Districts, 1965.

35 EK Makombe, "A social history of town and country interactions: A study on the changing social life and practices of rural-urban migrants in colonial Harare and Goromonzi, 1946-1979", p. 18.

officials and their agents to interfere in the daily life of communities.[36] MM van Beusekom and DL Hodgson also argue that, despite claims to address merely technical problems, the development agenda aimed for in the post-Second World War era was "deeply intertwined with colonial imperatives to order, control and compel the progress of the most backward subjects".[37] I Yngstrom, in his study of conservationist policies in central Tanzania, argues that, "within the discourse of conservationist ideology, Africans were constructed as unscientific exploiters with a poor understanding of the local ecology and production techniques in contrast to colonial agricultural knowledge generated from its Western scientific research base".[38] In the process of creating an environment based on knowledge and technology, imported categories of thought and techniques, Africans were constructed, as "unscientific exploiters of the natural resources and their ecological knowledge were silenced".[39]

Land, culture, religion and identity as tools of resistance

Chiefs Madlambuzi Ncube and Masendu Dube viewed the Act as a piece of legislation that impinged on Kalanga culture and identity although this identity was – as asserted earlier – fluid, malleable and dynamic. Central to Kalanga identity was the land, which was considered to belong to the Kalanga high god, *Mwali/Ngwali*.[40] It was therefore culturally taboo for the colonial regime to tamper with land allocation.[41] The refusal by the Kalanga chiefs to comply with the demands of the NLHA should therefore be perceived as an attempt by these chiefs to defend their culture and identity. Consequently, this led to the demotion of Chief Madlambuzi Ncube and Chief Masendu Dube.[42]

36 EK Makombe, *A social history of town and country interactions…*, p. 18.

37 MM van Beusekom & DL Hodgson, "Lessons learned? Development experiences in the late colonial period", *Journal of African History*, 41(30), 2000, pp. 29-33.

38 I Yngstrom, "Representations of custom, social identity and environmental relations in Central Tanzania, 1926-1950", W Beinart & J McGregor (eds.), *Social History and African Environments*, p. 177.

39 A Fiona & D Mackenzie, *Land, Ecology and Resistance in Kenya, 1880-1952* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 8.

40 Such arguments are still held by the Kalanga people. This was expressed during interviews in Madlambuzi and Masendu areas: T Dube (Personal Collection PhD student, University of the Witwatersrand), interviews, Sindalizwe Masendu Dube (Masendu chief), 11 March 2012; Baleni Dube (Headman under Chief Sindalizwe Masendu Dube), 11 March 2012; Mazwaligwe Dube (Headman under Chief Masendu Dube), 11 March 2012.

41 T Dube (Personal Collection), interviews, Sindalizwe Masendu Dube (Chief Masendu), 11 March 2012; Baleni Dube (Headman under Chief Sindalizwe Masendu Dube), 11 March 2012; Mazwaligwe Dube (Headman under Chief Masendu Dube), 11 March 2012.

42 The most remembered Native Commissioner who served during the period of the implementation of the Act in Bulilimamangwe District was Tapson.

The NLHA was implemented in most areas of Bulilimamangwe district around the early 1950s. To Kalanga chiefs such as Madlambuzi Ncube and Masendu Dube, the Act represented a serious affront to Kalanga traditional authority and identity as the chiefs' responsibility of being custodians of the land was suddenly erased.[43] The very idea of moving people who had lived on the land for a long time was deeply opposed by these Kalanga chiefs who argued that land actually belonged to the Kalanga god Ndzimu/ *Mwali* or *Ngwali*, and not to the colonial rulers.[44] For example, Chief Masendu Dube stated that the people lived by farming large fields because *Ndzimu* (*Mwali*) chose what he wanted from his people.[45] They justified their resistance to the Act on the grounds that it was also against Kalanga culture. The farming of large fields can also be linked to socio-economic demands as most rural inhabitants survive on subsistence farming. Therefore, besides ethnicity, these Kalanga chiefs resisted the NLHA because of economic considerations as well. They were opposed to the Act because it undermined their livelihoods. Acts of resistance were also common in most areas of Zimbabwe such as in Chiweshe among others.[46]

As opposition to the Act grew, old Kalanga songs were also used as a form of cultural resistance against agricultural demonstrators who came to the area.[47] In particular, the song *Kubukalanga ndiko kanyi kwedu* (Kalanga land is my home) expressed the Kalanga rootedness in Bulilimamangwe and their desire to uphold their customs and culture in the land of their forefathers. Although the song had its roots during the Ndebele incursions of the 1830s,[48] it became popular again in Madlambuzi and Masendu areas

43 As indicated above, state agents such as LDO and Land Demonstrators were tasked with land allocation and distribution.

44 The Mwali/Ndzimu/ Mlimo cult has been viewed as a Kalanga although its origins can be traced to the Venda. For more on the origins and ownership of the Mwali cult see, TO Ranger, "The meaning of 'Mwali', Rhodesian History", *The Journal of the Central African Historical Association*, 5, 1974, pp. 5-17; TO Ranger, *Voices from the rocks: Nature, culture and history in the Matopo Hills of Zimbabwe* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1999).

45 Chief Masendu Dube alluded to this fact and his view was supported by many people form the area who argued that to date people still possess a number of fields because it is a custom of the Kalanga to plough large fields. T Dube (Personal Collection), interviews, Headman Mazwaligwa Dube (Headman under Chief Masendu Dube), 11 March 2012; Lindiwe Mdongo (Headman under Chief Sindalizwe Masendu Dube), 11 March 2012; Belinah Sibanda (villager), 10 March 2012; Jele Khupe (Kalanga Activist), 13 March 2012.

46 LL Bessant, "Coercive development...", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 25(1) 1992, pp. 39-65.

47 Agricultural demonstrators worked under the supervision of LDO and were of African origin. They were also named abalimisi by the local people.

48 In this article the Ndebele incursions refer specifically to a period when the Ndebele people raided and occupied the present day Kalanga areas in Bulilimamangwe.

where it was directed to both the colonial regime and the Ndebele people.[49] *KubuKalanga,* according to the Kalanga, does not necessarily refer to the buildings, but to the totality of Kalanga existence as an independent ethnic group.[50] *Kubukalanga* was therefore perceived as a peaceful home where the Kalanga people could practice their own cultural practices and customs without being answerable to anyone. Singing in Kalanga was itself a form of cultural resistance as this can be perceived as an expression of the desire by the Kalanga to preserve their language and to articulate their belonging in their own language.

Chief Madlambuzi Ncube and the reaction to the NLHA/Amagandiya at Mpimpila Reserve

Chief Madzete Madlambuzi Ncube is well known to have been one of the first chiefs in Bulilimamangwe to resist the NLHA.[51] He is remembered for having refused the allocation of land by the Land Development Officers. Chief Madlambuzi Ncube said, "I will not allow the alien people to reduce the size of the land of my ancestors. We as Kalanga people refuse to be kept by other people. I as chief of the people have the right of allocating land to my people".[52] Here the Kalanga chief was resisting the NLHA on the basis of Kalanga ownership of the land. Moreover, he viewed himself as the rightful person to allocate the land according to Kalanga customs concerning land allocation. The refusal to comply with the demands of the Act was based on the chief's appeal to Kalanga tradition over land. This was shared during the author's interviews, personal conversations with Nconyiwe Ncube, Headman Grey Bango, and Payaya Dube who argued that – even now – in Kalanga culture, the chief has the right to distribute land to the people.

Chief Madlambuzi Ncube also represented African people's view over land not only among the Kalanga but also in Shona and Ndebele world view. For instance, prior to the advent of colonial rule in Zimbabwe, the prevailing

49 This was shared during the author's informal discussions with the informants interviewed in Masendu and Madlambuzi.

50 The view was shared during my interviews with Kalanga people from various parts of the Bulilimamangwe district who adhere to Kalanga ethnic identification, T Dube (Personal Collection), interviews, Jele Khupe (Kalanga Activist), 13 March 2012, John Tshuma (Villager), December 2011; Lisa Dube (Villager), 20 June 2011; Manyangwa Dube (Chief Wosana), 13 March 2012; Gogo NakaKheni Moyo (Elder), 21 December 2011.

51 NA, Harare, Land husbandry Act, Bulilimamangwe District; T Dube (Personal Collection), interviews, Baleni Dube (Headman under Chief Sindalizwe Masendu Dube), 11 March 2012; Tseyamu Ncube (Elder), 10 March 2012.

52 T Dube (Personal Collection), interviews, Nconyiwe Ncube (the late chief's wife), 10 March 2012; Tseyamu Ncube (Elder), 10 March 2012.

African land tenure system vested land rights in a corporate group which had overriding rights over those of the individual. The king or chief served as the trustee who allocated land to newcomers and ensured that its use was in line with the traditional land tenure formula.[53] Chiefs also acted as important intermediaries between their constituencies and the spiritual world. The traditional land tenure system accepted that land rights were inalienable. Land belonged to the living, to the unborn as well as to the dead.[54] Therefore, no member of a group could sell or transfer land to an outsider as land was considered a natural endowment. His resistance and refusal to comply with land allocation as stipulated in the Act was largely influenced by these views over land and the role of the chief as an intermediary between the Kalanga and the spiritual world.

Nconyiwe Ncube, the wife of the late Chief Madlambuzi said that when the LDO visited, Chief Madlambuzi Ncube was beaten up by his people who shouted "away with *amagandiya*".[55] Commenting on this same incident, Elijah Ndebele, a Village Head noted: "We believed that by beating up the chief, *abalimisi* would be convinced that we the Kalanga of Madlambuzi did not want *amagandiya*".[56] Chief Madlambuzi Ncube resisted the implementation of the NLHA not only in his area but also influenced the neighbouring Kalanga people to refuse *amagandiya.* One old man who is now settled at Madlambuzi related that he was initially staying in Gonde area and only settled in Madlambuzi during the *amagandiya* period. He said:[57]

> I was staying in Gonde area when the NLHA was introduced. Chief Madlambuzi Ncube called me to settle in Madlambuzi because he was against the NLHA. We as Kalanga people united with our chief Madlambuzi and resisted the implementation of *amagandiya*.

Accordingly, this man was called to settle at Madlambuzi by the chief in order to escape destocking and *magandiya.* In this way, they believed that by

53 A Cheater, "Africa: The ideology of 'communal' land tenure in Zimbabwe: Mythogenesis enacted?", *Journal of the International African Institute*, 60(2) 1990, pp. 188-206.

54 M Chanock, *Law, custom and social order* (Cambridge, University Press, 1985); HV Moyana, *The political economy of land in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1984); RH Palmer, "Aspects of Rhodesian land policy 1890-1936", CAHA Local Series 22, Salisbury: Central African Historical Association, 1968; C Bullock, *The Mashona* (Cape Town, Juta, 1928).

55 The incident was recalled by many interviewees in Madlambuzi area who also participated during the incidence. T Dube (Personal Collection), interviews, Elijah Ndebele (Kraal Head), 18 March 2012; Grey Ndlovu (Headman under Chief Madlambuzi Ncube), 10 March 2012; Nconyiwe Ncube (Wife of the late Chief Madlambuzi), 10 March 2012; Payaya Dube (Elder), 10 March 2012; Pius Ncube (Villager), 10 March 2012.

56 T Dube (Personal Collection), interview, Elijah Ndebele (Kraal Head), 18 March 2012.

57 T Dube (Personal Collection), interview, Tseyamu Ncube (Villager), 10 March 2012.

uniting as Kalanga people they would be able to resist the colonial demands of the NLHA and also maintain their Kalanga identity. The Act was not implemented and Chief Madlambuzi Ncube was demoted in 1951 and replaced by Chief Mpini Ndiweni. The installing of Chief Mpini Ndiweni was in itself an imposition of a kind of cultural hegemony which sought to undermine Kalanga traditional leadership. Mpini Ndiweni was an Ndebele who were considered to be the late comers in Bulilimamangwe. It is therefore not surprising that Madlambuzi Ncube challenged the powers of Chief Mpini during this period. He is remembered for having refused to attend Chief Mpini's courts and also influenced his kraal heads to boycott Mpini's meetings. Despite Madlambuzi's deposition, the Kalanga continued to observe him as their chief. This was expressed in the 1965 Delineation Report which said:[58]

> The arrangement to replace Madzete with Mpini has proved to be incompatible with the requirements of the Madlambuzi people and tribal custom. The people are unable to see how the Government could completely abolish the chieftainship and impose a "foreign chief" rather than install the heir Madzete.

After he assumed the headman's position, Madlambuzi was not paid for his duties and he ended up seeking refuge in Botswana.[59] The above serves to show that resistance to the Act especially in the Bulilimamangwe district aroused ethnic solidarity among the Kalanga people.

Chief Masendu Dube and the reaction to the NLHA/Amagandiya at Mpimpila Reserve

The cultural resistance also characterised the resistance to the implementation of the NLHA in the Nata Reserve under Chief Masendu Dube. The forms of cultural resistance were largely shaped by Kalanga world view on land, cattle possession, religion and chieftainship. The period of the implementation of the NLHA is best remembered as "the time of Sandlana" (Grispan), a Land Development Officer from the Plumtree District Offices who was in charge of the implementation of the Act in the northern parts of Bulilimamangwe district. He was nick-named Sandlana because his left hand was shorter than his right hand. In 1951, Sandlana erected a fence

58 NA, Harare, Reference S2929/6/2: Delineation Report Bulilimamangwe District, 1965.

59 T Dube (Personal Collection), interview, Elijah Ndebele (Kraal Head), 18 March 2012. Interviewees from Madlambuzi area also argued that Madlambuzi fled to Botswana after failing to comply with the demands of the NLHA, T Dube (Personal Collection), interview, Nconyiwe Ncube (Wife of the late Chief Madlambuzi), 10 March 2012; Belinah Sibanda (Villager), 10 March 2012; Grey Ndlovu (Headman under Chief Madlambuzi Ncube), 10 March 2012.

in the area that had been used by Masendu people as a grazing area for their cattle. The fence stretched from Tokwana to Mabhongwane passing through Masendu. This was done as part of the demands of the NLHA. Chief Masendu Dube and his people however continued grazing their cattle freely as they had done before and refused to conform to the demands of the colonial official over the land of their ancestors. The chief himself cut the fence, a veritable demonstration of his utter aversion to the NLHA.[60] One can argue that the cutting of the fence was an act to demonstrate Kalanga rootedness and ownership of the land in the area. The chief saw himself as the custodian of the land and hence this informed his aversion to the erection of the fence. He also got support from his subjects who continued to graze their cattle in the restricted grazing land. The Kalanga people's support to their chief was reiterated by Headman Mazwaligwe Dube who said:[61]

> I remember in the days of colonial rule when Chief Masendu Dube cut Sandlana's fence and allowed the people to graze their cattle across Tekwane River, we listened to our chief and supported him during the difficult days of Sandlana.

The refusal to comply with the Act also took the form of violence where Sandlana was beaten up by old women at the dipping tank after being accused of forcing the people to destock. Cattle were usually confiscated at the dip tank. The dip attendant would just tell a person that he was forced to sell his cattle because they had been termed *mangweni*, literally meaning the cow had to be sold.[62] According to Zenzo Herbert Nkomo, a resident of Madlambuzi, "if one's cattle were marked *mangweni*, they were supposed to be sold to the whites at meagre prices".[63] If a cow had a calf, that calf would not be paid for as it was argued that it was accompanying its mother and could not be sold separately. As retaliation to the Act, the Kalanga would not send their cattle to the dip-tank where they were highly likely to be confiscated. In addition, destocking also tempered with Kalanga customs on inheritance. In line with this, the minutes of Bulilimamangwe Council stated, "Without our cattle we feel there is no security and we would have no inheritance to hand on to our children".[64]

60 T Dube (Personal Collection), interview, Sindalizwe Masendu Dube (Chief), 11 March 2012.
61 T Dube (Personal Collection), interview, Mazwaligwe Dube (Headman under Chief Masendu Dube), 11 March 2012.
62 This was shared during the interviews with Sindalizwe Dube (Chief), 11 March 2012, and headman Mazwaligwe Dube (Headman under Chief Masendu Dube), 11 March 2012.
63 T Dube (Personal Collection), interview, Zenzo Herbert Nkomo (Elder), 10 March 2012.
64 NA, Harare, Reference S2793/4: Minutes of Bulilimamangwe Nata Council meeting, 1967.

Although the defence of Kalanga culture and identity was a driving force behind the Masendu people's resistance to dip-tanks, similar developments were recorded in regard to dipping in other parts of the country such as Umtali Veterinary District, Makoni District and that resistance to dipping had started in the Tandi, Weya, Chikore, Chiduku and Makoni Tribal Trust Lands.[65] The dip-tanks, now perceived to be centers of exploitation, became targets of the people's wrath. Many were thus destroyed in the process. They had become centres of exploitation as cattle were confiscated by dip tank attendants, with the cattle owners given a meagre price for their livestock. The Masendu dip tank was also one of the dip tanks that suffered in the 1950s.

The dip-tank attendants at Masendu Dip-tank also found themselves at the receiving end of the local people's rage. Anger directed at the exploitative nature of the provisions of the NLHA was demonstrated by both men and women. According to Chief Sindalizwe Masendu Dube, women played a pivotal role during the NLHA.[66] One can argue that the response by women was driven by their desire to preserve their culture as they viewed cattle as a symbol of wealth amongst the Kalanga. Moreover the frontal attacks also contribute to the way in which violence was used by the "weak" to challenge hegemony.

Besides being a source of livelihood, cattle were an important existential aspect of the Kalanga. First and foremost, it was believed that cattle belonged to *Ndzimu,* Kalanga ancestral spirits. This was demonstrated by the presence of a black bull in most Kalanga families. The bull represented the Kalanga ancestors; hence the bull was called *basekulu*, which means ancestors. Most Kalanga informants argued that there are many Kalanga families who still keep the black bull despite the encroachment and influence of Christianity. The view was also shared by the Ndebele in Bulilimamangwe such as Qedisani Dube-Ndiweni and Chief Ndife Ndiweni who argued that the "pure" Kalanga are identified by the keeping of the black bull.[67] Nonetheless, this custom of keeping the black bull is not documented in scholarly writings. In some areas, it was reported that the dip attendants would even confiscate the black bull. As the bull symbolised the Kalanga's beliefs and practices, its confiscation by the colonial authorities was challenged through boycotting dip tanks where this bull could be confiscated. The confiscation of the bull thus presented a

65 W Mwatwara, "A history of state veterinary services and African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe …" (PhD, Stellenbosch University, 2014), p. 221.

66 T Dube (Personal Collection), interview, Sindalizwe Masendu Dube (Chief Masendu), 11 March 2012.

67 T Dube (Personal Collection), interviews, Allen Bhidi Moyo (Villager), 10 April 2012; Manyangwa Dube (Chief Wosana), 13 March 2012.

serious affront to Kalanga customs and identity, which the Kalanga resisted. Furthermore, cattle were also slaughtered for ritual purposes and oblations for *Mwali*/*Ngwali*. The reduction in the number of cattle therefore meant that it was going to be difficult for the Kalanga to appease their ancestor through slaughtering cattle. In this way, destocking under the NLHA impinged on Kalanga culture and identity.

Land allocation according to the demands of the Act was also seriously challenged by Chief Masendu Dube who also influenced his headman, Baleni Dube of Muke village to oppose the implementation of the NLHA. Accordingly, the LDOs re-allocated land that had previously belonged to people of Muke village. Headman Baleni refused to be re-allocated the land and argued that his ancestors had been farming on the land for a long time, so he declared that he was not going anywhere.[68] Baleni said, "I refused to be re-allocated my own piece of land which I got from my ancestors. It was against Kalanga culture".[69] He continued ploughing on his piece of land and when the Land Development officers came to arrest him he said, "I will go to jail but my children will harvest my crops and I will continue ploughing when I come back". The LDOs never arrested him and he continued farming on his piece of land. While it cannot be doubted that the reduction of land under the NLHA posed a challenge to peoples' livelihood, it is important to stress here how the Kalanga in particular viewed it as cultural hegemony. They refused to comply with the Act in order to preserve their customs on land allocation and the role of the chief as a custodian of the land.

Freedom ploughing as a form of cultural resistance and the end of Magandiya in Nata and Mpimbila Reserves

By 1960, most people in Bulilimamangwe district had abandoned the states' technocratic policies and began to farm in the manner that appealed to them, known as *kurima madiro* (or "freedom ploughing"). It is important to stress that in Mpimpila and Nata reserves, freedom ploughing demonstrated the refusal by the Kalanga chiefs and their subjects to abide by the new farming norms imposed by the state. It can be argued that in these reserves, land and chieftainship played a pivotal role in resisting the land allocation patterns as stipulated in the NLHA. Mwatwara argues that freedom ploughing was

68 T Dube (Personal Collection), interview, Baleni Dube (Headman under Chief Sindalizwe Masendu Dube), 11 March 2012.

69 T Dube (Personal Collection), interview, Baleni Dube Baleni Dube (Headman under Chief Sindalizwe Masendu Dube), 11 March 2012.

an ideology of individual freedom to counter technocratic intervention characterised by the indiscriminate opening up of new lands by individuals and households.[70] Nyambara also states that in Gokwe Reserve, Africans referred to freedom farming as *madiro aNkomo* (Nkomo's freedom), the leader of Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) who encouraged Africans to protest against the colonial state by embarking on freedom farming, which literally meant ploughing in disregard to NLHA allocations and regulations, locally referred.[71]

Nonetheless, freedom farming was not unique to Bulilimamangwe. Drinkwater observes the same in his study of land use in the Midlands region.[72] As has been indicated above, although, freedom farming was a way of resisting the demands of the NLHA, in Bulilimamangwe, freedom farming was embedded in Kalanga customs on land use. According to the Kalanga, the land belonged to their high God and was kept by the chiefs. Therefore denying the Kalanga access to their ancestral land was considered to be undermining *Mwali*, the epitome of Kalanga identity, hence a threat to Kalanga culture and identity. Freedom ploughing therefore was meant to demonstrate that the Kalanga were ready to defend that culture and religion through farming without any limitation in the land of their ancestors. In this way, Kalanga chiefs and their subjects saw freedom farming as a way of preserving their Kalanga identity. For example, the resistance offered by Madlambuzi and Masendu demonstrated that they also wanted to defend their culture. The Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) observed that the Masendu and Madlambuzi people were ploughing all over the place disregarding allocated land.[73] Interviewees from both Masendu and Madlambuzi areas argued that they continued farming on their pieces of land and disregarded the demands of the Act in defence of Kalanga culture and identity.[74]

70 W Mwatwara, *A history of state veterinary services and African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe* …, p. 218.

71 PS Nyambara, "Immigrants, traditional leaders and the Rhodesian state: The power of 'communal' land tenure and the politics of land acquisition in Gokwe, Zimbabwe, 1963-1979", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27(4) 2001, p. 782.

72 M Drinkwater, "Technical development and peasant impoverishment: Land use policy in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15(2), 1989, pp. 287-305; PS Nyambara, "Immigrants, traditional leaders and …", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27(4) 2001, p. 782.

73 NA, Harare, Reference S2808/1/7: The land Husbandry Act, Bulilimamangwe, 1956.

74 The view was shared during my interviews in Masendu and Madlambuzi areas, T Dube (Personal Collection), interview Mazwaligwe Dube, Masendu, 11 March 2012, Chief Sindalizwe Masendu Dube, Masendu, 11 March 2012; Headman Mazwaligwe Dube, Masendu area, 11 March 2012, Zenzo Herbert Nkomo (Elder), 10 March 2012; Payaya Dube (Elder), 10 March 2012; Pius Ncube (Villager), 10 March 2012.

Moreover, migrant workers working in Johannesburg also defied the prescribed technocratic farming policies by indulging in ploughing on the unallocated lands when they returned to their homes. It was also reported that in Nata West Reserve "hundreds" of people were cultivating illegally all over the place. Efforts to punish the "illegal cultivators" proved fruitless. For example, it was reported that in 1960, the people at Nata East Reserve refused the individual allocation and the chief expressed in a meeting that the cultivators would return to the old system of tribal allocation. Some people even preferred to be imprisoned rather than complying with the demands of the NLHA. In 1961, between 50 and 100 people from Bulilimamangwe North (mostly areas under Chief Madlambuzi Ncube and Masendu Dube) were prosecuted for rebelling against the NLHA.[75] Those prosecuted mainly ranged from those that were ploughing outside the beacons, ploughing grass strips, to those people from Johannesburg who ploughed unallocated land.[76] *The Daily News* also reported the growing unrest and dissatisfaction in the rural areas over the NLHA. According to *The Daily News'* recommendations, a serious attempt was to be made to bring satisfaction to the rural people.[77]

Besides the problem of the resistant Kalanga chiefs, the government had also to deal with the corruption of LDOs as well as those said to possess land rights at their homes and the areas in which they worked. In this case LDOs used their roles to their advantage as they further robbed the Africans off their land. These complaints were raised by the Kalanga who seemed aggrieved that the land of their ancestors was being allocated to "foreigners". It can therefore be argued that more than anything else, freedom ploughing demonstrated the government's failure to succeed in subjugating the Kalanga on the basic level of imposing new agrarian lifeways. It is significant, in this regard, how the Kalanga used the word "foreigner" strategically in order to assert their agrarian autochthony at a time when the government sought to undermine them. Above all, these were forms of cultural resistance effectively deployed by the Kalanga communities in Nata and Mpimbila reserves. As a result, the colonial state failed to implement the NLHA in areas such as those under Chief Madlambuzi Ncube and Masendu Dube's jurisdiction.[78] Both Chiefs worked hand in glove with their people to resist land allocation. Their

75 NA, Harare, Reference S2808/1/7: The land Husbandry Act, Bulilimamangwe, 1956.

76 *The Daily News*, 30 March 1961, p. 5. The Act was meant to stabilise the rural population to put an end to labour migration. On the other hand, migrant labourers totally objected to being deprived of their rural base and security, which was the land.

77 *The Daily News*, 30 March 1961, p. 5.

78 NA, Harare, Reference S2929/6/2: Delineation Report Bulilimamangwe District, 1965.

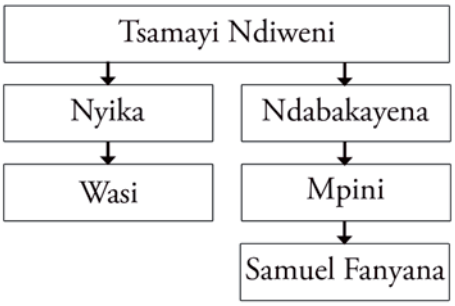
resistance to the Act was as much about defending Kalanga land and Kalanga chieftainship as it was about the assertion and articulation of Kalanga identity.

Conclusion

Although the implementation of the Native Land Husbandry Act was resisted in most parts of Zimbabwe, the resistance to this Act by Chiefs Madlambuzi Ncube and Masendu Dube took a different form and can be viewed as cultural resistance that sought to challenge colonial hegemonic policies by asserting Kalanga rootedness in Bulilimamangwe District. The article has shown that the forms of cultural resistance drew upon Kalanga identity, land, chieftainship and the centrality of *Ngwali*/*Mwali* religion. The deposition of the two chiefs following their resistance to implement the Act and the installation of an Ndebele chief, Mpini Ndiweni strengthened the ethnic identity of the two chiefs and their subjects who unequivocally refused to accept Chief Mpini Ndiweni in their communities. In offering a new inflection on established literature, the article complicated the analysis of resistance to the NLHA by deploying the concept of cultural resistance which was driven by the two chiefs and their subjects. Above all, the case of Chief Madlambuzi Ncube and Chief Masendu Dube specifically departs from the analyses which privilege the colonial rulers as significantly shaping and promoting ethnic identities in Zimbabwe.

Appendix 1

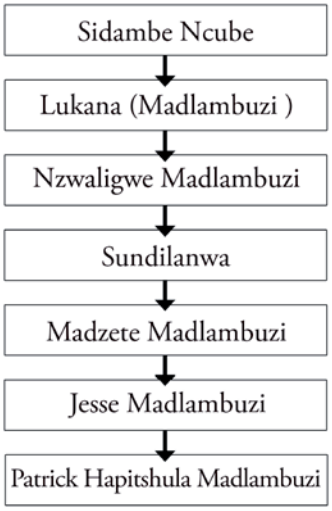
The Ndiweni chieftainship



Source: Author, 15 January 2014.

Appendix 2

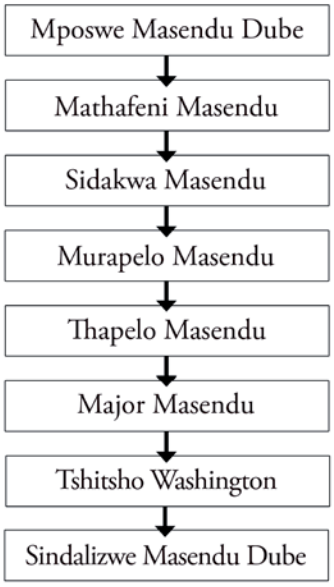
Madlambuzi Chieftainship



Source: Author, 15 January 2014.

Appendix 3

Masendu Dube chieftainship



Source: Author, 15 January 2014.