

MAKING HISTORY
Spirit Mediums and the Guerilla War
in the Dande area of Zimbabwe

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CONTENTS	PAGE
ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIALS	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
ABSTRACT	7
INTRODUCTION GUERILLA WARFARE AND THE STUDY OF CONTINUITY	9
Guerilla Warfare	10
Guerillas and Social Anthropology	13
Guerillas and Spirit Mediums	14
Methodology	19
Summary	23
<u>PART ONE</u> THE OPERATIONAL ZONE	27
CHAPTER I SPIRIT MEDIUMS AND RESISTANCE: PAST AND PRESENT	28
The 19th Century	31
Nehanda and the tradition of resistance	34
CHAPTER II THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND: MODES OF INCORPORATION	39
The Plateau and the Valley	40
Working the land	41
Political organization	49
Modes of incorporation	54
Descent - the lineage	56
Substance - the clan	62
Territoriality and duration	66
Kinship organization	67
Marriage	67
Mother's brother/Sister's son	69
Men and women	69
<u>PART TWO</u> THE LIONS OF RAIN	73
CHAPTER III SPIRITS AND THEIR MEDIUMS	74
Possession I: Seed and rain	75
Possession II: Curing	78
Provinces and realms	81
Powers and skills	87
Non-royal Ancestors: The childless, the murdered and the witch	94
What <u>Mhondoro</u> know	103
Ancestors and Witches	106
Ancestors and People	108

	PAGE	
CHAPTER IV	THE PROFESSION OF THE MHONDORO MEDIUM	112
	Becoming a <u>mhondoro</u> medium	112
	Possession III: The testing	116
	The medium in the world	122
	a) The medium's assistant	122
	b) The medium and the chief	128
	c) The system as a whole	133
	d) The past and the present	138
CHAPTER V	THE VALLEY OF AFFINES	140
	The Lions of Rain	143
	I <u>Mythology</u>	145
	The failed journey of Mutota	150
	The crime of Nehanda and Nebedza	159
	Mothers and wives	165
	II <u>Ritual</u>	169
	Black and white	169
	Red	174
	Men, women and the moon	179
	III How the <u>mhondoro</u> bring the rain	181
	Owners and conquerors	187
CHAPTER VI	THE COUNTRY OF KIN	196
	The ideal social order	197
	The spirit province	198
	The descendants of the <u>mhondoro</u>	203
	A spirit province in action	206
	The pangolin	209
<u>PART THREE</u>	<u>FROM CHIEFS TO GUERILLAS</u>	214
CHAPTER VII	THE POLITICS OF TRADITION I: THE MAKING OF MUTOTA	215
	The chiefs and the state	217
	Mutota vs Chiwawa I	220
	Territory and history	225
	From Chiwawa to Mutota	231
	The making of the modern Mutota	234
	The power of possession	239
	The genesis of a genealogy	242
CHAPTER VIII	THE POLITICS OF TRADITION II: THE INDEPENDENCE OF CHIWAWA'S SHRINE	248
	From chiefs to mediums	249
	Mutota vs Chiwawa II	254
	Chiwawa's shrine	262
	The politics of tradition	263

	PAGE
<u>PART FOUR</u>	267
CHAPTER IX	268
The ancestors in the struggle	271
Spirit mediums and resistance	273
Hunters, warriors and guerillas	277
Witches as traitors	286
The new <u>vazukuru</u>	290
CHAPTER X	291
The victory of the autochthons	292
Beyond autochthony	296
The Party	298
The Village Committees and the ancestors	305
The two Zimbabwes	309
CONCLUSION	315
APPENDIX	322
Speaking with spirits: the <u>mhondoro</u> and chiefs of Dande	322
NOTES	326
BIBLIOGRAPHY	350

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIALS

PAGE

MAPS

1	DANDE IN RELATION TO CENTRAL AFRICA	29
2	THE CHIEFS AND MAJOR MHONDORO OF DANDE - C.1980	51
3	THE MHONDORO OF SOUTHERN DANDE - C.1960	83
4	THE MAIN TRIBUTARIES OF THE ZAMBEZI RIVER IN NORTHERN ZIMBABWE	151
5	GUERILLA INFILTRATION INTO DANDE	269

FIGURES

1	THE JOURNEY FROM GURUUSWA TO DANDE 1	147
2	THE JOURNEY FROM GURUUSWA TO DANDE 2	186
3	THE JOURNEY FROM GURUUSWA TO DANDE 3	193

GENEALOGIES

1	TIES OF KINSHIP BETWEEN THE MAIN <u>MHONDORO</u> OF DANDE	86
2	THE ANCESTORS OF THE KOREKORE AND TAVARA IN DANDE	150
3	THE DESCENDANTS OF MUTOTA	222
4	THE MUTAPA DYNASTY AFTER ABRAHAM, 1959-60	222
5	RULER LISTS OF THE MUTAPA STATE: PRE-MUKOMBWE	244

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals primarily with two groups of people in the Dande region of the Zambezi Valley: the Korekore and the Tande, a sub-group of the Tavara. The ruling royal lineages of these people claim descent from ancestors, known as mhondoro, who are believed to control the fertility of 'spirit provinces' the ritual territories into which the chieftaincies are divided.

The authenticity of the mediums of these ancestral spirits depends on support received indirectly from the chiefs through their headmen. As the testing procedures for a medium require the recitation of the history of the royal lineage down to the present incumbent, and as one function of the medium is the selection of the successors to a chieftaincy, the authorities of chief and medium are interdependant. As a consequence, the history of the territory is thought of as the history of the royal lineage and ownership of the territory appears to be inevitably within its control.

During the colonial period (1890 to 1979), the chiefs were incorporated into the white-dominated state as low level administrators. Powerless to prevent the large-scale loss of land and forced resettlement, as well as taxation and forced labour, they were believed by the people of Dande to have betrayed their followers and to have been rejected by the ancestors. With the rise of the nationalist movements, reaching a climax with the entry of the guerillas into Dande, the insurgents were incorporated into the ritual and symbolic frameworks which had previously been occupied by the chiefs. This incorporation was effected through the agency of the spirit mediums thus allowing the perpetuation of the traditional symbolism of political authority.

As the ideology of the guerillas promoted the ownership of the land and control of the political process by all categories of people irrespective of ancestry, the symbolism of the royal lineage was expanded to refer to all the people of Dande, and that of the spirit province to refer to the emergent state of Zimbabwe which was believed to have been taken under the protection of the ancestors.

Mambo ndiye mugoni wepasi,
Ndiye anotaura mutauro mumwecheteyo
NaChaminuka nehanzvadzi yake, Nehanda.
Asi zvino maganzvo ababikwa kaviri nekatatu,
Pasi pari gwenga, denga rikachena.

(The Chief it is who is lord of the earth,
he it is who speaks in the same tongue
as Chaminuka and his sister, Nehanda.
But now the rain-offerings have been brewed twice and thrice,
while the earth is yet a desert and the sky is still bare.)

from Soko Risina Musoro by Herbert Chitepo
(translated by Hazel Carter)

INTRODUCTION

GUERRILLA WARFARE AND THE STUDY OF CONTINUITY

By the mid-1960s all of Britain's former African colonies had achieved independence. The one exception was Rhodesia.

The obstacle that prevented Rhodesia from joining the modern post-colonial world was the refusal of its government to extend to the black population, the majority of the inhabitants of the country, the right to vote in national elections. As long as the blacks remained disenfranchised, a negotiated independence from Britain was impossible. In 1965 the government of Rhodesia issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) with attendant promises that power would remain in the hands of the white minority for all time.

The black opposition did not wait long to respond. In April 1966 the first armed attack on the Rhodesian state in modern times was carried out near the town of Sinoia¹ by a small group of black nationalist guerillas. The guerilla war thus begun continued for thirteen years until, in 1979, Independence with majority rule was achieved.

Guerilla Warfare

Two main theories of guerilla warfare were current in the 1960s. The first was based on the experience of the guerillas who took power in Cuba in 1957; the second derived from the successful guerilla wars in China and Vietnam.

The theoretician of the first model, Régis Debray, has argued that the insurrection in Cuba was based on a small group of armed revolutionaries, the foco, who by the example of their unprecedented military success had achieved sufficient support from the peasantry to take control of the state. Debray developed the experience of Cuba into a universal theory of guerilla warfare:

... at the present juncture, the principle stress must be laid on the development of guerilla warfare and not on the strengthening of existing parties or the creation of new parties. ... insurrectional activity is today the number one political activity (Debray 1968:115). The setting up of military focos, not political 'focos', is decisive for the future (119).

This argument attracted immediate support as well as a good deal of criticism (e.g. Huberman and Sweezy 1968). However, after the disaster of Guevara's Bolivian campaign which had been conceived on lines similar to these (Debray 1975), few if any attempts to wage guerilla war depended purely on this 'South American' model for their inspiration.

The techniques of guerilla warfare described in the writings of the Chinese and Vietnamese leaders (e.g. Mao 1965 and Giap 1962) had a very different theoretical basis and motive. In this style of warfare, the primary objective of the guerillas is to gain the support of the peasantry in order that they be mobilised into taking action to liberate themselves. By proceeding in this way, the guerillas are able to achieve secure bases in the countryside, sources of supply and a knowledge of the operational area, as well as the rapid increase of their numbers. As much if not more emphasis is placed on political education as on military training. The hypothesis is that if the peasants understand the political, economic and historical causes of their oppression, they will rise up against the state in such numbers as to be irresistible.

Within the 'South American' model:

The guerilla force is independent of the civilian population in actions as well as in military organization; consequently it need not assume the direct defence of the peasant population (Debray 1968:41).

According to Maoist theory, by contrast, the defence of the revolutionary sections of the peasantry is one of the major tasks of the guerilla army. Indeed, military action is only undertaken for two reasons: to defend the peasantry and extend the size of the 'liberated zones' and, by extending the battlefield so as to include the whole of the countryside, to exhaust the resources of the state. Confrontation with the technologically superior forces of the state is otherwise avoided.

The opposition between 'South American' and Maoist models is a very broad one. Even in the 1960s, some South American guerillas adopted techniques that differed in many respects from those advocated by Debray (e.g. Marighella 1971). Nonetheless, the intention of creating a revolutionary peasantry as a prerequisite for the achievement of national independence clearly distinguishes the one strategy from the other.

The extent to which theoreticians from other continents had a direct effect on the formulation of strategies for the liberation of Africa has not yet been fully worked out. Africa has its own long tradition of guerilla warfare (Davidson 1981) and leaders of the recent struggles have tended to attribute their success to their practice of drawing theory from their experience of their campaigns. This is the claim made, for example, by Samora Machel, President of Mozambique:

We acquired a lot of experience. We learned much. We made mistakes and saw how to correct them. We made successes and saw how to improve on them. In doing this, we evolved a theory out of our practice: and then we found that this theory of ours, evolving out of our practice, had already acquired a theorisation under different circumstances elsewhere, in different times and places. This theory or theorisation is Marxism-Leninism (quoted in Davidson 1981:158).

However, the documentation available makes clear that in the struggles for the independence of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, to name only the most recently concluded, it was a strategy approximating to the Maoist type that proved successful (Davidson 1969, 1975; Cabral 1980; Chaliand 1969).

The same may be said of Zimbabwe, but with the difference that in the case of ZANU, one of the two main nationalist parties² and the one with which I am concerned in this thesis, the crucial influence on the formation of strategy is undisputed. The guerilla attacks that took place in the mid-1960s, including the 'Battle of Sinoia', were largely or entirely military ventures, similar, that is, to the 'South American' model (Wilkinson 1976:232). Little attempt was made to establish a base of support amongst the local peasantry. The defeat of the guerillas by the army of the state brought the insurrection to an end. The failure of this strategy was acknowledged and the training of Zimbabwean guerillas along Maoist lines in Mozambique was begun.

In 1972 there was a complete revision of our manner of carrying out the armed struggle. We began to realise that the armed struggle must be based on the support of the people... We worked with Frelimo for eighteen months in Tete province (in Mozambique). It was there that we learned the true meaning of guerilla war.
(Robert Mugabe, quoted in LSM Press 1978.)

Guerillas and Social Anthropology

The 'South American' model of guerilla warfare is susceptible to analysis in terms of the national political economy or national history of the country in which it takes place, or it can be studied by experts in the strategies of war. But, unless they are to study the guerillas themselves, social anthropologists or others who have knowledge of the rural communities can have little to say about this mode of warfare for it is designed to take place independently of the people on whose behalf it is fought. The Maoist model, on the other hand, demands and initiates intimate and long-term interaction between guerillas and peasants. It provides an opportunity for a study of change at village level of the type in which social anthropologists have long specialised.

It does, however, also provide a number of unusual features. One is the speed at which, of necessity, change occurs. Another is that the direction that change takes may be, and usually is, determined by a conceptualisation of the world some degrees at variance with that typical of the peasants in the villages. The last factor demands that a study of guerillas and peasants take into account the political forces at play in the country (or geographic region) as a whole, as well as the 'indigenous' political ideology and practice.

To describe the peasants' ideology as 'indigenous' is not to deny that it is the product of a relationship between peasants and the wider society. Indeed, it is the extent to which the peasantry have been thrust within and excluded from different aspects of the wider society that determines their readiness to listen to and participate in the ideas of the guerillas. Nor should this be taken to imply that peasants always require 'mobilization' by an external force before they will mount rebellion and insurrection. The history of Zimbabwe and Mozambique in the 19th century, to look no further afield, makes this quite clear (Isaacman 1976). But it is with an example of political activity that does result from external mobilisation, of the meeting of a peasantry with a guerilla army, an 'indigenous' ideology with one deriving from a nationalist or even an internationalist consciousness that I am concerned here.

This thesis is a study of the interaction of the ideology of the peasantry³ in the Dande area of Zimbabwe with that of the guerillas who lived among them between 1970 and 1979. The focus is on a set of ritual prohibitions which were observed by the guerillas.

These rituals imposed restrictions on the behaviour of the guerillas. While on active duty within the borders of Zimbabwe they were not allowed to have sexual intercourse, they were not allowed to kill the wild animals in the forests and they were not allowed to eat certain foods. They believed that by the observation of these taboos they could protect themselves from some of the dangers of war and increase their chances of victory. For the peasantry the acceptance by the guerillas of these restrictions on their behaviour demonstrated that, despite being strangers to Dande, they had the right to hold political authority within its borders.

The key to understanding how these ritual prohibitions mediated between the aspirations of the guerillas and the belief system of the peasants is found at the first moment of contact between peasants and guerillas. When the guerillas arrived in Dande and sought out sympathetic leaders of the local communities, they were taken to the villages of the spirit mediums.

Guerillas and Spirit Mediums

In traditional Shona cosmology, political authority is in the gift of the ancestors who stand at the centre of the moral universe. Certain immoral actions, such as incest, murder or witchcraft, are believed to disrupt the orderly processes of nature causing drought. Order and rainfall can only be restored by the intervention of the ancestors.

This conceptualization of the moral order contains a problem: ancestors have no bodies, no materiality, no form. In order to participate in the lives of their descendants they need representatives to act on their behalf. These are the chiefs, the descendants of the ancestors and leaders of the royal lineages.

In the past chiefs and mediums were together the defenders of the integrity and the morality of the chieftaincies into which Shona society is divided. In some contexts the authority of the chief dominated, in others that of the mediums. (This has been discussed by Ranger (1976), Beach (1979) and touched on by Mudenge (1976).)

But throughout this century the status of the chiefs has been severely undermined. The major cause was their absorption into the white dominated state as the lowest grade of local government administrators. In return for their salaries and the support of the local District Commissioner, they were obliged to perform actions, such as tax collection and the organization of forced labour, which are inconsistent with their traditional responsibilities as protectors of their followers.⁴ Their compliance with the wishes of the government was demonstrated at an international level in 1965 when the Council of Chiefs, chosen to represent the indigenous population of the country, gave its support to UDI. The members of this Council, as well as all other chiefs, knew that if they refused to cooperate over this or any other significant issue they would lose their position as chiefs to a less recalcitrant member of their lineage.

It was not, of course, the chiefs alone who accepted domination by the whites. Hundreds of thousands of Shona and Ndebele did the same with the consequence that the war of liberation, when it came, took the form of a civil war. The state was dependent on black soldiers and black labour to maintain its dominant position. On the other hand, it is also true that some chiefs refused to accept a subordinate status and either initiated or supported resistance. But the fact that the majority of chiefs, the descendants of the ancestors, had defected to the government side raised profound moral and practical problems which persisted throughout the colonial period. These problems were only resolved by the transfer of legitimate political authority from the chiefs to the guerillas.

This transfer of authority from chiefs to guerillas was carried out by the spirit mediums. They were able to do this because they are possessed by precisely the same spirits, known as mhondoro, who are believed to be the ancestors of the chiefs. As the chiefs lost their authority so that of the mediums increased. This is why the guerillas were taken to the spirit mediums on entering Dande. And it is the first reason why the mhondoro spirit mediums are the central focus of this thesis.

The second reason follows from the first. The guerillas took over the political authority of the chiefs. In time Political Committees, established during the war, inherited the authority of the guerillas. This second transition was mediated by the spirit mediums precisely as the first had been. Because the symbolism of political authority has persisted from one period into the next, and because it is derived from the symbolism of religious authority, it may seem to the casual observer that little has changed in Dande except for the names and lineage affiliations of the holders of power. Arguments of this kind appear in a variety of forms in a number of descriptions of recent events in Zimbabwe. For example:

Blacks in townships and rural areas...believed ZANU's claims to magical powers of detecting a voter's decision at the polls (Gann and Henriksen 1981:96).

No source of justification for this statement is given by the authors and it is easily countered by the view that:

What was crucial...was that (the black electorate) really believed that the ballot was secret. Without this the weight of security force intimidation and economic pressures exerted by employers would have worked (Cliffe, Mpofu & Munslow 1981:47)

But the trumping of one generalised quotation with another has little value. What is needed is a demonstration of precisely which aspects of traditional cosmology and morality have survived the experience of civil war and the establishment of a democratic state and which have yielded to the new. As the mhondoro spirit mediums stand at the centre of traditional political practice and morality, so they must be leading actors in this demonstration.

There is a third reason too. The most significant and pervasive inequality experienced by all Zimbabweans was, of course, that between blacks and whites. Apart from unequal control of the political process, the most important aspect of this national inequality was the control of access to land. A series of Parliamentary Acts passed since the inception of the Rhodesian state placed most of the fertile land in the hands of the whites (Palmer 1977, Riddell 1978). The consequent shortage of land for peasant cultivation was the single most significant incentive of

the struggle. Now, throughout Zimbabwe, it is the particular responsibility of the mhondoro spirits to protect the land. It was precisely because the guerillas were able to convince the mediums that they were fighting to reclaim the land for its rightful owners, the peasantry, that they were given access to the symbolism and the ritual practice that lie at the heart of the authority of the mhondoro.

The interaction between guerillas and mhondoro mediums had a powerful effect on the ideology and practice of both parties. As I will show in the pages that follow, the conceptualization of the royal ancestors, the mhondoro, rests on three sets of inequalities within Dande society: inequality between 'royal' lineages and others, between elders and the young, and between women and men. The identification of the guerillas with the mhondoro and their mediums for the purpose of resolving the national inequality, the distribution of land, forced the guerillas to take account of the indigenous inequalities which underlie the ideology of the mhondoro. Simultaneously, the mediums were offered an opportunity by the guerillas to adapt their practice to the wider political order of which they found themselves to be significant and respected members. As well as maintaining their responsibilities for their own individual territories, they began to see themselves as protectors of the country as a whole. It is clear, therefore, that one major interaction between external and indigenous ideologies, the process which distinguishes the Maoist form of guerilla warfare from all others, took place within the conceptual universe dominated by the spirit mediums and projected them to the front of the political stage.

It is for these three reasons: that with the eclipse of the chiefs the mhondoro spirit mediums held unchallenged political and moral authority in the countryside, that they used this authority to confer moral authority on the guerillas, and that they mediated the interaction between the guerillas and the peasantry, that so much attention will be devoted to these mediums in the pages that follow.

One further word of explanation: it may seem that in a study of guerilla war a disproportionate amount of space has been allocated to analyses of mythology and ritual, of kinship ideology and local conceptions of the past. But the changes that were effected by the experience of war in Dande were not simply those which might be expected when a group of armed militants issues instructions to a larger group of unarmed peasants. They were changes at the very core of political ideology and organization and they were expressed by means of the same symbolism as is used to express 'traditional' relationships in mythology, ritual and between members of families. To understand the changes at this level, it is necessary first to have some feeling for the texture and dynamics of Dande society. Because of their central role in the conceptualization of social, political and economic organization, the mhondoro and their mediums appear very frequently in the chapters that deal with these matters as well.

In sum, the mhondoro spirit mediums provided continuity from one era into the next while all around them was caught up in crises of destruction and reconstruction. The symbolism of the ancestors and of possession was as powerful at the height of the war as in the decades that preceded it and in the years that have passed since the ceasefire. Continuity is not inevitable. An attempt to explain how and why it has been achieved in the Dande area of Zimbabwe is the central concern of this thesis.

It should be clear by now what this thesis is not. I make no attempt at a complete analysis or description of the guerilla war either as it occurred in Dande or in the country at large. I present no further discussion of the theory of guerilla warfare than is contained in this introduction. No more detail of individual battles appears than is necessary to provide the background to other descriptions and arguments. Throughout, all events, symbols and processes, the whole of Zimbabwe in fact, is described as if through the eyes of a resident of Dande. I deal neither with the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) nor with ZIPRA, its military wing. In fact there is no reference at all to the major contribution made to the struggle by the Ndebele people or to that

of any of the other minority ethnic groups of Zimbabwe. The reason is simply that they were not represented in Dande where my research was carried out. Evidence has been published which suggests that a similar interaction of guerillas and peasants occurred in other parts of Zimbabwe (Ranger 1982a, 1982b; Masanzu 1980:8) but how far the conclusions I arrive at here are generalisable will remain unclear until the publication of many more case studies.

That the leaders of the ZANLA guerillas promoted an ideology containing some revolutionary aspects distinguished these warriors from those who had preceded them. But in many respects, the guerillas of Dande were no more and no less than the young women and men of the villages, fighting to take control of a territory they desired as generations of Shona warriors had fought before them. This point of view puts some of the seemingly unusual aspects of this study in their proper context. This is, in fact, a study with a long pedigree:

Control of the idea of possession was one of the main objectives of the rulers of Central African state systems, and the varying degree to which they achieved it constitutes a large part of the history of the Central African territorial cults (Ranger 1973:596).

This thesis is quite adequately described as an account of one stage in the history of a territorial 'cult' that operates in the Dande region of the Zambezi Valley in northern Zimbabwe.

Methodology

During the 18th and 19th centuries and perhaps before, the name Dande was applied to a semi-independent province of the Mwene Mutapa state (Beach 1980:146). It is also the name of a so-called Tribal Trust Land (an area designated for occupation exclusively by blacks) established under the Land Apportionment Act of 1941. Its borders survive as the boundaries of what, since Independence, is known as the Dande Communal Lands. Bearing all three conceptualizations of this area of land in mind, I adopted the boundaries of Dande as the approximate limits of my research.

There were two main reasons for the choice of Dande as a research site. Dande lies within one of the first operational zones declared by ZANLA, the military wing of ZANU. As fighting occurred there from 1972 until the cease-fire in 1979, interaction between guerillas and local people could be assumed to have been intense. The second reason was that research had been carried out in Dande by the historian Donald Abraham and the anthropologist Kingsley Garbett in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The advantages of having available to me detailed accounts of the social organization and oral tradition of the period twenty years before my study began were very great, providing a base line against which the changes that occurred at the time of the war could be measured (Garbett 1963, 1966, 1967, 1969, 1977; Abraham 1959, 1962, 1964).

A third incentive related to the second. There had been extensive discussion about the extent to which the structures of Korekore mediumship are inflexible and 'bureaucratic' in contrast to those of the Zezuru which have been described as subject to change and 'charismatic' (Fry 1975:54; Lewis 1971:135; Garbett in press; Bourdillon 1982a). A great deal of the discussion about the Korekore mediums has focussed on the central role of the senior medium of Mutota as organiser and stabiliser of the total system of mediums. Since the death of the medium of Mutota in 1974, this mediumship has been vacant. A reanalysis of the Korekore mediums at a time when they had no senior medium seemed a worthwhile extension of the study of the political and religious ideology of the Shona, especially in conjunction with a study of the political changes taking place within Dande over the same period.

I arrived in Dande in October 1980, having made a brief preparatory visit in June of the same year. This was seven months after Independence and ten months after the ceasefire which had ended the war.

During the last years of the war, the majority of the population had been forced into concentration camps, the so-called 'protected villages', in order to limit the amount of assistance they could give to the guerillas. The first camps had been constructed near the border with Mozambique but people had gradually been brought

further south and gathered into ever larger camps as guerillas won control of ever wider sections of the Valley floor. Those who lived close to the escarpment were in the camps for less than a year; those who had lived furthest were subjected to the protection of the state for upwards of five years. 'Operation Turkey' carried out by security forces simultaneously with the building of the camps, effectively destroyed every possession the people had left behind them which might have been of advantage to the guerillas. Houses, stores of grain, clothes, furniture, livestock, bicycles, all were burnt.

The camps were extremely overcrowded with minimal health facilities and acute food shortages. A confidential memorandum submitted to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1976 concerning camps in the nearby Chiweshe and Mount Darwin areas declares that:

It is now clear that the community is caught up in an uncontrolled collapsing sequence of events which, if not checked, will eventually lead to a degrading state of poverty where the people themselves will become so malnourished that both physical and mental degeneration will take place and we will have on our hands a huge national liability (copy in author's possession).⁵

When I arrived in Dande, the dispersal of people from the camps was in its last stages. Many people returned to the burnt out sites of their home villages but others chose to remain near the areas where the camps had been sited. Some communities that had existed before the war disappeared entirely and new ones were formed. A small number of people had fled to the towns rather than enter the camps. Others had been refugees in Mozambique. These were returning to their villages at the time that my fieldwork began.

Only a handful of farmers whose fields were near the camps had been able to cultivate crops during the last years of the war. During the first year of my fieldwork, people were heavily reliant on supplies provided by the government. Only in the second year was subsistence production sufficient to provide basic food requirements. During the first year, many men left their home villages to seek work on the farms on the Plateau or in the towns.

The demographic disruption caused by war had the effect that people from a large number of local religious traditions had taken up

residence side by side in the new communities, providing me with a broader range of experience and knowledge of these matters than is usually found in so small a space. In addition, the political committees which have taken over the administration of the villages were elected in the month before I arrived and were reorganized twice while I was there. I was thus able to observe the first stages of a new system of political organization while the old had not yet quite passed into history.

But the widespread disruption of villagers made the collection of systematic data on kinship and economics, usually the hard core of anthropological research, especially difficult. I have therefore drawn on the wealth of information recorded by earlier ethnographers. Apart from Garbett's work research had been carried out by Bourdillon in a substantially similar culture area (Bourdillon 1971). Many of the basic institutions of Shona society are similar throughout the country. I have therefore made use of the research of Holleman (1952, 1953, 1969) on religion, politics, kinship and law, of Weinrich (1960, 1971, 1975, 1977) on politics, economics and kinship and also of Yudelman (1964) on economics.

Approximately two-thirds of my time in the field (October 1980 to May 1982) was spent in my base village at the foot of the escarpment. During the remaining third I visited 12 other villages in Dande as well as four on the escarpment. These villages crossed seven chieftaincies and five hierarchies of mhondoro mediums. Travel between them was on foot, by bicycle or by bus. Visits extended from a few days to a few weeks; in all cases I visited each village at least twice, often three or four times.⁶ In my base village I collected information on approximately 100 households. I collected similar data from a much smaller village of fifteen households some ten miles away. In these two villages information was collected by participant observation and undirected interviews. In all other cases, information was gathered primarily by interview. In most cases these were recorded on tape. Interviews were conducted with mediums, their intermediaries (vatapi), their patients and visitors to their shrines;⁷ with members of village and branch committees

and with councillors; with ex-guerillas and with ex-members of the security forces and the district administration. All this work was conducted in Chikorekore, the local dialect of Shona.⁸

In addition I had interviews with politicians who had been guerilla leaders in Dande in the early seventies and with three ex-District Commissioners who had held responsibility for Dande and the neighbouring districts under the Rhodesian Front government. These interviews were conducted in English and were not recorded.

Supplementary information has been obtained from the records held by the Ministry of Local Government on the seven relevant chieftaincies, as well as the files compiled since the 1960s on the spirit mediums of Dande and of the country as a whole. I conducted a number of random checks to test the reliability of relevant sections of these reports which are held at the District Office in Chipuriro and in the archives of the Ministry of Local Government in Harare.

* * * * *

SUMMARY

This thesis is divided into four parts. The first part begins with a brief history of resistance in Dande, throughout Zimbabwe and in parts of Mozambique highlighting the role spirit mediums have played in the past. In Chapter II I give a description of the central institutions of Dande society. The outline of economic, political and kin relations provided here serves as background to the thesis as a whole. The main focus of my analysis of political organization is the relationship between chiefs and areas of land which are recognised as their territories. By the time of the war the authority of the chiefs over these lands had been severely weakened. The notion of an intimate and permanent relationship between a particular lineage and its territory was taken over by the guerillas who expanded the conceptions of 'lineage' to include all the people of Zimbabwe and of 'territory' to refer to Zimbabwe as a whole, but the relationship between the two conceptions remained essentially

the same. How this was achieved is described in Part Four. The discussion of the ideology of the lineage is the second important feature of this chapter for it provided the symbolism by means of which the guerillas achieved their political authority. The mhondoro are the ancestors of the 'royal' lineages. As the chiefs, their descendants, lost credibility because of their association with the white state, so the guerillas came to be accepted as the descendants of the mhondoro in their stead. A grasp of the structure and significance of kin organization is therefore essential for an understanding of the achievement of legitimacy by the guerillas.

Part Two begins with a survey of the variety of spirits and mediums found in Dande (Chapter III). By a comparison with the others (e.g. spirits of unburied people, of strangers, of animals, of witches) the unique characteristics of the mhondoro are revealed. The most significant of these are their morality and their altruism. The association of the guerillas with these altruistic spirits greatly facilitated their acceptance by the local communities as well as providing ethical support for their objectives and their techniques for achieving them. This discussion suggests an explanation of the common characterization of the opponents of the guerillas as witches, for witch spirits imbue their mediums with characteristics consistently opposed to those of the mhondoro.

Chapter IV focusses on the mhondoro mediums themselves, especially on the professional aspects of the medium's life, how he achieves and retains his position within the community. The central argument here concerns the interdependance of the institutions of the chief, the headman and the medium. This provides the materials necessary firstly, to perceive the changes that the more radical of the mediums have carried out in the organization of their professional practice, and secondly, to understand its significance as a means of resistance to the state. Again, the crucial point is that the guerillas have taken over from the chiefs the relationship which they used to have with the mediums.

Chapter V is a first foray into the ideological basis of the power of the ancestors and of possession. It takes the form of a structural analysis of the central myths of the Korekore of Dande and of some aspects of their rituals of possession. The key concept discussed is that of autochthony. The symbolism of autochthony (ownership of land expressed by control of its fertility) was taken over by the nationalists to express the opposition of the indigenous people of Zimbabwe to their 'conquerors' the whites. The myths and rituals described provide objective materials for the analysis of this concept so that the reason for its reappearance as a central image underlying the political programmes of the nationalist parties becomes clear. Part Two concludes with a description of the ritual practice by which 'ownership' of territory by individual ancestors, and therefore by their mediums, is achieved and maintained in the face of demographic change. These rituals were taken over by the guerillas to demonstrate their status as descendants of the mhondoro and, therefore, the rightful 'owners' and leaders of Dande.

Part Three contains a detailed account of the transference of moral and political authority from the chiefs to the guerillas. It consists of two inter-related studies. The first (Chapter VII) demonstrates ^{how} the hierarchies of ancestors, which are believed by participants in the system to be permanent, change over time and, more significantly, how contradictions that arise within the hierarchies have an effect on relations between mediums and their followings. This argument suggests an approach to the very difficult question of why some mhondoro mediums supported the guerillas while others became involved with the government propaganda programmes against the guerillas. The second case study (Chapter VIII) describes the means taken by the medium of the ancestor Chiwawa, one of the most militant of the pro-nationalist mediums, to disaffiliate his shrines from the chiefs who had lost his confidence as protectors of the people. The emphasis is on the creativity of the mediums in interpreting

their changing experience of the world in terms of their conception of the past. The experience which is crucial here is the rise of nationalism. The impetus for these changes was the appearance of the guerillas in the midst of the peasantry offering a practical alternative to the state-supported chiefs.

In Part Four I describe in detail the interaction between guerillas, peasants and mediums. At the centre of the first section (Chapter IX) is a discussion of the moral significance of the guerillas for the people of Dande, concentrating especially on the use made by the guerillas of the symbolism of traditional political authority. The focus here is on the series of ritual prohibitions which the guerillas observed, believing that these would protect them from danger. The meaning of these restrictions is revealed by a structural analysis which draws on materials first discussed in Chapter V. The focus widens in the last chapter. Here the nature of nationalism as articulated by the guerillas in word, action and symbol is considered, as are certain alternative perspectives on the ideology of resistance. This chapter completes the discussion of the persistence of the symbolism of the ancestors into the post-Independence era and considers its significance for the modern state of Zimbabwe.

The thesis concludes with an account of some of the changes that have taken place in Dande since the end of the war, particularly the appearance of previously unknown ancestors who have re-ordered the hierarchies of ancestors in a manner which suggests the influence of presentday nationalism on the mediums' current conception of the past.

PART ONE

THE OPERATIONAL ZONE

CHAPTER ISPIRIT MEDIUMS AND RESISTANCE: PAST AND PRESENT

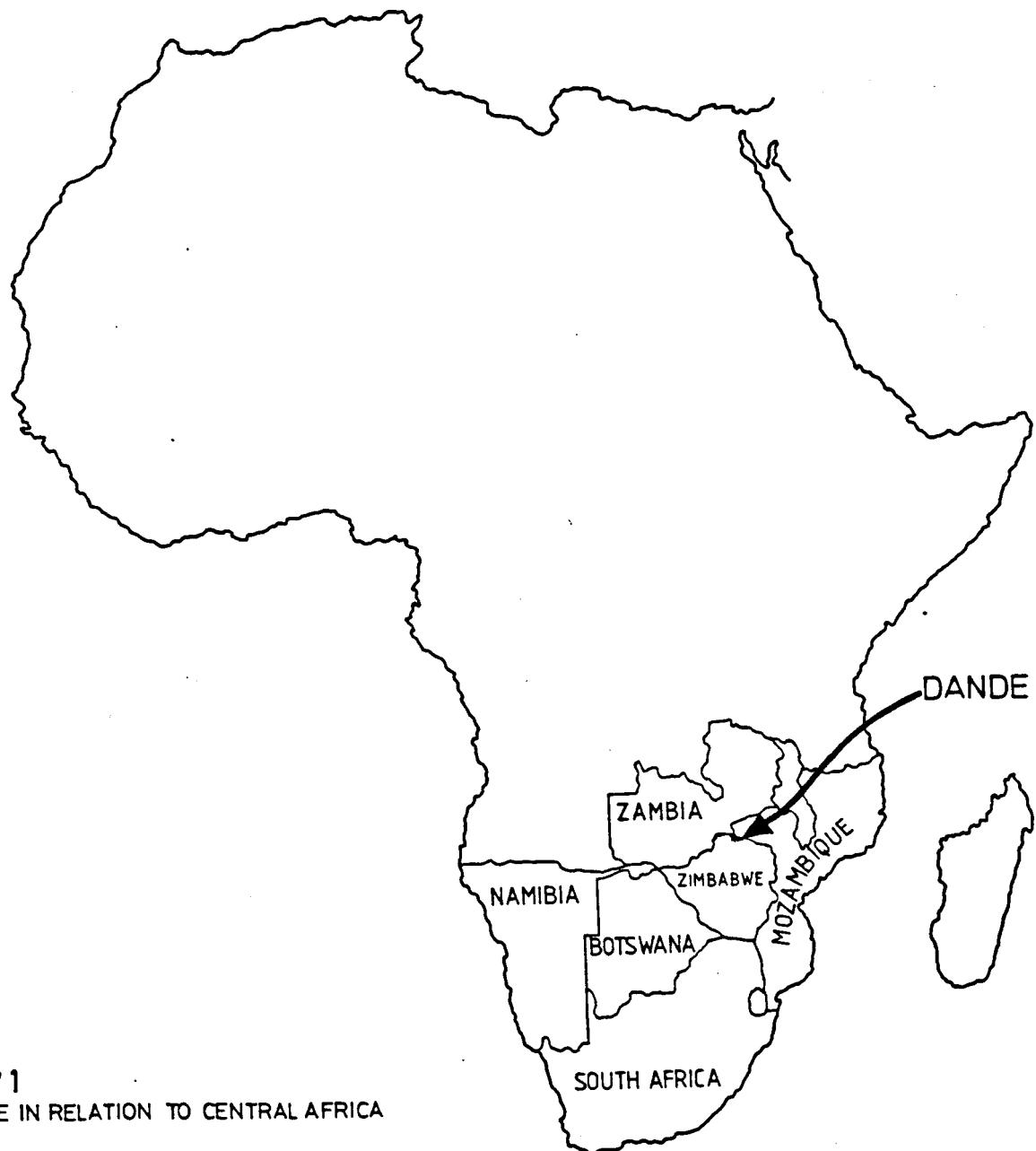
In the early 1970s, a small band of guerillas who had crossed from Mozambique into the north-eastern corner of Zimbabwe was led out of the dense forest of the Zambesi Valley into the village of an old woman named Kunzaruwa. She was a spirit medium. The name of her spirit was Nehanda.

Comrade Mayor Urimbo was the leader of this group:

When we arrived in the area, we had to start by talking to the masses. We spoke to the old people who said we must consult the medium. We were taken to Nehanda. She was very old. She never bathed and ate only once or twice a week. Her food had to be ground with a mortar and pestle. She hated all European things. We told her: 'We are the children of Zimbabwe, we want to liberate Zimbabwe'. She was very much interested. She knew very much about war and the regulation of war. She said: 'This forest is very, very difficult for you to penetrate', but she gave us directions. She told us what kind of food to eat, which routes to take, what part of the forest we were not allowed to stay in or sleep in, where we were not allowed to fight. She said we were forbidden to go with girls and she taught us how to interpret many signs in the forest which would allow us to live safely and to know when our enemy was near.

There were many other mediums in the area. The first that the guerillas had met was known as Chipfene, a short man with a powerful frame, bearded like most mediums and dressed in a sky-blue toga-like cloth. He led the guerillas to two other mediums, those possessed by the spirits of Chidyamauyu and Chiodzamamera. All three agreed to give the guerillas their support.

The medium of Nehanda had first been possessed many years before. Little is known of her early history. The three male mediums had begun their careers in the 1960s. All three had first become aware that they had been chosen as mediums by ancestral spirits when they became dangerously and incurably ill. The medium of Chiodzamamera, for example, was working as a school-teacher at the Evangelical Alliance Mission in the town of Banket when his illness struck. He visited the local hospital and a number of traditional healers but the cause of his illness defied discovery.



MAP 1
DANDE IN RELATION TO CENTRAL AFRICA

His condition grew steadily worse and he returned to his home in the Valley. There, a traditional healer revealed the cause of his illness to be a mhondoro, a lion spirit, that wished to possess him.

The mhondoro are the spirits of chiefs of the past, the ancestors of the present chiefs and the most important of all Shona spirits. They are believed to control the rains and to protect the chief's descendants and all those who live within his territory.

Rituals were performed. The sick man submitted to the spirit and allowed it to speak through him to its descendants and followers. The sickness went away. The cured man remained in the Valley as a highly respected professional mhondoro medium.

Once they had achieved the support of these mediums, the guerillas intended that they should live and travel with them. Few of the guerillas came from the north-east. The mediums could explain to the villagers who the guerillas were and why they had come, and assure them that they had their interests at heart. They advised the guerillas on the safest routes to carry weapons through the Valley and up on to the Plateau. They provided medicines to protect them in battle and to cure the wounded. They took a leading part in the programme of political education which the guerillas quickly began and they accompanied them into battle. Chipfene in particular gained a reputation for daring and elusiveness. The reward promised by the Security Forces for his capture or killing was never paid out.

In 1972 the build up of the guerillas in the Valley had been discovered by the Government Forces. Helicopters and ground troops began to patrol, searching them out. It was easy for the three male mediums to disappear into the bush with the guerillas, but for the aged medium of Nehanda, this was much more difficult. Fearing that she would be captured and punished for the support she had given them, the guerillas decided to move her out of Zimbabwe into Mozambique.

At first the medium refused to go, preferring to remain in the thick of the fighting. But eventually she agreed. Too old and feeble to walk, she was carried on a stretcher to the Zambezi River. Together with her three companions and aides she crossed into Mozambique, spent two weeks resting at Papai in Tete province and

then moved to Chifombo on the Mozambique/Zambia border where they remained for eight months. During this period, according to Comrade Urimbo, the medium 'was doing her command work, directing us in Zimbabwe'. The medium of Chidyamauyu says 'Vaititungamira muhondo yerusununguko': She led us in the war of liberation.

In mid-1973 the medium of Nehanda died. Her followers wished to bury her in Zimbabwe as the spirit had directed, but the war made this impossible. The site chosen was at the side of a road used by the guerillas on the journey from Mozambique to Zimbabwe. She was carried to the grave covered in a white cloth and buried, like a chief, on a wooden platform sunk in the earth surrounded by a hut built and thatched in one day.

After the war Comrade Urimbo, now National Political Commissar of ZANU (PF)¹ and a member of parliament, completed her story:

Her house is still there. Fire comes and goes but it will never burn. When we crossed to Zimbabwe, we put our weapons there and praised the ancestors and said: 'We are going to liberate Zimbabwe'.²

The Nineteenth Century

Spirit mediums have been practising in the Zambesi Valley for many centuries. Written records exist which document the activities of mediums, substantially similar to those operating today, since the mid-17th century (Abraham 1966:30n). By the mid-19th century, at the latest, the mhondoro mediums had taken responsibility for precisely those areas of experience that they dominate today.

The explorer David Livingstone has left a description of a 'Pandora' he met on the banks of the Zambezi River:

A man came to see us who stated that he was the Pandora of the place. Asked him to change himself into a lion then, that we might see and believe. Said that it was only the heart that changed, that he pointed out witches to be killed, that he told when rain would come (Livingstone 1956:254).

The Portuguese soldier and administrator Albino Pacheco gives a lively account of his meeting with a mhondoro at roughly the same time. His reaction, a combination of disgust and fascination, was repeated by most European administrators and observers from that

time until the present:

Being at the village of a medium I wanted to see for myself what stratagem he makes use of in order to be accepted as the incarnation of the deceased ruler. I must say that in view of the repugnant faces he made, the howling to imitate the roar of a lion, the barely intelligible answers to the questions put to him by a big crowd of stupid people... I had an urge to tell one of the detachment of soldiers to give him a good shaking... The tragedy is that there is no human influence capable of making those unfortunate people see and those mediums live off their blindness magnificently and that accounts for the great number of them that there are (Pacheco 1883).

But there was perhaps another reason for the large number of mediums in the Zambezi Valley at the time. For the late 19th century was a period of almost continuous resistance to Portuguese colonialism. Pacheco himself was killed during an uprising against the settlement at Zomba which he had been sent out from Portugal to command. Among the leaders of this resistance were the local spirit mediums.

Between 1884 and 1904 there were five rebellions in the Zambezi Valley.

In almost every case there is evidence of the spirit mediums or cult priests helping to legitimize, organize and coordinate the rebellions. For the mediums and priests this involvement represented the logical extension of their historical role of guarding the health and well-being of the Zambesian polities (Isaacman 1976:129).

The main leaders of these rebellions were the chiefs, but where the chiefs sided with the colonial power then, in precisely the manner of their successors of the 1970s, the spirit mediums moved to the front line of command.

While the prime concern of the religious leaders was to legitimate the authority of the secular rulers, they sometimes felt compelled to divorce themselves from specific rulers whom the Europeans had coopted. ...when Kageo (a chief) publicly refused to join the 1901 Shona insurrection, the spirit medium successfully appealed to the local population to disregard his pronouncements (as above).

Apart from providing legitimization and leadership, the mediums also provided protection:

In at least three rebellions, there are indications that the spirit mediums and priests distributed magic potions to neutralize the superior European weaponry. ...before the actual confrontation each soldier underwent a ritual to ensure his safety (as above).

In the Barue rebellion of 1917, the largest armed resistance in the region and the last until the start of the modern wars, the medium of the Tavara mhondoro Dzivaguru, a man named Kamoti, and the medium of the Korekore mhondoro Kabudu Kagoro, a young girl named Mbuya played crucial organizational and inspirational roles (Isaacman 1976: 158; Ranger 1963:54). Ultimately all these revolts were to fail but they were precursors of and preparations for the rebellion which at last brought liberation to Mozambique in 1975. There is some evidence that spirit mediums were active in this most recent struggle as well (Isaacman 1976:199).

Meanwhile, across the border in Rhodesia, spirit mediums were playing no less significant a part in resistance to the British than their counterparts in Mozambique towards the Portuguese.

In a classic study, Ranger has described the importance of the Shona mediums in the first Chimurenga or war of resistance in 1896 which came close to destroying the nascent white state almost before it had begun (Ranger 1967). He argues that the military coordination of the many independent chieftaincies that participated in the resistance was to a large extent achieved by the mediation of the mhondoro mediums associated with each individual chieftaincy. He suggests that the genealogies of the rulers of the defunct Mutapa and Rozvi states provided a framework which, when activated by the mediums of the spirits of those dead rulers, allowed the creation of a proto-nationalist unity in the face of political and economic imperialism.

This argument has received some criticism. In particular, the very broad range of affiliations which Ranger claims the mediums attracted has been disputed (Beach 1979; Cobbing 1977). Nonetheless, the central argument holds. That a conception of the political order of the past can provide not only inspiration but also a guide to organizational strategy is clearly brought out in the account of the second Chimurenga that follows. But one important criticism of Ranger's work does emerge from my own. His argument suggests that the versions of the past which the mediums use as justification for their strategies are fixed and permanent, are capable, that is, of

Providing the same organizational structure at different moments in time. In reality this is the view of the part which the spirit mediums adhere to. Analysis shows it to be a view entirely inconsistent with the facts. That the royal genealogies were more or less static was a belief common throughout the 1960s (Gelfand 1959, 1962; Garbett 1966, 1969). I deal with this problem in detail, though directing my criticisms at another and earlier historian, in Chapter V.

Nehanda and the tradition of resistance

Unlike all other mhondoro spirits, Nehanda is believed to have two separate equally legitimate traditions of mediums, one in the Mazoe region near the capital Harare, the other in Dande.³ A medium of the Mazoe Nehanda was a major organizer of the 19th century rebellion. When it failed, she was amongst the last of the leaders to be captured. A powerful and prolific oral tradition grew up around her name, her part in the rebellion and, especially, the last moments of her life: her refusal to accept conversion to Christianity, her defiance on the scaffold, her prophecy that 'my bones will rise' and win back freedom from the Europeans.

In time the career of the medium, a woman named Charwe, and the supernatural healing and protective powers associated with the spirit Nehanda became inextricably fused. In song, in verse and in myth Nehanda came to represent the inevitable but long awaited victory of the Shona over their oppressors. As a nationalist heroine, she was rivalled only by Chaminuka, a Zezuru mhondoro who came to be regarded as her brother. In the mythology that has grown out of the participation of the ancestors in the years of struggle, this brother and sister pair are thought of as the founders of the Shona nation.⁴

In the novel Feso by S. Mutswairo (first published in 1957 and later banned by the Rhodesian Front government) the 'Vanyai' who represent the enslaved Shona people, regard Nehanda as their protector and liberator:

Where is our freedom, Nehanda?
 Won't you come down to help us?
 Our old men are treated like children
 In the land you gave them, merciful creator.
 (Mutswairo 1974:66)

In the poem Soko Risina Musoro by Herbert Chitepo, one time president of ZANU (published 1958), an old warrior bemoans the destruction of the Shona nation:

The sun of the kinship is setting,
the rising wind is screaming
a tale of death. The rivers have dried up
leaving only pools filled with corpses of the dead.
Where are our heroes of old?
Where is Chaminuka and Nehanda?
Where are our tribal spirits?
Our complaining and our prayers,
have they failed to come where you are?

(reprinted in Mutswairo 1974:249)

In recognition and perpetuation of this tradition, the first two ZANU operational zones in the north-east were named Nehanda and Chaminuka. It is hardly surprising then that when the guerillas discovered their good fortune in having a medium of Nehanda active in their operational zone, they should have urged her to join the struggle. But the white administration was also conscious of its history. The part played by mediums in 1896 had not been forgotten by them any more than by their old adversaries.

In the many articles and reports written about spirit mediums by government agents two attitudes appear. Mediums are treated either as charlatans or subversives or both. But few of these observers can disguise the fascination with mediumship that turned so many 'native commissioners' into amateur ethnographers (amongst many examples see Campbell 1957, Marr 1962 and especially White 1971 and Lathan 1970, 1972). Remarkable fulfilments of mediums prophecies are reported, rain falling precisely where and when predicted, an exceptionally large number of game bagged after a spirit's permission to hunt had been obtained, and so on.

Materials collected to further state projects also contain presentations of mediums as cunning frauds wielding unscrupulous power over guileless natives. This is an extract from a report prepared in 1965:

It is held that the svikiro (medium) has no control over what he says - that is, it is not him speaking but truly the voice of the spirit! This, of course, is not true. ... Whilst in a trance the spirit speaks in a strange tongue - often unintelligible gibberish. ... I have observed that the

spirit medium often employs various tactics to set himself apart as a different or strange person. He might refuse to cut his hair and thus acquire the look of a golliwog. ... I have observed that epileptics are very convincing hosts (of spirits) and that they frequently have piercing, bloodshot eyes (Kaschula 1965:2).

But the complementary view, that mediums were dangerous agitators whose claim to political authority was illegitimate because contrary to the 'customs of the people' gained prominence. There was good reason for this. A significant aspect of the rise in nationalist consciousness that took place in the 1950s and 1960s was a renewed emphasis on traditional Shona cultural values. One manifestation of this was the increase in the number of spirit mediums amongst the Zezuru of Chiota district near Harare. Through the idiom of possession the spirit mediums were able to give expression and encouragement to forbidden sympathies:

Chiota people as a whole were supporters of African national ideals, and much of social life was taken up with problems which were either directly or indirectly a result of the conflict between black and white in Southern Rhodesia. Spirit mediumship was a ready-made institution which could be called upon to give meaning to the restored faith in African tradition and custom. ...the spirit mediums...assumed the role as symbols of African-ness against European-ness (Fry 1975:122).

In the late 1960s an administrative assistant in Urungwe district reported his belief that a spirit medium in his area had knowledge of guerilla activities. Although charges against this medium were eventually dropped, memories had been stirred. A nation-wide survey of mediums of all kinds was begun. As the first spate of attacks gradually intensified into a war, the information about the mediums on file received first 'confidential' and then 'secret' security classification. Two early papers by T.O. Ranger, the acknowledged expert on the first war of liberation, were circulated to all district offices while supplies of his full-scale study, 'temporarily exhausted', were replenished.⁵

By a variety of techniques, attempts were made to use the mediums to counteract the influence of the guerillas. Tape recordings of mediums, supposedly in trance, denouncing the guerillas were

broadcast from aeroplanes. Leaflets bearing the same message were scattered over the operational area:

TO YOU TERRORISTS

As the district commissioner of this area of Sipolilo it is my work to see that all the mediums are respected so that my people can be protected from the hardships you are bringing them... You took the medium of Nehanda from her home which is not allowed by the spirits which caused the death of Nehanda. ... Now you must know that you are living in the country of Nehanda's father Mutota. He does not agree at all with the bloodshed. All spirits are very angry with your evil deeds. ... They will only bring you death. It will be the cause of the death of your mothers, your fathers and all your children. ... You can only get away from this punishment by the spirits if you...put down your weapons and give yourself up. ... If you don't listen all you will get is death. (copy in author's possession. See also similar materials in Frederikse 1982:129; Raeburn 1978:177.)

In 1973 the Assistant District Commissioner for the Sipolilo District was instructed to send out his officers to fill the gaps in the records concerning the mediums. This instruction presents a vivid picture of how the administration's attitude to the mediums had hardened:

Ensure that each and everyone understands (that) those misguided swikiros (mediums) who have assisted terrorists or who operate with them will be destroyed. There is no place in any society for people such as these and they, having been severely punished or killed, as the case may be, will be responsible for their mhondoros remaining dormant for all time... The European will, if necessary, use the spirits of his mighty ancestors to fight terrorists and those who assist them. If this comes about the results for the Africans will be disastrous. ... Any complaint by Chiefs that swikiros are not toeing the line will result in immediate retribution upon the swikiro concerned.

The instruction continues:

In particular tell Johane, the medium of Chingowo, that the pretence of his not being allowed to see Europeans will need to be thought about by him carefully and if necessary he will be brought into camp. If he is sensible he will cooperate with the government.⁶

The medium of Chingowo refused to be sensible. He was shot by government forces in 1978. Other mediums were less resistant to persuasion. The medium of Madzomba, for example, accepted a number

of gifts from the District Commissioner, including five black cows and a trip to the capital to have cataracts removed from his eyes. Security forces were encouraged to treat him with deference and generosity and thereby demonstrate the government's respect for the traditions of the people. The authority of this medium was so compromised by these actions that at various times he had to be taken out of the valley and placed behind barbed wire to save his life. At least two mediums in the north-east, Parengeta in the Mount Darwin district and Matare in Chipuriro district, were shot by guerillas for cooperating with the security forces.

One charge which the spirit mediums could not make either against their followers or the local administration was that they were not being taken sufficiently seriously. In the course of my description of the mediums of one small section of the country, I shall many times have cause to consider whether or not this attitude to the mediums was fully justified. But before going on to discuss the activities of these mediums at greater length, I need to fill in the background against which they must be seen: the political and economic institutions, the structures and ideology of kinship and the history of the people of Dande.

CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND: MODES OF INCORPORATION

Within a short period of their arrival in Dande, the ZANLA guerillas were incorporated into indigenous social categories. The category into which they were placed was 'descendants of the mhondoro', which is to say that they were regarded as members of the royal lineages. This was not the only way in which they were perceived nor was their incorporation into this category absolute and complete. The extent to which it was achieved and the methods used to achieve it will be discussed in Part Four and also the changes to indigenous categories effected by the guerillas. But the background to this discussion, which stands at the centre of the thesis, needs to be laid out well in advance. That is the function of this chapter.

Two points demonstrate the range of the issues I will deal with. Firstly, few of the guerillas active in Dande were born in the region or had any historical connection with the ancestors believed to take care of it. Nonetheless, notions of descent, by definition a closed category, were opened out to receive them. Secondly, the incorporation of the guerillas as descendants of the ancestors took place at the expense of the chiefs. For reasons that will be laid out in Part Three, the chiefs' hold on their position as the axis of political authority had been considerably weakened during the colonial period (1890-1979). But they long maintained their position because, for much of this time, no alternative political focus was available. The nationalist politicians and their militant representatives, the guerillas, supplied this alternative.

To show how the assimilation of these strangers, the guerillas, occurred requires an analysis of all the techniques that can be used to achieve incorporation into Dande society. In this chapter I give an outline of these techniques. The chapters of Part Two contain examples of how they work out in practice in ordinary circumstances. In Part Four I discuss the use made of these techniques by the guerillas and their supporters during the war.

This accounts for the sections of this chapter concerned with political and kin organization. The section on kinship also contains a brief account of two important relationships, that between women and men, and that between sister's son and mother's brothers, which reappear in a variety of circumstances throughout the thesis. The section on the economy provides, firstly, the minimum of information necessary to support the description of politics and kinship and, secondly, it outlines the causes of the resistance by the indigenous peoples to the Rhodesian state.

This chapter begins with a brief description of Dande, its geographic features and its relationship to the rest of Zimbabwe. This description is not merely introductory. It may prove useful to refer back to it while reading the analysis of the central Korekore myths presented in Chapter V.

The Plateau and the valley

According to geographers, Zimbabwe is divided into four regions. The mountains on the eastern border rise more than 5000 feet, the highveld and the middleveld form a vast plateau covering almost two-thirds of the land and the valleys to the north and south fall at times to less than 1000 feet above the distant sea (Kay 1970:14). But for the people of Dande there are only two distinctive regions. Their home in the hot, dry Zambezi Valley which stretches the full length of the northern border is one. High above them the cooler, more fertile, much more affluent Plateau where jobs, markets and the centres of power are found is the other.

The road into Dande leads due north out of the capital Harare. For two hundred miles it passes between huge white-owned farms with great white houses set back out of sight, then through Communal Lands dotted with clay-walled huts at the sides of tiny fenced-off fields and then through the vast empty expanses of white-owned farms again. Fifteen miles before the road reaches the edge of the Plateau, the tar surface gives out and the gravel begins. But there are still shops and beer-halls, cows in the fields and a constant traffic of cars, jam-packed buses, tractors, trucks and donkey-carts winding their way between the villages, the farms and Chipuriro, the main town in the district.

The white-owned farms end at the Escarpment. Looking down from the edge of the cliff face, the valley spreads out, flat as a plate, north, east, west, visible for miles. The Zambezi River sparkles in the sunlight of a clear day from 80 miles away in Mozambique. Then the road falls 2000 feet in less than 10 miles.

In the Standard Shona Dictionary (Hannan 1974) the word 'Dande' is translated as 'country below the northern escarpment', but for many Shona it refers to an unknown territory, a place of wild animals, of great heat, of drunkards and witches - a place that modern Zimbabwe left behind years ago. The people who live in the Valley and those on the edge of the Plateau speak the same language and live, in some respects, the same lives. But the break is sharp and severe. On the Plateau the climate is mild and though the Escarpment area itself is too rocky and uneven to farm with profit, a mile or two south the soils are fertile though, like so many of the Communal Lands, badly over-worked. In the Valley, temperatures are consistently between 80° and 100°F in summer before the rains come, if the rains come, for they are even less reliable here than in the rest of this frequently drought-stricken land. For centuries the tsetse fly has prevented the rearing of cattle. The soils are poor. There are few shops, few schools, no beer halls, no jobs, no markets and it feels very far indeed from the centres of power. From the foot of the escarpment only the first row of hills can be seen but as the road travels north, the blunt face of the mountain rises behind and is visible half-way to the river. The people with whom this thesis is concerned live and mostly work on the Valley floor but the Plateau and the people who live there are never long out of their minds.

Working the land

This section on the economy of Dande provides no more than the background to the main discussion of this thesis. The central institutions of Dande society are described without consideration of their involvement with the state (colonial, settler or

Independent) or with the nationalist movements. The interactions of the local institutions with the state and the nationalists is the subject of Parts Three and Four.

This outline of the economy is drawn partly from my own research, but largely from the work of earlier ethnographers. For the economy of the Shona as a whole, the main source is Beach (1976, 1977, 1980). Scudder (1960, 1962) provides a thorough description of the ecology of another Valley society, the Tonga on the Zambian bank of the Zambezi. Lancaster's detailed account of the economy of the Goba who are closely related to the people of Dande and live in a similar environment (Lancaster 1981) contains a wealth of pertinent information. In his description of the economy of a chieftaincy on the eastern edge of Dande, Garbett (1963) includes a detailed discussion of the carrying capacity of the land, of patterns of village movement relative to the maintenance of fertility and of the economic causes of household fission (pages 23ff).

Away from the rivers that run off the Plateau and empty into the Zambezi, most of Dande is overgrown bush, dense with thin, grey Mupani trees and a scattering of towering Baobabs. This is the home of the buck, baboons, monkeys, pigs, elephants, buffalos, birds of a hundred species and, so it is rumoured, lions. It is also home to a few small settlements of people who, usually because of their penchant for hunting, choose to live in the bush on their own. Most people live in the villages of from 20 to 200 people on the banks of the major rivers. In the summer the grasses grow six and seven feet high and the rivers rise, isolating settlements one from another unless you make the long journey round to the roads and the bridge and then round to the villages again. When the rains end the grasses burn and all but the largest rivers run dry. In a few areas boreholes have been dug and villages are sited away from the river banks. But for most people a plot on the banks of one of the tributaries of the Zambezi is the first essential of life.

The paucity and unreliability of the rains is the main economic drawback (Garbett 1967:308). Scudder (1962:215f) considers the Valley to be more suitable for hunting and gathering than cultivation on this account. The dry season is from April to December. The heat begins to build up in August. By November work in the middle of the day is exhausting. In addition, little of the soil holds enough water for effective grain cultivation. Pressure on the better lands near the rivers, though far less intense than on the Plateau, is one constraint on the expansion of production (Garbett 1969:309). The Tsetse fly carried by game are another. Cattle brought into the valley die within months and so most cultivation is by hand with a hoe. Few families contain sufficient labour to cultivate by hand the eight acres of maize considered necessary by the local Agricultural Extension Officers to provide a subsistence and sufficient cash for basic needs. The acres that are cultivated run the constant risk of destruction by the elephants, buffalo, pigs, and baboons that emerge from the bush as soon as the crops grow ripe. Baboons and pigs can be driven away, though a great deal of labour time is needed to do so. It is illegal to trap or shoot large game, so elephants and buffalo (and hippopotomi in some areas) wander as they please and frequently destroy in a night the work of the year.

For most Shona peoples, as for most sub-Saharan African societies, cattle are a major source and store of value. Wealth, prestige and the morality of participation in ritual are expressed by means of cattle, the accumulation of herds and their controlled dispersal (cf Kuper 1982 for a summary of the symbolic and economic values of cattle). As cattle cannot survive the conditions of the valley, the people of Dande do not have this means for the expression of value available to them. The very significant part cattle play in the everyday life of the Plateau Korekore (Bourdillon 1971:9f) is taken by no single institution in the valley. This is one of the sharpest distinctions between the two populations.

The one advantage which Dande has over most other places in Zimbabwe is the many acres of unclaimed land. In some areas, large tracts away from the rivers are cultivable, although entirely dependent on the rains for irrigation. Over the last twenty years many people have settled in Dande, some because government legislation has deprived them of their lands. For others, the constant redivision and overworking of their land made Dande attractive despite its many disadvantages. But few have been able to take advantage of the land available.

The difficulties of accumulating sufficient capital to buy the agricultural equipment necessary to expand production has defeated all but a small number who brought to Dande the sums of money they had accumulated by wage labour in the towns. In the whole of Dande there are no more than ten tractors in working order (most are concentrated in two villages) and all belong either to the chiefs, the schoolmasters or to members of one of the Independent Christian Churches that make up less than 8% of the total population. For these people, and those who can afford to hire a tractor to plough from one to three acres each year, it is theoretically possible for the cultivation of cotton or maize for cash to produce reasonable returns. The Valley is highly suitable for cotton growing, though the intense, short season produces crops of less than first-rate quality. But only a handful of those who have tried it have made a success of small-scale commercial production. For the great majority, the market provides only a small proportion of the money in their pockets.

Beach (1977) suggests that the early diversification of the Shona economy, especially into various forms of trade, was encouraged by the need to find sources of income not reliant on the rains. The economic underpinning of the Mutapa state (see page 50) was trade in ivory and gold. From the 15th century, highly profitable trade routes from the Plateau to the sea ports via the Zambezi River passed through Dande. In some areas tolls were

paid to chiefs. Thus Dande was linked to the international network of trade between Europe and the Far East - ivory and gold exchanged with Portuguese traders for cloth and beads from India. One reason these items were desired was as a means of storing wealth which could be transformed into food when the rains failed (Beach 1977). The salt pans in the north-west of Dande provided another item for trade, this time with the people of the Plateau who had otherwise to extract it from cattle dung or the leaves of certain plants.

None of these forms of trade is carried on today. Apart from the small quantities of cotton and maize sold to the Government Marketing Board at a guaranteed price, the only trade is in the baskets and mats the men weave from bamboo and river reeds. They are bought by local entrepreneurs and sold door-to-door in the towns. In the past salt, sugar and cloth were manufactured. Clay pots made by women for their own use are the only goods, besides the weaving, manufactured in Dande today.

The basic unit of economic production is the household though additional labour may be recruited within the village if necessary. It is based on two types of fields and a garden, supplemented by occasional hunting and gathering. Cash from the sale of baskets, maize, cotton or labour is used to purchase a variety of necessities such as soap, oil, matches, tea, from the local stores and major items, such as clothes and furniture, from the town.

The main fields (minda) are away from the river banks and therefore dependent on the rains. If, as is typical, cultivation is by hoe these are between two and six acres per household. Crops include maize, sorghum, a variety of millets and groundnuts, with vegetables and melons interspersed between the main crop. The cereals provide the staple food, sadza, a thick porridge made by boiling ground grain, as well as doro, the home-brewed beer. Only one crop is harvested each year from these fields.

The fields located on the river banks, (matimba) are much smaller, usually from half to one acre. Here two or even three crops, usually maize, may be cultivated in a year. The type of maize

developed for Valley conditions is more productive and matures more quickly than sorghum, the traditional crop. But sorghum continues to be preferred in many areas as it is more drought resistant and less labour intensive both in cultivation and preparation as food. As very few grinding mills are available, this is a significant factor. In the opinion of Lancaster: 'Sorghum is...perfect for the Zambezi Valley' (1981:67).

The household head is officially in charge of production though in many cases he is away serving out a contract for migrant labour. Fields used for subsistence production are said to belong to each of his wives, whereas fields used for cash crops, such as cotton or tobacco, are his. Men are responsible for the clearing of new fields. All other productive tasks may be carried out by women or by men, separately or together, though usually when they work together they form two single-sex groups performing the same tasks in the same field rather than one interacting group of men and women. All household activities (fetching firewood and water, cooking, caring for children, etc.) are carried out exclusively by women. They are also responsible for maintaining small vegetable gardens on the river banks and for collecting various leaves and wild vegetables eaten as a relish with sadza. Though gathered foods are not much desired, they are eaten when, as is often the case, neither meat nor fish are available and no money can be spared to buy dried or tinned goods from the local shop.

Some men hunt using dogs, traps and spears. Pigs, rabbits, birds and small buck are the main game. Fishing is of great importance to the diet and takes place in the wet season after the sowing of the crops and while the rivers are still full.

All but the youngest members of the household participate in production of one sort or another. Until the 1950s work parties of neighbouring households assisting each other with large productive or development tasks in exchange for beer were common (Garbett 1963:105). This is no longer so, except for those organized by the local Women's Clubs who use the money

obtained by wage labour to finance visits to other centres, knitting and baking competitions and other projects. The few tractor-owning large-scale farmers, who cultivate up to 35 acres of cotton, hire some wage labour for sowing, weeding and harvesting but this is not yet a significant feature of the Dande economy as a whole.

Throughout the colonial period, taxation in cash was imposed on all households in order to force labour into the white-owned farms and mines. A series of Acts was passed by the Rhodesian parliament to encourage migration but allowing sufficient low-grade land to remain in black hands so that subsistence agricultural production could continue on the periphery of the main capitalist economy. The intention was that peasant production should not expand to meet all cash requirements, but that it should be capable of feeding the next generation of migrant labourers. This allowed wages paid to migrants to be kept extremely low, providing little more than the subsistence of the worker himself (Arrighi 1971; van Onselen 1976; Palmer 1977). In 1961, 72.3% of all men in the neighbouring Communal Land had signed labour contracts (Garbett 1963:18). More recent figures for the Dande area are not available. The national average in 1961 was 65.4%.

Since Independence and the abolition of the tax on the peasantry, the rate of migration has fallen. In Dande, it is possible that the flow has reversed. Many land-starved people who have been freed from the laws that confined them to the chieftaincies in which they were registered and who are unable to find work in the towns have applied to the various Village Committees in Dande for permission to clear new fields.

By way of summary:

Dande shares many of the features of the general Zimbabwean rural economy though in a more intense form. Historically, the development of agricultural production has been constrained by the unreliability of the rains and the poorness of the soils. In the

past an alternative economy based on trade was developed producing sufficient surplus to give travellers an impression of plenty and ease (e.g. Pacheco 1883). The collapse of the Portuguese trade-routes (Newitt 1973:341f) coincided with the inception of taxation forcing the most significant contributors of labour to the local economy, the young men, out of the Valley on to the capitalist market. The inherent instability of Dande's agricultural economy was thus doubly exacerbated. The fate of the families in the Valley depended on the success of their menfolk in the uncontrolled, fiercely discriminatory labour markets on the Plateau. Nonetheless, some movement of people into Dande took place as land shortage on the Plateau became so severe as to outweigh the disadvantages of life in the Valley. Tractors and other tools for the expansion of production are privately owned by chiefs or members of the Independent Churches who may hire them to others once their own requirements have been met.

Before Independence most schools in Dande were run by missions. All have now been taken over by the government and the numbers of students have trebled. Few adult women are literate; a larger number of men who have spent some years as migrant labourers can read and write but few do so with confidence. Most children and younger adults have basic literacy.

Only one mission continues to function. It provides the only local church (Catholic) and the only local hospital with in-patient treatment. During the war a number of dispensaries were built to provide first-aid to government troops. These now operate as a free service to local people. The short wave radios at the District Administration camps provide a source of communication with the outside world. The many police stations built during the war have been reduced to two. The number of bore-holes with standing pumps was greatly increased when the concentration camps were built. These still function. A few stores provide basic commodities to the handful of villages in reach of them. Most must rely on the three bus routes from

the Plateau to terminals on the Zambezi River or Mozambiquean border to visit the towns to make purchases or visit their families. Perhaps one in five families owns a bicycle. For the rest, communication is by letter passed from hand to hand and travel is by foot.

Political organization

The earliest attempts at a systematic analysis of Shona political organization are Bullock (1927) and Posselt (1935). Both writers contrast the contemporary disarray, as they perceived it, with the past but differ on the cause of these changes. For Bullock, Shona society had begun to collapse under the weight of its illogicalities before the colonial period; for Posselt 'contact with civilization' was the main factor.

Holleman's account of a number of Central Mashonaland chieftaincies (Holleman 1951) focusses on law and is a detailed and coherent presentation of the Shona chieftaincy as a self-contained polity. The basic institutions described there are found in a similar form amongst most, if not all, Shona peoples. His later work (1969) is an account of the restructuring of a 'traditional' chieftaincy, the Nohwe, by the colonial government and the resistance to this that arose. Weinrich has written a similar study of the Karanga chieftaincies of southern Zimbabwe (Weinrich 1971). The only substantial political history of pre-colonial Zimbabwe as a whole is by Beach (1981).

Garbett (1963, 1966a, 1969) has dealt with the 'traditional' political organization of the Valley Korekore and in other works (1966b, 1967) with political adaptation and enforced change. Lancaster has described the political structures of the non-Korekore inhabitants of the middle Zambezi valley (1974, 1981) and Bourdillon (1971) contains an account of two Korekore chieftaincies in the extreme north-east of Zimbabwe.

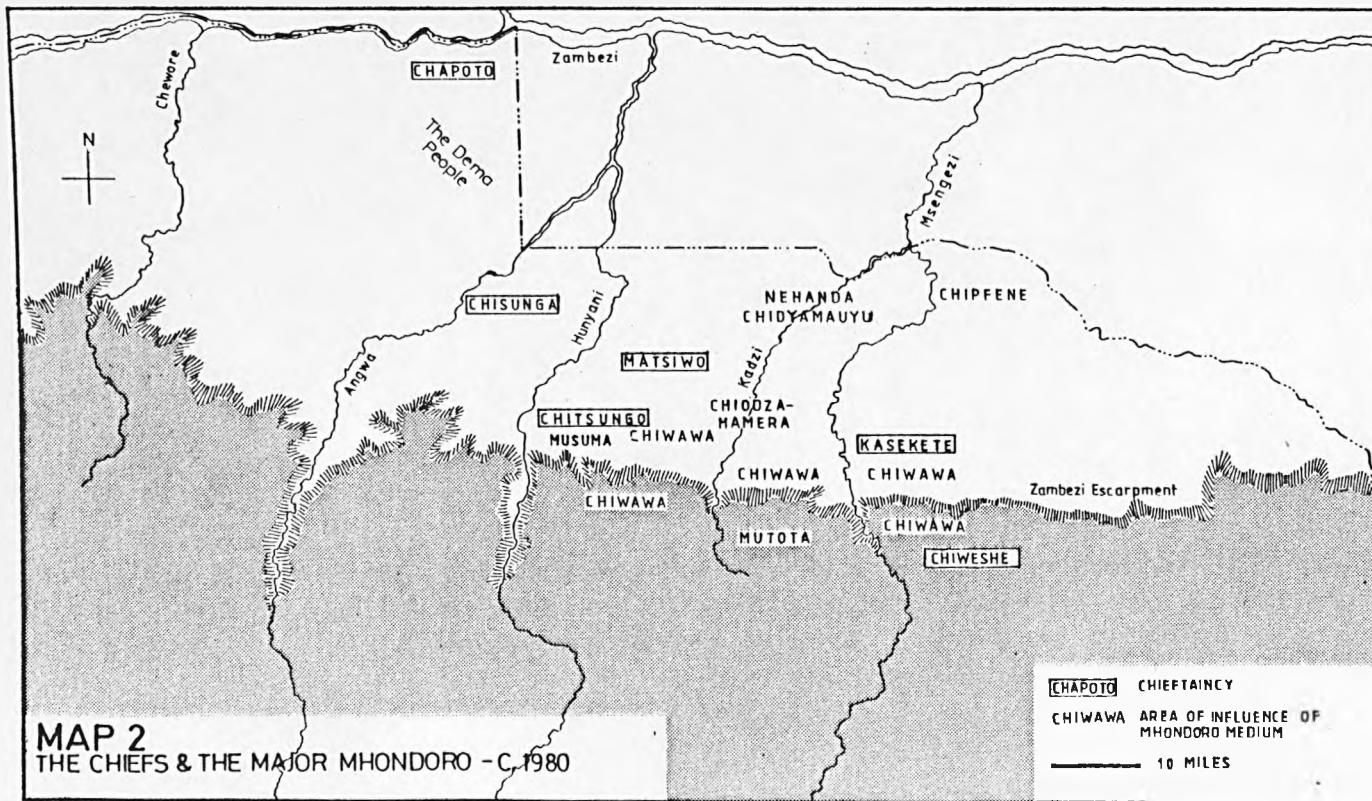
The Chikunda have been extensively studied by Isaacman (1972, 1976). There are no published studies of the Tande or the Dema peoples.

Northern Zimbabwe has known three major concentrations of political power in the recorded past. The Mutapa State was the focus of the highest levels of political authority over a large part of the Plateau and Valley from the 15th to the 18th centuries. Over this period it achieved various degrees of control over the administration of its many subject chieftaincies including those in Dande (Beach 1980:Chapter IV). In the 18th century, Dande increased its independence, ruled by a house which had ancestral claims to the Mutapa State as a whole but was unable to enforce them except for one brief period (Beach 1980:146). As the Mutapa State was displaced by that of the Rozvi, its centre moved to the Valley where, according to some accounts, it persisted as a focus of political authority until the early 20th century (Ranger 1963a). The institutions and genealogies of this state are believed by some writers (Abraham 1959, 1962, 1964 and others following him) to have significance for the political and ritual organization of the presentday occupants of Dande. I examine these claims in Chapter V.

The Rovzi State developed out of and in opposition to the Mutapa State. At its height it subsumed all the territories previously controlled by the Mutapas except the provinces in the Zambezi Valley.

Political astuteness was displayed (by Dombo, an early Rozvi leader) when he concentrated on taking only the agriculturally rich and gold-producing regions... while leaving the poorer Dande and Chidima areas under a shadowy Mutapa ruler, although it was in his power to take this also (Mudenge 1972:90).

The third political force was the Portuguese. Traders had maintained a presence in the Zambezi Valley since the 15th century. As their political fortunes rose and fell they either extended their trade south on to the Plateau establishing market centres, or withdrew to the river. Their participation in succession disputes eventually split the Mutapa leadership and contributed to its decline. Their prazos, or farms, lining the banks of the Zambezi remained in Portuguese hands until the start of this century, assimilating the riverine peoples to new forms of social organization (Newitt 1973; Isaacman 1972, 1976).



The name 'Dande' has been used to designate a number of different territories. As a province of the Mutapa state, it included land on the Plateau, the Escarpment and the Valley. Pacheco records its borders as

the Mussengüe river to the east, the Zambezé to the north, the Changüe to the south, and the Sanhata to the west (Pacheco 1883:42).

which is an area wider than the Guruve and Urungwe Districts of today. I use the term in this thesis as it is used by the people who live in it to refer to an area of the Valley between the Angwa River in the west, the Musengezi in the east, the Zambezi in the north and the Escarpment in the south, although people who live near the Musengezi River consider that Dande extends even further east. (See map 2.)

There are four main groups of people living within Dande: the Korekore, the Tande, the Chikunda and the Dema. The national population census conducted in 1982 revealed a total population of 18,147 divided into 3,516 households. This is almost certainly an underestimation. Approximately half of these people are Korekore, a third are Tande and the rest Chikunda with a scattering of Dema.

The Korekore are members of a major Shona language group (as categorised by Doke 1931) which occupies a huge swathe of the northern Plateau as well as the southern section of the Valley. In all accounts published so far, the Korekore are considered to be the descendants of a number of Karanga lineages who travelled to the northern Plateau and the Zambezi Valley from the south of presentday Zimbabwe in the 15th century. In the mythology, this event is presented as one coordinated invasion led by the founding ancestor of the Korekore, Mutota. The name Korekore is said to have been given the 'invaders' by the people whose land they took and is interpreted as a corruption of kure-kure (the people from afar) or of a word meaning 'locust' in reference to the effects of the pillaging that ensued. Political alliances between these conquering lineages are thought to have formed the basis of the Mutapa state. In Chapter V I suggest an alternative reading of the evidence for these hypotheses.

I am concerned with only four of the many Korekore chieftaincies. Three of these (Kasekete, Chitsungo and Chiweshe) claim descent from the ancestor Chiwawa who will appear frequently in the pages that follow. The fourth (Chisunga) claims descent from the ancestor Nyamapfeka. All four chiefs claim ultimate descent from the original 'conqueror' Mutota. The royal clan is Elephant (Nzou Samanyanga, literally: Elephant Owner of the Tusks).

The Tande, from whom the name 'Dande' derives, have only one chieftaincy, Matsiwo, but their identity is ambiguous. They are the people from whom, according to the mythology, the Korekore took land when they arrived in the Valley and they consider themselves to be the true owners of the whole of Dande. However, because of the higher prestige of the Korekore as 'conquerors' and as members of a group with marginally higher economic status and mobility, many Tande claim to be Korekore. The word 'Tande' is considered by some (though not the royal lineage) to be derogatory, indicating backwardness, poverty, wildness, etc. It has been argued that the Tande are 'really' members of the Tavara, the indigenous or pre-Korekore people to the north and east of Dande and in Mozambique (see Bourdillon 1970:103 for a map indicating their location). The Tande themselves deny this and the genealogy of their ancestors shows no linkage to the major Tavara ancestors. If one uses the word Tavara (as Beach does 1980:66) to indicate a loose collection of 'dynasties' resident in the Valley before the Korekore, this would accommodate the Tande. Their own oral history suggests that they arrived in the Dande area (or were constituted as an autonomous group) after many of the other 'Tavara' groups but before the Korekore. Their dialect is distinctive but fully comprehensible to Korekore speakers. Their chieftaincy lies between the three Korekore chieftaincies but members of both groups are scattered throughout both, notionally distinct, areas. The royal clan is also Elephant (Nzou Samanyanga).¹

In the far north, along the Zambezi River, are the Chikunda. They are found in Mozambique and Zambia as well as Zimbabwe. These descendants of the slave armies of Portuguese land-holders are the product of the blending of a number of riverine peoples including the Portuguese. Only one Chikunda chieftaincy is found within Dande. This is Chapoto, a descendant of the ancestor Kanyemba. 'Kanyemba' is, in fact, the Shona name of the 19th century Portuguese land-holder Jose Rosario Andrade (Newitt 1973:298). The royal clan is Pigeon (Hangaiwa Marunga).

The final group are the Dema. These have achieved some notoriety because of the widespread belief that they suffer from a hereditary deformation of the foot giving the appearance of having only two toes. In fact only one Dema family - and no more than two members of it - have ever had this characteristic (Gelfand, Roberts & Roberts 1974). They are no strangers to disapprobation. Pacheco (1863) reported that they were cannibals, the historian Abraham described their initiation practices as 'disgusting' (Roberts 1974:89) and so on. Their reputation as well as their present condition as semi-foragers in the Doma Hills with little access to fertile land possibly derives from their prolonged resistance to incorporation within the Mutapa State (Beach 1980:66). The clan of all 'true' Dema is Mvura Tembo.

Mvura means water. Tembo may be translated either as eland (Korekore) or as elephant north of the Zambezi (Beach 1980:69).

The dialect spoken by the Chikunda is closer to that of the Tande than that of the Korekore. The Dema speak a dialect distinct from all three but which is, nonetheless, comprehensible to them.

In this thesis I am concerned principally with the Korekore and their relations with the peoples they consider to be autochthons, the Tande and the Tavara.²

Modes of incorporation

In Dande, as in many African societies, ideas about political authority are expressed in terms of 'ownership of the land'. The principle holder of political authority, the chief, is the

leading member of a lineage that claims descent from an 'owner' of the land. These may be thought of either as autochthons, the first people ever to have lived there (as in the case of the Tavara) or as the conquerors of earlier owners (as in the case of the Korekore). Ownership by autochthonous right and by conquest do not achieve equally profound 'depths' of ownership (see Chapter V). But both autochthonous and conquering ancestors are referred to by their descendants as varidizi vepasi, the owners of the land. For the moment I will treat both styles as equally capable of conferring the authority to rule.

The notion that a territory within Dande is 'owned' by a particular lineage has a number of consequences for the way it is conceptualized. For a start, the claim made by a lineage to an area of land causes it to be conceptualized as a 'territory' in the first place. These claims always refer to specific (usually natural) boundaries providing a chieftaincy or other territory with a precise delimitation. Secondly, the history of the ancestors of the lineage permeates and, to some extent, organises the sensory experience of the territory by its inhabitants, the members of the ruling lineage and others. The ruling lineage lends the territory its traditional name. Chief Chitsungo's territory is known as 'Chitsungo' and so on. A link between the chief's lineage and the territory is formed by the notion that the chiefs of the past (the ancestors) were buried in its soil. An equally common way of expressing the bond is that the territory belongs to the chief's lineage because their ancestors lived in it. The most important sites in the territory (hills, pools, certain trees) are named after the ancestors, are near where their villages were sited or are associated with significant events in their lives. A chief's territory is sub-divided into 'spirit provinces' each controlled by an individual ancestor of the ruling lineage who is the moral arbiter of the lives of the people within his 'province', punishing them with drought if his laws are disobeyed.

The consequence is that strong emotional bonds exist between individuals and the territory of their ancestors. The desire to live there is equalled only by the desire to be buried there. An important notion in the organising of political and moral experience is the idea of living 'at home'. Home for the living is, essentially the home of the dead. Life is good if you live where your ancestors lived before you.

The use of the name of a ruling lineage for its territory occurs in a similar form with nations. Mozambique is often referred to by the name of its president Samora (Machel), Zambia is Kaunda and so on. It also occurs at the level of the village, the name of the village-head being applied to the village as a geographical location. This second usage points up an important feature of the use of the chief's name for a territory. In a village, most if not all the people will be related to the village head. But within a chief's territory live many people who do not belong to the ruling lineage. Only between a quarter and a third of those living in a chieftaincy are members of the chief's lineage (Garbett 1967:314). Despite its small size, it is able to stamp its personality on the terrain which it shares with other lineages and thereby make unthinkable the possibility that the land might not belong to them. A discussion of how this is achieved must wait until Part Two, but it should already be clear that 'ownership of the land' refers to the relationship between 'royal' lineages and others. As a preliminary, I describe here i) the people who live in a chieftaincy but are not members of the royal lineage and ii) how they may be integrated into the chieftaincy.

Descent - the lineage

The first means of incorporation into Dande society is by descent, 'a genealogical connection recognised between a person and his ancestors' (Fortes 1959:206). Members of the patriline descended from the 'original' ancestors have the right on that account alone to live and cultivate land within the chieftaincy. Concomitant

with this right is the obligation to subject themselves to the rule of law emanating from the chief's court (dare) and sanctioned by the ancestors. The punishment for major crimes (which are conceptualized as offences against the ancestors and the lineage) is either death or banishment, that is the loss of rights in land.

The people who live within a chieftaincy may be divided into three categories: i) the agnates of the chief (machinda, s. jinda) who are eligible for the chieftaincy and who I refer to as royals; ii) members of other lineages of the same clan as the chief but who are not eligible for the chieftaincy whom I call commoners; iii) people belonging to clans other than that of the chief (vatorwa) whom I call strangers. Commoners, though members of the same clan as the chiefs, may be members of different sub-clans, in which case they are permitted to marry into the royal lineage. All strangers are members of different clans and sub-clans and therefore may marry into the royal lineage. (For a discussion of sub-clans see Bourdillon 1982:21f).³

Royals claim descent from the ancestors who control the land, the varidzi vepasi. Commoners may have moved into the chief's territory when they married uxorilocally (83% of all marriages are uxorilocal - Garbett 1963:90) or their lineages may have been resident in the territory for generations. Strangers, similarly, may either be recent arrivals following uxorilocal marriage or migration from an area of land shortage, or their lineages may have a long tradition of residence in the chief's territory. In the terms I am using royals are 'at home', commoners are only partially 'at home' (they live in the home of their clan but not in the home of their lineage; their lineage may not have its own home), and strangers are not 'at home' at all. Whereas royal lineages possess long genealogies (up to fifteen generations deep) linking them to the 'owners of the land', the genealogies of commoner lineages generally extend no further than FF of the oldest living member. Strangers may be members of royal lineages with long genealogies in their home territories or of commoner lineages with shallow ones. Because many of the peripheral branches of a royal lineage cherish the possibility of one day making a claim to the chieftaincy, royal lineages are considerably longer than others.

Traditionally, a man of renown...was one who had control over a large following, who had qualities of leadership, who could entertain lavishly, and who could put others under obligation to him by distributing gifts of grain and beer among them...For royals there was the additional ambition to become chief. This gave an intensity to their struggles for power and prestige which was lacking among commoners. For commoners, the pinnacle of success in the political field was to be called to advise the chief at court. A chief tended to rely on prominent commoners, for he feared the sorcery (uroyi) of his close agnates who were rivals for his position (Garbett 1967:308).

However, apart from the exclusive right of the royal lineage to succession to the chieftaincy, there are no other distinctions of status between these three groups.

The difference between the extended genealogies of the royal lineages and the shallow fragments of all others is very marked. Considering that only one-third of the population belong to the royal lineage, to what extent does the principle of descent organize the communities within the chieftaincy as a whole?

The fullest description of Shona political and kinship organization is Holleman's study of a group of chieftaincies in Central Mashonaland: the Hera, the Mbire and 'two autonomous fractions of the widely scattered Rozwi clan' (Holleman 1952). The ordering Holleman proposed has, by and large, been followed by most subsequent writers including Murphree (1969) and Bourdillon (1982). With some adjustments, it offers one perspective on the social organization of Dande.

According to Holleman, the chieftaincy is based on three different units, the biggest of which is the 'tribe' (nyika = country), which is divided into several tribal wards (dunhu, pl. matunhu), while the population of each ward is grouped in separate villages (musha, s. misha).

The following quotations are all from Holleman (1952). To start at the lowest level:

The villages (misha) are mostly tiny hamlets which are widely scattered over the country, and inhabited by small groups of kinsmen (single and extended families) numbering from half-a-dozen to about twenty-five people (page 3). The musha is controlled by an hereditary headman, the amusha, who is the head of the principal

family unit which originally founded the village. Membership of the village is based on kinship and (or) residence within the common homestead (page 5). The first establishment of a new village as an independent community requires the sanction of the headman of the tribal ward, and in the case of a foreigner coming from outside the tribal boundaries, also of the chief (page 6).

The men of a village generally eat together in the men's house or dare whereas women eat in their own households with their children. The dare is the moral and political centre of the village. It is the court where the headman hears disputes and exerts his authority over all villagers, both kin and others. Apart from court hearings, there are no other occasions when the villagers act together as one unit.

The next most inclusive level is the ward which:

is a subdivision and component part of a greater tribal grouping (nyika), and it consists of a number of separate and mutually independent villages under the political control of a hereditary ward headman (sadunhu), who is often the representative head of one of the 'houses' of the chief's lineage, but sometimes the head of a foreign community, who owes allegiance to the chief of the territory. As in the village, the population of the ward is composed of a nuclear body of agnatic kinsmen of the ward headman who are usually spread over more than one village. Apart from this agnatic nucleus there are villages belonging to other relatives of the ward headman, some of them related to him by blood or by marriage. There may also be village communities which are not related at all to him, and these owe their ward membership exclusively to the fact that they have chosen to live here and have received permission from the ward headman to settle under his jurisdiction on ward territory (page 12).

Holleman comments also that unlike the village the ward 'has a well-defined territory (page 11), and that 'it is the autonomous ward community which, as a well-defined component part of the tribe, holds the communal right over all the territory within its boundaries' (page 12). Further, 'the ward headman...has authority to adjudicate upon any legal conflict which arises within his area and falls within the scope of his jurisdiction. This means that his tribunal is also a court of appeal to which village headmen will bring cases which they have failed to settle' (page 13).

In Dande there are very few wards, possibly because of the low population levels (between 3-18 per square mile cf Garbett 1966:139). One chieftaincy contains two wards, one specifically to take care of a settlement of Karanga people whom the District Administration moved into the area in 1975. Another has only one ward created in the 1960s. Most villagers live, therefore, in a two-tier system, under the jurisdiction of their village head and their chief. In the few cases where wards do exist, the ward head hears cases at his court. There is no other occasion on which wards form the basis of cooperative action.

The framework of tribal organization is based primarily upon the genealogy of the chief's lineage or, more accurately, upon the genealogy of the lineage section which is represented by the hereditary and traditional name of the chieftainship (page 16). Political unity is effective only within the limits of a common, and in principle inalienable, tribal territory (page 16). The functions of the chief are essentially the same as those mentioned in connexion with the ward headman, but obviously, his authority is much greater (page 17).

The chief organises no major rituals, though he may be present at those organised by others. The main expressions of the unity of the chieftaincy are the tribute, mostly ritual in content but also labour, which in the past was paid to the chief in return for support in time of need and the legal authority of the chief's court. However, although the decisions taken by the chief's court (dare) are binding within the chief's territory, individuals who are dissatisfied with the decisions of their own chief may take their case to another. Royals, as well as others long established in one chief's territory, may decide to take up residence in the territory of another related to them either through their father, mother or wife's father, and they can expect to be allocated land there.

A powerful determinant of the authority of the royal lineage, therefore, is the relative plenty of the key economic resource, land. Disagreements between chief and followers are frequently resolved to the followers' satisfaction because of the likelihood that a neighbouring chief will make land available to them in

return for the transfer of their allegiance. In the past the chieftaincy operated as a military unit but even in this case the decision to support the chief's cause or not appears to have been open to the individual (Bourdillon 1971:137). The relationship between chief and individual is, in the final analysis, personal, negotiable and dependent on mutual agreement.

From all these quotations it is clear that the chain of authority that Holleman describes is a chain of legal institutions, of courts, the lowest being that of the village which refers cases upwards to the wards (where they exist) and upwards from there to the chiefs. Although at each level descent from the political leader is one determinant of who belongs and who does not, it cannot be the only one for at each level 'strangers' have the use of land, take part in agricultural rituals and are subject to the authority of the court. At each level the idiom of relatedness is of filiation, not of descent. The village head is 'father' to his village and the wardhead to his ward just as the chief is 'father' to his followers. This terminology is used for all three categories of people within each unit whether they are linked by ties of descent or not.

As the leader of a village court may be of a different lineage and clan from his wardhead and he in turn may belong to a different lineage and clan to the chief, the principle of descent cannot, by itself, organise the different units within the chieftaincy into a single political entity. Moreover, such authority as the chief possesses as descendant of the founding ancestor is weakened by the right of his followers to appeal to another chief if they are dissatisfied with his judgment, or to leave his territory and live somewhere else. (Similarly they may appeal to a wardhead or a village head other than their own.) And yet it is universally accepted that all inhabitants of a chief's territory are subject to the laws of his ancestors. By examining other systems of incorporation, it is possible to go some way towards discovering how this ideology of descent is constructed.

Substance - the clan

In his discussion of kinship organization, Holleman deals only cursorily with the clan. He describes clans as exogamous and patrilineal and adds that he has found no example of a clan functioning 'as a corporate group: either as a recognised political unit, or as an occasional, all-inclusive gathering for particular purposes' (1952:24). He remarks that clans are divided into sub-clans (also patrilineally inherited) that they are dispersed and that they are named, usually with the name of an animal and, finally, that 'people are expected to refrain from eating their totem animal or a specific part of it' (page 23). If they do not their teeth will drop out. Similar characteristics were noted by Stead (1946:4) and by Bourdillon who also makes the important observation that 'sub-clans originated as local pockets of a particular clan' (Bourdillon 1982b:21). The more substantial point that clans as a whole are associated with geographic areas was made by Stead who mapped a section of Charter District in central Zimbabwe in terms of clan affiliation (Stead 1946). Other aspects of clans mentioned by Bourdillon are that 'when two people with no traceable kinship ties meet, they may adopt rules of behaviour towards each other based on any relationship which they know exists between other members of their respective clans' (Bourdillon 1982b:21). Lastly, he notes that '(Clan) names are most commonly used in a respectful greeting or when one wishes to show gratitude' (page 22). They are also used as endearments in lovemaking and celebrated at length in praise poems (Hodza and Fortune 1979).

The most important features of clans are that they are i) exogamic (in some cases it is permissible for members of different sub-clans of the same clan to marry); ii) patrilineally inherited; iii) named after an animal (or other object) which must be avoided; iv) associated with geographic regions; v) dispersed with no corporate or ritual functions.

For all the writers I have quoted, the clan is a means of incorporation based on the notion of descent. It is a collection of lineages, loosely and non-specifically related to each other, deriving its

coherence from an undemonstrable claim to common descent from an unspecified ancestor. In other words, clan members feel that they are related to each other more or less in the same way as are members of the same lineage.

The difficulty with this conclusion is that all the facts about clans that distinguish them from lineages - association with a named animal or object, the territorial aspect, the mystical punishment for eating the tabooed animal and so on - remain unexplained. There is no doubt that descent is one aspect of clan membership, but having said that, a great deal remains to be said.

For the purposes of my argument, it is not necessary to consider why clans exist in the first place, and as to the particular 'totemic' characteristics that they display, Lévi-Strauss' conclusion, that these are elements of a structured symbolic classificatory system, fits this case as successfully as it does his many other examples (Lévi-Strauss 1969). I am concerned only with clan membership as a mode of incorporation into Dande society.

Firstly, Stead and Bourdillon's suggestion that clans (and sub-clans) are associated with specific geographic regions needs to be put much more forcefully. There is a very clear association of clan with place. By pointing in various directions, people can indicate precisely where each clan of significance to them has its origins. Dande is the home of the Elephant clan; to the south of the Plateau is the home of the Monkey clan; to the north-east is the Pig clan; to the north-west the Pigeon clan and so on.⁴ Secondly, people are adamant that clan membership can never be changed. When this subject is discussed, it is common for people to strike themselves over their hearts insisting that their clan identity stands at the very centre of their personalities and can never be altered. Although women adopt the clan name of their husbands at marriage, they return to that of their father if they divorce. Their father's clan is their 'real' clan and this remains with them all their lives. Both these ideas are generally accepted as absolute truths and yet both are continually contradicted and disregarded.

If the association of clan with area operated as it is said to do, one would expect that the autochthonous people of a territory would be members of the clan of that territory and the 'conquerors' would have the clan of the area from which they come. In fact, in Dande both the Tande, who stand as autochthons in relation to the conquering Korekore and the conquerors themselves are members of the same clan: Elephant. That this is an anomaly is recognised (and attempts have been made by certain spirit mediums to alter clan affiliation on a large scale so that the autochthon/conqueror opposition may be clearly reasserted. See Conclusions). But the Tande royal lineage insist that they are the 'real' Elephants, while the Korekore royal lineage maintain that nonetheless they are Elephants as well.⁵

The second inconsistency with the 'rules' as people express them is that despite the claim to a profound identification of individual with her or his clan, numbers of people are known to have changed their clans. In all cases this occurred when they moved from an earlier place of residence to the area where they live at present. The conventional explanation given for these changes goes as follows: 'If an individual or a group is defeated in battle, they will flee to the territory of another clan. They will hide in the bush for a few days until they hear how the people who live there address each other, i.e. until they learn what the indigenous clan is. Then they emerge from the bush and claim to be members of the same clan. Once they have adopted the new clan, it is impossible for their enemies to find them.'

The conquered, having lost control of their territory, change their clan affiliations when they flee to their new home. This explanation illustrates the close association of clan with territory and the assumption of so complete a merging of individual with clan that clan membership can obscure all distinctive features of the individual.

How do people describe their sense of their clan affiliation, their mutupo? They say that they know that they are members of a particular clan because if they eat the animal associated with

it, they will become sick and their teeth will fall out.

Q : How do you know which clan you belong to?

A : If a man eats a chicken and it makes him sick, then he knows he is a member of the chicken clan.

A subtle but crucial distinction is being drawn here and it is one that can be very easily lost sight of. It is possible to say that one is a member of clan x because one avoids eating food x - an argument of 'doing' derived from a notion of law. But it is also possible to say that because one is a member of clan x, if one eats food x one will become sick - an argument of 'being' derived from a notion of substance. What one is 'being' is the same sort of thing as other members of one's clan. This is demonstrated by the typical reaction to the introduction of a particular substances (the clan animal) into a clan member's body. It is not a question of standing structurally in relation to members of one's clan as one does to members of a lineage, the 'descent' view of clanship, but of being of common substance with other members of one's clan. The word used for clan is rudzi which has a very general application. It can mean type, nature or colour of a thing or person.

This is not to say that clan membership has no descent component. One acquires one's clan membership from one's father and the word rudzi can also be used to refer to a lineage (though dzinza is more commonly heard in Dande).⁶ But there is no suggestion that members of a clan are descended from the clan animal and it is rare, in my experience, that descent from a common ancestor is given as an explanation of clan-membership. The way to enquire a person's clan is to ask not from whom they are descended but what animal they taboo (Unoerei?). I refer to incorporation by these means as incorporation by common substance.

To summarise so far: Within a chieftaincy one finds a) members of the royal lineage who are members of the clan traditionally associated with the territory (royals) as well as b) members of other lineages who are also members of this clan (commoners). These two groups are of the same substance. Commoners have as much right to live in the chief's territory as royals. One also finds c) strangers who belong to different clans, are not of the same substance as the royals or commoners and must gain permission to live in the territory.

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One illustration of significance of substance as a mode of incorporation is the following notion: it is believed that a method of protecting oneself from sickness is to eat a small quantity of the soil of one's home territory. This suggests a link between territory, substance and well-being.

Territoriality is the third mode of incorporation.

Territoriality and Duration

The general explanation for changes in clan membership (flight from 'home') suggests that all such changes are a last resort against extermination and are therefore involuntary. However, individuals discussing their own particular experience of shifting clan allegiance describe it as a gradual process of, as it were, assimilating a new clan identity. In all cases this occurs because they are living in a territory (however 'territory' may be defined) not associated with their clan and because they have been there, or their lineage has been there, for a very long time. Living for a long time in a 'foreign' territory gradually allows one to be adopted into the clan of that territory and to be treated as such by other clan members.

But territoriality has another aspect as well. People who live within a territory not of their own clan may, by working the land and by performing certain rituals of the agricultural cycle, come to be regarded as descendants of the ancestors of that territory without changing their clans. To take this argument further requires the bringing together of certain aspects of 'territories' and various types of authority that must first be discussed in detail by themselves. In Chapter V I discuss incorporation by territoriality without the changing of clan membership and in Chapter VI I show how all the elements discussed so far (royal, commoner, stranger lineages; clans; territories; time) and all four modes of incorporation (descent, substance, territory, duration) fit together to create the self-perpetuating fiction that the land belongs to the royal lineage which is the royal lineage because it owns the land. In Chapters IX and X I show how all four modes of incorporation were made use of to effect the assimilation of the ZANLA guerillas into Dande society.

Kinship organization

The brief discussion of kin relations that follows provides no more than is necessary to follow the argument of the thesis. Shona kinship has been thoroughly documented in the past. Among the main works are Garbett (1963) which contains a full description of Korekore kinship, household organization and the domestic cycle; Holleman (1952) which contains a detailed account of the legal aspects of kinship; Bourdillon (1975 and 1982) which contains a summary of all research on Shona kinship to date. A brief discussion of Tavara kinship is found in Weinrich (1960) and an analysis of Holleman's data by means of transformation theory in Borland (1979).

Marriage and social organization

Amongst all Shona groups, as throughout central and southern Africa, bride-price is paid by the husband and his agnates to the agnates of the wife in return for uxorial and genetricial rights in the wife. Typically, bride-price is paid in cattle. But amongst the Korekore and the Tande payment for a wife is usually made in the form of labour in the fields of the wife's father (Garbett 1967:308). Occasionally this is accompanied by a small sum of money, but generally no more than a ritual payment and other prescribed gifts change hands.

The first reason for the high incidence of bride-service marriages is the absence of cattle in Dande due to tsetse fly. The system should therefore be seen as operating within the 'wives for cattle' framework, as summarised by Kuper (1982), but, by force of circumstances, without the cattle. The second reason is the relative poverty of the people of the Zambezi Valley compared to those on the Plateau (Garbett 1967:308). Even men who have earned money by migrant labour find it very difficult to put together sufficient cash to pay for their wives once for all. The consequence is that the vast majority of marriages are uxorilocal (kugarira marriages)? Garbett has calculated that 83% of Korekore marriages are uxorilocal. My impression is that the figure may be higher for the relatively less well off Tande.

The period of bride service may be as long as fifteen years. When it has been completed, husband, wife and children may return to the husband's father's home, but frequently they remain in the father-in-law's territory on land allocated by him. If this occurs, the allocation of land to a son-in-law must be approved by the senior local representative of the royal lineage, the chief or wardhead. In addition, it must be ascertained that the mhondoro (royal ancestor) agrees to allow this 'stranger' to live in the territory he controls. A gift must be given to the mhondoro (typically a black or white cloth) and a payment (known as a badza or hoe) made to the chief. When the high proportion of uxorilocal marriages is taken into consideration, it becomes clear why, in each territory, members of the royal clan are outnumbered by stranger lineages by two or three to one (see page 56).

The villages of chiefs tend to be larger than those of others (Garbett 1967:314). Their wealth allows them to pay cash for their sons' wives so that their sons are able to remain at home. Meanwhile, their daughters tend to marry uxorilocally. The result is that the chief acquires an unusually large labour pool of sons as well as sons-in-law which in turn finances further virilocal marriages.⁸ Further, as Garbett has described, competition for succession to the chief's status acts as a disincentive for royals to leave Dande in search of migrant labour. He has calculated (1963:110) that royal villages tend to persist as settlements longer than those of commoners or strangers.

The relationship between affinally related lineages is very highly stressed. Wife-givers have higher-status than wife-takers. During marriage negotiations a man is required to avoid coming into contact with senior members of his wife's lineage and an intermediary (known as dombo or stone) arranges the bride-price and other matters on his behalf. After a period of married life, avoidance ceases, but a demonstration of respect continues throughout the life of the marriage and, in some cases, even after divorce. On meeting a father-in-law a man will crouch on the ground, remove his hat and perform a special long, loud, hollow-handed clapping as a respectful greeting. He will do the same to any member of

the affinal lineage or his wife's mother's lineage. In the recent past men wore their hair in a particular style to indicate their status as sons-in-law (Garbett 1963:93). This behaviour overrides all other statuses so that, for example, a chief may crouch and clap to a young child who is his wife's brother. The term for father-in-law is, in local etymology, derived from the verb kuzva, to give life. The explanation is that one's wife's father gives life to one's own lineage by supplying a female with which it may be perpetuated. The term may be used for any male member of the affinal lineage.

Mother's Brother/Sister's Son

The senior members of the kindred of an individual are classified together as sekuru (FF, MF and MB) or ambuya (FM, MM or MBW) with the reciprocal muzukuru (SS, DS, ZS, FZS and SD, DD, ZD, FZD). In the classificatory usage, sekuru includes all male members of the mother's lineage classified together. Although he is a senior male kinsman, the sekuru is treated with informality in contrast to F or FB. (See Radcliffe-Brown 1950:34 for a discussion of MB among the Shona and Kuper 1982:36 for a summary of the arguments about this relationship in Southern Africa.)

On all ritual occasions, the typical officiant (dunzvi) is the muzukuru. The preferred dunzvi for a man is the ZS but the DS may also officiate. For women the role is performed by BS by preference or by DS. The term sekuru is used as a general respectful term of address to a senior man and also to refer to or address the ancestors. In Chapters VI and IX I will show that the sekuru/muzukuru relationship was the crucial one in the assimilation of the guerillas.

Women and men

The central feature of the relations between women and men is the moral, legal and intellectual supremacy of men. Only men can inherit or attain positions of authority within the lineage, ward or chieftaincy. Every adult man of sound mind is considered

capable of settling disputes. No woman of any age is believed to be capable of this, just as women are believed to have no knowledge of the past. In fact, many women possess knowledge of the past as detailed as their husbands who frequently refer to their wives for forgotten details of the histories of their lineages. But the belief persists that the past, and the authority and morality that derive from it, is a domain into which women can never enter. In Chapters V and X I will discuss the persistence of this belief through the years of the war. I therefore give a brief account of the status of women in Dande to complete this section.

At marriage, which is usually to the man of her choice, a woman adopts the clan name of her husband and this may be used as a term of address for her. But her ties with her own lineage remain strong. If divorce should occur (as it frequently does, though not without the approval of her senior agnate cf Bourdillon 1971:35) the woman will return to the territory of her father and take up his clan name again. Her own lineage ancestors play a large part in her life. Should she become sick in her husband's home it is likely that she will return to her natal home to be cured. Her husband has need to remain on good terms with her father's ancestors for they will make his children ill if he does not.

Whereas men may be polygynous (roughly half the men in my sample villages were) and may indulge in extramarital sex without universal disapprobation, women are expected to remain faithful to their husbands. Adultery by a wife is sufficient grounds for divorce.

Women share with men the basic agricultural tasks of sowing, weeding and harvesting but they do not clear new fields, handle cattle or tractors in the few instances where these are available. Their domain is the household and the garden. They venture into the bush only to collect wild vegetables as a supplement to the diet. While their presence en masse is required at the major rituals, there are no individual ritual roles open to women except as mediums of lineage ancestors. Very few women become mhondoro mediums.

Succession to all positions, statuses and properties held by individual men on behalf of a social unit (the position of chief, the control of the chief's titles and names, the position of village head, non-royal lineage names and so on) are inherited adelphically (see page 128). A man's own name and the property he has acquired during his life-time is inherited by his sons. The eldest of his sons who lives with his other descendants and kin will also inherit the term by which his father was addressed so that this son's brothers and even his mother will call him 'father' in his father's stead.

A woman's property is inherited by her agnates at her death (FZ, Z, BD) unless she specifies that it is to go to a daughter. It is distributed without the ceremony that occurs for men (Bourdillon 1971:231n). Although women may be said to 'own' the fields they work on, they do so in the name of their husbands and lose rights over them at their husband's death. A wife may be inherited by a brother of her husband but women are free to refuse subsequent marriages if they wish to and to return to their fathers' homes.

Apart from the agricultural activities mentioned, the only other time at which men and women spend time together is when drinking beer, although drinking is considered bad for women as it makes them foolish, mad or sexually irresponsible.

Finally, unlike many neighbouring peoples (e.g. the Ndebele, Zulu, Shangaan) the Shona have neither an age-grade system nor specialised military institutions. Neither males nor females undergo a ceremony of initiation into adult status. Adulthood is achieved at the birth of the first child. The practice of teknonomy marks this transition.

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Before I proceed to the discussion of the spirits of Dande and their mediums, the subject of the next two chapters, I want to explain briefly why the Christian church, in its established and its Independent forms, has been mentioned only in passing and will not be referred to again. (A large number of people in Dande, perhaps a third, are registered members of an established

church and somewhere in the region of 8% are members of an Independent Church, mostly the Vapostori of John Marange.) The main reason for the exclusion of this matter is its complexity. I have no space for an adequate treatment of the perception of 'religion' which allows members of an established church to dance through a Saturday night at a possession session, pause only for a final mug of beer and then go directly to hear Mass at the home of the local catechist. This interweaving of Christian and traditional belief and practice has been dealt with at length by Murphree (1969) and Bucher (1980). But the exclusion can be further justified on the grounds that, as we shall see, the war, which is the main subject of this thesis, drew its ideological support from the ancestors, from traditional religion. In Dande, joining the resistance required a rejection of Christianity which was firmly associated with the white state. For some members of established churches, their past affiliation to both belief systems allowed them to, as it were, put Christianity into neutral and concentrate exclusively on the other for a time. The Independent churches, however, disallow contact with all spirits except the holy one. The children of members of these churches who joined the resistance rejected the churches utterly and few, to my knowledge, rejoined at the end of the war. Both kinds of experience of Christianity are, therefore, outside the experience of participation in the resistance and I have left a consideration of the significance and influence of Christianity on the war in Dande for another occasion.

PART TWO**THE LIONS OF RAIN**

CHAPTER III

SPIRITS AND THEIR MEDIUMS

The spirit mediums with whom the ZANLA guerillas made contact when they entered Dande in the early 1970s were possessed by mhondoro spirits, the ancestors of the chiefs, who were believed to have ruled territories in Dande in the distant past. But there are many other types of possession found in Dande. In the two villages in which I collected this information, I found that over half of the households had at least one member who, from time to time, became possessed by one sort of spirit or another.

In this chapter I describe all the various forms of possession that occur. By comparing the most important features of each type, the reason why it was the mhondoro mediums who formed a relationship with the guerillas becomes clear. I begin with a description of the mhondoro and then move on to each of the other types of spirit in turn.

The spirit mediums of Zimbabwe have been the subject of a number of publications. Garbett (1963a, 1966, 1969, 1977) has written on the Korekore mediums; Bourdillon (1971, 1972, 1979) on the Korekore and the Tavara; Fry (1975) on the Zezuru; Holleman (1958) and Murphree (1969) on the Budjga; and Gelfand (1974) on the mediums of the Inyanga area. Werbner (1964, 1977) has described the religious structures of the Kalanga peoples. Gelfand (1969) and Crawford (1969) have both written general monographs on witches. Both describe situations which differ in many ways from that which pertains in Dande. Chavanduka (1982) has provided a brief but perceptive study of the Anti-Witchcraft legislation. His study of traditional healers (Chavanduka 1978) is the only comprehensive monograph to date. Gelfand (1959, 1962) has written outlines of the nature of the midzimu spirits in central and northern Zimbabwe. Both these works contain very little analysis. Bourdillon (1982) has recently revised his summary of research in all these areas which was first published in 1976.

Possession I: Seed and Rain

It is late afternoon in November. The sun burns out of a massive cloudless sky. By the side of the path along which small groups of men and women make their way, the grasses are brittle, sharp and brown. Grey trees stand bare, the beds of rivers are dry. Unless rain falls within the month no crops will grow this year. The preparing of fields hasn't yet begun. The earth, baked brick hard by the sun, can't be easily broken with hoes until the first rains fall. But seed can be prepared. It is for this that lineage heads from nearby villages gather at the village of the medium.

As they arrive, the men and women separate. The women put down their bags, unload children from their backs, greet their relatives and friends, go to look for firewood to cook the evening meal. The men make for the open space at the centre of the village where the medium is lying on a reed mat on the earth, drinking beer with elders and the chief. All the men are wearing everyday trousers and shirts. The medium, young and bearded, with a powerful stocky frame, is dressed in a long black cloth draped over his left shoulder, tied beneath his right. At his side lie his ritual axe and staff, the signs of a medium of a mhondoro, the spirit of a chief and warrior of the past.

The beer which the newcomers are offered was brewed from grain collected from all the local households. Rather, it should have been. The old woman, long past child-bearing age, chosen by the mhondoro to brew this beer, visits each group of women as they arrive, seeking out those who failed to contribute and warning that their fields will get no rain or their houses will be struck by lightning when the first rains come. The medium's wife brings out a large clay pot, kneels, sets it at the medium's feet. He ladles out a mug of beer, tastes it and hands it round. Young boys drag up a huge trunk of a tree, set fire to twigs and grass beneath one end and watch it burn.

The sun has set. The meal is over, plates tidied away, mats and blankets laid out on the ground. The youngest children sleep. The young boys who have been trying their hands at drumming make way for their fathers. The cross rhythms of the four hide drums become more complex, overlaid and sure. In the darkness an old woman sings out the first line of a song to the ancestors. Other voices follow. Some women dance - advancing, sway, retreat, advance again - turning a circle in the sand. The medium has retired inside his hut with a few close friends to discuss local affairs.

The men round the fires drink on. Soon the singing dies down. The women stretch themselves on the earth to sleep. The moon is full and rising in the sky.

Two hours before dawn, the medium's assistants go among the people, waking them. More than two hundred men gather in a semi-circle at the door of the mhondoro's hut. The women, sitting close together to one side, sing and then fall silent. Loud bursts of clapping rise from the men. It dies away, picks up and dies again. Singing. Clapping. Silence. Clapping. Silence. Silence.

The medium bursts from the door of his hut. A long white cloth is wrapped around his body covering his head. The singing pours out. He leads it, his long staff bobbing and dipping above the heads of the people. The medium's body stands before the crowd, but it is the mhondoro that sings.

He sits. The singing stops. The men clap, the women ululate. Silence. Then the mhondoro speaks. His voice is low and rough but his speech is clear. He explains why he has called them to his village. A discussion begins. Problems are raised by the chief and elders and by other men as well. Herds of elephant have gathered in the bush outside the villages. The crops will be destroyed as soon as they grow ripe. What is to be done? Some men object to the siting of a new village, the fields may encroach on their own. In three villages, children have sickened and died for no good reason. They address the mhondoro directly, and soon the awe his appearance had created wears off and the discussion, though respectful, is vigorous and free.

The medium listens but says nothing until everyone has had his say. Then he gives his advice and his instructions. When all problems have been raised, he asks who is to take the offering to the senior mhondoro who controls the rain. Forty dollars has been collected, black and white cloths and a mound of tobacco prepared. A headman is selected and told which medium to take the offering to. It will be passed from medium to medium until it reaches the most senior medium of all.

The light is rising. Dawn is near. Two weeks before, the medium's assistants had collected seed from every local lineage head. Two large winnowing baskets have been filled, mostly with sorghum and maize. Seeds such as cotton which are grown only for cash may not be added to the rest. The baskets are taken inside the hut. An assistant is grinding roots which protect the seeds from locusts and other pests. The medium sprinkles these on to the seeds and stirs them round. The baskets are taken out and seeds distributed to each lineage head to take home and divide between their sons and sons-in-law to mix in with their seed.

A few men and women elbow their way into the hut to consult the mhondoro about their health or other urgent matters. He listens and prescribes a cure. Some ask only for a pinch of bute, the mhondoro's snuff, which brings good health and luck. When the last of these is satisfied, the sun is high, the women have packed their baskets, bound their babies to their backs, set out for home. Young boys have taken back the drums while their fathers drink a final mug of beer.

After a while the medium emerges from his hut dressed in his long black cloth. It is hard to say exactly what has changed in him. A touch of self-consciousness, perhaps, where before he was all confident authority. Like a body builder, he seems to admire himself objectively, as if what is admired is not quite the same self that admires. He looks like a man who has just had a pleasant, not altogether unexpected, surprise. He stretches, yawns, sits in the shade. The mhondoro has gone.

His assistant tells him the cures prescribed by the mhondoro for each of the waiting patients. He dispenses herbs and roots with instructions on how each must be prepared. The assistant is paid and the patients leave. The medium returns to his own house to find his wife and wash and drink and rest.

Two days later, in the early morning, people gather again but fewer than before. They walk half a mile into the bush to a small clearing. In the middle stands a single hut, the dendemaro or house of the spirit, with its two doors, one for the medium and mhondoro, the other for those who consult him. Beer has been brewed near a large tree on the bank of a stream. This is the mhondoro's shrine. Here men and women sit together, passing a mug of beer from hand to hand. The assistant empties one mug full on to the ground before the shrine. Men clap, the women ululate. The assistant crouches, claps and says:

Ancestor, you cared for us in the past. Do so again.
Bring us rain. How can we grow our crops without rain?
Do not fail your children. Send us rain.

A full pot of beer for the mhondoro is placed beside his tree.

The medium arrives late, sits to one side, drinks and talks but is not possessed and has no special part to play. From time to time the old women dance in a tight circle and cry out the words of the ancestor's songs. When the beer has run out, the ceremony is over and they walk to a nearby village where beer has been brewed for sale.

Possession II: Curing

Except for a few children playing in the shade, the village of the medium is deserted when the man and his sick wife arrives. The oldest of the children runs off into the fields where the adults and the older children are working and returns with the medium's assistant, the mutapi. He offers them food and, while they eat, questions the woman and her husband about the sickness. He receives a small consultation fee and agrees that she may consult the mhondoro at dawn the next day.

The rest of the day the sick woman spends with the women of the village. Among them is a woman who is the wife of the mhondoro, of the spirit not the medium. She is known by the archaic form of the word for woman mukaranga and was selected by the mhondoro and paid for out of money collected from visitors to his shrine which may not be used by the medium for his own ends. A mukaranga is chosen very young to ensure that she is virgin at marriage. Her responsibilities are to care for the house of the spirit and for his possessions: the clothes, plates, sticks and other tools of the medium's trade. Her children are fathered by the medium and brought up as integral members of his household but they do not belong to him. When the medium dies they are not inherited by another member of his lineage but await the coming of another medium of the mhondoro, their father.

When the medium returns from his fields he pays the patient scant attention, but she knows him at once. The taboos to which mediums are subject mark them out from other men. The most conspicuous of these determine his dress: black cloth, hat of straw or fur, ritual axe and onion-shaped snuff-carrier worn on a string round his neck. The mediums are forbidden to have any contact with the artefacts of European culture. They may not eat food produced by mechanical means or enter shops. They may not use western medicines. They may not ride in cars or buses. Petrol fumes are dangerous to them as is the tar of asphalt roads.

Another set of restrictions control the mediums' contact with the biological aspects of human life. They may have nothing to do with death or the destruction of life in any form. Blood, especially menstrual blood, is extremely dangerous to them. They believe they will die if the mhondoro is allowed to see it. Vivid reds and scarlets may not be worn by people present when a medium becomes possessed. They may only eat food cooked by women free of the taint of sexuality, either past child-bearing or pre-pubescent. In addition, each medium has his individual set of culinary taboos but all avoid onions and pepper as well as the use of strong smelling soap. These taboos mark out the

mediums so dramatically that a blurring of the distinction between medium and mhondoro easily occurs. The mediums are often referred to by the names of their spirits and when one sees them wandering about in their pre-European dress, it almost seems that they are the spirits of the chiefs of the past returned once more to human life.

At night the patient sleeps in the hut of one of the mutapi's wives. Shortly before dawn, the mutapi wakes her and leads her to see the mhondoro. Consultations are held at a spirit's hut in the medium's village. When they arrive, the medium is already possessed. The mutapi leads the patient in. The hut is dark but she can just make out the medium lying on a low platform, propped up on one elbow, covered by a black cloth and wearing a large flat hat made of porcupine quills. The mutapi sits at the medium's feet. The woman has brought a length of black cloth as a gift to the mhondoro. The mutapi places it on a wooden plate, hands it to the medium, claps in respect and explains why the woman has come.

Before he speaks the spirit may roar and growl like a lion. But when he speaks his diction is clear, though he may use archaic words and obscure phrases which the mutapi translates and explains. Frequently he breaks into a chant, speaking a formalised, rhythmic verse. Each mhondoro has his own individual style and verse form. One may use a short line with two main stresses:

kàre nekàre / zvataita / zvataitànda / kutànda pàsi etc.

Another uses a longer more complex line:

ndidouya muno no Chimureng-a-murenga

or amai vake Chekamarara

At first the woman is afraid, but the ease of the relationship between the mhondoro and his mutapi reassures her. As the session progresses, the atmosphere of apprehension is dispelled. The mhondoro begins to joke and call out to people outside the hut. The respectful clapping that had preceded each question and response is forgotten, as is the mediation of the mutapi. The

patient talks directly to the mhondoro and he outlines the cause of her distress. If the case is simple a cure is prescribed right away. Otherwise the patient may be told to remain in the care of the mutapi for a while and return to the mhondoro after resting for a few days.

Mhondoro are unwilling to stay in the body of their mediums when the sun has risen. The medium leaves the hut by his own door and wanders off into the bush roaring and growling. When he returns his own personality is restored. The mhondoro stays behind in the bush.

* * * * *

Before moving on to a discussion of these sequences, by way of summary and a first distillation of the symbolism of possession, I want to point to certain oppositions which emerge from these accounts:

bush	village
rain	curing
lions	people

Provinces and realms

Audrey Richards has characterised the chiefs of South and Central Africa as follows:

...the chief combines executive, ritual and judicial functions. ...like the family head, he is a priest of an ancestral cult, believed in many cases to have a mystic power over the land (Richards 1940:83).

Among the Shona, however, chiefs have no ritual functions, no 'mystic power over the land'. This is entirely in the hands of the medium of his ancestors, the mhondoro. Medium and chief are at once sharers of authority and rivals for power, both representing, though in different ways, the ancestors who own the land. (This division of authorities between chief and medium was first noted as a point of variance with the surrounding societies by Mitchell (1961:34).)

The word mhondoro means lion¹. When a chief dies, his spirit leaves his body and goes into the bush where it enters the body of a lion. Some people say that a few days after a chief is buried a tiny lion without a mane crawls up through a hole left for it at

the side of the grave and runs off into the forest. This occurs only in the case of chiefs, for chiefs are not like other men.

In life, men and women look after their families as best they can but their powers are limited. Misfortune arrives without warning. Human strength and wisdom are not always enough. But when they are dead, their spirits (vadzimu) can warn their descendants of misfortune before it arrives and cure their sickness when all help has failed.

As with men so with chiefs. In life, chiefs are expected to look after all their followers, providing them with grain from a common store in time of drought, maintaining peace by enforcing the law through their courts. In death, the chief continues to care for his people but with greatly enhanced powers. The mhondoro is the source of the fertility of the chieftaincy. He provides rain for the fields and protects the crops as they grow. Rain is only withheld if the laws of the ancestors are disregarded. If incest, murder or witchcraft take place the rains fail and the crops never reach fruition. But if the descendants of the mhondoro obey his laws and perform his ceremonies in due time they will live in plenty, peace and harmony. Such is the power of the ancestors of the chiefs.

From time to time, when the mhondoro feels the need to speak directly to his descendants he leaves the body of the lion in the bush and chooses a man, or occasionally a woman,² to act as his medium (tsvikiro). When the medium is possessed by the spirit he loses control of his body and his mind. They say anobatwa nemhondoro, he is grabbed by the spirit. Once chosen by the mhondoro a medium usually continues to act as his mouth-piece for the rest of his life.

A medium is thought to be a perfectly ordinary person with no special knowledge or qualities (though it is accepted that a mhondoro would only select as a medium a person who was morally sound). But when an ordinary man or woman is chosen from all others they are marked out as extraordinary, as unique. The

medium combines in one body two contradictory aspects: he has no special qualities and he is as close as man can come to divinity; he is irrelevant to the will of the mhondoro, yet the mhondoro cannot act without him; he is a man of no special powers and he is the source of the most significant powers on earth.

The whole of Dande (and much of the surrounding territory as well) is divided into what, following Garbett (1963) may be called 'spirit provinces' each under the control of an individual mhondoro. (See map 3 on page 83) These vary enormously in size, some containing no more than a scattering of villages, some spread out for thirty or more miles, containing hundreds or thousands of people. Their borders, which are usually rivers, cross boundaries of all kinds: chieftaincies, districts and nations.

The provinces are grouped to form 'spirit realms' each roughly equivalent to the territory of a chieftaincy or set of related chieftaincies. Within each province, the mhondoro that 'owns' it is responsible for the supply of rain. However, once a request for rain has been made to the individual mhondoro, it is passed up a chain of mhondoro until it reaches the most senior, the mhondoro in charge of the realm as a whole. It is this mhondoro who actually ensures that the rain falls.

The chain of mhondoro up which the requests are sent is the genealogy of the chieftaincy which links the present chief to his most distant ancestors. These very long genealogies, consisting of as many as fifteen generations, distinguish the 'royal' lineages of the chiefs from the 'stranger' or 'commoner' lineages whose brief genealogies, no more than two or three generations deep, do not link them to any ancestor of significance for the territory as a whole. It is said that two or three generations after the death of a chief, his mhondoro will possess a medium and have a province allocated to him. When requests are made to the medium of this mhondoro for rain he, as the most recent and therefore most junior mhondoro, will hand it on to the next most senior until it reaches the top.³

The ancestors of the royal lineage are recorded, therefore, both in time (the genealogy) and in space (as 'owners' of spirit provinces). Both records are thought of as unchanging and permanent, outlasting the careers of individual mediums. When requests for rain are carried from province to province and from more junior to more senior ancestor, both elements, time and space, come into play linking the recent with the more distant past and all inhabited parts of the chieftaincy with all others in order to produce the one essential commodity without which life is impossible: rain. Participation in this ritual is the most important task of the mhondoro mediums. A term by which they are commonly addressed is samvura, 'owner of the rain'.

In theory it is possible for every spirit province to contain a medium of its own mhondoro at the same time, but this is never the case in practice. Some mhondoro have never taken mediums, others have long traditions of mediums stretching back over hundreds of years, others take a sequence of mediums over eighty or ninety years and then return to the body of a lion and to silence for years on end. It is said that only those chiefs who ate special medicines when they were alive are able to possess mediums after their deaths. The type of medicine that has this effect is known only to the royal lineage. But even if the dead chief never takes a medium, he nonetheless has a place on the royal genealogy that relates the mhondoro to each other as father to son. They are related, that is, precisely as living people are related to each other. The notion of descent provides the link between human and spirit worlds. The 'spirit realm' appears as a reflection of the chieftaincy, the most senior of the mhondoro standing in relation to his descendants (vazukuru or grandchildren) as the chief to the lineages of his followers (vana or children).

For the moment I describe the system as it was described to me, as it is believed it should operate, rather than how I observed it to operate in practice. The use made of these theoretical notions to construct practical ritual structures is discussed in the following chapters.

GENEALOGY 1

TIES OF KINSHIP BETWEEN THE MAIN MHONDORO OF DANDE

(underlining indicates the senior mhondoro of each lineage)

KAHONZA
DHATYA
CHIKAWO
KUNUMPUMHU

BANGOMWE

MWERA

MUTOTA

DZIVAGURU

MADZOMBA

NYAJORE/NYACHAVA

NEHANDA

NEBEDZA

MUSUMA

BIRI

CHIMOMBE

NYAMAPFEKA

NYAHUMA

CHIKUYO

?

SEREMWE

KANYEMBA

MARIA

CHIGUA

CHIDYAMAUYU

NYAMASOKA

CHIODZAMAMERA

CHIVERE

KATUU

CHIMHAKO

MUKOMBWE

CHIWAWA

CHIEF
MATSIWO
(TANDE)

CHIEF CHAPOTO
(CHIKUNDA)

(DEMA)

CHIEF CHISUNGA
(KOREKORE)

CHIEFS
CHITSUNGO
KASEKETE
CHIWESHE
(KOREKORE)

(TAVARA)

Genealogy 1 contains all the genealogies of the mhondoro of Dande linked together, showing the perpetual kinship believed to exist between them. I use this term, perpetual kinship, in a weaker sense than that of Cunnison (1956) to indicate the belief that all the senior mhondoro of all the royal lineages are related to each other, as consanguines or as affines. This has an effect on the way their descendants view each other. If it is believed that the descendants of royal lineage A stand in relation to the ancestors of royal lineage B as, for example, father-in-law to son-in-law, then all members of lineage A stand in that relationship to all members of lineage B in perpetuity.

The genealogy was compiled using all the kin ties of which I was told by the mhondoro, by their mediums and by their assistants. Only the most senior of the mediums might be able to produce a similar diagram should he choose to do so. Most people know only those fragments which hold importance for the part of Dande where they live. In compiling this total family tree, very few inconsistencies arose. In the cases where there were alternative linkings, I have given the majority view. No one spirit or medium ever linked all these ancestors together precisely in this way, though stretches were supplied numerous times by various experts. By consulting the genealogy, the mhondoro that are discussed in the chapters that follow can be placed in relation to all the rest.

Powers and skills

The different mhondoro are believed to have varying abilities and specialities. Dande is a huge territory. I was unable to visit all the practising mediums or to stay with those I did visit long enough to observe whether they did, in fact, display the talents it is believed they possess⁴. In discussing these powers and skills, therefore, I am to some extent reliant on reports made to me by many different people with different sorts of knowledge about different orders of mhondoro.

All levels of knowledge are important. How a woman in the south-east corner of Dande thinks about the mhondoro she has heard of in the north-west tells a great deal about how the past and the present are conceptualised and how these conceptualisations fit together. But with distance from individual mhondoro, statements about them become progressively more generalised and the specific powers characteristic of a specific mhondoro are averaged out. If you ask the general question: 'What do mhondoro do?', the typical answer is vanotichengeta, they look after us. If you ask for details it will be said that all mhondoro bring rain, protect crops, protect and control wild animals, protect the earth against pollution by incest and murder, send thunder and lightning. All can cure and all, being the spirits of chiefs, vane simba yehondo, have the power of war. As there are few people who have frequent contact with more than one or two mediums, statements like these reflect a generalised conception of the powers of mhondoro with a bias towards the activities of the mhondoro the informant knows best.

Rain

The simplest account of the mhondoro of Dande is that they fall into two groups: autochthons and conquerors, mhondoro who can by themselves bring rain and those who cannot. Although it is said that all mhondoro can bring rain, in practice conqueror mhondoro must refer the request for rain up their lineage hierarchy. When the request reaches the senior mhondoro he refers it on to the autochthonous mhondoro for it is only autochthons who can really make rain come.

There appear to have been a sequence of 'conquests' of Dande and so it is not possible to separate conqueror from autochthonous lineages in absolute terms. The status of the Korekore lineages, those descended from the mhondoro Mutota and Nyamapfeka, is clear. They are conquerors. But although the Tande mhondoro are autochthons in relation to the Korekore (in the mythology they are said to have yielded their land to the Korekore) the Tande

mhondoro are unable to produce rain by themselves. Like the Korekore, they must appeal to the mhondoro of the Tavara people, Musuma, who has a small spirit province on the southern edge of Dande near the Escarpment (see map 3 on page 83).

The usual description of Musuma is that he is yekudara, meaning 'of the very old times' whereas the senior Tande mhondoro, Bangomwe, is thought to have lived at the time of the arrival of the Korekore. The reason that Bangomwe is placed at a specific time whereas Musuma is not is probably that Bangomwe has living descendants (the Matsiwo chieftaincy) whereas Musuma has none. Apart from the myths that involve Musuma, few people are able to say more about him than that he comes from Tsenga, north of the Zambezi River. According to traditions to the east of Dande, Musuma (also known as Nyamukokoko) is a son of Dzivaguru, the most famous Tavara ancestor, known throughout Zimbabwe as a rain bringing mhondoro (Garbett 1977:66). When an attempt is made to specify historical sequence, it is said that Musuma came to Dande after Bangomwe but that before he came Bangomwe made his requests for rain to Musuma's father Dzivaguru. The Tande, Bangomwe's descendants, like the Korekore, have never been able to bring rain by themselves.

Protecting crops

At the kutsiga mbeu ceremony (see page 75) mhondoro mediums add medicines to seed to protect crops against insects. This seed is known to be pure. By scattering some amongst their seed farmers demonstrate that they do not use seed which has been treated with human blood by a n'anga (traditional healer). To treat seed in this way ensures abundant production for the individual farmer but pollutes the earth causing drought. The mhondoro can also provide medicines to drive away elephants, pigs, baboons and other pests. One mhondoro forbids the use of fertilisers which, it is said, make the crops inopenga (literally, they go mad) that is the stalks grow vigorously producing meagre cobs. All other mhondoros permit and some encourage its use.⁵

All mhondoro should receive offerings of maize, sorghum or both from the inhabitants of their province each year at the first harvest. If this is not given, it may affect the ability of the medium to become possessed. Or rather, one medium who was unable to achieve possession claimed that the cause of his difficulties was the failure of the inhabitants of his province to perform this ceremony during his absence at the time of the war. By such claims and precedents are traditions established.

Protecting game

The permission of the mhondoro must be obtained before game is hunted in his province and certain parts of the animals caught must be given to the mhondoro in return. (The Soli ancestor Chimombe is said to have been consulted before white hunters were allowed to shoot elephant in his territory, Campbell 1957:37) As mhondoro live in lions when not possessing mediums, lions are especially subject to their protection. The unexpected appearance of a lion or the sound of one at night is considered evidence of activity among mhondoro. People believe that they will never be attacked by a lion unless they offend a mhondoro. Apart from lions, mhondoro are said to have control over certain other animals. For example, the medium of Chiodzamamera claims to have a leopard and a crocodile as well as a lion that obey his instructions.

War

The general statement is made that all mhondoro were warriors when alive but there are very few occasions on which this statement is elaborated. There are only two mhondoro of whom it was ever specifically said that they have simba yehondo, the power of war, in the same way that it is said that Musuma or Chimombe have simba yemvura, the power of rain. The association of Nehanda with war almost certainly derives from the role played by an early Nehanda medium in the first Chimurenga (page 34). Chiwawa, the other mhondoro of war, is a senior Korekore ancestor. His status as a warrior will be discussed in Part Three.

Together with curing, these are the most important powers of the mhondoro. Brief notes on a few specific mhondoro will show how idiosyncratic characteristics are attached to each.

Madzomba

None of the mhondoro of the Tande royal lineage had mediums active while I was in Dande. All the information I have on them is based on reports, memories and government records. However, the mhondoro Madzomba, who does have a medium, switched his affiliation from the Tande royal lineage to that of the Korekore under Mutota in the 1950s (Garbett 1977:83, see page 238). This mhondoro is said to be especially successful at eradicating locusts. Many newcomers arriving in Dande go to Madzomba for advice and medicines to counteract this problem. His name actually means 'locusts'. Although Madzomba may have changed his lineage affiliation, he did not change his name. Indeed, because the name of a chief is, in fact, all that survives him and a mhondoro is no more than the traditions and reputations that accrue around a name, it is not possible for a mhondoro to change his name and remain the same mhondoro, though he may acquire additional names from time to time. For this reason, it seems legitimate to consider Madzomba's skills at locust eradication as well as his other characteristics as representative of the Tande mhondoro and so give a clearer view of this lineage of ancestors.

Musuma and Chimhako

These two mhondoro (the one an ancestor of the Tavara, the other of the Dema) are particularly referred to for curing when the complaint is of a sexual nature - venereal disease (rukawo) in the case of Chimhako and infertility in the case of Musuma. Other mhondoro are also able to deal with these complaints but Musuma and Chimhako are the experts and patients travel long distances from the Plateau and from Mozambique to be treated by them.

Chivere

It is said that in the past the medium of the mhondoro Chivere regularly performed the annual agricultural rituals. But it is also said that in recent years the medium of the 'son' of Chivere (a mhondoro called Ura) has come to Chivere's province to perform these rituals because the mhondoro Chivere (not the medium) is unable to. This contradiction is explained by the local attitude to the present medium of Chivere. When he attempted to perform one of the major agricultural rituals in 1981 he was chased away by the people of his province who claim that he is a fraud. This brief account suggests some of the ways in which attitudes to mediums and mhondoro change over time.

Katuu

A number of crocodile infested pools are found within Katuu's spirit province. He is said to be especially expert at the control of them and is called on to prevent them attacking people fishing in the rivers. This is another example of how characteristics may be acquired by mhondoro. It would be anomalous for a mhondoro such as Bangomwe, whose people live far from a major river, to have a reputation for power over crocodiles whereas it seems natural that a mhondoro based near pools where crocodiles are found is able to control them. Therefore, when anomalies appear, such as the association of the Tavara mhondoro Musuma, who lives very near the Escarpment, with the snake spirit Tsunguni who lives in the Zambezi River sixty miles away, this may be evidence allowing a reconstruction of changes that have taken place within the organization of the mhondoro of Dande.

Chimombe

Chimombe, a Soli ancestor, is not strictly speaking a mhondoro. He is a piece of twisted iron that speaks through the medium of the mhondoro Mbaiwa of the Korekore Nyamapfeka royal lineage (White 1971). Apart from his role as a senior rain-bringing spirit,

he is especially associated with wild fruits. If the ceremonies due to him are not performed they will not ripen. This is a variation of the control of game and refers to the mhondoro's powers over the world of the bush, musango, as well as the village.

Chidyamauyu

This son of the senior Korekore mhondoro Nyamapfeka is said to be a messenger sent between his father and other mhondoro throughout Dande. Chikwamba, son of Chidyamauyu, also has this reputation as does Chimhako, the mhondoro of the Dema.

Seremwe

It is said of this mhondoro that 'he has no powers'. I take this to refer to the fact that, although he has a spirit province and is responsible for all the ordinary functions of the mhondoro in that area, there is no chieftaincy of which he is the acknowledged ancestor. He is a free-floating mhondoro attached in space but not in time.

The less important powers of the mhondoro seem to shift over time, perhaps because of a blurring of the division between the particular skills or reputation of a medium and the mhondoro that possesses him. However, the major powers of the mhondoro do not change. If the lineages of mhondoro are the units of comparison, all four major lineages (those led by Mutota, Bangomwe, Nyamapfeka and Musuma, taking Madzomba as a Tande for the moment) have an equal spread of major powers. All bring rain, all protect crops, all cure. An important qualification is that only the Tavara Musuma and the Soli Chimombe have the ultimate power of providing rain without reference to any other mhondoro.

Non-royal ancestors: the childless, the murdered and the witch

The spirits of chiefs have control over a wide range of phenomena, from mental health to wild fruits ripening on the trees, from the annual arrival of the rains to military theory and the organization of war. But it is not only chiefs who have life after death, nor is it only the spirits of human beings that have the power to possess human mediums. When they have left their bodies in the grave, all categories of people have the potential to possess one of their descendants in order to communicate with the families they have left behind. These spirits are known as midzimu (s. mudzimu). They may be male or female. They generally possess a grandchild of the same sex, but nothing about the midzimu is predictable and they may possess any cognatic descendants they take a fancy to.

The form a mudzimu takes is described as mweya, that is 'air' or 'breath'. They have no material form but only force and so can be everywhere. But they can see and hear, they have emotions and desires. For example, they prefer the baobab to all other trees because these provide them with the best shade when they are wandering in the bush. But they also prefer this tree because its hard, grey pods provide food at times of drought and famine.

Midzimu are never frivolous or malign. The welfare of their descendants is their only concern. The only reason that they might make one of them ill is as a sign that they wish to possess him or her. They may wish to do this to get a message through to their descendants, to complain that they have been forgotten and to ask that beer be brewed, or a child named in their memory, or to warn that some disaster is about to strike.

When a person becomes ill in a manner which can be neither cured nor explained he or she will go to a n'anga, a traditional herbalist and expert in one of a number of divining techniques. (A mhondoro medium may be consulted in especially serious or persistent cases.) If the n'anga concludes that it is an ancestor that has made the person ill, an all-night dancing ceremony (humbikumbi) will be held in order to persuade the

mudzimu to tell its tale, make its complaint and state what action it requires to allow the sick person to regain its health. It may take many such sessions before the name and demands of the ancestor are revealed. In some cases, the patient fails to become possessed or, when possessed, fails to speak and then another explanation for the sickness must be found.

Although the midzimu are concerned only with the good of the living, their protection is not automatic. It must be won by performing certain rituals, the most important of which is kutamba guva (to dance the grave). This must be performed within a year of the death of an individual. In the course of the ritual, the mudzimu is led out of the bush, where it has been living since death, back into the household which was its home when alive (Holleman 1953; Bourdillon 1982:200). Only if this is adequately performed and if the ancestors are remembered from time to time by the brewing and distributing of beer in their name, will they protect their descendants from harm.

Mhondoro may also be referred to as midzimu for they too are the spirits of dead people, though with as greatly increased powers over ordinary midzimu as chiefs have over their followers. As a mudzimu takes care of the lineage death has robbed of its human protector, so the mhondoro takes care of the nyika, or country, he ruled when alive.

There are three categories of people who cannot become midzimu. These are the unmarried or the childless, the murdered and the witch.

It is argued that people who die childless cannot become midzimu because they have no descendants to be mediums for them. (This demonstrates the belief that midzimu choose only 'real' and not classificatory descendants as their mediums.) If a person dies childless the spirit will wander, angry and malicious, causing harm out of fury and spite. To prevent this, childless (or in some cases unmarried) people are buried with a rat, a plank or a seedless maize cob tied to their backs. This object takes the place of the child (or the spouse) and will keep the spirit still.

This angry spirit is known as ngozi, but the more typical ngozi (the word is commonly used to mean 'disaster' or 'accident') is the spirit of a person who has been murdered. These spirits rise after death to take revenge on members of the murderer's lineage until reparation has been made. A third category of ngozi is the spirit of a person who has not received adequate burial, either not buried at all, as may occur with the murdered, or not in their home territory, in which case the 'bringing home of the spirit' will not have been performed. In sum, a ngozi is the spirit of a person who has failed in one of the crucial activities that define human existence and has had for that reason an unsatisfactory, unfulfilled or uncompleted life. Such a person could never become a benign mudzimu, concerned only for the welfare of those they have left behind.

The third category of people who cannot become midzimu are witches. The term used for witch, muroyi, covers a wide range of imputed behaviours. The typical act of witchcraft is cannibalism. Witches kill other people (including their own children) or rob graves in order to eat human flesh. Other actions described as witchcraft are incest (Bourdillon 1982:172) and adultery. A widow who has intercourse before the spirit of her husband has been settled (kutamba guva) may be called a witch. According to Holleman (1949:36) a son who has intercourse with one of mother's co-wives is also a witch because he 'would like to see his father dead'. In further inversion of ordinary life, witches are characterised as people who act out their evil deeds naked and at night.

It is said that people become witches by becoming possessed by the shave, or non-human spirit, of the hyena who hunt by night and eat dead animals found in the bush. But once the hyena shave has taken possession of a man or woman, the shave of witchcraft is handed down from generation to generation in the patriline by men, in the matriline by women. (This is the case in Dande: other places have other methods of

inheriting witchcraft power, cf Bourdillon 1982:163). It is also possible to become a witch voluntarily by apprenticing oneself to a practising witch and eating certain medicines.

Witches carry out their murders either by magical acts, that is in ways non-witches know nothing about, or by poisons. Hence the distinction between witches and sorcerors made by Evans-Pritchard (1937) is not applicable here. There is however a tendency to ascribe male witchcraft to apprenticeship and the use of poisons, whereas women are believed more likely to have been possessed by the witch shave and to use mystical means. Both male and female witches are capable of turning themselves into snakes, crocodiles or hyenas in order to commit adultery. These animals may also be the familiars of witches, as may zvidoma, very small people the size of children who carry out the witch's commands.

The motives ascribed to witches are many. Envy is the most common, either by the poor of the rich or by the barren of the fertile. But witches are also thought to be driven by unmotivated malice or simply by a taste for human flesh.

People ask in bewilderment why witches don't go to the butchers like other people if they want meat to eat.

It is universally agreed that the punishment for witchcraft should be death and people will declare themselves willing to kill any witch they discover, however close a kinsman it may be. But although it is known that there are many witches about, who they are cannot be known unless a n'anga or medium is consulted about a particular misfortune and an individual is pointed to as the cause. In fact, despite the violence of the conventional response to the threat of witchcraft, villagers live side by side with people known to be practising witches. This requires some explanation.

If the frame of reference is shifted from a generalised conception of witchcraft to the specific dangers to which people feel they are subject, witches fall into two categories. Witches are

either members of one's own dzinza, or lineage, or they are close affines. They are never strangers. I will treat these categories separately.

Dzinza, like rudzi (see page 65) can be used in a limited sense to mean patriline or to refer to a broad category of people of a similar 'kind' to oneself. For example, it is said that only a member of the Elephant clan can bewitch another Elephant. If an Elephant wants to bewitch a member of the Monkey clan he must find a member of that clan willing to help him. As this was vividly put to me: 'An Elephant will say of an Elephant - he is our brother, let us kill him. An Elephant must help a Monkey kill an Elephant'. This idea may be elaborated to include more or less closely defined groups of people, but in the first instance one looks for suspected witches amongst one's closest agnates, though not necessarily those of the same household.⁷

The second category of potential witch is close affine. Men say that they always consult an older member of their kindred (MB, FZ or grandparent) before choosing a wife for they fear that they will discover too late that they have married into a family of witches. Although witchcraft accusation between co-wives is common, the source of aggression is frequently identified as a wife's mother. But accusations are made in the other direction as well. If women who have married virilocally become dangerously sick, they may wish to return to their natal homes and put themselves under the protection of their own ancestors. Their husbands encourage them in this, for they fear that if their wives die in their married home they will be accused of having bewitched them.

Witches are always either agnates or affines. What these two categories of witches share is that they attack the lineage from within, either as a member by birth or by assimilation. This is why it is possible to live at peace with known witches provided one is neither a member of their lineage nor one of their affinal kin. For example, in one village in Dande, a barren woman was vigorously accused by the son of her co-wife

of having killed a number of his children. So firm was his belief that, unable to take any legal action against her (see Chapter VII), he moved his entire family out of the village. Even then he attributed the death of yet another child to this woman's malign influence. Other villagers with no kin tie to the woman knew of the accusation but were not afraid of her. Moreover, in elections to the local village committee she was appointed Welfare Officer, thus attaining a unique combination of roles, each justified by her relations with different parts of the village.

The fear of witches within the lineage is very strongly marked at the burial ceremony. After death, the body is carried to a site outside the village where other members of the dead person's lineage have been buried. When the grave has been dug, a shelf is hollowed out at the base. The body is placed on this shelf and sealed off with a mat and wooden poles. The grave is then filled with stones and a mound of stones is built on top of it. These precautions are taken to make it difficult for witches to get at the body. Funeral orations always contain exhortations to witches to leave the body alone. What is very striking is that no member of the lineage of the dead person may participate in the process of burial. It is unthinkable for a fellow lineage member to carry the dead body or to climb into the grave in order to place the body on the shelf or to help to seal the grave. The final part of the ceremony is the sweeping of the grave and the surrounding area so that if witches visit their footprints will be seen. This is performed by the muroora of the dead person, that is the wives of his or her sons or classificatory sons (i.e. affines). At all other rituals the main officiant is the muzukuru (ZS, SS or DS). The main officiant at a burial is the sawhira who is a friend, a non-kinsman. The sawhira relationship is inherited patrilineally, forming reciprocating lineages of 'ritual friends' who may be trusted to organize burials. It is forbidden to visit a grave without a sawhira of the dead person present.

Witchcraft is the inverse of kinship, or better, the experience of witchcraft is an inversion of the experience of kinship from which it derives. As clans (rudzi) and lineages (dzinza) are dispersed, witchcraft is everywhere because kinship is everywhere.

Ancestors and witches are irrevocably opposed. Whereas mhondoro inhabit and control lions which kill, if at all, publically and by day, witches turn themselves into and control hyenas and snakes, animals of the night and the dark which kill, like the crocodile, out of sight of the public eye. Ancestors protect the lineage, witches long to devour bodies preventing the dead from becoming midzimu. Midzimu promote health, fertility and continuity. Witches promote sickness, death and cessation. For Dande at least, it is not sufficient to characterise witchcraft as 'the paradigm of all evil and anti-social behaviour' (Bourdillon 1982:175). It is an evil that emanates from within the lineage itself.

One reason why it is essential to maintain good relations with one's ancestors is that if you do not they may punish you by 'opening the door' to the witches, allowing them to attack you. The enormous concern with the ancestors that characterises every member of Dande society may in part be accounted for in this way: if the ancestors of your lineage do not protect you, you are at the mercy of your closest kin.

The mashave (s. shave) are the spirits of animals or of foreigners; they are spirits that do not correspond to the experience of local human society. Their common feature is that when they possess a medium, they confer a particular quality or ability. This may be the ability to hunt or to cure with unusual facility or it may be the trick of dancing in a particular unusual style associated with the home of the spirit. Once possessed the medium is required to wear beads on his wrist which indicate the kind of shave by which he is possessed and, occasionally, to brew beer for the shave and to dance and allow the shave to possess him in company with other shave mediums. This is done either to alleviate illness caused by a shave

aggrieved at having been ignored and forgotten, or to prevent an illness occurring. Mediums of mashave never dance with mediums of midzimu or mhondoro. Each type of medium dances only amongst others of its own kind.

In Dande the most common shave are:

Kaporí, the hunter shave - mediums wear red beads; the baboon shave (shave rebveni) the healing shave which confers the ability to find medicinal roots in the bush - black beads; madzviti - the shave of foreigners, usually Ndebele or Tonga, which cause their mediums to dress up and dance as a member of that group.

One way in which possession may be understood analytically is as a theory of personality based on the assumption that individuals are all inherently the same. Significant variations between them are accounted for by attributing them to possession by a spirit that endows its mediums with those characteristics. Shave are the least complex of spirits and possession by a shave may be suggested as a first explanation for illness by a n'anga. The kind of shave diagnosed is, objectively, derived from the healer's knowledge of the patient's personality, though the local view puts the terms the other way round. For example, if an individual especially gifted at hunting becomes ill, he may be told that his talent is due to the Kaporí shave who made him ill because he has not brewed beer or danced to thank the shave for the skill he has been given. If the beer and dancing are followed by an alleviation of the complaint, this is proof of the accuracy of the diagnosis. If they are not, the n'anga may reconsider his diagnosis and decide that an ancestral spirit is behind the illness, either alone, in which case the shave will be forgotten about or in conjunction with the shave, in which case the patient will become a medium of both types of spirit and be possessed by each in turn. Like all possessing spirits, ancestral and otherwise, shave are - though this is not all they are - a means of accounting for differences between people, in tastes, abilities, habits, behaviour.

Similarly, a man possessed by a mhondoro is believed to be in all essentials no different from anyone else. The unusual behaviour he manifests is explained as the attempts of the mhondoro to possess him or by his resistance to possession. But attribution of cause is never simple. For example: a man of thirty with some reputation as a hunter had been unable to persuade a woman to marry him. Four times he had made the first payment on a wife only to be rejected and have the payment returned. The man's parents were of the opinion that a mhondoro wanted to possess their son and was keeping him free from pollution by sex which would make possession more difficult. The man began to believe this himself, but this interpretation was rejected by an established mhondoro medium who pronounced that the cause of the dilemma was a hunting shave annoyed at having been ignored by the recipient of its skills.

The key distinction between mashave and the ancestral spirits is that mashave have no message to communicate and no moral responsibility. Their possession sessions consist of dancing and drinking but no speech. Mashave have significance only for the medium they possess.

Finally, there are the zvipoko or ghosts. Fire burning high above the ground, tiny people met with by the side of the road and towering figures with excessively ugly faces may all be termed zvipoko and believed to be the dead returned to haunt the living. They are only met with at night which is 'their time' and their hostility to people is explained by their anger at seeing living people moving about during their period of the day. They do not take mediums and have no influence on the living except to frighten them. A different order of theory to that appropriate for spirits which have no material form and exist only through possession is necessary to account for zvipoko and I do not deal with them in the chapters that follow.

The following table (which is based on the model developed by MacGaffey 1970) contrasts the four most important types of spirit in terms of two characteristics: i) whether it is hostile or benign; ii) whether the spirit derives from inside or outside the lineage.

<u>INSIDE</u>	<u>OUTSIDE</u>
<u>HOSTILE</u> MUROYI (witch)	NGOZI (spirit of murdered or unburied foreigner)
<u>BENIGN</u> MIDZIMU and MHONDORO (ancestral spirits)	MASHAVE (animal or foreign spirits)

What mhondoro know

The mhondoro spirits have a wide range of specialist knowledge which they communicate through their mediums. In this section I compare their knowledge to that of other spirits and their mediums and to knowledge acquired by other methods than possession.

Knowledge may be acquired by four techniques: by learning, by dreaming, by possession by shave, by possession by ancestral spirits (midzimu or mhondoro). A fifth category, 'inherent' knowledge, is typified by traditional skills such as basket weaving and pottery. Practitioners say that they have received no training. They know how to make these things simply because their 'fathers' knew. I deal only with acquired knowledge and in terms of these characteristics:

whether or not it changes the person who acquires it;
whether it is publicly admitted;
whether it is used for selfish or altruistic purposes (using 'altruistic' to describe actions considered beneficial to the society as a whole);
whether it promotes life or death.

In the concluding section of this chapter I outline how knowledge is acquired by the holders of the various specialist practitioners.

Chiefs

All people acquire some of their skills and knowledge by learning, either from a member of their family, their peer group or from the local school. This is also the case with the knowledge of chiefs. Despite the special status of the chief as a descendant of the mhondoro the chief is the owner of no specialised or ritual knowledge.⁸ He acts on the advice of elders and the mhondoro and is subject to no mystical retribution if his reign is morally or legally inadequate. His knowledge is acquired through the experience of being chief and it is considered to change him as an individual (an old chief is wiser than a young chief). His knowledge is displayed publicly (in court and whenever he is consulted). Whether he uses his knowledge altruistically or not is open to interpretation by those he judges. In general, the knowledge of the chief promotes life for it is in his power to condemn and execute witches. (I do not mention in this context the life-bringing powers of the royal lineage which they dispense once they have been transformed into mhondoro. These powers are not a consequence of their knowledge but of their identity, their substance as descendants of the mhondoro.)

N'anga - traditional healers

All dreams are considered meaningful, but only the n'anga ascribe some or all of their professional knowledge to their dreams. For example, if in a dream they discover the curative properties of a particular plant, they will look for it, try it and if successful acquire a reputation as a healer of that disease. But such knowledge by itself is not sufficient to accord healer status. Many people have knowledge of some sorts of cures and assist their neighbours, usually without payment. Professional, charging healers generally claim to have obtained their knowledge by a number of techniques. They may be mediums of the baboon shave spirit (shave rebveni) or they may have been taught their divining skills by a senior practitioner.

That healers feel the need to lay claim to all available techniques is an indication of their moral ambiguity. Dreaming is morally neutral. But possession by shave spirits is not. These spirits convey talents and thereby change the nature of their hosts. The powers conferred by the mashave are used only for the benefit of individuals. Consultation takes place in private and payment is made to the medium. All these characteristics leave the medium wide open to suspicion. Public possession is morally praiseworthy, but if a person gets possessed where he cannot be scrutinised it may be that one of his spirits is a witch. For this reason, healers tend to stress the dream/learning aspects of their knowledge. Nonetheless many wear the bracelet of black beads that indicates possession by the baboon spirit as a sign of their power.

Witches

The knowledge that witches acquire by possession by witch spirits (varoyi) or by apprenticeship is knowledge to harm individuals by poison, by illicit intercourse in the shape of a snake or a crocodile, by murder or by the desecration of graves for the sake of a meal of human flesh. Their knowledge gives them power over a wide range of animals and allows them to fly about in winnowing baskets. Witches are quintessentially selfish and the only 'cure' for witchcraft is death. Although their knowledge can be acquired, it is accompanied by the taking of medicines which, like possession by a witch shave, changes the man or woman utterly.

Spirit Mediums

Possession by an ancestor, whether high level (mhondoro) or low level (mudzimu) is said not to alter at all the personality of the medium. Mediums of ancestors are the passive, ignorant conduits of knowledge communicated in public from the dead to the living. This activity is unequivocably beneficial to the community whether this is a lineage or the 'country' as a whole.

The chart below summarises this information. Of the many comparisons and contrasts this chart suggests, two are especially important for the argument of the following chapters.

<u>CHIEFS</u>	<u>HEALERS (N'ANGA)</u>
Knowledge acquired by LEARNING which CHANGES the recipient	Knowledge acquired by POSSESSION/ DREAMS/LEARNING which CHANGES the host
Benefits are PUBLICLY experienced as ALTRUISTIC/SELFISH (depending on the individual)	Benefits are INDIVIDUALLY experienced as ALTRUISTIC/SELFISH (depending on the spirit)
PROMOTES LIFE	PROMOTES LIFE OR DEATH
 <hr/>	 <hr/>
<u>ANCESTORS</u> <u>MIDZIMU and MHONDORO</u>	<u>WITCHES</u>
Knowledge acquired by POSSESSION which DOES NOT CHANGE the medium	Knowledge acquired by POSSESSION/ LEARNING/MEDICINE which CHANGES UTTERLY the host
Benefits are PUBLICLY experienced as ALTRUISTIC	Benefits are INDIVIDUALLY experienced as SELFISH
PROMOTES LIFE	PROMOTES DEATH

Ancestors and witches

The opposition between ancestral and witch spirits finds its basic expression in kinship terms: inside lineage, benign or inside lineage, malevolent.⁹ By comparing the attributes associated with these spirits and their mediums, it becomes clear how

different interpretations of the actions or intentions of the mediums, can alter public conviction about the kind of spirit they are possessed by. The essence of ancestral spirits is that they are altruistic. If a mhondoro medium is suspected of selfishness, it may come to be believed that whatever may have been true in the past he is not possessed by an ancestral spirit any more.

For example, the mhondoro medium receives payment for the performance of his duties, as recompense for his curing abilities or as offerings for rain. Much or all of this money is used to cover the expenses of his establishment, especially the providing of hospitality to his many visitors.

What the senior medium (of Mutota) retained as personal income was just enough to enable him not to work extensively in his garden and to keep his family modestly clothed. Over the year...he more or less broke even. In this region, therefore, the principal officers do not acquire a great deal of personal wealth through the operation of the cult (Garbett 1977:75).

But if a mhondoro medium is believed to be accumulating large amounts of cash (like the ambiguous n'anga who, free of the moral injunctions of ancestral mediums, typically accumulate small fortunes) he is open to suspicion as a fraud or a witch.

A fraudulent medium will, it is believed, be killed by the mhondoro he pretends to be possessed by. If a fraudulent medium does not die, this may be taken as evidence of his unusual and dangerous powers rather than of his legitimacy.

The contrast between the two types of spirit is very fully worked out. Fraudulent mhondoro mediums will be killed by the mhondoro, real witches must be executed by the chief. The knowledge of witches is available to the living by apprenticeship but it radically alters the nature of the person who obtains it, placing them outside the bounds of human society. The knowledge of the ancestors cannot be learnt, it is available only through possession, it does not alter the nature of the medium that dispenses it, and it enhances their social status. A witch is an illegitimate

ancestral medium, a medium without the public backing of a respected lineage member. The medium of a mudzimu is logically no more than a publicly acknowledged beneficent witch.

Ancestors and people

Technical or empirical knowledge can be acquired by experience and by teaching. But knowledge of the past and of the world of the spirits, knowledge that gives power over life and death and places nature under control is known only to the ancestors and becomes available only after death. This idea is expressed in Dande as: 'We eat sadza (food), we know nothing'. In other words:

CORPORALITY \neq KNOWLEDGE

It can be experienced just as powerfully the other way round, in the belief that anything which the living do know must be different from the knowledge of the ancestors.

Lineage seniority, age and duration are all loosely associated with superior knowledge. An elderly person who has lived a long period in one place will be assumed to have knowledge of the history of that area including the period before his arrival. But in the absence of initiation rituals which impart specific knowledge to a specific group of elders, adults or experts, the grounds on which the old can claim superior knowledge to the young are very vague.

Nonetheless, in discussion of matters concerning the ancestors, if an individual reaches the edge of his knowledge, drawing on this vaguely defined distinction between the knowledge of children and of adults, he will say: 'I am a little child - only the mhondoro know'. This attitude is adopted even by the most senior of elders, headmen or vatapi. It may be expressed in the formulation that children are to adults as people are to ancestors:

CHILD : ADULT : : PEOPLE : ANCESTORS

Now, although there is no body of ritual knowledge or practice that converts a child into an adult, the boundary between the two states is clearly marked. For both men and women, adult status is achieved by the birth of the first child. This is indicated by the teknonymic system of naming that constantly stresses the parental status of adults. The word for adults means literally 'parents' (yabareki from kubereka = to give birth). Procreation is the dividing line between the statuses of 'child' and 'adult' just as death is the division between 'people' and 'ancestors'. The only distinctive category of people in this respect is the chiefs who by their knowledge of certain medicines are transformed at death not into ordinary ancestors but into mhondoro. The difference between chiefs and ordinary people is never more marked than in the grave.

CHILD ... (procreation) ... ADULT
 PEOPLE ... (death) ... ANCESTORS
 CHIEF ... (death and medicines) ... MHONDORO

If these ideas are added to the notion that **CORPORALITY ≠ KNOWLEDGE**, using 'corporality' to include all the biological processes of life and death, then it becomes clear that, by comparison with the true knowledge and power of the ancestors, human life is worth nothing. Knowledge is obtained only by the leaving of it.

CHILD (procreation)	ADULT ... (DEATH)	... ANCESTOR
IGNORANCE	KNOWLEDGE
CORPORALITY	DEATH

In fact, this sharp dichotomy does not reflect the actual relationship of human knowledge to the specialised knowledge revealed by the mediums. The main areas of mediums' knowledge are curing and 'the past'. Most adult men and women know a great deal about these subjects. Some have reputations for their abilities to cure certain diseases stretching miles and into other districts.

Many adults, especially vatapi and chiefs, have some knowledge of the ancestors and their territories, though this is usually restricted to provinces they have lived in themselves. Knowledge of (or interest in) other provinces is rare and a frequent

response to questioning is: 'I only know the spirits I have lived with'. Nonetheless, the true relationship between human knowledge and ancestors' knowledge is as points on a continuum. It is conceived of by the people themselves as two separate blocks. The existence of a continuum is accepted, though unthinkingly, in day-to-day speculation and discussion about the world of the spirits. It is only when an adult reaches the limits of his knowledge, or when he reaches the limits of the knowledge he feels it legitimate to admit to, that the continuum is denied and his own knowledge downgraded to that of 'a child'.

Two further points will bring out the power of this denial. Firstly, as a medium can only demonstrate that he has knowledge by speaking it, it is possible for other people to acquire his knowledge by remembering what he says. To some extent this occurs, but it is unthinkable that knowledge acquired in this way would be used by an individual to assert that he is a medium. Secondly, to prove he is genuinely possessed, an aspirant medium must recite the genealogy of the ancestors. This genealogy is to a large extent common knowledge. If the genealogy he recites varies greatly from what is known as 'true' he will not gain acceptance. Although this is so, it is not conceived to imply that elders and mhondoro share certain knowledge. That ancestors have knowledge and humans do not is most concisely demonstrated by the typical reply given when an informant is unable to answer a question: 'We don't know because the mhondoro didn't tell us'.

A further elaboration of these ideas is the way in which knowledge of the (conquering) Korekore mhondoro is related to that of the autochthons. In regard to certain areas of knowledge concerning the very remote past, it may be said of a Korekore spirit that it is impossible that he should know this for he is 'a little child' in relation to the spirits who lived before him. Thus the child/adult opposition can be used to express the conqueror/indigene distinction as well as that between people and their ancestors, those who live in impotence and ignorance and those who have true knowledge of the world.

Lineage ancestors protect their own descendants, witches do their utmost to destroy them. Shave provide skills to individual women and men. Only the mhondoro have responsibility for all the people, for the community as a whole. In addition, they alone are entrusted with the safekeeping of the land. Because of their inexhaustible moral authority, the mhondoro have the power to restore fertility to the earth when it has been disrupted by the immoral actions of the people who live on it. Their authority is based on their ownership of the land, achieved by conquest in the distant past. Their moral authority, their power to control fertility and their claim to be the true, original owners of the country were the most important factors that encouraged the guerillas to take the mhondoro mediums as their partners in their struggle to win back control of the land.

CHAPTER IVTHE PROFESSION OF THE MHONDORO MEDIUM

In this chapter I describe the profession of mhondoro mediumship from two points of view. Firstly, I describe how the individual medium becomes aware that his destiny is to be different from all other women or men in the village and how, over time and under the supervision of an established medium, entry into the profession and the accumulation of a following are achieved. In the second, major part of this chapter, I show how the institution of mediumship is linked to the institutions of the chief and the headman. So intimately are these three institutions connected that, in the case of individual holders of these positions, the continued legitimacy of each is dependent on that of the others.

This analysis has two functions. The first is to demonstrate how, despite this interdependency, ultimate authority is vested in the mhondoro. This has allowed the mhondoro mediums to free themselves from the 'de-legitimization' suffered by chiefs and headmen due to their additional roles as officers of the District Administration. The second function is to show that the relationship between mhondoro mediums and guerillas that developed at the recommencement of the war in the early 1970s has its roots in the relationship between mediums and chiefs that preceded it. As I will show in Chapter IX, the guerillas have in effect simply replaced the chiefs as partners in the division of political and religious authorities that is characteristic of the Shona peoples.

Becoming a Mhondoro medium

The early stages in the career of all mediums follow the same general pattern. A man or a woman becomes sick in a manner which can neither be cured nor explained. All available forms of curing, Western and local, are tried but have no effect. The suspicion grows that the illness has been caused by a

spirit. Eventually a n'anga (traditional healer) may declare that this is so, though usually he cannot say whether the spirit is a shave (animal or foreign spirit), a midzimu (the person's own ancestor) or a mhondoro (an ancestor of the royal lineage). One factor that influences the diagnosis of the n'anga is the age of the patient. On the whole people do not start to become possessed late in life. For an old or middle-aged person to claim that her or his illness is caused by an ancestral spirit is considered ridiculous. People say that at that age you are almost an ancestor yourself. The illnesses of the old therefore tend to be diagnosed as witchcraft or simply as disease. But if the n'anga does decide that the illness may be caused by a spirit, he will recommend that the patient attempt to become possessed so that the spirit can speak and reveal its identity, its complaint and its demands.

Possession is never spontaneous. It only occurs at rituals known as humbikumbi (for midzimu) or mashave (for shave) which take weeks to prepare. Beer must be brewed, the patient's patrilineal and matrilateral kin must be summoned and given time to arrive from their villages or from the towns. To accommodate town dwellers, these rituals are usually held on Saturday nights, starting soon after dark and continuing until long after Sunday's dawn.

During most of the night the patient sits on a mat in front of the drummers with a half-white, half-black cloth covering his head. He will not have eaten for a day or more before the ritual begins but may drink as much beer as he likes.

The patient's father takes charge of the ritual, usually in cooperation with the n'anga who diagnosed the possession. Drumming starts soon after darkness has fallen and continues throughout the night. Female kin and neighbours dance in a semi-circle facing the drummers, approaching and retreating from the patient who sits impassively. Mediums who have been possessed many times before and who can now slip easily into possession are invited to become possessed and dance with the

women to encourage the spirit troubling the patient. As these mediums, dressed in their black and white cloths, become possessed, the men join the dancing which becomes more aggressive, the mediums brandishing their axes and sticks, crying out, chanting, weeping but never relenting from their vigorous, passionate dance.

If the patient becomes possessed during the night he will join the dancing. If not he remains sitting in front of the drummers. In either case, just before dawn, the patient is led into a hut followed by his agnatic kin and the other possessed mediums. Matrilateral kin, affines and neighbours remain outside, for hours if necessary, waiting to be told what the spirit has said.

The identity of a spirit is discovered by question and answer. The father asks the main questions but the n'anga and anyone else may interrupt to encourage the spirit or to ask their own questions. The attitude of the spirit is always reluctant, unwilling to reveal its name or its message. It must be cajoled and bribed with small coins, pleaded with, reminded of its duty to care for its descendants. Sometimes the spirit remains silent and the ritual has failed. But if it does speak, after the first faltering exchanges the spirit speaks with increasing fluency and willingness and after a while may make long bitter speeches, broken up by weeping and groaning, grunting and agonised cries. At any moment the flow may stop, perhaps to continue after encouragement, perhaps not, in which case the ritual has come to an end.

The first question put to a medium and the one which the spirit is usually most reluctant to answer is the name of its clan. The asking of this question is called kukonya. The answer given declares what sort of spirit it is. If possession has occurred but the spirit refuses to speak this may be taken to mean that it has no clan, therefore it is either not human or not Shona, that is it is a shave and the rest of the session will be given over to determining what sort of shave it is. But if it does

have a clan further questions are asked to discover the details of the life of the spirit, its name, where and when it lived and died and finally what it requires.

If in the performance of the first humbikumbi the spirit reveals its clan, its name and some of its history, this is highly satisfactory and no more could be expected. Some relief of the sickness may occur and plans will be made for a further dance ritual when more information will be elicited. As these are expensive and time consuming, it may take years before all the demands of the spirit have been ascertained.

The naming of the clan is the crucial event of the ritual and determines a great deal of the subsequent life of the medium. A mhondoro never possesses its own descendant. Therefore if the clan named is the same as that of the medium, the spirit must be its own ancestor and therefore a mudzimu, not a mhondoro. If the clan named is different from that of the medium, it is possible that the spirit is a mhondoro. This process contains one of the reasons why women are so rarely considered to be the mediums of mhondoro. As far as possession by lineage ancestors, midzimu, is concerned, men are almost exclusively possessed by ancestors of their father's lineage but women may be possessed by ancestors of their mother's or their father's lineage. This means that if a possessed woman names a clan other than her own (that is, her father's) this may be interpreted to be an ancestor of her mother's or her mother's mother's lineage and so on. For men two paths are open: own clan = mudzimu, other clan = mhondoro. For women, no matter what clan they name, it is possible to conclude that they are possessed by a low level ancestor, a mudzimu.

If it is thought that the ancestor may be a mhondoro, the patient will be sent to the village of an established mhondoro medium where he will attempt possession again. If the medium is convinced, he may agree to keep the patient with him and prepare him to be formally tested. From this point on the new patient will adopt the conventional medium's dress and expect to be treated with some of the respect due to an established mhondoro medium.

An established medium will refuse to give help to an aspirant unless he has already received some recognition, for example at a humbikumbi. Either the medium's father or a representative of the lineage of the mhondoro believed to be possessing him must accompany him when he first visits the established medium. Men who believe themselves to be mediums but who can persuade no-one else are occasionally found wandering round Dande dressed as mediums but rejected by the established mediums and regarded by other villagers as mad.

The first years in the career of a medium are the most sensitive. At any moment the mhondoro may decide he is inadequate and abandon him. To discourage this, the medium should abstain from sex until his mediumship is confirmed, a process which usually takes years. During this time the medium may stay with his mentor, or he may return home. The mhondoro may disappear for months on end, allowing the medium to live an ordinary life, and in time it may turn out that it has gone for good. Or it may return to dominate the medium's life once again. Gradually the medium establishes a reputation for his special powers. He may foretell the future with surprising accuracy, reveal secrets or threaten to punish those who don't believe in him and then persuade them that he has done so. Eventually, when the medium is confident of his powers, the full scale testing procedure can begin.

Possession III: the testing

It is a clear night with a perfectly clear moon. On one of the highest peaks at the edge of the Escarpment, two hundred people including the local chief have gathered to watch the testing of a new mhondoro medium.

The medium had appeared unexpectedly some months before. A short, wiry man with a straggling beard and long greased hair, sombre, morose, he had declared himself the medium of a spirit that had lived on this mountain top many years ago but who had never come out in a medium before. Stories began to circulate

of his ability to send lightning to attack those who doubted his powers and of how a hole which had been dug under his instructions had revealed pots, beads and a stick buried by the mhondoro in his lifetime. Tonight it is expected that the mhondoro will speak its name and its history and explain the relationship it has to the known mhondoro of the area. Two established mediums have gathered. If they find the narrative convincing they may declare the new medium genuine and admit him to their ranks.

For hours on end, drums to call the ancestors are played. Women and children sing the songs of the ancestors, some of which the new medium has taught them. One of the mediums, possessed by his mhondoro, dashes from his hut, growling, darting into the darkness and out again, frightening children and amusing the crowd. He leads them in song, his stick waving over his head. He dashes back into his hut. Whenever the dancing lags or the drums are still one of the mediums comes out, orders them to continue, dances, restores their energies and goes in again.

A few hours before dawn there is a sudden scurry around the entrance of the hut. The new medium has emerged, possessed and singing. All the dozing men and women wake and hurry after him, seating themselves in a semicircle round him. The other mediums are at his side, one upright and eagerly watching, the other lying on his back on a mat entirely covered by a length of black cloth. In front of the new medium sits his assistant, the mutapi, clapping to the mhondoro, encouraging him, assuring him of how keen the people are to hear what he has to tell them and to welcome him. Silence. The mutapi claps and speaks again: 'Grandfather, we are waiting for you; grandfather, speak to us...'.

The women sing again and then fall silent. The only sound is the clapping of the mutapi. The men join in, then stop. The mutapi continues on his own. Then the medium begins to sing with the voice of the mhondoro. He repeats the same rhythm over

and over, singing hesitantly, falling silent, picking up the thread, advancing a few lines, stumbling, giving it up, starting again. Gradually he gains confidence and sings through to the end taking perhaps an hour to complete his narrative, the history of the mhondoro: where he comes from, who his descendants are, what relationship he has to the chief. He gradually works his way through all the members of his lineage describing their association with well known sites in the area.

But his narrative is not at all what had been expected. His story states that his mhondoro is the father of the most senior mhondoro of the local spirit realm. No-one has ever heard of him. But they listen in silence. When he gets to the end the men clap respectfully and the women ululate.

It is dawn. The mediums have all gone inside their hut. The women begin to make preparations to climb back down the mountain-side. The men discuss the story they have heard. None of them is prepared to commit himself. Parts were convincing, other parts - no-one can be sure.

In the weeks that follow agreement is reached that the new story cannot be true. One of the mediums who had been present maintains that the new medium was simply confused. This is no slight. In the early part of a medium's career, his possession is often so weak that his true story cannot be clearly spoken. It is agreed that he should come back in a few months' time when his possession is stronger. Then perhaps he will be able to speak the true history that the mhondoro wanted them to know.

* * * * *

The ritual by which a new mhondoro medium tries to prove his authenticity by reciting the royal genealogy and the history of the chieftaincy is called kubata masuo, literally 'to grasp the uterine passage'. By performing this ritual, the new medium must convince not only the other mediums present but also the chief and the elders that a mhondoro has actually spoken. Many of the elders know a great deal of the history of the mhondoro as

it is recorded in the royal genealogy and the lay-out of the spirit provinces. Although the quantity and complexity of their knowledge is thought to be much less than that of a mhondoro, they consider themselves capable of assessing the validity of an aspirant medium's claims. The effect is that to gain acceptance, what the aspirant medium says must approximate to what is commonly believed.

This does not mean that an elder could claim to be a medium simply on account of his knowledge. Long before he embarks on this test, the medium has been marked out by his inexplicable illness, his willingness to accept the diagnosis of the n'anga, his persistent attempts to achieve possession, his avoidance of sex, his inexplicable powers and his wearing of the ritual costume of the medium. Successful completion of testing does not transform an ordinary person into a medium. Rather, it confirms the generally accepted explanation of his behaviour, that a mhondoro has chosen him as a medium.

The final part of the test requires the aspirant to select from a pile of carved staffs the one which was used by the previous medium of the mhondoro or by the mhondoro himself when he was alive. Even at this point, after the history of the royal lineage has been successfully recited, if the medium fails to select the correct stick he is judged to have failed.

Failure does not imply that the medium is a conscious fraud, for the world of the ancestors is not susceptible to human control. Perhaps the medium has broken a law of the ancestors, but perhaps the ancestor simply changed its mind and decided to select someone else as a medium instead. The failed medium will be accepted back into the community but with the need to find an alternative explanation for his illness. It may be that the established mediums decide that he has only been possessed by a shave all along. In many cases, however, a medium who has not convinced his audience at his first attempt will be advised to return in a year's time when his possession, having reached a greater intensity, will allow him to give a

better account of the ancestors' history. The medium may return to the medium who has been looking after him or perhaps may make a visit to the medium of the Tavarø mhondoro Musuma (see page 91) who has the unique power to assist mediums in difficulty with their mhondoro.

If he does make another attempt and is successful, there is no thought that he has been coached in the true version or that he would cynically recite an acceptable account of the past. It is known that a mhondoro will kill anyone who pretends to be possessed when they are not. A recitation of a more 'accurate' version is thought to be a consequence of the increased passivity of the medium which allows the mhondoro himself to come through loud and clear. The authenticated medium is allowed to take up residence in the established spirit province of his mhondoro. In fact, if at this stage he does not begin to practise as a professional medium, he is disobeying the will of the mhondoro who will kill him.

Once a medium has started to practise, he usually continues to do so for the rest of his life. But this is not always the case. During the liberation war mediums of certain mhondoro are said to have appeared in the concentration camps. None of these are practising now. Another medium, although not finally accepted, was reputed to be genuine until he made off with a large sum of money belonging to people in his area. Yet another is said to have been deserted by his mhondoro for a number of years during which he joined an Independent Christian Church (anathema to the mhondoro). In time the mhondoro returned and he resumed his career as a full-time medium again. Finally, in special circumstances, it is possible for mediums to be accepted as genuine although they have not undergone or failed the testing procedures. The medium of Chiwawa is an example (see Chapter VI).

I do not intend to deal at length with the state of mind of the medium in trance¹ but I will say that I have found no reason to impute conscious fraud to mediums. I know of no moment in

the initiatory stage of a medium's career, such as that described by Beattie for the Banyoro, when the aspirant medium is encouraged to feign possession (Beattie 1969:166). Rather the initiation sequence structures the aspirant medium's perception of his own experience, constantly allowing him individual choices but then forcing on him the institutionalised consequences of the choice he has made. The first diagnosis of possession is made when the patient is in a state of crisis, having failed to find a cure for a persistent and troubling disease. At this stage it is not his interpretation of his experience but that of the n'anga that determines that a ceremony to evoke possession will be held, though it is possible for the patient to signal by his behaviour that this is his desire without openly stating it. In the first questioning (kukonya) the possessed medium makes a straightforward choice when he states the clan of his spirit and so determines the direction his initiation will take. It is possible for him to withdraw before this stage has been reached by not becoming possessed at all, or to reduce the significance of his possession by not naming his clan and thus allowing his spirit to be interpreted by others as a shave. If he does name a clan, his subsequent answering of questions, and the detail of the history of the spirit that he gives, determines whether or not they will take the process a stage further by organising a subsequent possession ritual at considerable expense to themselves. Each choice the medium makes elicits a response from the listeners which determines the subsequent choice the medium makes. It is in the interaction between medium and 'audience' that a credible personality for the spirit is evolved and a patient converted into a medium.

The word 'choice' stands inadequately for a complex range of individual psychological responses to the support or disbelief the patient receives from his kin and neighbours, but that the patient can at any stage opt out, causing no humiliation to himself, suggests that his persistence reflects a conviction,

however gradually it is arrived at, that mediumship will resolve his dilemma. Following Lévi-Strauss (1968:175) I suggest that those mediums who achieve recognition as genuine do so because they have been able to interpret to themselves their own unusual experience in terms of the symbolic framework, the expectations and the rewards of the institution of mediumship.

All this is to view the institution only from the point of view of an individual entering it. I turn now to a description of the institution as a whole. Though this will lead down a number of different paths, it will return us to a consideration of the authenticity of the individual medium, though from another perspective altogether.

The medium in the world

a) The medium's assistant

The mhondoro mediums are the most important and most respected religious experts in Dande but they do not carry out all their duties by themselves. The medium is by convention the passive recipient of the spirit of the dead. The mutapi (pl vatapi) is his active counterpart. (The mutapi may also be known as nechombo as in Garbett 1963, or as mutonje as in Bourdillon 1971:202).

The mutapi is the manager of the shrine. His main responsibility is to act as intermediary between the mhondoro that possesses the medium and those who wish to consult him. He receives visitors to the medium's village, deals with financial matters, finds the visitors sleeping quarters, looks after them during the consultation, and so on. When the medium is possessed, the mutapi takes care of him and interprets or explains the statements he makes. Some vatapi collect the medicinal roots and herbs prescribed by the mhondoro and administer them to his patients.

As well as overseeing the ceremonies at which possession occurs, the mutapi also organises those at which it does not, in which the medium plays no part, such as the supplication for rain (mbudzirume) and the thank-offerings for the harvest (musoso). If the rains are late, he collects money to be offered to the mhondoro, some of which he may be permitted to keep. If the rains fail altogether, it is usually the mutapi who is sent with an offering to the more senior mhondoro. He may also be sent on other errands, taking messages to the chief or District Commissioner. Vatapi make little financial profit from their skills. Indeed they complain of the amount of farming time they lose when the mhondoro has many visitors. They are distinguishable from other villagers only by their knowledge of everything that concerns the mhondoro including the genealogies of the chiefs of the past. Like the chieftaincy, the position of mutapi is inherited adelphically, that is from older to younger brother, though the sons of the current mutapi may deputise for him. In many cases, especially those in which there is a long tradition of mutapiship in the lineage, vatapi claim to be descended from the mhondoro for whom they care, and it is considered impossible for a member of the mutapi lineage to be possessed by 'their' mhondoro. The lineage of vatapi may live on in a spirit province long after the death of a medium, waiting for the next one to appear. When he does, the current mutapi will act as his assistant. When a new mhondoro comes out and there is no traditional lineage of vatapi, the medium will select one and this position will be inherited from then onwards.

In the relationship between medium and mutapi, as in all other concerns of the mediums, there is a great deal of freedom for originality and interpretation. An established medium speaking as a mhondoro may announce that he requires a new mutapi in addition to or as a substitute for his present one and make such other changes as he desires. But two characteristics are common to the majority of vatapi. Firstly, they (or their lineage)

have lived in the spirit province longer than most (or any) other people. They may have the reputation of being the first person ever to have lived there. Secondly, many of them are village heads. A brief description of two mutapi lineages will show how the combination of the two roles, mutapi and village head is a result of historical process.

i) Hambe

Hambe is a settlement of some ten households deep in the sangojena, the white forest. For almost half the year, when the track that leads to the village is grown over with high, sharp grass and the rivers it crosses are swollen with summer rain, Hambe is virtually cut off from the outside world. The men of Hambe are famous for their hunting skills, their ability to follow the elephant trails, the makwara, which also means customs, traditions, the paths our ancestors followed long ago.

The mhondoro of the spirit province in which Hambe is sited is Nyahuma. The most recent medium was possessed by the mhondoro at his home on the Plateau in the early 1940s. By 1949 at the latest he was installed in his spirit province between the Hambe and Dande Rivers. It is said that when he arrived there was no-one living in the spirit province at all. With him came a man from his home village to act as his mutapi. That a new mutapi was appointed suggests that there had been no medium of Nyahuma for a long time, long enough at least for the previous lineage of vatapi (if there had been one) to die out or, more likely, move away.

Although the medium was moral leader of the new community, his mutapi became samusha, village head. In time the mutapi's son was appointed sabhuku or government tax collector. The followings of the medium and his assistant included their own descendants and their sons-in-law. Gradually other people gathered around them attracted by the space for gardens on the banks of the river, the hunting and the presence of the medium.

The medium of Nyahuma died in 1971. There seems no reason why Hambe should not have held together for years awaiting a new medium. But in the early seventies, when most of the inhabitants of Dande were forced into concentration camps, Hambe was one of the many villages cleared out and burnt.

The camp in which the residents of Hambe were placed was sited in the spirit province of the mhondoro Chiwawa, some twenty kilometres from Hambe, on the main gravel road that runs between the Escarpment in the south and the Zambezi River in the north. When the camps were dismantled late in 1979 and the thousands gathered from all over Dande allowed to disperse, many people found themselves homes on land more fertile than that they had left, closer also to the facilities they need if they are to enter the expanding cash economy. Many others returned to their earlier homes.

A few ex-residents of Hambe returned home but most moved just across the border of Chiwawa's province into that of their own mhondoro, Nyahuma. Here they can take advantage of the nearby facilities and still satisfy the moral injunction to live in 'the right place', in the province of their mhondoro, even though on the very edge of it. A son of the old mutapi has been accepted as village head. In their new/old home they await the arrival of a new medium of Nyahuma.

ii) Kwainona

Kwainona is a village in the spirit province of Chivere. A number of mediums of Chivere are remembered, three by name. The mutapiship is in the hands of the core lineage of the village, so that the present mutapi is also the village head. His elder brothers were vatapi before him as were members of their father's generation before them. The Kwainona lineage are commoners of the Elephant clan and claim direct descent from the mhondoro himself:

Chivere (mhondoro)

|
Gomo

|
Kwainona

|
Mapaka (the present mutapi)

The present medium is of the Monkey clan and came from that clan's heartland on the Plateau in 1977.

The village was destroyed in 1978. By 1981 it had reappeared. Almost all its member lineages returned from the camps to the burnt-out remains of the houses and built them again, despite the fact that Kwainona is sited on some of the least productive soil in the valley. Dry, uneven, full of stones, however hard the fields are worked the level of production remains painfully low. It is among the most desolate places in all Dande. Nonetheless, encouragement from agricultural extension officers and party officials to move to a more productive site is ignored. In fact, the Kwainonas have moved the site of their home some six or seven times in the past twenty years but always within the limits of the section of Chivere's spirit province which the mhondoro says is good to live in. And there they feel they must stay.

Hambe and Kwainona present two possible combinations of elements found in all Dande communities. In the first case, at Hambe, although the existence of a spirit province belonging to the mhondoro Nyahuma may have been known, it was unoccupied before the most recent medium arrived. By taking up residence, the medium and mutapi formed the basis of a community which has survived, though with reduced numbers, both the death of the medium and the disruptions of the war². At Kwainona, there had been a steady stream of mediums over a number of years and the well-established lineage of vatapi formed the core of the community of people (women as well as men) who regard themselves as descendants of the mhondoro and who remain a community during the periods between the death of one medium and the appearance of the next. One difference between the two communities is that the long established vatapi at Kwainona claim direct descent from the mhondoro, whereas the relatively recently appointed vatapi of Hambe do not.

If a medium is possessed by a previously unknown mhondoro, the next most senior mhondoro that has a medium may reveal where the new mhondoro's spirit province is and a new community will assert itself. Conversely, if a mhondoro has taken no medium for a

long period of time, the lineage of vatapi may begin to lose reason for maintaining its integrity and disintegrate. Should a medium turn up, the lineage may reassert itself. If not, the identity of the community as descendants of the mhondoro may lapse. People may shift their ritual allegiance to another nearby mhondoro or move away. If they do leave, a few scattered households may remain, potentially the basis of a new cycle of village development, expansion and decline should a medium of the old mhondoro or of a new one eventually arrive. Of course, not every village in Dande has its own mhondoro medium and not every headman is a mutapi. But within a spirit province all villages are dependent on the village of the medium for the performance of the crucial rituals of agricultural production. The cycles of appearance, incumbency and death of mediums affect most directly the villages of these mediums and their headmen the vatapi, but all villages are caught up in the swell and flow of change that the establishment and dissolution of these core villages creates.

* * * * *

I have mentioned the aspirant mediums who wander about Dande dressed as mhondoro mediums, full of bitter stories of their rejection by the villagers who treat them as mad, dangerous or both. Their problem in essence, is that they are unable to persuade anyone to act as a mutapi for them, to organise the rituals which would enable them to become possessed and prove their claims. A medium cannot do this for himself. Spontaneous possession never occurs. Unsupervised possession occurs only in the case of the witch. And it is of no use if a man of no social standing, that is a man with no descent group following, offers to help, for the essential characteristic of the mutapi is that he is a lineage head. By agreeing to act as a mutapi the lineage head allows his authority to underwrite the ambiguous power of the medium. By performing the rituals necessary for a mhondoro to communicate with his descendants, the authority of the mutapi legitimates the medium's claim to possession by a benign ancestral spirit.

It is thus the mutapi through whom the free-floating unconstrained mhondoro (described as mweya or air) is made available to his descendants and followers and not the medium alone. From the outline of the formation of the villages of the mediums I have given it is, I hope, clear that this is true both in a historical sense as well as in the day-to-day business of consultation and possession.

b) The medium and the chief

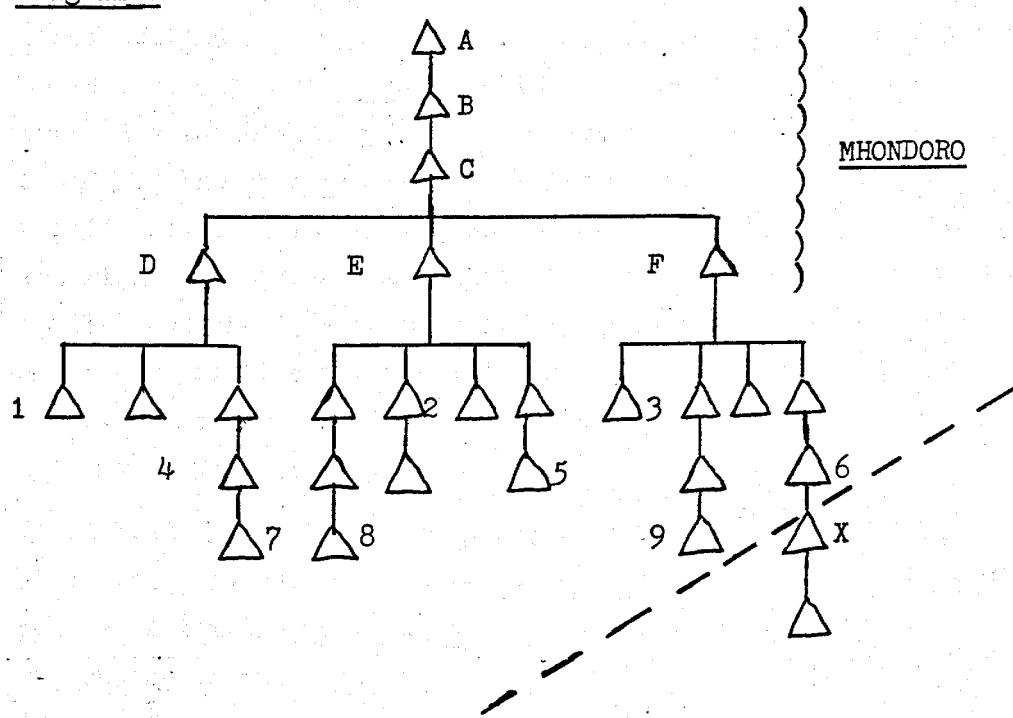
In order to see how the individual shrines, consisting of medium and mutapi, fit into the organization of the chieftaincy as a whole we need to look at one major responsibility of the medium not yet dealt with.

The three categories of people (royals, commoners, strangers) who live within the spirit province of a mhondoro look to that mhondoro for assistance in different ways. The mhondoro sends rain to everyone and everyone benefits from his power to protect the crops and the fertility of the soil. But as ancestors of the royal lineage, the mhondoro have a responsibility towards the royals that they do not have towards the other two groups, the resolution of disputes within the royal lineage. The most important of these are crises of succession to the chieftaincy. It is the responsibility of the mhondoro to select each succeeding chief at the death of the previous title holder.

Like most other inherited statuses, the chieftaincy is passed on by adelphic succession. In other words, at the death of a chief he is succeeded by his younger brother and he by his younger brother in turn until all men of that generation have been exhausted. Then the chieftaincy passes to the senior son of the next generation. In practice this does not mean that every male of each generation has a spell as chief, but that each of the 'houses' (dzimba) descended from the sons of the founder of the chieftaincy should have a turn to put up a candidate for the position.

Diagram 1 presents a simplified royal genealogy. The chieftaincy must pass between houses D, E and F at the death of each incumbent. Claims are based on events of the distant past of which permanent records were not traditionally kept. There are therefore always a large number of contestants for the title within each house, as well as disputes between houses about whose turn for the chieftaincy it is. The senior member of each house would seem to be the ideal choice in each case but as the houses are internally segmented, exactly who is senior is not always easily agreed. Factors such as political acumen, age and general suitability are taken into consideration. In addition this system of inheritance has the effect that chiefs tend to be old when selected and so succession crises are frequent. (See Holleman 1952:21 and Garbett 1966a for a full discussion of chiefly succession among the Shona.)

Diagram 1



(Numbers indicate order of succession of chiefs.)

The choice of chief from all the possible candidates is made by the mhondoro medium. To hold legitimate power chiefs must fulfil two criteria. Firstly, they must be members of the royal lineage, that is they must be descended from the mhondoro. A typical attempt to discredit a potential chief is a claim that his ancestors were not descended from the mhondoro of the chieftaincy concerned. Secondly, it is necessary to have been picked out and installed (kugadza) by a mhondoro medium. If the second of these criteria has not been fulfilled one cannot be chief.

The mhondoro that actually selects the chief is the mhondoro believed to have founded the chieftaincy. Before the number and organization of the chieftaincies was regulated by the central government, fission of royal houses was frequent. Lineage heads, discontented with their failure to be appointed chief or with their land allocation or for some other reason, would break away and form their own chieftaincy on unclaimed land. Within a few generations this lineage-head-become-chief would come out as a mhondoro. It is this mhondoro who is charged with selecting the successors to the chieftaincy he founded. The mhondoro of the senior house, that is the chieftaincy from which the new houses broke away, may retain the right to approve the choice, but it is in this area that battles for the independence of chieftaincies one from another are fought as also for the independence of mhondoro mediums one from another. (This argument is elaborated in a case history in Chapter VII.)

In diagram 1, if house F should split off and constitute itself as an independent chieftaincy, then mhondoro F will choose the chiefs of this house. It may be that he is obliged to refer his choice to the mediums of mhondoro C, B or A for confirmation, if any of these mediums has been able to retain authority over the new chieftaincy. But in the first instance, the mhondoro that chooses a chief always has some especially intimate relationship with the house for which he performs this task.

From this discussion it should be clear why it is, as has often been noted (Ranger 1967; Mudenge 1976: 35) that, whereas chiefs have political and moral responsibility within their own territories, mhondoro mediums may have responsibilities that extend beyond these boundaries. Referring to the diagram again, whereas mhondoro F has responsibility only for the chieftaincy created when this part of the house broke away, a medium of mhondoro A, B or C might claim authority over this house as well. On the other hand, if the mediums of mhondoro E or D decided to claim responsibility for the new chieftaincy F, whether this would be accepted or not is impossible to predict from purely structural principles. The reputation of the medium, the desire of the chieftaincies for unity against a common enemy or any one of a hundred reasons could cause the claim to be accepted or rejected. In time claim and counter claim obscure the original historical relationships, which very quickly become irrelevant. For, far from being an accurate record of the past, the kin relations of mhondoro is an idiom used to express and contest the relative statuses of related chieftaincies. (Again, this is discussed more fully in Chapter VII.)

To return to the selection of the chiefs. It has been argued that the medium's choice of a particular individual as chief is an expression of popular consensus, that the medium names the candidate with widest support (Garbett 1967, 1969:125; Bourdillon 1982:104). While this argument probably has some validity, it is circular and untestable. A medium is a figure of very high status in the community. Inevitably his opinions are influential. Although it may well be the case that a chief is chosen because he is popular, it is equally likely that his popularity has been achieved because he is known to be the favourite of the medium. The main point is this. Succession crises should not be seen as isolated, one-off events but as moments when the dense flow of interaction between chiefs, mediums and people achieves a rare concentration

and the structures of authority are thrown into relief. The choice of a chief is but one element in an elaborate strategy by which a medium attempts to do what appears to him the most good. Chiefs come to power old whereas mediums attain their status as young men. One medium may live through and influence a large number of incumbencies. Their preference for certain branches of royal lineages cannot go unnoticed and indeed it does not, as the case history discussed in Chapter VII will make clear.

This question marks a major stage in the argument presented so far. The key reason why mhondoro are responsible for the selection of chiefs is that mhondoro and chief are members of the same lineage and the successful candidate will in his turn join the ranks of the mhondoro. In this, as in all other matters concerning the welfare of a lineage, it is the dead members of the lineage, those who have passed beyond the possibility of self interest, duplicity or error, who are in control.

To summarise the different routes by which problems are conveyed to the relevant mhondoro: in all questions to do with the fertility of the land or the rain, royals, commoners, and strangers appeal to the mhondoro who is the 'owner' of the province in which they live. In all questions to do with the viability of a particular lineage, the lineage ancestors are consulted. In the case of a royal lineage, the ancestors are the mhondoro. Royals living away from their own territories will travel home to consult the mediums of their own mhondoro. Finally, where matters of health are concerned, both strategies (within the territory, within the lineage) may be ignored if it is felt that another mhondoro is best able to resolve the problem. Mediums with a reputation for a high success rate and a broad range of curing abilities will attract a clientele from an area considerably wider than their own spirit province.

If the mhondoro of one's own spirit province has no medium, visits to others may be made, usually to the mhondoro one above one's own on the royal genealogy. Recourse to a medium-less mhondoro may be had by the divining technique of leaving a small amount of flour in a dish overnight and interpreting the mhondoro's reply to one's questions according to whether the flour has been disturbed or not. But this yields only yes/no answers and is far less satisfactory than consultation with a medium for settling the complex and subtle problems that so frequently arise.

c) The system as a whole

We have seen that a medium requires a mutapi before he can attempt to prove the authenticity of his possession to an established medium, and that an established medium cannot perform his work without the help of a mutapi. We have seen that the legitimacy of a chief has two sources. Firstly, he is a member of the royal lineage descended from the mhondoro. Secondly, he was selected by the appropriate mhondoro from all other candidates. Medium owes his authenticity to mutapi; chief owes his authenticity to medium.

The circle is completed by the fact that the mutapi, like the chief, also draws his authority from two sources. In his capacity as village head, his responsibilities (allocation of land, holding courts) are performed purely on behalf of the chief. But in his capacity as mutapi, his authority derives from his claim to descent from the mhondoro and also from his relationship with the senior descendant of the senior mhondoro, the chief.

From observation of the close relationship between mutapi and medium it would seem that the day-to-day duties of the mutapi are performed on behalf of the medium, looking after the practical aspects of his professional life which the medium cannot take care of himself. In fact these duties are not

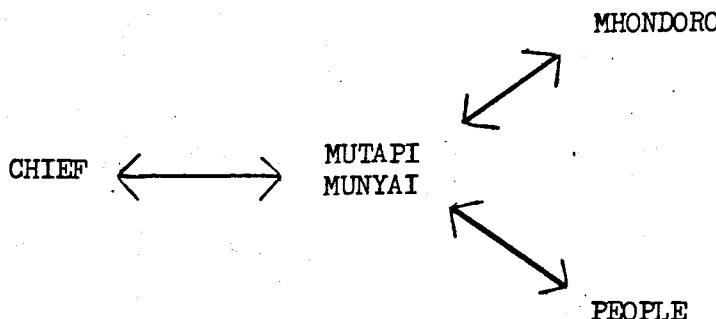
carried out on behalf of the medium but on behalf of the chief whose ancestor the medium is possessed by. For the mutapi is also a munyai, a royal servant or messenger and this title is used interchangeably with that of mutapi.

The term munyai (pl vanyai) can be used to indicate many different sorts of subservient relationship.

According to local reckoning, the confluence-zone Goba were collectively known as vanyai or followers of highland southern chiefs at least intermittently in the past...the term Nyai referred to the local political structure and to a hierarchy of status linking Shona-speaking groups occupying a fairly wide area. (The term can also refer to) a valuable periphery of dependent men...uxorilocal service husbands (whose labour) would be available for an indefinite number of years....They also acted as messengers, errand runners, bodyguards and henchmen for their leader, spying out local dissension, scouting for news of enemy attacks, and rushing to their defence or help if a raiding party were approaching. In addition, the younger men might form hunting, raiding or trading parties on behalf of their patrons (Lancaster 1974:77).

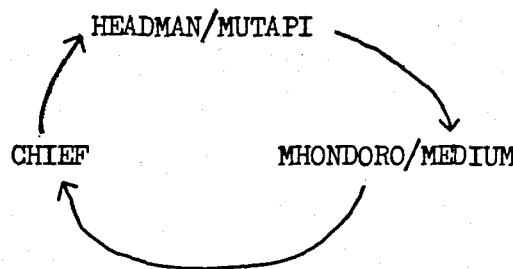
Within a chieftaincy are many spirit provinces. A chief cannot be present at the shrines of the mediums of all his ancestors wherever and whenever they become possessed. The use of the term munyai for the mutapi indicates his status as a 'messenger' of the chief, acting as an intermediary between the chief and his ancestor, the mhondoro. In local conception, therefore, the chain of communication excludes the medium altogether. Despite the flamboyant and idiosyncratic behaviour of the medium, it is not the medium who is thought of as intermediary between the living and the dead. It is the representative of the chief, the mutapi-munyai. (See diagram 2 .)

Diagram 2



Once it is established that the three necessary and invariant factors in this communication are the chief, the mutapi (or munyai) and the mhondoro, the position of the medium becomes clear. The personality of the medium is the independent variable which gives dynamism and adaptability to the system. When the system is working well, this factor is invisible to the participants. The statements of the medium which contradict or revise established history, convention or ownership of land, communicated while possessed, are interpreted as the will of the mhondoro and therefore as correct and to be accepted. It is only when the system breaks down when, for example, the actions or changes proposed are too radical to be easily accommodated, that the medium's true significance, his originality and creativity are perceived and his authenticity called into question.

Diagram 3



Flow of authority

It is for this reason that the medium is thought of as a stranger, as someone who comes from outside the society whose most significant ancestors he is possessed by. That mediums always come from outside is a dogma which persists despite the fact that the majority of the mediums of Dande have been born there, some within the chieftaincy whose ancestor has possessed them.³ The local explanation for the requirement that the medium be a stranger is that if the medium came from the same area as his mhondoro, he would know the history of the chieftaincy which must be spoken by the mhondoro to prove the authenticity of his possession. But this

is not in fact an explanation, rather it is a commentary by insiders on an element of their social organization, the significance of which is invisible to them (partly because it is so obvious). The medium is thought of as an outsider because he is irrelevant to the system of communication which operates between chief and followers on the one hand and between chief and the mhondoro on the other, both mediated by the mutapi.

The mhondoro selects the chief. The chief underwrites the authority of the mutapi as headman, an administrator of the chieftaincy and as munyai, an intermediary between him and his ancestor. The mutapi, as a lineage head and representative of the chief, underwrites the authority of the medium. An attack on a medium is ultimately an attack on the chief. In this way the authority of the chief, which derives from the mhondoro, is constantly tapped to support claims to authenticity by individual mediums. (See diagram 3.)

It is some indication of the stability of the chief's and headman's position that, on the rare occasions that the authenticity of a medium is unsure, this uncertainty is expressed so as to suggest that the medium is no longer possessed. It is never suggested that the medium has always been a fraud, except perhaps by enemies of the chief. And this explanation is acceptable because, as everyone knows, the medium is passive. It is the mhondoro that possesses the will. He may enter or abandon the medium just as he pleases. On the other hand, a sufficiently powerful medium can undermine the authority of a chief on the grounds that, though a member of the royal lineage, his selection by a mhondoro medium was, in some respect, ineffective or illegal. For example, the medium was a fraud or was bribed or had no authority over that royal house and so on. With the support of a mhondoro medium, whole branches of a royal lineage may be declared ineligible for succession to the title.

In sum, the institution of mhondoro mediumship is inseparable from the institution of chieftaincy, not only because the spirits that possess the mediums are the ancestors of the chief, but because the authenticity of the mediums relies on the political structure of the chieftaincy for its expression. A medium who has the backing of a village head or a member of his lineage is on the way to recognition as a mhondoro medium. A medium who has no such support is at best no medium and at worst the medium of a witch. Unlike the Old Testament prophet, the mhondoro medium cannot wander off into the empty bush and live as a 'charismatic' visionary on his own. He cannot act as a medium without a mutapi and a mutapi has no authority unless he is a member of an established lineage holding rights in land under the authority of a chief.

For example, when the present mutapi of the mhondoro Chiodzamamera arrived at what is now the settlement of Mosomo, the medium of this mhondoro was the only person living there. Although, as he told me, he had had little desire to act as a mutapi or knowledge of what this entailed, he had felt himself obliged to help out. He is still the medium's senior mutapi some ten years later. Had he refused to act as mutapi in the beginning, there could have been no practising medium at Mosomo at all, only a mad young man in the bush. As he became mutapi he simultaneously became munyai, the messenger between the mhondoro and the chief and at that moment the new community achieved its political identity.

In the first instance, at the (quasi-mythical) moment of the birth of a community, the three institutions of village head, medium's assistant and chief's messenger are inseparable. In the continuing life of the community, through the interlinking and interdependent authorities of mutapi, medium and chief, the identity of the land as the chief's territory and as a spirit realm is perpetually reasserted as is, simultaneously, the authenticity of the medium. As new areas of land are opened up for cultivation, new mhondoro and new spirit provinces appear and the ownership of the land by the chief's ancestor and therefore by the chief is never called into question.

d) The past and the present

There is one further aspect of the professional life of the mhondoro medium that contributes to the apparent inevitability of the ownership of the land by the royal lineage. By his adherence to certain restrictions on his behaviour, the medium presents the illusion that he is not simply the medium of a spirit of a chief of the past, but that he is that very chief himself.

The dress that all mediums wear, the length of black (or dark blue) cloth tied round the waist and falling to the feet with another draped over both shoulders and tied under the right, the staff and the sandals is the dress worn by Shona chiefs since the 16th century (Beach 1980:98). Ordinary people must remove their hats, shoes and sandals before entering the presence of a medium. This is not an unusual gesture of respect, but it is precisely what is described as having been compulsory when addressing the Mutapa, the leader of the Mwene Mutapa state.⁴ Mediums may not see rifles. In the past it was forbidden to appear before a chief holding a rifle or any other weapon (Alpers 1968:15). In this case, as in the last, what seem to have been gestures of respect or measures to protect security when directed at a chief or Mutapa have been transformed into ritual taboos when acted out towards a medium.

The term mambo, meaning chief, is commonly used to refer to a medium. If one were near a medium's residence and asked where the 'mambo' was, one would be directed without hesitation to the home of the medium. The gano or ritual axe which all mediums carry is a symbol of the ownership of a chieftaincy as is the unique fur hat worn by some mediums who say that this may be worn 'only by a chief'. Finally, a medium is given precisely the same burial as a chief. His body is allowed to disintegrate, the flesh to separate from the bone, before the body is finally placed in the earth.

These ritual behaviours of and towards mediums are shaped by the local conception of how the chiefs used to behave in the past. Mediums are as quick as non-specialists to insist on the distinction between the medium and the mhondoro that possesses him. But the ritual of their daily lives blurs this distinction. The restrictions to which the mhondoro mediums are subject operate at all times, whether the mediums are possessed or not so that the spirit realm becomes, as it were, a constant performance of the past. It is an endless acting out of the claims to ownership of each spirit province by each mhondoro and to the ownership of the chieftaincy by the royal lineage as a whole. A challenge to the chiefs' claim to the land is unthinkable, for rights to ownership in the present derive from rights to ownership in the past. And with each royal ancestor returned to life and living in his spirit province, the past is available for inspection right now, right here, right before your eyes.

CHAPTER VTHE VALLEY OF AFFINES

The first two chapters of this part of this thesis contained a description of the institution of the mhondoro medium.

Chapter III placed the mhondoro among all other types of spirits that appear in Dande and pointed out their unique qualities: altruism and the power to control the fertility of the land. Chapter IV focussed on the mediums of the mhondoro, showing how, despite their apparent independence, they are intimately bound up with the central political institutions, those of chief and headman, and how each institution supports, supplements and draws its authority from the others.

This completes the description of the mediums in themselves. Many of the ideas discussed in these chapters will be taken up when, in Parts III and IV, I discuss the variety of ways in which mhondoro mediums and guerillas worked together during the years of the war. But the relationship between mediums and guerillas was more than simply one of political and military cooperation.

Because of their structural position within Dande society, the mhondoro mediums are the most important exponents of the dominant ideology of the Korekore people. Many elements of this ideology were taken up and elaborated by the guerillas. In the next two chapters I attempt an exposition of these fundamental ideas. In a sense, these chapters continue the analysis begun in Chapter III for many of the pages that follow enlarge on the nature of the mhondoro. But the analysis presented here is at a different level from that which preceded it. The categorization of the spirits given in Chapter III is based on descriptions given to me by numbers of Korekore people, religious experts among them. What follows is a discussion of ideas which were not volunteered by any of my informants but which have arisen from an analysis of certain 'texts', myths and rituals, which have been spoken and repeated by generations of Korekore.

These texts are subject to quite radical change over time (this aspect is explored in Part III). But though the shape in which the ideas are expressed alters, as do the ends to which the ideas and practices are put, the ideas themselves - the nature of life on earth as opposed to life after death, the origin of political authority, the 'natural' preeminence of the male gender and, above all, the elements that constitute the self-identity of Korekore lineages and chieftaincies in relation to each other, to the land and to the past - all of these seem to persist. Indeed, how they have persisted into the most recent times is the subject of Part Four. There I discuss their reappearance in the political programmes of the guerillas, many of them in new guises but instantly recognisable once the analysis that follows has been made.

Before the main part of this chapter begins, I want to summarise, in a form slightly different from that presented before, the main characteristics of the mhondoro. These are that they are: i) lion spirits; ii) the spirits of chiefs; iii) rain-spirits.

Of all wild animals, lions are acknowledged to be the most dangerous to people. They dominate the bush and keep people out of it more effectively than any other animal. Lions divide the country (nyika) into two sectors: the bush, the home of lions and the villages, the home of people.

bush	village
lions	people

But mhondoro are also the spirits of chiefs. Chiefs are people, but they are people of a very distinctive kind. Unlike lineage elders who control only a village and its cultivated land, a chief owns and controls the whole 'country': villages, fields and the uncultivated bush. There would appear to be a contradiction between the 'lion' aspect of the mhondoro spirits as 'owners' of the bush and the 'chief's ancestor' aspect as owners of the bush and the villages as well.

But there is more in the bush than lions. Hyenas, crocodiles and snakes are found there too. Unlike lions who hunt by day, killing their prey in the open, these animals kill in private, either at night (hyenas), invisibly (snakes) or by dragging their victims under water (crocodiles). They are the familiars, spirits and transforms of the witch who by any of its many evil deeds (incest, murder, sorcery) causes drought (Garbett 1969:105). These animals represent the anti-social, negative aspect of the non-social wild.

Although lions kill, they kill publicly and they never feed on found corpses. They represent the positive aspect of the non-social. They are the semi-socialised aspect of the wild.

COUNTRY

<u>BUSH</u>	<u>chiefs</u>	<u>VILLAGE</u>
hyenas	lions	people
witches	royal ancestors	lineage ancestors
night	day (dawn)	
drought	rain	

The royal lineage claims that its ancestors control the rain. This control of nature by the spirits of a particular class of people is symbolised by the most human-like controller of the bush, the lion. It is from these chiefly lion spirits, these intermediaries between the rulers of the bush and of the village, that rain and fertility derive.

The presentday composition of any territory in the Zambezi Valley bears testimony to its long history of 'ownership' by a succession of chiefly lineages.¹ Precisely which lineage of chiefly ancestors are believed to bring rain differs in different contexts. In this chapter I describe the complex of rituals and mythologies that express the beliefs about which royal lineages at any one time bring the rain.

The lions of rain

Throughout Zimbabwe, the mhondoro Nehanda is famous as a leader of resistance to white supremacy. Her mediums were active in the first Chimurenga of 1896 and in the second, the liberation war. In Dande she is known to be one of the mhondoro that has simba yehondo, the power of war. But she is also known as a mhondoro who has simba yemvura, the power of rain.

In the 19th century Nehanda's reputation as a rain-bringing spirit was widespread (in some accounts she is referred to as a 'rain witch') and this reputation has endured. A medium of Nehanda in the Mazoe region in 1906 is referred to in government reports as a 'rain spirit'.² In 1963 a District Assistant collecting information for the Ministry of 'Native Affairs' records that 'Nehanda is the spiritual rainmaker' of the Korekore people in the Valley.³ Guerillas who lived with the medium of Nehanda in the 1970s believed her to have this power and this is the generally accepted view in Dande today. However, when I visited the village where the most recent Nehanda medium lived before her journey to Mozambique and asked some of those who had lived with her: 'Can Nehanda bring the rain?' the answer was no. Not only that, I was told that Nehanda had never had any rain-making powers at all.

The same contradiction arose with Nehanda's 'father', the mhondoro Mutota (see genealogy on page 86). In general discussion with villagers in Dande it is taken for granted that as Mutota is 'the big one', the senior mhondoro at the head of the genealogy of Korekore royal ancestors, he is the chief rain-maker. But at the village where his most recent medium, George Kupara, was living at the time of his death in 1974, his followers say that the mhondoro Mutota cannot make rain. They say that only the mhondoro of the autochthonous Tavara people, Musuma, has this power. Moreover I was told that every year during his lifetime, the medium of Mutota had sent

offerings of tobacco and cloth to Musuma to ensure that rains fell. When this is put to the villagers of Dande they agree and say: 'Musuma, he is the big one. He is the real one who brings the rain'.

Only at Musuma's village is there no ambiguity. The medium of Musuma and his followers agree that everything said of him is true. As one follower described it, Musuma's village is 'head office' where all the minor mhondoro must make their offerings. Middleton has written that amongst the Lugbara of Uganda 'the rainmaker has a raingrove, into which only rainmakers may enter: he has there a rainpot in which are rainstones. By the manipulation of the stones...he causes rain to fall, to cease or not fall at all' (Middleton 1971: 196). Musuma has no need of such accessories. True, at his village he has a sort of grove, a long passageway cut 200 yards into the dense bush from which he emerges in a state of possession to enter the house of the spirit and address his visitors and patients. But Musuma produces rain simply by desiring that it should fall. As the medium puts it, he controls the tap of heaven and can turn it on and off as he will.

Two ideas coexist side by side. On the one hand, the Korekore ancestors are responsible for providing rain, the source of fertility and life. On the other the Tavara mhondoro is the only one who has this power. These ideas would seem to be mutually exclusive but they are not experienced as such by the people of Dande. To find out why I examine the ideas of the Korekore about 1) what fertility is and where it comes from; 2) who they are and where they come from. I do this firstly by an analysis of a series of mythic narratives spoken by the Korekore in Dande and, secondly, by an analysis of the symbolism of the ritual of possession performed by the mhondoro mediums.

I MYTHOLOGY

The story that follows, Mutota's journey from Guruuswa, is the most important in Korekore mythology. Any Korekore asked about the history of his ancestors eventually finds his way round to this narrative, if he does not begin by telling it right away. It is perhaps more helpful to say that anyone who answers questions about his past by referring to this myth is making a claim to be a Korekore. For by 'Korekore' the people of Dande do not mean that huge area of Northern Zimbabwe which, on maps of dialect distribution, has this word written across it. They mean a collection of lineages thought of as conquerors in opposition to the Tavara who are thought of as autochthons, using this word to mean 'original owners of the land'.

The Tande people occupied the Dande area before the Korekore but are not thought of by them as autochthonous 'rain-bringers'. Their mhondoro are as ambivalent in this respect as those of the Korekore. They are rain-bringers but they are also dependant on the Tavara mhondoro for rain. The discussion that follows is concerned only with the Korekore lineages who claim Mutota as their ancestor and Guruuswa as their original home.

MYTH I

I collected many versions of this myth. This one is the most frequently told in Dande. I mention variations only when they are pertinent to the analysis that follows.

'Nyakatonje lived in Dande which at that time was called Mbire. He travelled to the country of Guruuswa taking with him some salt. When he arrived he found Mutota living there. Mutota killed an ox to welcome him. When the meat was cooked, Nyakatonje added salt to his portion. Mutota saw him eating this and asked for some. When he tasted how good it was, he asked Nyakatonje where he came from and then set

out with him as guide to find the land of the salt. With him went his son Nebedza (also known as Matope) and his daughter Nehanda, as well as Zvimba and Chingoo. (In some versions Chingoo is described as Mutota's brother or twin, in others as his friend. Other 'sons' of Mutota such as Samarengo, Nyajore, Madzomba and Chinengebere may also be said to have travelled from Guruuswa. They are all mhondoro of the Zambezi Valley or Escarpment and are added to the narrative by those who claim to be their descendants.)

They journied through many places, passing where Harare is today and on into the Mazoe Valley. When they reached a certain place, Zvimba said he had to stop as his legs were hurting him (kuzvimba = to swell up painfully). Zvimba remained there and that's how that place (Zvimba) got its name. Chingoo and Mutota continued. They found a tree with bees in it. They were unable to reach the honey, so Chingoo bent his spear into the shape of a curved stick (called ngoo) used to fetch down honey from trees and that's why he was called Chingoo. Some of the honey was wet and fell on Mutota and that's why he was called Mutota (kutota = to become wet, especially with rain). When they reached the country of Guruve, Chingoo stopped and made his home there while Mutota continued towards Dande.

As they travelled Mutota told Nyakatonje to warn him before they reached the edge of the Escarpment and saw the Zambezi River in the Valley. Mutota needed time to prepare himself to perform certain magic (mapipi). But Nyakatonje failed to warn him and Mutota saw into the Valley before he was ready. Now he was unable to continue his journey. He turned back and made his home on the Escarpment. (Versions vary about precisely where this was, but usually at Mount Chitako.) When he died the earth opened for him and he was placed inside a rock. Around his grave were planted eight small baobab trees (tuuyu tusere) brought from Dande by his followers.

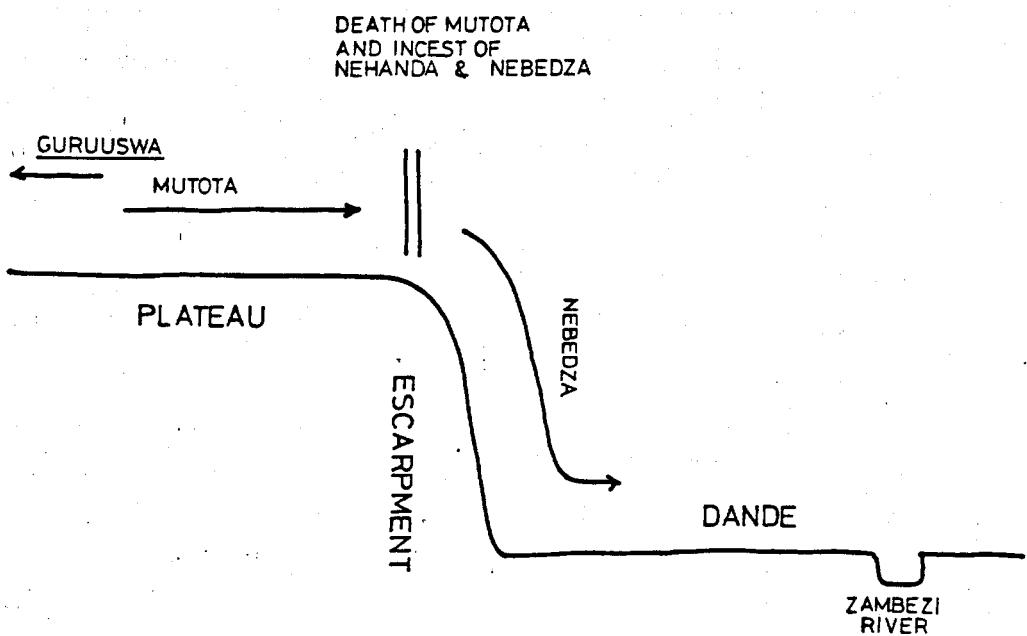


FIGURE 1 THE JOURNEY FROM GURUUSWA TO DANDE 1

Before he died he told his sons that if they wished to enter the Valley one of them would have to have sex with their sister Nehanda. All the brothers refused to perform this forbidden act. Only Nebedza, the youngest, agreed. When this was accomplished, Nebedza inherited his father's position as head of the lineage and all the sons climbed down the Escarpment and made their homes in Mbire, now called Dande.' (See Figure 1)

This myth appears in many studies that have been made of the history of the Zambezi Valley. The first analysis of it in modern historiography is that of D.P. Abraham in his essay 'The Monomotapa Dynasty' (Abraham 1959). He discusses a version of this story told him by the medium of Mutota, George Kupara. Abraham considers the myth to be an accurate if condensed summary of specific events which actually occurred at specific dates which he has calculated. He presents Mutota as an actual person who left the 15th century Karanga state centred on Great Zimbabwe 250 miles south of the Zambezi Escarpment. When Mutota arrived in the north he founded the Mutapa state (see page 50) of which he was the first ruler, Nebedza the second and so on. Correlations are made with Portuguese records to support the historical accuracy of this account.

The analysis of the myth that follows will show that Abraham has misjudged the nature of the meanings that the myth contains and that his interpretation is unjustified in conception and in detail. Abraham's methods have been roundly criticised by Beach (1976 and 1980, Chapter 4) and Henige (1974:54) but his work has had enormous influence. (See Part Three for an account of the significance of Abraham's writings in the war against the guerillas.) No recent account of the history of the Zambezi Valley fails to include a reference to the coming of Mutota. The migration of the Korekore from Great Zimbabwe (or thereabouts) to the north at some time in the 15th century

is firmly established in Zimbabwean historiography. Some writers make concessions to the 'probable' mythological nature of these events (Bourdillon 1982:10 though see 1971:1) but most treat Mutota as a substantiated historical character.

Nyatsimba Mutota of the Mbire line launched before the middle of the 15th century a campaign of conquest to carve out a vast empire. Mutota marched at the head of a formidable army of Karanga warriors... (Henriksen 1978:7).

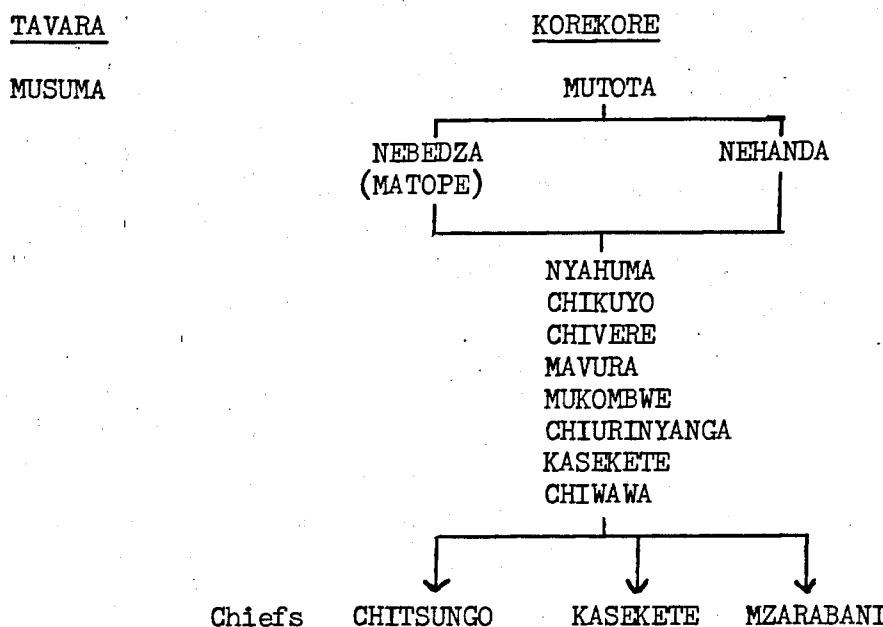
In life Nyanhewe was the most important son of Mutota, the original mwene mutapa (Lancaster 1981:18).

Mutota remained in the north and, according to this tradition, was given the praise name Mwene Mutapa, ruler of Mutapa. He made his capital on the slopes of Chitako hill, (Sibanda, Moyana and Gumbo 1982:56).

All these accounts derive directly or indirectly from Abraham. (See also Alpers 1968:9 where Mutota's psychological motivation for launching his campaign is discussed and also Mutunhu 1977 which is the most detailed reconstruction of the journey from Guruuswa of all.)

Beach has compared a number of Mutota-related narratives and argues that what these myths describe as a single migration from the south to the north was, in fact, a series of migrations lasting two or three hundred years, some culminating in the Zambezi Valley, many not (Beach 1980:60f). However the meaning of the story of Mutota as it is told in Dande can only be revealed if it is compared not with similar Mutota stories told by other peoples in other parts of the Valley and Plateau, but with other myths told by the Korekore in Dande which describe their history in rather different terms.

The Mutota story contains not one but two accounts of the coming to Dande of the ancestors of the Korekore. Firstly there is the story of Mutota, heading for Dande but failing to arrive there, secondly there is the story of the entry of his children into the Valley. I will treat the two sections of the story separately, dealing with each significant element as it appears in the narrative. Figure 1 contains the key elements of the narrative.

GENEALOGY 2THE ANCESTORS OF THE KOREKORE AND TAVARA IN DANDEThe failed journey of Mutota

a) Guruuswa - the home of Mutota before the journey.

A large number of Shona groups in the northern parts of Zimbabwe name Guruuswa as their original home. But not all of these groups agree about where Guruuswa is.

...the dynasties that claim to have come from such a place locate very different areas as their point of origin. In the lands between the lower Ruya and Mazoe Rivers, 'Guruuswa' is said to lie in the west; in the upper Ruya Valley, the upper Dande Valley, the Dande and western Chidima, it is thought of as being in the south and the people of the Mafungabusi Plateau and the Umfuli-Umniati confluence area place it in the east (Beach 1980:62).

Guruuswa means literally 'long grass'. In order to explain the variety of directions in which Guruuswa is said to lie, Beach has made the attractive suggestion that the term is used by people living in highly afforested or scrub lands to refer to their 'original home' on open plains or grass lands.

Explanations given to me in Dande follow rather different lines.

Guruuswa, I was told, cannot be located geographically for it is not a place in the sense that a village or a nyika, a country, is a place. Guruuswa is where everything comes from not only ancestors but all men, all animals, even all plants. It was also suggested that the 'long grass' is not real grass, but the hair that grows in the pubic region of the human female.

One simple observation brings all these interpretations together. On map 4 are marked the homes of the Guruuswa traditions mentioned by Beach. All lie within the inverted bow shape of the Zambezi River and all these communities live on tributaries of the Zambezi River on which (traditionally and, in some cases, still today) they are dependent for water. In each case the source of these rivers lies in the direction in which these communities say Guruuswa is to be found. The myths seem to say that the first man (the origin of social life) and the waters of the river (the basis of biological life) both travel towards the present home of the community from the source of the river where water rises out of the earth in a patch of long grass.

There is one further piece of information about Guruuswa that the myth contains: who was living there. In no version of the myth is any reference made to a wife of Mutota or to any other affine. The people at Guruuswa and those who make the journey to Dande are agnates - Mutota's sons, his daughter and his brother, twin or friend Chingoo. The notion of twinship or of brotherhood emphasises the consanguinity that binds the other characters. In narrative terms it provides companionship without introducing affinity.

Guruuswa, then, is the source of social and biological life, a source of fertility within the lineage of the protagonist, Mutota. This implies the notion of motherhood which is consistent with the interpretation of Guruuswa as a vagina.

b) Nyakatonje - who brought the salt from Dande to Guruuswa.

Nyakatonje appears in the myth as the name of an individual but, unlike all the other characters, he is not an ancestor and therefore not a mhondoro. The word may be translated to mean 'acolyte, or interpreter, of spirit medium (Hannan 1974). The word for spirit medium's assistant amongst the eastern Korekore is mutonje (Bourdillon 1971:202n). In many versions of the myth, Nyakatonje is described as a muranda (servant) or

munyai (royal messenger - see page 134) both of which are synonyms for mutapi, the word used for an assistant to a spirit medium in Dande. This association of the salt-bringer and guide with a religious functionary is not arbitrary. It is found in earlier versions of the myth such as the account contained in Pacheco's mid-19th century description of the Zambezi Valley (Pacheco 1883). Here the Nyakatonje figure is called Netondo. According to Randles, the netondo was 'one of the three religious specialists at the court of the Monomotapa' (Randles 1981:18).

If Nyakatonje is a mutapi, it would seem that at one level the myth refers to the possession of mediums by mhondoro spirits. Nyakatonje the mutapi goes back (upstream) to where the source of life is found to fetch the great spirit, the senior mhondoro, to the people of Dande. This is quite a different sort of interpretation to the one suggested in the previous paragraph, but these two interpretations, and a third suggested in the next paragraph, are all compatible, inter-related and inter-dependent.

c) The salt

In one version of the myth, the salt brought to Mutota is described as 'salty burnt ash', in other words, not salt from a salt pan but extracted by the burning of cow dung or certain leaves. In most versions, however, the salt from the earth brought by Nyakatonje is contrasted with the dung-salt that Mutota had been using and it is the attractiveness of mined salt (munyu wepasi, salt of the earth) that persuades Mutota to leave Guruuswa.

The trade in salt from the Valley to the Plateau in exchange for gold and ivory was one of the main forms of commerce in Dande since the 16th century (Beach 1977:47; Randles 1981:18). Randles suggests that the motivation for Mutota's journey may have been 'an effort to take for himself the role of the Batonga in the commercial exchange of salt and cloth from the Zambezi

Valley for the gold and ivory of the Plateau' (Randles 1981:18) an interpretation similar in style to that of Abraham and equally untenable as it stands. Nonetheless, the two journeys recounted in the story correspond in direction to the trade routes. This third level of interpretation gains significance from the fact that the clan of the people who travel towards the valley (downstream) in the same direction as the gold and ivory is Elephant, Owners of the Tusks (Nzou Samanyanga).

But there is more to be said about salt. It is characteristic of Zambezi Valley societies that meat offered to the ancestors in rituals is unsalted. This is true of the Korekore and also of the Tonga (Weinrich 1977:43; Colson 1977:126) whose basangu ancestors are very similar to and interrelate with the mhondoro of the Korekore. That Nyakatonje adds salt to the meat Mutota eats and that this most senior ancestor desires salt enough to travel to Dande to find it would seem to be a paradox. Why should spirits desire salt?

I will answer this question later. The following two points are worth making now. Salt is categorised as 'hot' whereas the ancestors are 'cool', like the rain that they bring. Other 'hot' things are sex, sickness and death. During the burial ceremony, water is poured over the grave to 'cool down' the dead person so that she or he can become an ancestor. The word kupona means both to recover from a sickness and to cool. So 'hot' salt is taken by Nyakatonje to the 'cool' mhondoro. Secondly, there are very few or no cattle in Dande because of the tsetse-fly whereas cattle are abundant on the Plateau. The very close association between ancestors and cattle has been noted by numerous writers for many southern African societies including the Shona (Kuper 1982:15; Bourdillon 1982:222). This is a minor point and it is not made explicit in the myth, but it is likely that the meat eaten by Mutota and salted by Nyakatonje is the flesh of a cow, the beast of the ancestors. The significance of both these points will become clear in a few pages' time.

To summarise so far:

The myth of Mutota's journey from Guruuswa has meaning as accounts of:

- i) the origin of all life as a) the source of the river on which the people depend for their water supply;
- b) maternal fertility;
- ii) the ritual of spirit possession;
- iiia) the trade of salt for ivory between the Valley and the Plateau;
- b) the ritual offerings of unsalted meat to the ancestors.
- d) Mbire - the pre-Mutota name for Dande

The only point it is necessary to make here is that, when the story starts, Mbire is already established as a defined and populated territory. In Chapter VII I discuss Mutota's fear of seeing the Zambezi River in relation to the ritual restriction on chiefs and mediums crossing from their own territory or province into that of another without taking certain ritual precautions. Some versions stress that Mutota should not see the Zambezi River, others that he should not see the Mbire country. Both amount to the same as, on a clear day, the Zambezi is visible from the edge of the Escarpment. (One section of the Escarpment is called Rukovakuona, 'riverview'.) The significant point is that the boundary which Mutota is unable to cross is the Escarpment itself.

e) Mutota's magic

Quite what this magic is, is never made clear. In some versions Mutota says that he wants kuita mapipi, to do magic. In others he needs to prepare his body before he can begin his magic. Why does he need to do magic at all? Firstly, because he is intending to cross from one territory into another. But more important for the moment is the comment contained in one version of the myth that Mutota needs to do his magic in order to conquer the people in the Valley. A number of other myths describe how 'conquerors' use trickery to turn the tables on

their autochthonous adversaries. The four myths that follow (two from Dande, two from Korekore chieftaincies on the Plateau) concern conquerors of this kind.

MYTH II

'Chimombe travelled from the north bank of the Zambezi to the south and made his home in a place from which Nyamapfeka's people had been accustomed to take salt. Nyamapfeka set out to win back this land but a fog came up and Nyamapfeka's people were unable to find their enemies. They devised a new strategy. They sent Semwa, daughter of Nyamapfeka to seduce Chimombe. She was successful and he married her. One night after Chimombe had fallen asleep, Semwa cut his throat. Where the blood fell a river formed. Semwa returned to her father who became owner of the salt pans.'

It is near the river formed from Chimombe's blood, the Chiore, that the 'iron god' which represents Chimombe today was found. Chimombe cannot speak to his followers directly but has the medium of the mhondoro Mbaiwa, a descendant of Nyamapfeka, to interpret for him. (Chimombe is said to be the chief of the VaSoli; note that he travels from north to south, the direction of the rivers flowing into the north bank of the Zambezi from where the Soli people are said to come. Despite that Nyamapfeka is said to have taken salt from Chimombe's home before Chimombe's arrival, Chimombe is in all respects treated and referred to as an autochthon. Nyamapfeka is the senior mhondoro of the Korekore Chisunga chieftaincy of the Elephant clan. This myth was recorded in the Chisunga chieftaincy; another version is found in White 1971:42.)

MYTH III

'Musuma lived in Dande. His daughter was married to Nyahuma, a descendant of Mutota. One day while Musuma was thatching his hut, perched up on the roof beams, Nyahuma hid a red cloth beneath one of the bales of thatching grass. When Musuma lifted

this bale he saw the red cloth which he is forbidden to do and he died. Before he died he said: as I am on the roof of the house, my home will be in the heavens, whereas you who are on the ground will own the land. That is why Musuma is the bringer of rain.'

(Musuma is the mhondoro of the Tavara people, a 'son' of the major Tavara mhondoro Dzivaguru. Nyahuma is a descendant of Mutota. See genealogy on page 150. Myth recorded in Chitsungo chieftaincy.)

MYTH IV

'When Chingoo parted from Mutota, he entered the country of Guruve. He found Nyamazunzu living there, 'a great warrior and a man of miracles'. As he could not defeat him in battle, Chingoo offered him Peduru, the daughter of his descendant Dumbu. He said 'Take my daughter to be your wife. Let us be friends and stop fighting. You are my mukuwasha (son-in-law).' After beer had been drunk at Dumbu's village they travelled to Nyamazunzu's home where more beer was drunk. When Nyamazunzu was asleep Peduru cut off his head and beat the ceremonial drum announcing victory. Chingoo entered the village and killed all of Nyamazunzu's people. That is how the country of Guruve was won.'

(Nyamazunzu is a common name for an autochthon, but there appear to be no traceable links between this ancestor and any group of people in Guruve today. Chingoo is the senior mhondoro of the Korekore Chipuriro chieftaincy on the Plateau who are members of the Monkey clan (Soko Wafawanaka). Myth recorded in Kaschula 1965a:16.)

MYTH V

'Chambavanhu came from Guruuswa and settled in Damba on the Plateau. Nyamakwere, a four-eyed man, was already there. Chambavanhu could not easily defeat him as Nyamakwere's arrows were guided by the wind, he was able to raise mists to hide his

people and he could disguise himself by turning into an anthill. Chambavanhu tied a black cloth round the eyes of Nyamakwere during the night. He died and his body was thrown into a pool where he turned into a crocodile.'

A different version, told by the people who claim descent from a mhondoro called Chigamauro who 'lived in Damba before Chambavanhu', relates that:

'Chigamauro climbed a mountain of rocks where Nyamakwere the four-eyed man was living and said: 'We've come to fight' and Nyamakwere said: 'Why have you come to fight when I have married your daughter?'. They both took up a bow and arrow and shot at each other. Nyamakwere's wife tied a piece of black cloth round his neck and strangled him. Chigamauro also died of his wound.'

(Nyamakwere is another undefined autochthon. Chambavanhu and Chigamauro are ancestors of different branches of the Korekore Beputa chieftaincy of the Pwere clan. Versions of this myth are recorded in Kaschula 1965b:85 and 92.)

A comparison of these four myths with the Mutota story will form the basis of my analysis of them all. For the moment, notice that the 'trick' played by Nyahuma differs in type from that of Chingoo, Chambavanhu and Nyamapfeka. The last three send female agnates to seduce and kill the autochthon; Nyahuma kills 'his' autochthon by exposing him to the colour red which causes his death. However, whatever sort of magic Mutota would have done if he had been warned in time, the point of his story is that he does none. Unlike the heroes of the other four myths, Mutota fails to conquer the autochthons and take control of their territory. His quest for the country of the salt ends in his defeat, though not the defeat of his lineage.

f) Mutota's death and burial

In one version Mutota, having failed to perform his magic, is sent to guard the point where the Manyami River pours off the Escarpment (Kaschula 1965b:128); in another he is said to

live in a place where he takes water from the Nyarutombo stream (Kaschula 1965a:14). Although these versions may be said to associate Mutota with water, he is never said to enter it or become it or control it as Nyamakwere or Chimombe or Musuma do. At his death Mutota is burried inside a rock in the earth. In one version (Garbett 1977:66) it is said that Mutota cannot be buried until his son and daughter have committed incest. In Pacheco's account of the rituals of succession to chieftaincy in Dande the son of the defeated (and therefore dead) claimant must retire to a place of exile where eight baobab trees (mouio tussero) grow together (Pacheco 1863:27). This is precisely how the famous site of Mutota's burial is described. In non-Portuguese Shona it is tuuyu tusere.

The crime of Nehanda and Nebedza

Nehanda and Nebedza are complex figures around whom a variety of traditions have accumulated. They appear in a number of different forms with different names appended to explain their varied incarnations. For the moment I deal with them only as daughter and son of Mutota.

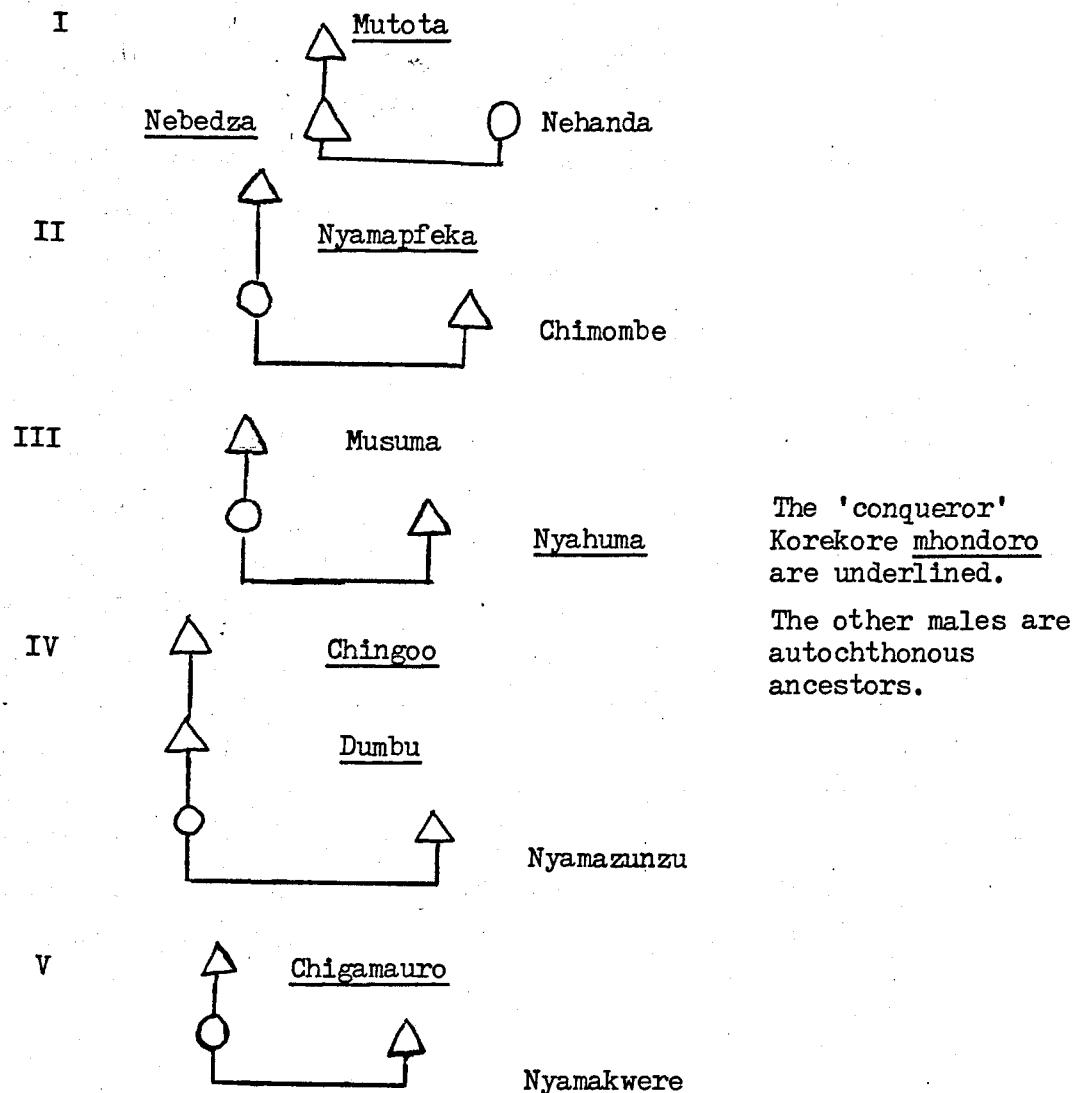
a) Nebedza as son

Nebedza is the youngest of the sons of Mutota. In Dande it is said that 'traditionally' the estate of the father (his property, his position, the wives and his titles) was inherited by his youngest son. The reason given is that as land was plentiful, older sons would move away from their father's homes at marriage, settling either uxorilocally or neolocally, leaving the youngest to care for the father's lands when he became too infirm to do so. This information is given in Dande specifically to explain why Nebedza, rather than any of his brothers, became 'chief' after Mutota.

b) Nehanda as daughter

The following diagram shows all the daughters in the five myths and who they married:

Diagram 4



In myths II, IV and V the Korekore daughter marries the autochthon and causes his death. In II the autochthon's daughter marries a Korekore who causes her father's death. But in the Mutota story the Korekore daughter commits incest with her own Korekore brother. This is the second point which, together with Mutota's failure as a conqueror, distinguishes his history from the others. In general usage, to commit incest is referred to as *kuita makunakuna*. In

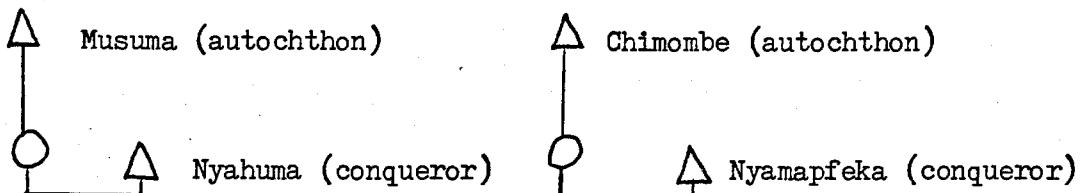
telling this story incest is referred to as kupinga pasi, literally 'to protect the earth'. The phrase is used in a number of other contexts, for instance, the placing of protective medicines around a new home or the erection of military fortifications. The use of this phrase draws a distinction between ordinary incest which pollutes the earth and causes drought and royal incest (or incest between ancestors of the royal lineage) which protects the earth. The myth does not make explicit what danger the earth is being protected from. That the ritual protection is incest, as well as the contrast between this marital couple and the others, suggests that it may have something to do with affinity.

In Myths II to IV, the relative status of conquerors and conquered is expressed by the exchange of women. The meaning of the direction in which women travel is most clearly expressed in Myth III. Here the conqueror (Nyahuma) takes the autochthon's daughter, then kills her father and gains his territory. The conqueror gets the woman. In the other narratives the women travel in the opposite direction, but all these marriages are subterfuge. By giving their women, the ultimate conquerors, the Korekore, pretend to capitulate to the superior force (or magic) of the autochthon. But when they have defeated the autochthons by the deceit of their daughters, they take back their women. This is explicitly stated in Myth II. When he has brought about the death of his temporary son-in-law Chimombe, Nyamapfeka takes back his daughter. It is in the logic of the myths that the heroes will now find their wives among the daughters of the autochthons. The flow of women is reversed and the principle demonstrated in Myth II (winners get women) is enforced.

The message these stories contain becomes clear when it is realised that they are told by the (eventual) conquerors, the Korekore, and that all the conquerors are, by the time they tell these stories, sons-in-law. The subterfuge is only

exciting as a narrative device because it seems to contradict the outcome anticipated by the listeners, that their ancestors will win. When the autochthon Nyamakwere is attacked by his Korekore father-in-law, he says in astonishment: 'Why have you come to fight when I have married your daughter?'. For the Korekore listeners this is the moment when the tables are turned and the outcome is assured. Within the structure of the myth the establishment of a stable relationship based on political dominance is expressed by the right of the powerful to the women of the weak.

The final kin relations contained in the two Dande myths (II and III) look like this:

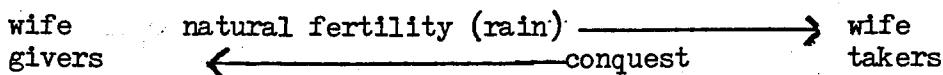


The customary pattern of exchange that occurs at marriage is that the wife's father's lineage supplies biological fertility to the husband's lineage with which it can reproduce itself and is compensated with a payment of money or labour (see page 67).

wife givers biological fertility $\xrightarrow{\hspace{2cm}}$ wife takers
 $\xleftarrow{\hspace{2cm}}$ marriage payment/labour

But this is not the exchange that is discussed in the myth, and it is for this reason that the myths do not actually include the information that the conquered autochthons give their daughters to the conquerors, although this is logically implied. The explicit outcome of the defeat and death of the autochthon is the availability of water (Musuma goes into the heavens and becomes rain (Myth III), Chimombe becomes a river (Myth II)). The exchange which the myths describe concerns not human or biological fertility, but natural fertility, rain or water (in Shona both are expressed by the same word mvura). The exchange that the myths describe

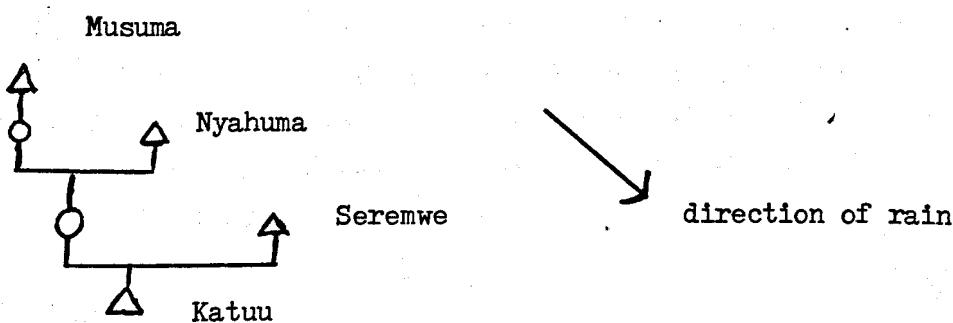
is that the wife's father's lineage supplies natural fertility with which the husband's lineage can reproduce itself. In other words it is the wife's father who supplies rain.⁴



The linking of an autochthonous with a conquering lineage by marriage results, in both cases, in the flowing of blood: symbolically expressed by the red cloth in Myth III and explicitly in the blood from Chimombe's severed head in Myth II. In both cases the blood leads directly to the availability of water. In Myth III, Nyahuma and Musuma's daughter are married before the red cloth is shown. Blood does not flow because of conquest. It is marriage that causes the blood to flow, which brings the water. Conquest determines only who marries who, the direction in which the fertility flows. Affinity is in itself the source of rain.

Another example of how the relationships between the mhondoro of different lineages are expressed is that between the mhondoro Seremwe and Katuu on the one hand and Nyahuma on the other. Seremwe and Katuu are father and son (see genealogy 1 on page 86) and members of the Eland clan (Shava Mufokose). There is no chiefly lineage in Dande that recognises them as ancestors. The only link they have to any other mhondoro is with Nyahuma whose (unnamed) daughter Seremwe is said to have married. Although there are other mhondoro such as Chikuyo and Tombwe, who are geographically closer to them, Seremwe and Katuu refer requests made to them for rain to Nyahuma. Once again it is wife's father who brings the rain. (See diagram 5.)

Diagram 5



This relationship is explicitly recognised by the mediums who operate the system. The terminology the medium of the autochthon Musuma uses to describe all the mhondoro he supplies with rain is affinal: 'I have many, many sons-in-law' he says, listing Nyahuma, Nyajore, Chikuyo and all the other Korekore ancestors; the medium of the Korekore mhondoro Chivere describes himself and Mutota as sons-in-law of Musuma and so on.

The term for father-in-law is tezvara which, in local etymology, derives from the verb kuzvara, which is translated as 'to give birth'. The use of this word for father-in-law is justified, again in local etymology, on the grounds that it is a father-in-law who allows the perpetuation of a lineage by providing a wife. Wife's fathers (or wife's father's lineages) are life-givers.

Although other kin terms are available, the term tezvara can be used for any male member of the wife's lineage (the females are mezvara or vamwene). The 'rain-givers' are thought to be the wife's lineage as a whole. An incident from my field work illustrates this. While one version of Myth III was being told me, an argument broke out about whether it was Musuma's daughter or his sister that Nyahuma had married. Those who argued for sister eventually fell in with those who backed the daughter, but that Nyahuma and Musuma might have been brothers-in-law was considered a possibility, even though it was rejected. These two versions of the myth make no difference to its essential point, that the wife's lineage provides the rain. And it is, perhaps, this view of the marriage exchange contained in the myths (rain exchanged for marriage payment or labour) which accounts for one of the prohibitions that occur during the month of mbudzi (November). Mbudzi is the month of the mhondoro, when they perform the rituals necessary to ensure that the rains will fall in December. During mbudzi no marriage payments may be made. It is as if sons-in-law withhold their part of the exchange until fathers-in-law keep their side of the bargain and supply the rain.

To summarise this section of the argument: Myths II to V describe how the conquering Korekore gained control of the territories they live in and of their fertility. They gained the territory by defeating its original owners, the autochthons; they gained its fertility by marrying the autochthons' daughters.

To return to the myth of Mutota (Myth I). The difference between Myths II to V and the Mutota narrative is that Mutota neither gives nor takes a daughter. His son Nebedza need not kill an autochthon nor need he give nor take a wife to gain control of Dande. All the terms are reversed. His own father dies and he has intercourse with his own sister.

Rain comes from wife's father say Myths II to V, but if men marry their own sisters then own father is wife's father.

The Mutota lineage is complete in itself and can supply itself with its own fertility, biological and natural. The lineage of Mutota need neither conquer nor marry strangers nor perform tricks or subterfuge to win the ownership of Dande. It belongs to them by right. The meaning of the myth of Mutota, revealed when it is compared with the other myths, is that the Mutota lineage has no need of affines. They can bring their own rain.

Mothers and wives

The claim to be able to control rain is, in reality, a claim to the control of territory. The claim that the Mutota myth makes is that he and his lineage are autochthons. But they are unconquered autochthons who have no need of affines. The explicitly political aspect of this myth has begun to emerge.

In the discussion of Guruuswa, I mentioned a source of fertility within the lineage which does not depend on incest, the fertility of the mother. To bring all these sources of fertility together - affinal, incestual, maternal - requires an analysis of an aspect of certain mhondoro not yet dealt with. This is that some mhondoro are regarded as women or as having a female aspect. These are Nehanda, Chigua, Musuma and Chimombe.

These four mhondoro can be divided into two groups of two. In the first group are Nehanda and Chigua, the daughters of the Korekore ancestors Mutota and Nyamapfeka respectively. These mhondoro are female and the mediums whom they possess are always female. There are other female mediums in Dande but these are possessed by male mhondoro. (In Myth II Nyamapfeka's daughter is called Semwa. His daughter, who possesses a medium in Dande today, is called Chigua. According to my informants, Semwa is another name for Chigua. I suspect that historically the matter is more complex, but for the sake of this analysis I treat the two daughters as one.)

Musuma and Chimombe are quite different. Nyamapfeka regards Chimombe as his 'wife'. The medium of Nyamapfeka says that Chimombe is a woman using the words mukaranga and mukadzi (ritual wife and wife/woman), despite that in the myth he is characterised as a man (he is seduced by Semwa etc). The idea that there is a female aspect to Chimombe is shared by non-specialists as well as this quotation from an interview conducted in Nyamapfeka's spirit province shows:

Q: Are Nyamapfeka and Chimombe related to each other?

A: Yes. Chimombe is a mukaranga. If Nyamapfeka wants the rain to fall nicely or if you plant a small field, if you can't get the food you need from that field, in the bush there is the fruit and the other things that you find, Nyamapfeka begs them from that woman, because that woman has the power. That is the one who makes the rain fall very heavily.

According to the medium of Musuma, his mhondoro also has a female aspect. He refers to Musuma as a woman in some contexts as do other mediums and non-specialists as well.⁵

This list of various characteristics of two mhondoro is extracted from the description of the powers of the mhondoro in Chapter III. From the point of view of the Korekore, Musuma is contrasted with Chiwawa (see genealogy, page 150). In Chapter VII I explain why Chiwawa has these characteristics. For the moment all I am

concerned with is how the symbolism attached to him clarifies the conceptualization of the different lineages of mhondoro.

MUSUMA	CHIWAWA
Most distant	Most recent
'female'	male
affine	descendant/agnate
cures sexual problems	doesn't cure
brings the rain	warrior
protects crops	doesn't protect crops

With regard to the 'most distant' and 'female' elements of this table: firstly, two terms used in discussing the earliest moments in the history of the lineage are Guruuswa (where they came from) and musikarudzi, meaning literally 'creator' (kusika = to create) 'of the type, species, clan' (rudzi = clan). I have already referred to the interpretation of Guruuswa as 'vagina'.

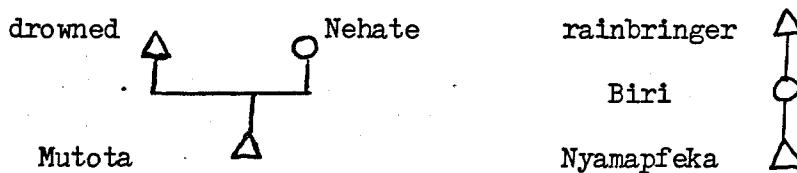
Musikarudzi is commonly used to refer to apical ancestors like Mutota or Nyamapfeka but it is closely related to sikarudzi which is a 'polite expression' for vagina (Hannan 1974).

Secondly, all recitations of the genealogy of the Korekore royal ancestors begin with Mutota as musikarudzi. But if informants are pressed, some will reveal as an item of the most arcane knowledge, the name of Mutota's mother. She is called Nehate. Further than that they cannot go. The name of his father and his mother's father are unknown. The mhondoro, as they put it, never told them. However, on one occasion at which I was present, the medium of Musuma, speaking in trace, described how at the time of the beginning of the world, Mutota's father had not died as other men but had drowned in a huge lake which had existed where the mountain top on which we sat as the mhondoro spoke now stands.

The history of the musikarudzi Nyamapfeka reveals a strikingly similar picture. His birth was magical. He remained in his mother's womb for three years. When he emerged he was dressed in skins, carried a bow and arrow and immediately took his place as chief of his people. His mother is Biri, a name that occurs

in more than one genealogy as a remote female ancestor. The name of Nyamapfeka's father is not known and his magic birth suggests that he has none. However, in certain contexts the Nyamapfeka lineage is linked to the Mutota lineage as a junior branch. Then it is said that the father of Biri is Nyajore, a son of Mutota, who is regarded by Nyamapfeka as one of the three great rain makers in the area (see genealogy on page 86). The structure at the very top, almost unknowable edge of these two Korekore genealogies contains a female element and then the idea of water or rain. See diagram 6.

Diagram 6



Taking these ideas and sets of associations together produces a new table:

female	male
rain/water	war
past	present

The left-hand table is consistent with the symbolism of Guruuswa and may be spelt out as follows: 'In the most distant past is the source of water, which is the source of life, which emanates from the vagina, the sikarudzi, the creator of the clan and the first ancestors'.

This points to one further distinction: although this is not the case in the Nyamapfeka/Chimombe relationship, in that between Mutota (or Nyahuma) and Musuma, a clear distinction is made between river water and rainwater. The fertility that comes from affines comes in the form of rain. The fertility of one's own lineage comes in the form of a river or a pool.

wives	mothers
rain	rivers and pools

We return once again to the fundamental duality. Affinal lineages supply water in the form of rain and their representatives, such as Chimombe and Musuma, are regarded as wives by the Korekore. This is an everyday sort of fertility which comes, as it were, out of nowhere, is hard to control and will start and stop as it pleases unless certain measure are taken to control it. But mothers are also a source of fertility, of primordial fertility which always runs in the same beds and on which one can rely when affinal fertility, rain, has let one down. Ultimately, of course, rivers depend on rain but no-one would deny that, in the far distant past, one's mother was someone else's affine.⁶

Because they belong to the far distant past it would seem as if Musuma and Chimombe should be categorised as 'mothers' as well as 'wives' but they are old in the history of the land whereas the maternal sources of water are old in the history of the lineage. Despite their seniority they are categorised as affines, a source of fertility outside the lineage. Nehanda and Chigua, on the other hand, are characterised as daughters. Like mothers these are sources of fertility within the lineage. Although they do not stand as ultimate heads of their lineage, they are very commonly thought of as if they did. Both are known as 'grandmother'. It is as Ambuya Nehanda (grandmother Nehanda) that this mhondoro is celebrated throughout Zimbabwe and Chigua is addressed as Ambuya Chigua by her less widespread followers as well.

II RITUAL

Black and White

In the mythology of the Valley Korekore, the rain-bringing powers of affines may be affirmed or denied. But in their ritual practice, all mhondoro are a source of fertility. In this context it is the ritual of the mhondoro mediums that bring the rain.

The major rituals of the annual cycle (huruva or mbudzirume, the offerings for rain and kutsiga mbeu, the protecting of seed) take place between October and November. The precise date is determined by the phases of the moon. The same is true of other rituals involving possession, such as the testing of aspirant mediums, for the mhondoro are only able to possess their mediums when the moon is visible in the sky. The most important rituals take place only at full moon. Although experts deny that a full moon is absolutely necessary, during the time that I lived in Dande, all important rituals were held at full moon as were many low level midzimu possessions as well. None were held when there was no moon at all. Rituals at which possession does not occur (e.g. kutamba guva) may be held at any convenient time.

The phases of the moon regulate another sphere of activity as well - day-to-day agricultural work. In the weekly and monthly cycles, certain rest days known as zvisi (s. chisi) are observed. The widest definition of chisi is a day on which no work is allowed because someone has died. Burial usually takes place on the day following death or on the same day if the death has occurred at night. On this day all villagers should gather at the home of the dead person and assist with the work of the burial. Even when the rituals have been completed, no work may be done. The work which is forbidden is agricultural work and hunting. The domestic work of cooking, water and fuel fetching and so on may continue as usual.

In the weekly cycle, two chisi days are observed. These vary from area to area. In general they are associated with the death of a mhondoro or of a medium. At Mushumbi, for example, the zvisi are Monday and Friday, the first of these because, it is said, Musuma died on that day. This refers in fact to the death of a previous medium of Musuma but the statement as it is made transfers the experience of the medium on to the characterisation of the mhondoro, a common practice which I have referred to

before (see Chapter III, page 92). Friday is chisi throughout Dande. It appears that this was imposed by the last medium of Mutota. In the Mauhwe area the second chisi is Sunday. Some people argue that this has been adapted from the practice of the local Catholic church. But the church has no power to impose sanctions against those who choose to work on Sundays, whereas the mhondoro have. Despite the frequently expressed uncertainty about which the 'correct' zvisi days are, it is believed that people who work when they should be resting will be struck by lightning sent by the mhondoro.

There are two rest days in the monthly cycle, chiropo and rusere. Chiropo is the day following the non-appearance of the moon in the sky. When this happens it is said that the moon is dead (mwedzi yafa). Chiropo is the chisi following the death of the moon. Rusere is the second day following chiropo and is indicated by the reappearance of the moon. The name means simply 'eighth' and it is possible that it derives from one of the rest days observed in the calendar of the Mwene Mutapa state (Randles 1981:50). Not everyone observes rusere. Pressure of work in the fields may cause some to treat it as an ordinary work day. Chiropo, the death of the moon, is universally observed.

Some people interpret the work prohibitions to refer only to work on their own fields. They use the zvisi as an opportunity to earn money by working on the large fields of the few farmers who employ wage labour. It is also said that cooperative work parties may be held on these days. In general, working for others for money is not forbidden. It is in these terms that people explain how their relatives who live in the towns escape punishment for working on rest days. However, unusually frequent thunderstorms and too heavy rains may be blamed on people's unwillingness to treat zvisi seriously. In this strict interpretation only women's work should be permitted. The typical activity on chisi is to gather at a house in the village and drink beer. This may be beer brewed for sale or people may choose a chisi to offer beer to their ancestors in which case the beer will be free.

Drawing these practices together, it would seem that the absence or 'death' of the moon causes a prohibition on male work, which includes the possession by mhondoro of their mediums. This may be expressed as:

no moon = no mhondoro = no male work = death

The obvious question is, if each term in this equation is reversed:

moon = mhondoro speak = male work = life

does this new equation have something meaningful to say about the experience of possession rituals? The answer can be found by elaborating the symbolism contained in the equations.

When there is no moon in the sky, the night is said to be either usiku dema, meaning black or dark night, or usiku hwakasviba, meaning black, dark or dirty night. The idea of darkness is associated with:

1) rain - one way in which the mediums are believed to be able to bring rain is by hanging out black cloths;

Musuma, the most important rain spirit, completely covers his body and head in black cloth when he becomes possessed; the association is made between black clouds and rain in that the colour of the clouds indicates that rain will fall. That this is not a trivial association is suggested by the practice of the cattle-owning Plateau Korekore of identifying individual beasts by black patches on the cow's bodies said to represent rain clouds.

2) chiefs - the choice of a chief is indicated by the mhondoro medium placing a black cloth on the shoulders of the chosen man.

3) death - the colour of the cloth placed on the body of a dead chief is black.

As black/dark has all these associations, it is not surprising that it is the colour worn by mhondoro mediums and that the gift made to a mhondoro when requesting help is a length of black cloth. But that mediums are the only people permitted to

wear black suggests that in some sense they control black, that they have power over the referents of black: rain, chiefs and death.

The word for bright or white is chena (which also means 'clean' in opposition to kusviba, to be dirty, dark, black). Mwedzi yakachena means 'the moon is bright'. A common usage, pachena, means 'at dawn', literally 'at whiteness'. In direct contrast to black, white is associated with absence of rain. For example, at the kutsiga mbeu ceremony (described on page 75) which has nothing to do with rain, the medium appears totally enfolded in a large white cloth. A few days later, at the rain-making ceremony, he wears his customary black. The medium of the Korekore mhondoro Kaviko is reported to use white cloths to prevent the fall of rain, and so on.

All these ideas are brought together in the word kupenya which, used as a noun, means lightning, and as a verb means either 'to be bright', to flash as lightning does in the sky, or 'to be alive'. It is the root of the noun upenyu, the common word for 'life'. Munhu wakapenya means 'the person is alive'; mwedzi hwakapenya means 'the moon is shining brightly'. The essence of the idea of kupenya is the appearance of light surrounded by darkness, such as lightning or the moon. Modern means of creating light in darkness are not described as kupenya. The light of a torch or a motorcar are described as kushina, indicating the conceptual control exercised around the idea of kupenya.⁷

These ideas can be summarised as:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{death} &= \text{darkness} \\ \text{life} &= \text{brightness} \end{aligned}$$

The equations I suggested are therefore justified:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{no moon} &= \text{no } \underline{\text{mhondoro}} = \text{death} \\ \text{moon} &= \underline{\text{mhondoro}} = \text{life} \end{aligned}$$

But what sort of life is this that is associated with the mhondoro who are, after all, dead? It is not ordinary human life. It is the return to life of the mhondoro made possible by their possession of their mediums.

In addition to black cloth, another typical gift to mhondoro mediums is white cloth. This represents not human life, but the life attained by the dead through possession. Within the terms of the ritual of the mhondoro, black = white and life = death = life. This is most clearly expressed when a person attempts to achieve possession by an ancestor for the first time. A special cloth called a hungwe is placed on the head of the aspirant medium. It is made by stitching together two precisely equal lengths of cloth - one black, the other white. In the interlinking conceptions of how life is controlled and maintained, a certain circularity has begun to appear.

At the end of the analysis of knowledge in Chapter III, the view of human life that emerged was that it is a state of ignorance and powerlessness in comparison to the wisdom and power of the ancestors. Here, by means of a different set of symbols, life is conceived to be, like lightning, a dazzling flash in the night, a bright glimmer of whiteness in the dark. But it is not human life that flashes and gleams, it is the life the mhondoro achieve by their death.

Red

One of the most powerful taboos observed by the mhondoro mediums is the avoidance of ropa, blood (see page 79). Mediums believe that if they see blood when they are possessed they will die. For example, it is said that during the war the medium of the mhondoro Chingoo died when he saw the blood of a man who had been killed. No violence had been used against him but the sight of blood is enough to kill, or so the mediums say. Apart from the blood of a dead body or a killed animal, the other type of blood explicitly forbidden is that associated

with menstruation and childbirth. A mhondoro medium may not eat food cooked by a woman during the time of her menstruation or for some time after she has given birth - to be exact: until her child has cut its teeth.

A related set of restrictions concerns sexual intercourse. In the early, ambiguous, uncertain stages of their careers, when they have been possessed but not yet confirmed as a professional mediums, mhondoro mediums are not allowed to have sex. Or, rather, if they do they run the risk of frightening away their mhondoro. Common to both these sets of restrictions, avoidance of blood and avoidance of sex, is the desire to escape from the dangers of female sexuality. Sex and blood are combined in menstrual blood and this is the substance most rigorously avoided by the mediums. The abhorrence of all these forms of blood is typified by the mhondoro's fear of seeing red cloth, for example in Myth III the sight of red cloth is enough to cause the death of Musuma.⁸

The two 'crimes' thought to be particularly pollutant and abhorrent to the mhondoro are murder and incest. Both result in drought unless fines are paid to the mhondoro of the spirit province in which they took place. The pollutant power of murder is described as 'blood falling on the earth'.⁹ Blood is the metaphor of the other crime as well. Members of the same clan and of the same lineage are said to be 'of one blood'. Incest is having sex with and/or marrying your own blood.

One phrase describing incest is kudya mutupo which means literally 'to eat your clan animal'. This restriction is also thought to be a means of gaining control over the pollutant powers of blood. Some say that no part of the clan animal may be eaten but this is rare. The parts of the elephant which are in practice avoided by members of the Elephant clan are the heart and the liver. The association of the heart with blood needs no explanation. The word for

liver is chitaka but also chiropa, literally 'thing of blood'. It is avoidance of one's own blood, whether eating it, spilling it or having sex with it, that the clan sanctions insist on. But the penalty for eating one's clan animal is not drought. It is that one's teeth fall out. At first sight this punishment seems arbitrary but it contains a logic that will advance the argument one further step.

In discussion of the constituent elements of the human body men argue (and, as far as I could determine, women agree) that the female is simply a container within which the substance 'planted' by the man is grown. Significantly, the only substance that some people will agree may come from women is blood. In the creation of a child, it is as if the wife's lineage lends (almost rents out) the womb of a member of its lineage and a portion of her blood in which a member of another lineage may be conceived.¹⁰

Now a woman who has given birth remains dangerous to a mhondoro medium until her child has cut its teeth.¹¹ By direct inversion of the same ideas, a child is susceptible to the evil thoughts of witches until the opening on the top of its head, the fontanelle has closed. Certain medicines are rubbed into the scalp and protective charms worn until the bone has grown and the head is hard. Birth and the early stages of life are associated with blood and wetness ('fontanelle' in ChiKorekore is dziva which also means pool of water). The process of ageing is characterised as progressively increasing hardness and dryness. Holleman states this explicitly: 'A child becomes dry after it has started cutting teeth' (Holleman 1953:38). Burial customs make these conceptions clear. Very young children must be buried by the banks of a river in wet soil. If they are buried in dry soil this will cause a drought. Adults must be buried in dry soil. If they are buried in water this may cause their spirit to become a dangerous ngozi rather than a beneficent mudzimu. In the burial ceremonies

of chiefs the body is not buried immediately but laid out on a platform, either in a hut or in an unclosed grave, with pots placed so as to collect the bodily fluids (Bourdillon 1982:193). The body is left until only the skeleton remains (Randles 1981:63; Abraham 1962:14). The chief, the source of all political authority, must be thoroughly dried out, more than an ordinary person, before he is placed in the earth of his ancestors. (Note also that the word pfupa used as a verb means 'to placate the ancestors', used as a noun it means 'bones' (Hannan 1974).¹²

The young who are far from the ancestors and have no authority are wet, soft and bloody. Older people are more authoritative and closer to the ancestors. They are drier, harder and bonier.

birth	age
soft	hard
blood	bone
wet	dry

The avoidance by mhondoro mediums of women whose children have not yet cut their teeth, is an avoidance of the dangers of blood and of human reproduction. When the child has its teeth, it has been incorporated into the dry male world and the dangers to the mhondoro have passed. In relation to the mhondoro:

no teeth	=	danger of pollution by blood
teeth	=	no danger

To return to the consequences of eating the clan animal: when an adult eats her or his clan animal, they ingest their own blood and enter a state similar to that at which they were at birth, polluted by the blood of their mother, which is their own blood. They return to a state before the male characteristics of dryness and hardness have taken effect and, as a consequence, their teeth fall out. Or so the logic of the system of ideas leads people to expect. (I never heard anyone attributing the loss of their own teeth to the breaking of this taboo, though people do, jokingly, claim it is the cause of loss of teeth by others.)

But the avoidance by mhondoro mediums of people in the wet, soft condition (which includes menstruation and sexual productivity) is only one aspect of their avoidance of all the biological processes of human life. Apart from the blood of death mhondoro mediums may not see a dead body. They may not attend funerals. It is said of one medium that he may not even hear the sound of a rifle shot that kills an animal. The logic of all these avoidances taken together shows that biological life and biological death are outside the sphere for which the mhondoro have responsibility. Indeed, they must be avoided by the mediums on pain of their own deaths.

To return to the rest days governed by the phases of the moon: chiropa means liver, but it is also the name of the day following the death of the moon. The prefix 'chi - ' is used to indicate days: chishanu is the fifth day or Friday and so on. Chiropa is the day of blood (ropa = blood). The word mwedzi, moon, is also used for the menstrual cycle. To menstruate is kuenda kumwedzi, to go to the moon or kushamba, to wash the body, which suggests that menstrual blood is thought of as dirty. Therefore: on chiropa the moon is dead. The sky is black, dark, dirty. It is the day of blood when the earth may not be cut into with a hoe nor may any other men's work (such as hunting) be done. Only women's work in the house or the gathering of wild plants is allowed. On chiropa there are no mhondoro, no spirits, none of the mediums' 'white life in death', the life of the ancestors of the lineage. There is only biological life, the life of the menstrual blood of wives, that is to say the life made possible by affines. On chiropa, the ancestors of one's own lineage do no work. They are dead and the mediums cannot restore them to life, for chiropa is a day polluted by affinal blood.

Men, women and the moon

The mhondoro are the most important spirits in Dande society and the rituals at which they attain possession are amongst the most significant moments in the social life of the people. The relationship between men and women which is displayed during these rituals cannot but contain information about the way the relationship between the sexes is conceptualized.

The world of the mhondoro is dominated by men. Of all the mhondoro mediums who were practising between 1980 and 1982 only three were women. Except for Nehanda and Chigua, the daughters of the two most senior ancestors, all mhondoro are men. The mothers of these ancestors, though named, never take mediums and are not thought of as mhondoro.

At possession rituals, as at all public events, the important and individualised actions are performed by men and observed by a crowd of deindividualised women. The only participation of women in these rituals is as brewers of beer, as singers and as dancers but never individually, always as members of a group. When the mhondoro speaks the men surround the medium at the edge of his mat as they consult and banter with him. The women sit quietly in a group at a distance, looking on.

Women are excluded from participation in the ritual world of the mhondoro by their 'ignorance'. However often a woman's knowledge may be called on in private, the official line is that, as far as the mhondoro or the past is concerned, women know nothing at all.

For the Korekore there are two kinds of life. There is the biological blood-drenched life associated with women as affines, and there is the social and intellectual life-in-death of the mhondoro controlled by men. In the ritual of possession by mhondoro women sit, sing and observe. What they observe is men creating life through death. When the mhondoro possess their mediums, biological life is explicitly rejected. This occurs

symbolically by the abhorrence of the colour red and empirically by the exclusion of women from active participation in the rituals. Their presence at the rituals is, of course, obligatory. If they do not come the statement that they are excluded from the especially interesting and important parts of social life cannot be made.

I have argued that:

dark = rain, death, chiefs
bright = moon, life, mhondoro

Chiefs become mhondoro by passing from death into life. Of course, in reality, it is the chiefs who are alive and the mhondoro who are dead. But from the perspective of the perfect, permanent and unchanging life of the mhondoro, human life is indistinguishable from death.

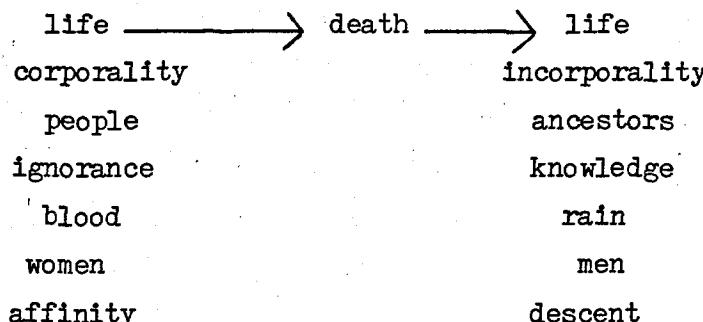
Of the two kinds of life, the first is associated with affinity, the second with descent; the first is symbolised by blood, the second by rain. By the claim that they control the rain, the mhondoro who are the ancestors of the lineage, claim that all significant fertility is in their gift and that all other kinds are not worth having. This claim is a weapon in the battle for political authority fought by men against women, a battle elaborated variously into a battle of cognates against affines and of ancestors against the living.

Of all substances, blood is the most dangerous to the mhondoro. If it falls on the ground it causes drought. This can be expressed as:

blood ≠ rain

Women, in their role as wives, are said to provide biological fertility which is symbolised by blood. Men, as husbands, provide natural fertility, the fertility of the earth or rain. As we pass from life to death to life again, we pass from corporality to incorporality, from ignorance to knowledge and from the world of blood to the world of rain, from the world of affinity to the world of descent, from a temporary and

insubstantial world to a world that can never change.



The central symbol of this cycle of transition from life into life is the moon. Without the moon the mhondoro cannot appear. Though it is not always in the sky, it always returns. One of the songs sung frequently at funerals goes:

aenda-enda, achadzoka (s)he has gone,
(s)he will return

The same sentence is repeated over and over again. Like the moon, we die and we come back to life and it is the creation of this second life, the life of the mhondoro, of the fertility of the earth, of rain and of the past that is achieved by men through the rituals of possession. And it is no coincidence that the moon is also the dominant symbol of another cycle, the menstrual cycle. The symbolism of this, in reality, most significant source of fertility is, as it were, stolen by men to glorify their own creativity. This is most clearly evident in the steel symbol worn by a chief round his neck to mark his status as head of a royal lineage, owner of the clan and the land, direct descendent of the mhondoro and father of his people, quintessence of the principle of descent. This steel symbol is in the shape of a crescent moon.¹³

III How the mhondoro bring the rain

The possession rituals of the mhondoro make the statement that the lineage by itself and under the control of the men can provide itself with rain. More than this, they claim that the biological processes of life and death, symbolised by menstrual

blood, which is the blood of affines, are a potential source of drought. This is entirely in agreement with the statement made by the Mutota myth, that the Mutota lineage can produce its own rain by itself, but in contrast to Myths II to V which are accounts told by sons-in-law about the rain-bringing powers of the wives' fathers.

Another way of putting this is that the performance of the possession rituals makes the claim that the Korekore mhondoro are autochthons. This is the same claim as that made by the Mutota lineage by the incest of Nebedza and Nehanda, whereas the sons-in-law of Myths II to V accept their status as conquerors and make no claims to the absolute ownership of the land.

I started this chapter by describing the contradictory statements made about the powers of the Korekore mhondoro. It is said that they are rain-bringing spirits and that this power is their unique characteristic. Yet it is also said that they cannot bring the rain and are dependant for it on the autochthonous mhondoro. We are now in a position to understand why this is so.

Here is a summary of the procedure by which requests for rain are made. Each year a gift of cloth, tobacco or money is taken to the medium of the mhondoro of a spirit province by the people who live there to ask for rain for their fields. The medium accepts the gift and passes the request and a portion of the gift up the hierarchy of Korekore ancestors until it reaches the senior mhondoro, either Mutota or Nyamapfeka. This senior ancestor will then refer the request to the senior local autochthonous mhondoro (Musuma in the case of Mutota; Musuma, Chimombe or Nyajore in the case of Nyamapfeka).¹⁴ Only those who live within the spirit province of an autochthon send their requests for rain directly to him.

This ritual combines both conceptions of the origin of rain. The passing of the requests for rain up the hierarchy of ancestors establishes the integrity of the Korekore lineage,

treating each mhondoro as if he were an autochthon, an owner of the land. This is continued until the rain-bringing powers of the complete set of ancestors have been proclaimed and exercised. Only when this is accomplished and the desire of the Korekore to lay absolute claim to Dande has been taken as far as it will go is a concession made to the original owners of the land and offerings are made to them.

The transfer of authority from Korekore lineage to autochthon is significant for another reason as well. Because of the emphasis on the patriline and the down-playing of the importance of affines in the possession rituals during which mhondoro are revealed (see page 113), female ancestors do not 'come out' as mhondoro. But the two female mhondoro that do take mediums, Nehanda and Chigua, appear in the mythology precisely where the link between Korekore and autochthon is made. They are the daughters of Korekore ancestors and the wives of autochthons (or the pseudo-autochthon Nebedza). For each Korekore lineage to have access to the rain of the autochthon it is only necessary that the link to the autochthonous lineage be made once. Consequently, there is only one female mhondoro in each genealogy.

If there was no migration from Guruuswa, who or what is Mutota? There are traditions outside Dande that name Mutota as ancestor and yet others that claim Nebedza as their first chief. The tradition I am concerned with, Myth I, is told by people who live in Dande as they contemplate and argue about who they are and where they come from. The most conspicuous physical feature of Dande is the Escarpment. Visible from miles to the north, it an enormous and overwhelming barrier dividing the hot, dry Valley from the cool and fertile Plateau. For people who live in the Valley one of the most common sights of the wet season is the huge banks of black clouds piling up on the highest visible point of the Escarpment.

The word mutota means 'the wet one' (see page 146), or 'he who became wet in the rain'. His son Nebedza is very frequently referred to as Matope, or as Matope Nebedza. Matope is the plural of the word dope which means mud; not daga, the firm moist mud used for building houses, but the wet, sloppy mud that appears after rain and makes the paths impassable. From the point of view of Dande, the rain pours down on the mountain top and the mud flows down the mountain side just as Mutota stood at the edge of the Escarpment, looking out over Dande, and his son Matope climbed down into the Valley. Matope's son is Nyahuma. This name does not continue the sequence from rain and water to mud. Nyahuma (like Nebedza which means 'owner of Bedza', a territory in Dande) is the name of a man.

I am at last able to draw together all the strands of the argument. All are contained in the narrative of Mutota's journey from Guruuswa.

Guruuswa, the starting point of the journey, is the origin of all life, at the source of the rivers on which the subsistence of the Korekore in Dande depends. It is female, it is the vagina, it is the source of biological life within the lineage. It is the place where the notions of descent and of female fertility are combined to form the notion of maternal fertility or, more simply, 'mother'. It is the place of birth, it is wet (the presence of the Zambezi River in the Valley is of no use to the Korekore who live miles away from it; the Valley soils are much drier and less fertile than those on the Plateau). It is the origin also of social life, the place where the ancestors come from. It is cool like rain and like ancestors (the temperatures on the Plateau are considerably lower than those in Dande) and it has no salt (ancestors do not eat salt which is 'hot').

The Valley, the end of the journey, is the place of affines, of wives. It is dominated by wives' fathers who combine the principles of masculinity and affinity. It is hot and dry and

it is the place where the salt comes from, for humans eat salt and the Valley is the place not of ancestors but of people, the descendants of Mutota, the Korekore.

The journey from Guruuswa is a journey from mother to wife, but it is also a journey from birth to manhood. At birth we are wet, as we age we dry. Mutota in Guruuswa and on the edge of the Plateau is pure wetness. His son, Matope, is mud, a combination of water and dry sand which crosses the barrier of the Escarpment and flows down into the Valley. On the way down the mud dries out entirely and becomes Nebedza, owner of Bedza, a dry adult who owns and lives on dry sand and who is, most significantly, the first chief.

In the Valley (Myths II to V) away from the Korekore's original home, they live among affines and affinity is essential for rain. In Guruuswa, the home of the ancestors (Myth I) there are rivers and rain and no affinity. All the problems of the Korekore derive from the fact that they no longer live in their ancestral home. If they were the owners of their present home they would be able to make the rain fall. Conversely, if they could find the way to make the rain fall, they would be the owners of their new home.

Mutota cannot enter the Valley. He remains unpolluted by affinity and so is endlessly fertile, an unceasing source of rain. But his fertility is useless. His descendants live in the Valley, not on the Escarpment or the Plateau where his rain falls. As the rivers which flow from Guruuswa containing the waters of maternity reach the edge of the Escarpment, they are added to and strengthened by the rains of the father, Mutota. But the water of rivers is not enough. People also need rain on their fields. It is this crucial problem of the Korekore, how to get access to rain in a strange land, how to gain control of their own rain, to make it leave the Escarpment and move into the Valley and fall on their fields that the myth of Mutota attempts to resolve.

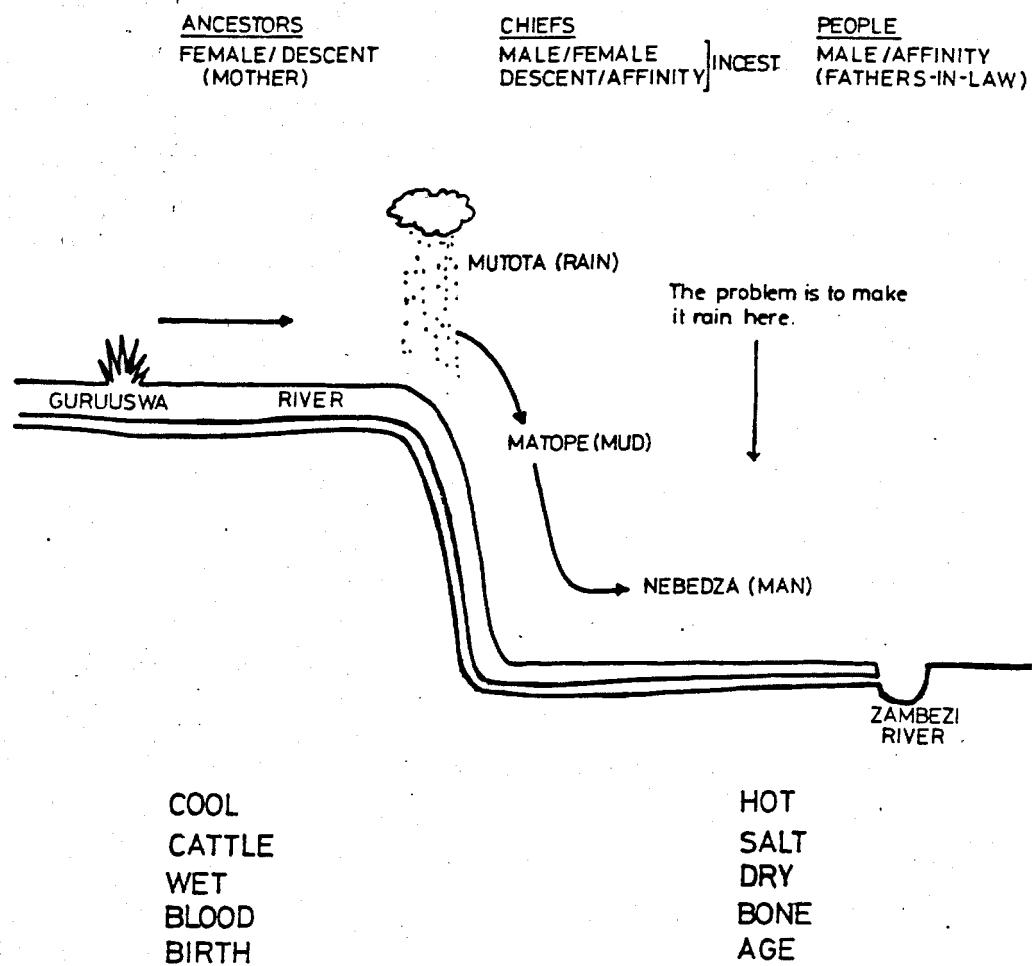


FIGURE 2 THE JOURNEY FROM GURUUSWA TO DANDE 2

Between pure lineage fertility in Guruuswa and pure affinal fertility in Dande a compromise is reached. This compromise is the incestuous fertility that is created at the midpoint between the two regions, on the edge of the Escarpment. By the marriage of Nehanda to Nebedza the pollution of affinity is banished, conqueror becomes autochthon, the Korekore lay claim to the ownership of Dande and the fertility of Mutota enters the Valley (see Figure 2, page 186).¹⁵

Owners and conquerors

Mutota is the ancestor of the royal lineage, even of those commoners who share the Royal Elephant clan, but he is not the ancestor of other Korekore clans. Through the ability of the royal lineage and their ancestors and mediums to bring rain into Dande their rights to their 'new' home are secured. All other Korekore, as well as members of other ethnic groups ('strangers') must apply to the royals and their ancestors for permission to live in their territory and share in the fertility their ancestors bring. But, all the while, the other myths (II and III) are told proclaiming the rain-bringing powers of the autochthons and, ultimately, offers for the autochthanous rain must be made.

Or rather, offers to the autochthonous spirits may be made, for it is precisely at the point where authority is transferred from one lineage to another that a stage is cleared on which current political exigencies are acted out. For example, throughout the 1950s and possibly for many years before, the medium of Mutota claimed that he need make no offerings to the autochthon Musuma because he by himself could bring the rain (Garbett 1977:79). (This is dealt with in more detail in Chapter VII.)

Can the existence of the two sets of myths and the double origin of fertility be accounted for historically? The small amount of reliable historical evidence available allows no more than a few suggestions to be made.

Beach has argued that the tradition of the journey from Guruuswa should be interpreted as a series of migrations by a number of separate lineages over some hundreds of years (Beach 1980:60). This suggests the possibility that each of the mhondoro of the Korekore royal genealogies was the head of a lineage who arrived in the Zambezi Valley, conquered a territory by driving out and/or absorbing its previous occupants and set himself up as ruler. If we consider each Korekore mhondoro individually, this is consistent with Myths II and III. The division of powers between autochthons and conquerors has been described for many other societies (e.g. Mitchell 1956, Turner 1957) although it is not always the case that the autochthons are believed to control the rain. A distinction may be made between earth cults and sky cults (e.g. Fortes 1940) or between the fertility of rain and of rivers (e.g. Cunnison 1959) and so on. But when the Korekore royal Lineage is considered as a whole, the peculiar relationships between the mhondoro and the practice of referring requests for rain up the lineage demonstrate the peculiarities of this system.

It is quite clear that as a geographic location, Guruuswa has never existed. Who then are the Korekore and where did they come from? I cannot, of course, rule out every possibility of a migration of some unspecified people from south, east or west to the Dande region at some time in the past, though without myths such as those I have discussed there is no evidence that any such migration took place.¹⁶ However, perhaps the 'migration' or 'conquest' can be accounted for without evidence of that kind.

The rate of uxorilocality in Dande is extremely high (in the late 1950s it was 83% - see page 57) and it has been so for generations. Traditionally, the experience of the vast majority of adult men was that they lived in the territory of their fathers-in-law and were dependant on his ancestors for

rain. If 'Guruuswa' refers to the beginnings of biological and social life within one's own lineage, as I have suggested, then the journey described in the myth, the journey from 'original home' to 'present home' may be the journey travelled by men at marriage from the home of their fathers (where they are machinda or royals, 'at home' and rely on their own ancestors for rain) to the home of their father-in-law (where they are vatorwa or strangers, not 'at home' and dependant on the ancestors of their father-in-law for their rain). In this reading there would be not one journey from Guruuswa, nor would there be a hundred, but it would take place at least once in the life of the vast majority of adult men.

The dominant mode of inheritance of the people who were integrated into the Mutapa state is patrilineal. The mode of those who were not (Tonga, Goba, etc.) is matrilineal. It is possible that one technique by which the Mutapa state expanded was by the uxorilocal marriage of its patrilineal members to matrilineal peoples. By this strategy their sons would inherit the land of the matrilineal peoples without passing on to them any of their own territory. (Goody 1969:120 has described a similar matrilineal/patrilineal border situation in Ghana with a similar result.)

The ability of the patrilineal lineages to enforce their claims to the land of their MBs would depend on the political and military superiority of their 'home' lineages. One would expect resistance. One counter measure might be the use of tactical marriages (such as FZD) by the matrilineal peoples in order to regain control over their land (Goody 1969:124). There is some evidence that such in-marrying patterns evolved amongst those who resisted incorporation into the state (this is most clear for the Dema people). Another strategy might be conversion from matrilineality to patrilineality. There is some evidence that this has happened to the Tande people. (Their ancestral genealogy is described by the medium of the

mhondoro Madzomba speaking in trance as succession from ZS to ZS suggesting that in the past they practised matrilineal succession.) The effect of the uxorilocal strategy of the patrilineal peoples, the sons-in-law, would be that they gained control of the land of their fathers-in-law. In other words, the claims made by Mutota's lineage in the Guruuswa myth would have taken effect. Perhaps there is no more to the 'conquest' of Dande than this. But the claims of the Mutota myth take effect only at a time of the centralization of a number of lineages to form a state or state-like polity. Then Myth I has dominance over Myths II to V and Mutota is the ultimate source of the fertility of the land and the authority of the chiefs. At a time (or in an area or in a context), of less centralised authority, Myths II to V regain their significance and offerings are made to the 'autochthons' for rain.

In this sense and in this sense only, Abraham's suggestion that Mutota was the 'first Monomotapa' has some reality (Abraham 1959:84) but Mutota represents no more than the self-consciousness of the 'sons-in-law' lineages as they increase and centralise their control of the land. Contrary to Abraham's contention that the Mutapa state was a creation of the Korekore, it would seem that Korekore were a creation of the Mutapa state.

One last historical conjecture. The title by which the ruler of the Mutapa state was known has come down to us from Portuguese and other documents in a number of forms. Its meaning has been the subject of much discussion. Basing his argument on a belief that 'kinship was matrilineal', Randles suggests 'child of the country' (from mwana = child, mutapwa = captive, Randles 1981:11). Abraham translates the term to mean 'master pillager' giving little by way of explanation for this (Abraham 1962:12). According to Bhila:

Lately, historians have come to accept the version Mwene Mutapa or Mwanamutapa despite the fact that this does not really make sense in Shona for mwene means owner and mutapa (which comes from the verb kutapa, to explore or seize) means explorer (Bhila 1974:79).

Bhila dismisses both these forms as inaccurate and favours munhumutapa, 'the person who explores'. However, if mutapa is translated not as 'explorer' but as 'one who seizes' or 'captor' (kutapa = take captive, make prisoner, Hannan 1974), then the contradiction that caused Bhila to reject this most frequently recorded form contains precisely the same duality of political and ritual authority as the characterization of Mutota and the political process he represents. He is owner/captor of the land whose fertility he supplies. He is autochthon and conqueror in one. No greater power can be claimed by a political or military leader than that he can conquer a territory and then become the source of the fertility of the territory he has conquered.¹⁷

But even now we have not reached the last layer of meaning that the Guruuswa myth contains. I suggested that Mutota and Guruuswa are an expression of the collectivity of the united 'sons-in-law', the Korekore, compiled from their experience of life in the hot, dry Valley looking up at the Plateau from the foot of the towering Escarpment. The last level of meaning Myth I contains is a description of how this conceptualization may have come into being and of how it is sustained. It contains a description of the possession rituals of the mhondoro mediums.

The messenger who travels from Dande to fetch Mutota from Guruuswa is Nyakatonje whose name means intermediary, or mutapi of a spirit medium. He travels to Guruuswa with salt as a gift for the mhondoro and guides him back as far as the Escarpment. But Mutota can go no further. Why?

The Valley is divided into spirit provinces associated with ancestors. If these ancestors represent the different lineages which, after consolidation, constructed the mythology of Mutota as an image of their state, then Mutota cannot enter the Valley because there is no spirit province for him there. But this is only part of the answer.

Guruuswa is the world of the ancestors. Dande is the world of men. Mutota cannot enter into Dande any further than mhondoro can by themselves enter into the lives of men.

They cannot enter directly into men's lives because they have no bodies. Their knowledge, their power over rain is a product of that same incorporeality which, paradoxically, makes their knowledge and power useless without a body, without even a voice with which to make their will known.

At the Escarpment, the boundary between life and death, Mutota's journey comes to a stop.

But the mhondoro do acquire bodies. They acquire bodies of two kinds. Firstly they acquire the bodies of their descendants, the chiefs, who rule in their name the lands they ruled 'when they were alive'. Secondly, they acquire mediums within whose bodies they can enter directly into the lives of the living. As with mhondoro in the rituals of possession, so with Mutota in the mythology. Mutota goes no further than the Escarpment but his son Nebedza continues the journey down into the Valley to become the first chief of the Korekore.

That Nebedza rather than Mutota was the first chief of the Korekore (as opposed to the first ancestor) is widely reported. In the myths of many neighbouring peoples, it is Nebedza who is credited with conquering the autochthons of the Valley and some of the Plateau as well (Randles 1981:11; Beach 1980:163, 173; Lancaster 1981:18). This is the endlessly reiterated justification of the political rights of the royal lineages, that they are descended from the people who conquered the valley.

But the second means by which the mhondoro enters the world of the living, the medium, has a quite different source of authority. The medium does not claim the right to rule (kutonga) but only to advise. Present day mediums and chiefs make this distinction absolutely clear. The medium does not inherit his status as a chief does his. His authority is acquired. He does not come from Guruuswa like the agnate Nebedza, he comes

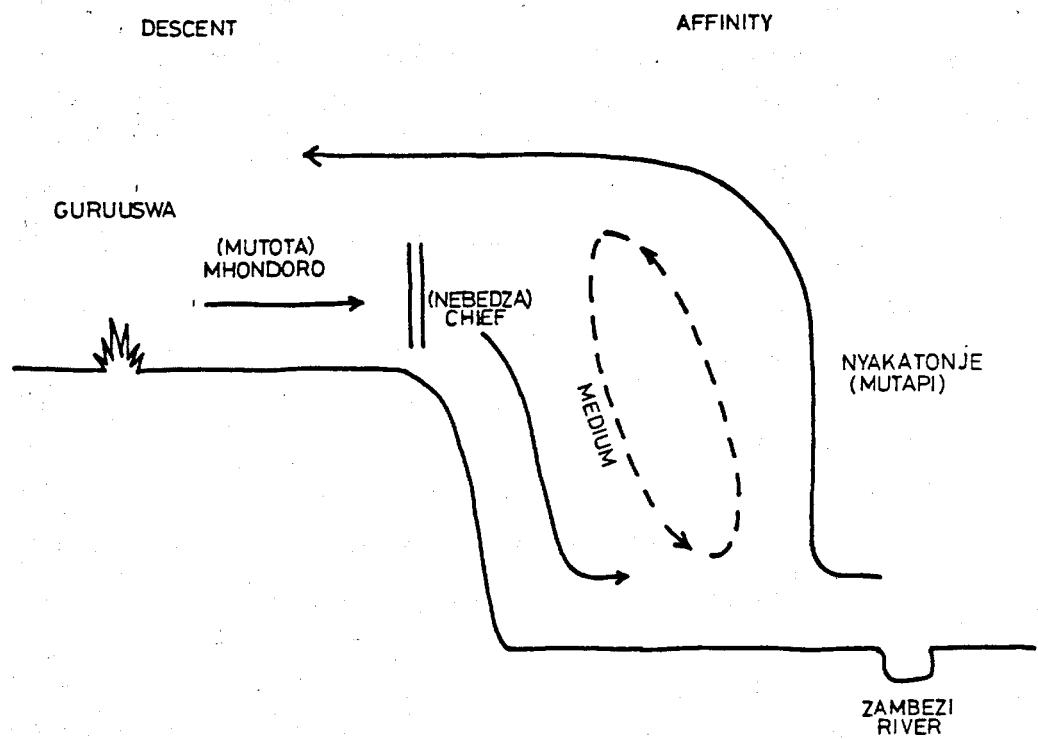


FIGURE 3 THE JOURNEY FROM GURUUSWA TO DANDE 3

from the Valley, the land of the affines. Whereas the chiefs are agnates of the mhondoro, the mediums are their affines. Here is the source of the dogma, so frequently contradicted in practice, that the medium must be a stranger to the lineage of 'his' mhondoro. This is also the ultimate source of the common practice of referring to the medium as the 'wife' of the mhondoro that possesses him.

Every time the possession rituals of the mhondoro mediums are performed, the mutapi travels back to the beginning of the world and fetches the ancestral spirit from its home in Guruuswa. At the Escarpment, the boundary between life and death, the original home and the new, the medium, the affine, allows his body to be filled with the agnatic ancestor of the chiefs. Every time this ritual is performed, the right of the Korekore to live in Dande and their claim to be able to provide their own rain are reasserted. These rituals make the statement that it is Korekore and not the Tavara that bring the rain to Dande; that it is the Elephant clan and no other that brings the rain to Dande; that it is the royals and not the commoners who bring the rain to Dande. It is no coincidence that in the analysis of the mythology and the ritual, the journey from Guruuswa and the possession rituals were found to contain precisely the same message (see Figure 3).¹⁸

One final point. Nyakatonje carries salt to Guruuswa. Ancestors never eat salt but men have to eat it to live. Mutota tries it, likes it and travels to Dande to find more. The ingestion of salt by the mhondoro marks the beginning of his journey from the world of the spirit to the world of men. But he can never set foot in Dande. His power derives from his existence outside the social world. (He is not a mudzimu who is brought home to the village by the performance of a ritual, but a mhondoro, a lion whose home is the bush.) He can only participate in the lives of his descendants through the polluted bodies of the medium and chief.

In the Guruuswa myth, Nyakatonje smacks his lips over the salted meat to persuade Mutota to try it just as, in the ritual, the intermediary entices the mhondoro to leave the world of the dead and enter the world of the living. By eating salt, Mutota becomes a little more like a man. But he cannot become entirely a man. To do so would be to lose his purity, his rain-bringing power, which confers on his descendants the ownership of the Valley of affines, the country of blood.

CHAPTER VI

THE COUNTRY OF KIN

Of all the ideas discussed in the previous chapter, the most important for an understanding of the position of the guerillas in Dande is the opposition 'conquerors/autochthons'.

The guerillas arrived in the Valley as highly trained, heavily armed combatants. Many accounts of the first response of the peasants to the guerillas make clear that the instructions of the guerillas were carried out simply because they were armed and the peasants were not. But within a few months the guerillas were no longer regarded as foreign conquerors of the peasants' land but as their representatives, as the vanguard of the rightful owners of the land who were fighting to return it to the peasants from whom it had been taken eighty years before. Moreover, as we shall see in Part Four, by the observance of a series of ritual prohibitions, the guerillas were able to present themselves as fully-fledged autochthons, in intimate contact with the forces of nature, at one with the forest and its wild animals, the 'adopted descendants' of the mhondoro who control the rain.

The techniques by which the guerillas achieved the transformation from conquerors into autochthons were not their own inventions. They were adaptations of techniques used to create new alliances by the many people in Dande who, throughout their lives, live in various parts of the Valley which are not their natal homes. In this context, the 'autochthons' are members of the royal lineages who 'own' the territories, and the 'conquerors', or potential-conquerors, are affines and strangers who, for a variety of reasons, come to live among them. In order that the assimilation of the guerillas to the category 'autochthons' be understood when it arises, I describe in this chapter the process by which the assimilation of members of one lineage or clan to another takes place.

The ideal social order

In the first part of Mutota's journey from Guruuswa, Dande appears as a territory under the authority of affines or, better, of potential affines. It is a country owned by people of other clans and other marriageable lineages. In the second part of the myth, Nebedza establishes the authority of Mutota's descendants as the royal lineage of Dande, the rightful owners of all the land they occupy. In the symbolism of the myth, he replaces the chaos and pollution of affinity with the order of descent which brings the rain. This is not the same rain that watered the fields of the earlier 'autochthonous' owners of Dande. It is the rain of the Korekore under the control of their own ancestors. The title deeds to land are the power to ensure its fertility.

This suggests that for the Korekore the ideal form of social organization would allow each clan, and within each clan each lineage to live in its own territory, free of the pollution of affines, producing its own rain. But this is impossible. A lineage on its own is sterile. People have to live with affines or die out, either as strangers in the territory of a father-in-law, or as 'owners' of the land challenged by the stranger husbands of their female agnates.

If the ideal order is ever found, it is for the brief moment of the founding of a new community, chieftaincy or village. Men with little chance of succeeding to positions of authority or with other cause for discontent might hive off and found a community of their own, based on their own descent group, established on previously unpopulated land. For a short space of time the ideal order exists. But then the demands of clan exogamy coupled with uxorilocality force some men out of the new community and bring in strangers. People no longer live 'at home' and the new community has to face all the old challenges to its ownership of its land.

It is only in ritual that the ideal form of social organization can be brought into being. In the possession rituals, the journey made by the mhondoro from the 'long grass' the source of all life, to the world of the living, recreates the moment of undefiled descent at the birth of the community. The successful performance of these rituals demonstrates the authority of the ruling lineage and the rain-bringing power of its ancestors. But it does more than this. The possession rituals construct an ideal alternative society which persists after the rituals have been completed, a society based on the ideal of 'one lineage, one territory', the ideal of pure descent in which any threat of change, any challenge to the ownership of the territory is defused by the authority of the ancestors of the royal lineage.

This society is constructed by adding the principles of territoriality and duration to those of descent and common substance. Everyone who lives in the spirit province of a mhondoro and participates in the work (i.e. the ritual) of that mhondoro becomes, through that work, a member of the lineage descended from the mhondoro. The longer they live there, the more fully their identity and that of the 'real' descendants of the mhondoro are merged. The creation of these super-lineages, the realisation of a perfect society takes place within the borders of each spirit province in Dande.

The spirit province

The borders of spirit provinces are usually rivers. The location of provinces is described by people in Dande in this way: 'the province of X extends to river 1, of Y to river 2, of Z to river 3' and so on. As rivers (or at least river beds) are permanent, this gives the impression that the provinces are permanent as well. Rivers do not, of course, meet to form perfectly conscribed areas of land. The edges of provinces between the rivers are unmarked. The spirit ownership of these remote unpopulated areas is indicated by the offerings hunters make to the mhondoro they believe controls the game within them (Garbett 1977:63).

Spirit provinces are units of communal ritual activity. The medium of the local mhondoro exercises control over: 'the enforcement of rest days, restrictions on the use of fish poisons and prohibitions affecting diet and modes of cultivation' (Garbett 1977:73). In the smallest provinces all lineage heads must cooperate in the rituals which produce rain. If any fail to participate, this reduces the chances of the ritual producing the desired effect. In the larger provinces, where a number of shrines exist, separate rituals are held at each shrine, but all are directed to the same mhondoro. All lineage heads must make offerings of grain to the mhondoro of his province at the first harvest of each season. When newcomers (strangers or sons-in-law) settle within a spirit province, a gift must be made to the mhondoro and permission to cultivate 'his' land obtained.

The borders of the spirit province are their most distinctive feature. They express the ownership of the land by the Korekore in defiance, as it were, of the older claims of the autochthons. The senior Tavara mhondoro Dzivaguru

is honoured elsewhere (than at his shrine) in Choma, and the most famous of his mediums appears to have wandered from chiefdom to chiefdom to such an extent that many say Dzivaguru has no real home (Bourdillon 1972:113).

The reason that this 'wandering' of the medium is remarked is because, unlike the Korekore mhondoro whose authority is limited to their own spirit province, the autochthonous mhondoro do not have spirit provinces. Their claim is to the ownership of the entire, undifferentiated territory for which, in extremis, they provide rain.

The medium of Mutota can, in times of severe drought, send messages with gifts of snuff tobacco to Dzivaguru and Karuva in order to obtain rain (Bourdillon 1979:243).

This is, of course, the point of view of the autochthons, the Tavara, whom Bourdillon studied.

This 'wandering' is not unique to Dzivaguru. It is a characteristic feature of autochthonous rain-bringers. Its most extreme form is the phenomenon of the rolling rain-producing stone of the Urungwe District, immediately west of Dande. This stone is known as Changamuchiri, the name of the sister of the autochthonous Mabara chief said to have been conquered by the Korekore Dandawa chieftaincy. She refused to flee from the Korekore and turned into a stone when she died. The only description of this stone appears in an unpublished report by R.S. Hughes, for many years a ranger in the Urungwe District:

The stone is flat and has four holes in it and when rain is wanted in October beer is poured into two of the holes (and) millet porridge into the other two. Tobacco and snuff were also placed...on the flat area dividing the four holes. Immediately the sacrifice had been made, an animal, resembling a wild pig, would walk of its own accord out of the bush and into the midst of the assembled people. It was slaughtered and during the following night it would rain heavily... This stone is reputed to move of its own accord and sometimes goes down to Mana pools on the Zambezi to drink and bathe. If you listen hard at night, you can sometimes hear it moving through the veld and its passage is always accompanied by a roaring wind (Hughes undated:6).

Before the rain offering is made each year, it is necessary to search for the stone through the length and breadth of the Urungwe part of the Valley. If it is not found, drought will follow.

Between Changamuchiri, the rolling autochthonous stone to the west, and Dzivaguru, the wandering autochthonous mhondoro to the east, a third wandering mhondoro in Dande itself makes clear that this border-crossing quality of autochthons is consistently opposed to the static bounded Korekore. For reasons which his descendants cannot explain, Bangomwe, the senior mhondoro of the Tande who is said in some accounts to have been the mhondoro who distributed land to the children of Mutota, has the additional name Chinokunguruka, which means 'the rolling one'.¹

Claims to the ownership of particular territories designated as spirit provinces are made by Korekore mhondoro with respect to the autochthons, but they are also made with respect to each other. Except in the cases where the province of one mhondoro is said to be within that of his 'father', it is believed to be dangerous for a medium to cross the river-boundaries of his province without first taking ritual precautions to protect himself.

One medium may visit another only on very special occasions and then only after he has taken ritual precautions. Mutota's medium may not cross spirit boundaries without first being blindfolded and then carried over. Korekore say: 'We fear that the great spirit may come and eat all the lesser ones' (Garbett 1969:110).

This practice, described by Garbett as universal in the late 1950s, operates only in some provinces today. In the past a similar restriction was imposed on chiefs who were not permitted to leave their territories without the performance of similar rituals.

A custom prevails to this day that a chief when crossing the Tshadzire stream, must be blindfolded and carried across amid shouting and singing. It is a belief that should he walk across he would become blind and lose his chieftainship.²

In one case where this practice is carried out by mediums today, the river where the ritual is performed is believed to be dangerous to all mhondoro mediums. All must be carried across if they wish to pass that way. It is called the Karoyi River. The name means 'little witch' and this river is said to be dangerous to mhondoro mediums because at some time in the past it was used to drown convicted witches (see page 106 for the structural opposition between mhondoro and witch spirits).

This ritual is very hard to interpret, but one clue suggests its meaning. The only other people ever carried on the back are children. It is believed that children under the age of sexual maturity are able to detect witches. It is possible

that the reason that a chief or a medium is carried on the back during the period that he is crossing from his own territory to that of another is that when his feet are off his own land owned by his ancestor or possessing mhondoro and he is out of their protection, the chief or medium is open to attack by the enemies of the ancestors and of the lineage: the witch. By being carried on the back, the chief or medium becomes symbolically a child, and is able to detect the witch before it does him harm.

That chief or medium is blindfolded when carried across the river boundary is reminiscent of the moment in the myth of Mutota's journey from Guruuswa when Mutota is unable to complete his journey into the foreign territory of Dande because he had seen it before having a chance to perform his rituals or his magic. The ritual which ultimately allows his lineage to cross the boundary (the Escarpment) into Dande is incest by means of which the dangers of affinity are avoided and the authority of the lineage powerfully asserted.

The chief is at home and safe in his own territory because it is the territory of his ancestors. The medium, similarly, is safe in his own province because it belongs to the mhondoro that possesses him. Danger to a chief or medium is also danger to their followers. Therefore a chief or medium protects his descendants by staying within his own territory. This interpretation is given support by the Zezuru belief that until a child is weaned his father 'dare not cross the rivers which form the boundaries of his country' (Bullock 1928:76, see also the reference to protection afforded by snuff-taking when crossing rivers in Isaacman 1976:141).

The boundedness of the spirit provinces in relation to the autochthons and the restrictions on the movement of the 'owner' of one province to another suggest that the spirit provinces are thought of as the home and the property of the descendants of a single ancestor, in other words as the property of one lineage.

The descendants of the mhondoro

By definition, affines are the descendants of other mhondoro, the owners of other spirit provinces. The particular problem that uxorilocality presents to the owners of a spirit province is that large-scale uxorilocality threatens to become conquest.

The conceptualization of rights to land is clearly expressed in Myths II to V (see page 156). Conquerors take the land of the autochthons and consolidate and perpetuate this relationship of dominance by taking their women as well. They claim the territory as their own and institute their own rituals for ensuring their own rainfall. The danger to the conquerors, therefore, is that by tactical uxorilocality another lineage of stranger sons-in-law will do to them as they have done to the autochthons. The consequence would be that the territory of the conquerors would come under the control of the strangers who would perform ceremonies to their mhondoro to bring their rain to them.

In fact, by however much the strangers outnumber the conquerors (3 to 1, Garbett 1967:314) the real danger of a 'second conquest' is not great because in practice strangers are not all of one lineage or clan, but of a number with allegiance to a variety of different mhondoro and chiefs. Nevertheless, conqueror lineages assert their dominance over the autochthons, strangers and affines in their midst by transforming them all into vazukuru (descendants) of the mhondoro of the spirit province in which they live.

The kin term vazukuru groups together all descendants of the generation below children as well as sister's children. It is a category from which the notion of affinity is excluded. Marriage with a muzukuru is forbidden. In all rituals the muzukuru is the principal officiant or dunzvi for he can intercede with the ancestors of the individual for whose benefit the ritual is held. The only exception to this is the ritual of burial in which the muzukuru as a member of the

lineage of the deceased may not participate and yields the role of dunzvi to the sawhira, the ritual friend. In all other rituals, the preferred dunzvi is the sister's son but either son's son or daughter's son can perform the necessary tasks if called on to do so.

Similarly, the mutapi of a mhondoro should be the muzukuru of the mhondoro. Vatapi justify their status on the grounds that they were the first settlers in the province or that they were appointed by the mhondoro. But if the full-time mutapi is absent any muzukuru of the mhondoro can act in his stead. Deputy vatapi are called into action according to a schedule based on the relative length of time their lineage has been resident in the spirit province. Ultimately, anyone who lives in the province may be called upon. As with first-comers, so with the most recent arrivals, it is residence in the spirit province that confers rights. By living in the territory of the mhondoro, all affines and strangers who are members of other lineages, descendants of other mhondoro, become vazukuru of the mhondoro in whose territory they live.

This does not happen automatically. When a newcomer arrives in a spirit province he must apply to the mhondoro through the mutapi for permission to live in his province and to plough his land. This request must be accompanied by a gift (mukowho). If you have not paid the gift and received permission you can never be accepted as a muzukuru of the mhondoro, a legitimate resident in his territory and beneficiary of the fertility he provides. But this is not sufficient in itself. To be a muzukuru you have to do the work of the ancestors, which means participate in their rituals, the agricultural rituals of the annual cycle and the rituals of possession. In this way strangers come to regard themselves as muzukuru of the mhondoro and the ideal of one lineage in one province becomes a reality.

The particular individuals at whom this ritual creation of vazukuru is aimed are the daughters' and sisters' husbands. No special effort is needed to bring second generation affines into the category. Daughter's son and sister's son are both muzukuru even though they are, in terms of inheritance of rights, property and jural status, members of their fathers' lineages. It is specifically daughters' and sisters' husbands who constitute the threat to the lineage in whose spirit province they live. By stressing the boundaries of the spirit province as the limits of the descent group of the mhondoro, the authority of the mhondoro of these strangers is nullified. If they return to their father's home they may participate in the rituals of their original ancestor there, but when they leave that home they leave their ancestors behind.

The symbolism of the possession rituals makes the statement that the lineage of the mhondoro is complete in itself. As owners of the territory they live in they do not need the assistance of their affinal (autochthonous) lineages to provide them with fertility. The ritual conversion of affines into agnates occurs at precisely the same possession rituals when 'strangers' act as vazukuru or vatapi of the mhondoro. This is the ultimate demonstration of the authority of the lineage of the conquerors. But that rain ultimately derives from the ancestors of the autochthons may also be recognised in ritual, for all members of the conquering lineages and their affines-turned-agnates are, collectively, thought of as vazukuru of the autochthonous mhondoro and he as the sekuru (ancestor) of their mhondoro and of themselves.

The mhondoro is the ultimate source of order, in social organization as in health as in morality. Women and affines continually recreate chaos. Men, as members of their lineages of which the mhondoro is the purest expression, continuously balance and order and heal.

A spirit province in action

As an illustration of how the four principles of incorporation - descent, substance, territoriality and duration - interact, here is an outline of the organization of the vatapi (intermediaries) and vazukuru (descendants) of one mhondoro.

This outline is based on an actual spirit province in Dande though simplified in some respects. The relationships are illustrated in diagram 7.

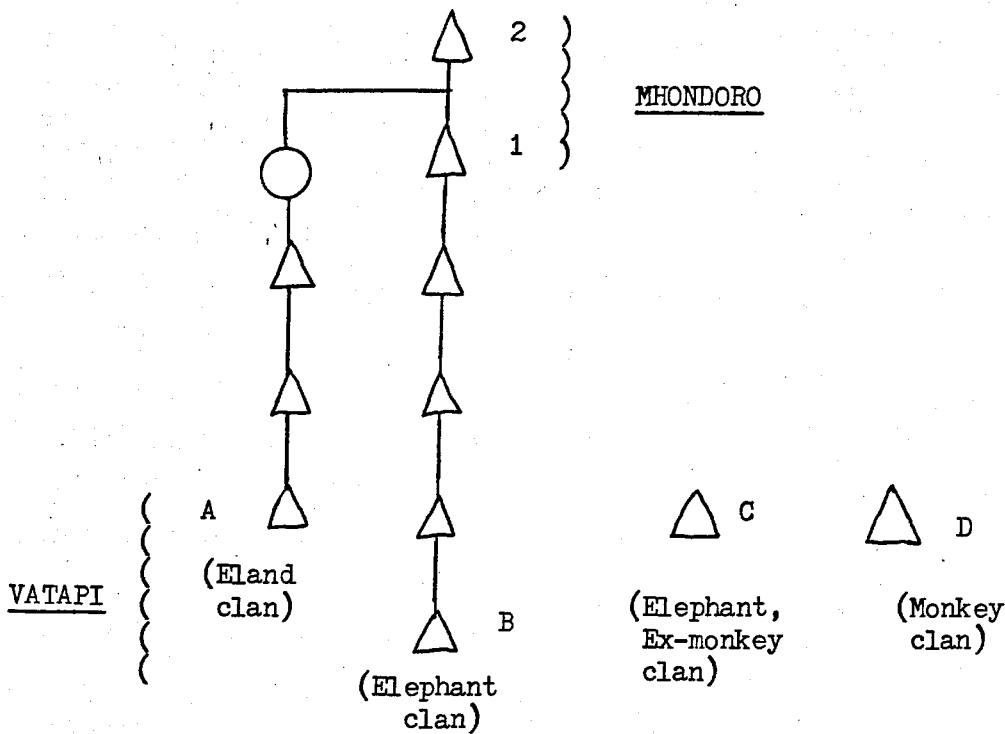
The most recent medium of the mhondoro (1) was possessed in the early sixties, some years after the death of the previous medium. The earlier medium, who was of the Monkey clan, had come from the Plateau bringing with him a lineage head (A) who acted as his mutapi. This man was of the Eland clan. Some years later, the mutapi of mhondoro (2), the 'father' of mhondoro (1) moved into this spirit province after the death of 'his' medium. Because of the close relationship between the two mhondoro, the mutapi of mhondoro (2) is considered to be a mutapi of mhondoro (1). This man is of the same clan as the mhondoro, Elephant. Thirdly, a man (C) who claims descent from the mhondoro, and is therefore of the Elephant clan though he is not a member of the royal lineage, moved into the spirit province. He had lost his land when it was declared a 'native purchase area' by the government and had moved into this spirit province because, he says, his ancestors used to live there in the past.

When the most recent medium of the mhondoro took up residence in his spirit province, all three of these lineages provided vatapi for him. Each justifies his status with a different reason. The original mutapi A has died, but his son claims the right to act in succession to him because his father was chosen by the previous medium. The present representative of lineage B claims to be a mutapi because his lineage has served as vatapi of the 'father' of the mhondoro for generations. The representative of lineage C claims the right to act as

mutapi because he is descended from the mhondoro. The most senior of these vatapi is A. If he and all of his agnates are absent, the role of mutapi may be taken by B and, in the same circumstances, by C. The order of seniority is explicitly based on the principle of duration, the length of time that each lineage has lived in the province. If all of these vatapi are out of the province or indisposed, the longest resident of the non-expert, non-mutapi lineages may act in their stead. Due to the high level of uxorilocality and labour migration, non-expert vazukuru are often called on to act as vatapi especially to invoke the protection of the mhondoro at the beginning of the village committee meetings which are held so frequently at present.

I have said that lineage C, who have a long tradition as intermediaries for the 'father' of the mhondoro, are members of the mhondoro's clan. In fact, and this is something they admit only with great reluctance, they are actually members of the Monkey clan. They say that their lineage has lived in the spirit province of an Elephant mhondoro and acted as his vatapi for so long that it is taken for granted that they are members of the Elephant clan and they have accepted this. In effect they have changed their ancestors to suit the province they live in. This change of clan allegiance, theoretically impossible, is an extreme consequence of the idea that all those who live within the spirit province of a mhondoro (and especially those who act as his vatapi) are his descendants. The representative of lineage A claims to be sister's son's son's son of the mhondoro, the closest connection he can claim without changing his clan. His lineage has probably lived too short a period in the spirit province to do so. His claim to seniority is enhanced, despite his lack of direct descent from the mhondoro, by the use of the notion that the sister's son is the preferred ritual officiant of any ancestor.

Diagram 7



In fact, there is little that is historically 'real' about any of these genealogies. Each of the lineages choose some aspect of the past - one or more principles of incorporation - to make a claim to the right to control certain significant rituals. Those who wish to be a senior muzukuru, a mutapi, complete their genealogies by linking them to the mhondoro. Those who don't wish to be a mutapi, do not. For example, lineage D is considered to have been the first to have lived in the spirit province. If the argument that the longest lived in the territory are the most senior vatapi were extended to them, they would be pre-eminent. But it is not because the present head of this lineage does not wish it to be. He simply is not interested in the job. He agrees that as a muzukuru he may intermediate for the mhondoro, but he insists that he will only do so if all of the established vatapi are

absent. His justification is that the mhondoro has not specifically asked for his services, for the final decision rests with the mhondoro. He may appoint and dismiss vatapi as he chooses. He may do this by revealing a previously unknown relationship of descent between the mhondoro and a lineage resident in his territory or he may appoint a mutapi of his choice despite the absence of any relationship whatsoever. If the last is the case it seems that a relationship of descent will gradually emerge over time.

Participation in the work of the ancestors converts strangers into descendants of the mhondoro. The principle of territoriality is converted into the principle of descent by the principle of duration. The longer a lineage has been resident in a spirit province the more intimately related to the mhondoro it is presumed to be. Another way in which the unity created out of the diversity of lineages within a spirit province is expressed is by participation in a ritual which makes use of the final principle of incorporation, common substance.

The pangolin

The pangolin (haka) is a creature that lives in the bush far from people and their villages.³ If, as occasionally happens, one is found by hunters, it doesn't run away like a truly wild animal but curls up into a ball and waits to be taken to the mhondoro in whose spirit province it was found.

A number of very stringent taboos surround the pangolin. If you catch one and eat it by yourself you will go mad and die. It must be taken to the mhondoro who will give it to his mutapi to cook and share out so that everyone in the spirit province may eat a little of its reputedly excellent meat. When you bring it to the mhondoro you may not speak a word until you have handed it over and been paid for it, either with money or a gift. This practice echoes that of the newly wed wife

arriving at her husband's village. She may not speak until she has performed a number of menial tasks and been paid for them. This echo is not surprising as the haka is regarded as a mukaranga, a ritual wife of the mhondoro. If you find a pangolin and do not take it to the mhondoro, he will berate you and demand to know why you have left his wife to live all alone in the bush. If you should find a pangolin so close to the border of two provinces that you cannot tell to whom it belongs you may take it to either of the mhondoro who will discuss the problem with the other and decide whose it is. Like all good wives, the pangolin follows the mhondoro about. They live only where the mhondoro live which is why you will never come across a pangolin in the towns.

In those clans which are designated by the names of animals members identify themselves by saying: tinoera nzou, we respect and abstain from eating elephant or monkey or whatever their clan animal happens to be. It is said of the pangolin: inoerwa nevanhu vese, it is respected and avoided by all people. While the pangolin found within a particular province is being eaten, it is as if all those who live within that province become members of a pangolin clan.

Ordinary clans are constituted out of the principles of common substance and of descent. Within a spirit province live members of many different clans. The 'pangolin clan' combines the principles of common substance with the principle of territoriality to overcome the fragmentation inherent in the principle of descent. By the intervention of the mhondoro and his 'wife' the pangolin, self-identification in terms of individual lineage history and individual household production is suppressed. By the conversion of the fruits of the wild from individual gain to general benefit, such consciousness of solidarity as is experienced by all those whose subsistence depends on the productivity of the same spirit province finds, if only for a moment, a ritual expression.

In the preceding four chapters I have discussed concepts and practices without which the activities and the ideology of the guerillas in Dande and the ways in which they were received by the local people cannot be adequately understood.

In Chapter III I discussed the conceptual opposition between the mhondoro and the witch, showing how the interpretation of an individual's behaviour as possession by one or other form of spirit is determined by the social circumstances in which the possession takes place (or is believed to have taken place). In Chapter IV I showed how the legitimacy of the mhondoro mediums is ultimately provided by the chiefs mediated by the yatapi, and how the legitimacy of the chiefs is, in turn, dependant on the mhondoro mediums.

In Chapter V I explored the ideology of political authority demonstrating that the legitimacy of a royal lineage derives from a claim to descent from and control of the source of the fertility of a particular territory. This led on to a discussion of the symbiotic relationship between 'autochthon' and 'conqueror' lineages which revealed the profound control of the fertility of the land that autochthony confers.

Finally, in Chapter Six, I discussed the power of territoriality to convert coresidence into descent through the agency of the rituals of the mhondoro. This has the effect that all inhabitants of a spirit province are thought of as descendants of the local mhondoro and the divisive tendencies of lineality are overcome.

All these concepts - autochthony, territoriality, legitimacy of possession and legitimacy of political authority - were taken up and transformed in the ideology of nationalism and the practice of the guerillas in Dande. How this occurred is the subject of Part Four.

Three inequalities experienced by the people of Dande have also been discussed: that between the old and the young in Chapter III, those between men and women and between royals and other lineages in Chapter V. All three inequalities draw their justification from the mhondoro. The inequality between royals and others and that between the sexes are intimately related, the first drawing on the second for the imagery in which it is expressed. Chiefs and their lineages epitomise male virtues. All other lineages are thrown together into the category of the female or, more specifically, of wives. The royal virtues are typified by the mhondoro who reject biological life, reproduction and death which are associated with women, in favour of incorporeal life-in-death through possession. The organization of the rituals of possession is the responsibility of men. The ability of the royal ancestors to provide rain justifies the claims of the royal lineage to the land and of the chief to his tribute and authority. Mhondoro also typify the characteristic knowledge and authority that is held to distinguish the old (people of parent status) from the young.

The guerillas offered a challenge to all three of these entrenched inequalities. Very few, if any, of them were parents yet they claimed political and moral authority over their elders. They allowed their female comrades a far more significant role in decision making and leadership than had previously been tolerated. The clearest challenge of all was that made to the authority of the chiefs. This too is discussed in Part Four.

* * * * *

In these chapters I have described 'traditional' institutions and practices. In Part Four I describe the use made of them by the guerillas. But before I can do this, one further set of ideas and processes needs to be explained.

The guerillas were able to adapt traditional institutions to their advantage because of the support they received from the mhondoro mediums. And, to a large extent, it was the mediums

who performed the adaptations. Although, in the local view, these mediums are the protectors of tradition, in fact the adaptation of tradition to the needs of the moment is one of their most common 'traditional' activities. Yet again, what at first sight appears to be an innovation introduced by the guerillas turns out to be, in reality, a variation on a long established practice.

Part Three is a bridge between the old and the new. By means of two case studies, I demonstrate how mhondoro mediums transform established ideas and relationships to accommodate the needs of the present, how they set about making and remaking their records of the history of their people. The cases I have chosen demonstrate the transference of political authority from the chiefs to the guerillas as it was carried out by certain of the mhondoro mediums of Dande.

PART THREE**FROM CHIEFS TO GUERRILLAS**

CHAPTER VII

THE POLITICS OF TRADITION I: THE MAKING OF MUTOTA

No matter which aspect of Korekore society one considers there is one issue that always forces itself on the attention. Whether one turns to mythology, to political organization, to the economy, to ritual, to the history of the society or its structures of belief, like an actor who has learned every role in the play, the question of 'rights in land-use' reappears time and again, in different guise but still at the centre of the stage.

These rights take two forms, the rights of the autochthon and the rights of the conqueror. Both forms express ownership of land as a relationship between groups of people: the notion of the autochthon only has meaning in relation to a conqueror.

The status of conqueror cannot be achieved except by taking rights in land from a group of people who had held them in the past. With regard to non-specific large-scale territories, these groups are conceived of as clans. With regard to specific, cultivable areas the groups are lineages and chieftaincies.

The claim of autochthons is ultimately the more powerful for only they can cause the rain to fall and make the land fertile. For this reason, conquerors tend, over time, to transform themselves into autochthons. This transformation occurs at the successful completion of rain-bringing rituals. When the rain falls, conquerors have proved they are autochthons with permanent rights in the land.

These rituals have another effect on the cognitive ordering of social relations. The ideal social order is that each lineage should occupy its own territory to the exclusion of all others. But the principle of clan exogamy and the practice of uxorilocality makes this impossible to realise. In addition, claims to the ownership of territories are always under threat from the members of affinal or stranger lineages who have come to live within

them. By participating in the possession rituals of the mhondoro mediums and the rituals which bring rain, strangers are assimilated to the royal land-owning clan in the category 'commoners'. The threat they present is defused and the ideal social order is achieved.

And there is one further claim, one which logically precedes the others, which, by these rituals, is proved. The mhondoro who incorporates the strangers among his kin is (thought of as) the original conqueror of the territory, the ancestor from whom the head of the royal lineage, the chief, has inherited his rights in land. When the rain falls it demonstrates that the mhondoro to whom offerings were made does indeed own the land and therefore his descendant the chief owns the land.

The coming of the rain reaffirms the claim of the royal, conquering lineage to the land, makes strangers 'at home' in the territory where they live and transforms rights in land by conquest into rights by autochthony, for everyone knows that only autochthons can make the rain fall.

But if the rains fail and drought and famine take possession of the land, a rapid reassessment must be made. The spurious and impudent claims of the conquerors who, in the great scale of time, have only just arrived in the place, are cast aside. Appeals are made to the earliest known owner of the land, the genuine autochthon, the mhondoro who owned and ruled the land before any of the conquerors' ancestors were born. He alone can really bring the rain if only he can be persuaded to try.

The possession rituals, the rituals of rain, the royal genealogies and the myths of conquest and autochthony are the central traditions of the Korekore. In this chapter and the chapter that follows I describe a sequence of radical alterations that occurred to these traditions. They relate to two attacks on the status of the institution at the heart of these traditions, that of the chief.

The first attack on the chiefs was made by the colonial government. The second, very remarkably, was made by their own ancestors speaking through the mediums they possess.

The chiefs and the state

The occupation of the territory that was to become Rhodesia took place in 1890. The rebellion that rose up against the occupation ended in defeat and, for the Shona, a political crisis of mammoth proportions (Ranger 1967:268). The victorious white government set about a full-scale reorganization of Shona society in order to squeeze the last drops of resistance out of it and keep it subservient for ever.

Massive shifts of population were enforced. The most fertile half of the country was allocated to white farmers only. The resident population was moved out. In the process, chieftaincies were broken up and their members scattered. Large numbers of chieftaincies were abolished altogether, others were amalgamated to 'streamline' administration (Garbett 1966:118; see also Holleman 1969, Weinrich 1971 and Ranger 1982b). Chiefs who had been loyal to the settlers in the rebellion were rewarded. Those who had resisted or were considered inadequate were removed from office and replaced by more pliable members of the royal lineage or by non-royals whose descendants succeeded to the chieftaincy. The salaries (known as subsidies) paid to the chiefs who remained provided them with a higher standard of living than their followers and a reason for continued loyalty to the state. The chiefs had become civil servants. As such they were subject to the wishes of their superiors, the 'Native Commissioners' and no longer to those of the mhondoro or their people. The 'ancestral' authority of the chiefs had been replaced by the authority of the state symbolised by a uniform consisting of red robes, a sola -topee and a pair of handcuffs. Their most significant powers were taken from them. The right to try criminal cases was put in the hands of the Commissioners. The boundaries of each chieftaincy were demarcated and defended by the state. The amount of land which could be owned by each peasant farmer (approximately 6 acres) was decreed by law (Garbett 1963b:189f). With the loss of the right to allocate

land, the chiefs suffered a huge decline in prestige.

Today you see natives passing their chiefs with little or no formal salutation. When reproved they will say 'Where is the land?' That is to say: 'The whites are now owners of the land. Why should we salute a landless man?' (Bullock 1928:70).

The chiefs found themselves, in the classic phrase, between two worlds. As salaried members of the administration they were required to enforce the laws of the land on their people but they had no authority, even had they the will, to represent their people to the makers of the laws. The major rituals of the chieftaincy, ^{the} installation and the burial of chiefs, became moments of maximum penetration by the state into the depths of the countryside. The hated collection of taxes, which forced the majority of young men out of their homes and into underpaid European employment, was the one function for which the chief had full authority. Headmen became known as sabhuku, owners of the tax book. Rights in residence in a territory were no longer contingent on a delicate and negotiable matrix of historical precedents and kin relations, but on the inclusion of a name in one tax register rather than another. One could neither get a job nor travel without an identity certificate and one could not get a certificate unless one paid tax (Bourdillon 1971:5).

But resistance, cut down and left for dead in the 1900s, had rested, healed and risen again. By the 1960s the Nationalist parties inside and outside the country posed a serious and volatile threat to the 'peaceful cooperation' which the government claimed existed between the tiny white population and the severely deprived black majority. Once again the chiefs were used by the state to shore up its authority. They were to act as the true representatives of 'the natives' and voice their opposition to any change in the social order that prevailed. A so-called tribal government was set up as an alternative to the equality and democracy promised by the Nationalists when they came to power. A national council of chiefs was appointed

and persuaded to support UDI in 1965. By 1969 chiefs had become members of the Senate and all manner of 'representative' bodies had been established to draw the fire of the Nationalists building up their armies on the borders of the country.

In the early period, no account had been taken of the rituals by which the authenticity of a chief was ensured. Instalment by the government was all the authenticity required. But as the chiefs became a key element in the fight against 'terrorism' it was essential that they be recognised as legitimate by those whom the government considered to be their followers. District Commissioners dedicated themselves to genealogical research in the belief that, if the one true genealogy could be distilled from the trash of the ages, no illegitimate and therefore unpopular appointment need ever take place. Ranger has described the 'almost mystical belief' that 'where there was nationalist agitation in any area this was because the tribal system was not working in a traditional manner' (Ranger 1982b:22).

Throughout this period 'tradition' whether it took the form of a genealogy, a myth or a ritual was assumed to be a rigid, and permanent thing. Change was conceived only as corruption, as loss of authenticity and authority. The administration believed that only the use of the 'original' pristine traditions could guarantee the anti-nationalist authority which they required their servants, the chiefs, to wield.¹

But traditions do change and whether they retain their authority or not depends on why they change, who changes them and the manner in which the change takes place. The first change in Korekore traditions I describe took place over a long period of time. The evidence is fragmentary but sufficient to demonstrate that a major shift in the organization of the experience of identity of the Valley Korekore chieftaincies has taken place. This is the transformation of a fertility principle into a mhondoro: the making of Mutota. This does not derive in the

first instance from the influence of the colonial government but certain of its consequences were taken up by the local District Commissioners in their attempts to win 'traditionalist' support against the nationalist guerillas. Tracing the development of this tradition allows a tentative answer to one of the most difficult questions thrown up by the war - why some mediums supported the liberation struggle while others did not or, at best, declared that their duty was to take care of their descendants who fought on both sides.

The second case is a demonstration of the creativity of the mediums in the face of attempts to control and direct their authority. This is the reinterpretation by Chiwawa of the meaning of the institutions of his shrine brought about by his commitment to the war against the state. Overall, these two chapters set the stage for the biggest shift in traditions that has occurred in Dande in modern times, the shift of political authority from the chiefs to the agents of political liberation, the guerillas, and the subsequent transference of that authority to the heirs of the guerillas, the political committees which have today replaced the chiefs in the day-to-day administration of the countryside.

Mutota vs Chiwawa I

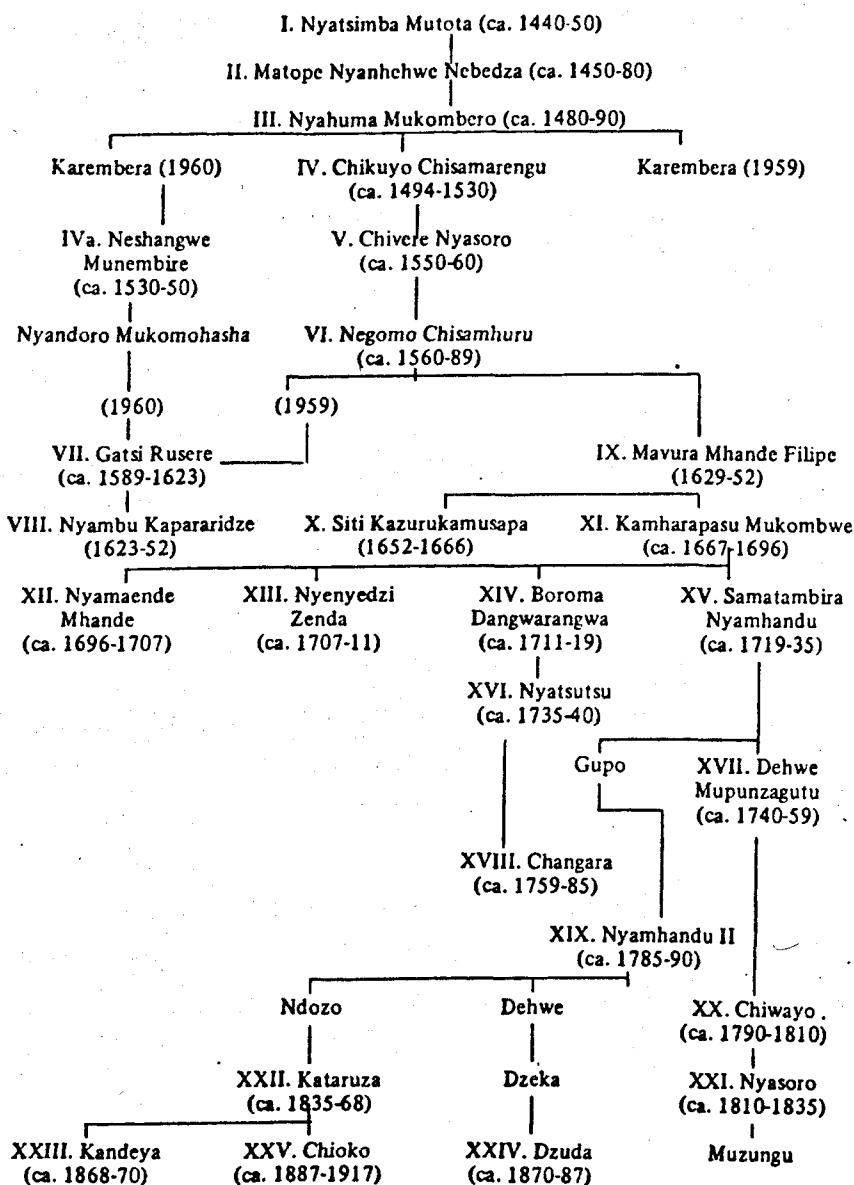
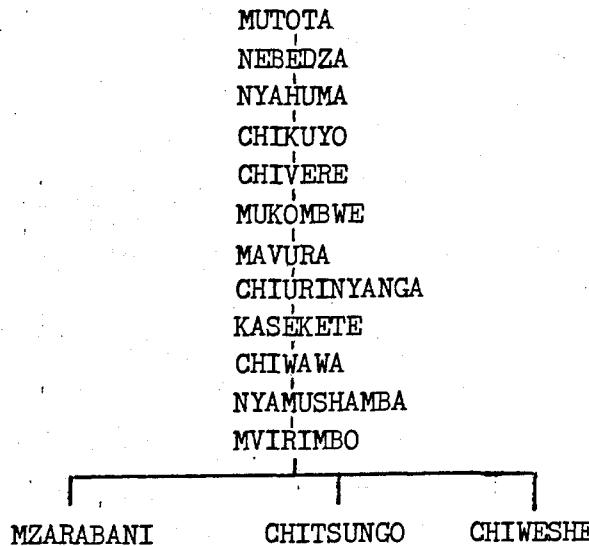
Of the Korekore mhondoro of Dande among the best known and most widely respected is Chiwawa. Chiwawa is regarded as sekuru or ancestor of all the Korekore. When reciting the genealogy of their ancestors, Korekore quite commonly proceed as far as Chiwawa and conclude 'and then come all the Korekore'.

Most mhondoro control only one spirit province. Chiwawa controls two and they are vast, both stretching from the Plateau some miles south of the Escarpment, down the mountainside and north into the Valley. The spirit provinces of today are thought to be territories conquered by the mhondoro when they were alive. Chiwawa's reputation as a warrior and conqueror is consequently

very great. He claims the land between these two provinces as well and, though this claim is disputed, if all this territory had ever been under the authority of one chief as the claim implies, all communication and trade between the Plateau and Dande would have been under his control. One of the two major trade routes operated by the Portuguese for many centuries ran directly through where one of his provinces is found today (Bhila 1982:76). Within his provinces are five separate shrines each supervised by an independent lineage of intermediaries or vatapi. Chiwawa is undoubtedly a major presence among the ancestral personalities that embody the self-identification of the Korekore of the Valley.

It is extremely surprising, therefore, that the account of the history of the Korekore published by Abraham in 1959 reflects none of the importance attributed to Chiwawa today. In fact, with one exception, Abraham's account makes no mention of Chiwawa at all.

The genealogy of the Mutapas, the supposed rulers of the Mwene Mutapa state published by Abraham (see page 222), contains a number of the mhondoro that appear on the current royal genealogy (Nyahuma, Chikuyo, Chivere, Mukombwe etc.)². But the only reference to Chiwawa in this or any other of Abraham's accounts of the Mutapa dynasty occurs in the description of the successor of the Mutapa known as Mukombwe. According to Abraham's informant, the medium of Mutota, Mukombwe had had six sons. The first of these predeceased his father. Sons two to five succeeded each other and the chieftaincy was then inherited by the descendants of sons four and five in turn. The sixth son is said to have died as 'a young man leaving only one son, named Kamota Kasekete the father of Derere Chiwhawha (Chiwawa), the father of Gomo Nyamushamba, the father of Mvirimbo Chuzu, etc.etc.' (Abraham 1959:69). In other words, according to the medium of Mutota, Chiwawa and his lineage were not Mutapas or rulers of the state but members of a minor disinherited branch who were 'under the authority of Changamire (the Rozvi leader) for they were not strong enough to contest the umambo (chieftaincy) with their relatives'.



Mudenge's researches into Rovzi history have shown that the Rozvi were never rulers of Dande (Mudenge 1972:90, see page 50). The claim that they were appears to be an attempt to diminish the political importance of the Korekore lineage who did hold political authority. The same is true of the 'etc.etc.' with which the list of descendants of Chiwawa tails off, thus concealing the links between Chiwawa's lineage and the chiefs who were actually ruling in Dande at the time these statements were made (see genealogy page 150).

It is not only in Abraham's work that Chiwawa is presented as an ancestor of far less significance than his present reputation justifies. In a follow-up to Abraham's article, J.B. Mathews published a brief account of the village of the medium of Mutota (Mathews 1960). He provides a detailed genealogy of the medium's lineage, a sketch map of his village and a range of other details. Among them is the statement that 'Chiwawa is the mhondoro for Matsiwo's people' (pg.70,note 1). I have found most of Mathews' information to be reliable. This statement, that Chiwawa is a Tande mhondoro rather than a Korekore, is entirely wrong. It is unlikely that so painstaking an observer would have recorded it unless he had been misinformed. The implication is that, as Chiwawa is the mhondoro of Matsiwo's Tande people, Mutota and not Chiwawa is the mhondoro of the local Korekore.

One of the most interesting aspects of the historiography of Dande and, more generally, of northern Zimbabwe, is the very great influence that has been exerted by the most recent medium of Mutota, George Kupara. As he was the principal informant of both the scholars who have produced important work on the area, Garbett and Abraham, it is largely his view of the history of the Korekore that has been recorded and published.

One reason for this is that Kupara had the good fortune to be studied just at the time that, partly due to the influence of Jan Vansina, oral history was gaining respectability as a tool for the reconstruction by academic historians of the unrecorded past. Indeed amongst some academic historians (the most striking

example is Mutunhu 1977) Kupara is treated with a reverence quite unlike the attitude taken to him by even the closest of his ex-associates in Dande. This is not to say that the memory of this medium is not respected. It is. But Kupara is thought of as one of a number of important mediums of the past rather than as the sole fount of wisdom which, to exaggerate only slightly, is how he is regarded in some accounts of the statements he has made (for a criticism of this attitude to Kupara see Beach 1980:118).

The point is this. When reading the accounts of the past which Garbett and Abraham recorded from Kupara, it is necessary to take into consideration the context in which these statements were made. My concern is with the relative standings of the mhondoro of Mutota and Chiwawa. In Garbett's work the significance of Chiwawa is as understated as in that of Abraham. Why should the medium of Mutota, the major source of the materials presented by both these writers, have so persistently attempted to minimise the importance of Chiwawa and his descendants?

I think a large part of the answer can be found in the fact that, over the period that Abraham, Mathews and Garbett recorded information from Kupara, the greatest challenge to his authority as a medium came from a medium of Chiwawa.

The opposition between these two mediums developed and increased between 1954 when the medium of Chiwawa was first possessed and 1973 when the medium of Mutota died. In the struggles between them they drew on an ever-widening range of political factors to enhance their positions. But as they battled to achieve for themselves the maximum of local authority, the centre of political life shifted beneath their feet. In the end they found themselves on opposite sides of the war of liberation, the medium of Chiwawa intimately involved with the anti-government guerillas, the medium of Mutota a pawn in the 'psychological warfare' carried out by the army of the state.

The antipathy which the two mediums felt for each other arose from and reflected an underlying structural opposition between their mhondoro. To show this it is necessary to analyse briefly the royal genealogy on which their names appear.

Territory and History

Every royal lineage has a genealogy linking the immediate ancestors of the chief to the original inhabitants, conquerors or autochthons, of the territory. It is because it 'owns' a genealogy of this kind that a lineage can claim royal status and ownership of the territory in which it lives.

The royal genealogy is the most important political institution of the chieftaincy to which it belongs. It determines the order in which requests for rain are sent from local to most senior ancestor. By recitation of a royal genealogy, aspirant mediums prove the authenticity of their possession. Other lineages have 'histories' containing two or three generations. These are of concern only to themselves. The genealogy of the chiefs is thought of as the history of the society from its earliest beginnings to the present day.

All Korekore royal genealogies derive ultimately from Nebedza Matope, the original conqueror of Dande, and from Mutota, traveller from Guruuswa and source of the fertility of the land. At first sight these genealogies appear to differ from 'commoner' genealogies in nothing but scale. In both sorts, each name is connected to the others by ties of kinship, usually father to son. In reciting the genealogy of the Chitsungo, Kasekete and Chiweshe houses, which is the one I am concerned with here, it is said that 'Nyahuma is the one who gave birth to Chikuyo, Chikuyo gave birth to Chivere' and so on down to the present chiefs (see genealogy 3 page 222). With no more evidence than the genealogy itself, one would assume that each of the names on the genealogy refers to a chief who ruled the whole of the territory now under the authority of the present chiefs. But this is not so.

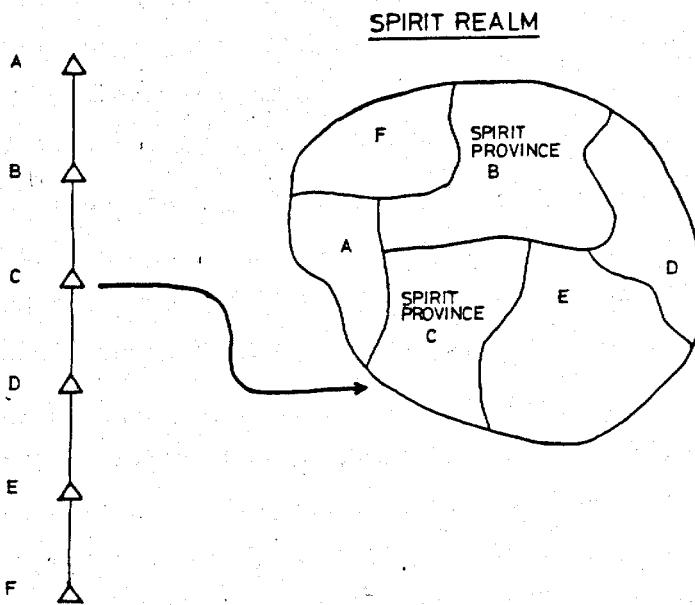
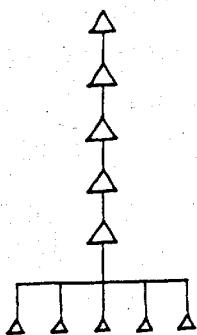
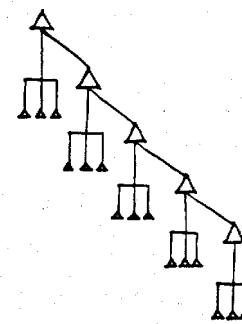
Each name on the royal genealogy refers not simply to an ancestor but to a mhondoro who is the 'guardian' of a spirit province which he is said either to have conquered or to have been allocated as a section of a province conquered by a more senior mhondoro. Each ancestor named is thought to have ruled only that spirit

province of which his mhondoro is now the guardian. The genealogy is therefore not a list of all the past rulers of the chief's territory, but a list of all the spirit provinces that make up the spirit realm which roughly corresponds to the territory of the chief. Diagram 8 illustrates the relationship between the genealogy and the spirit realm. Each letter on the genealogy indicates a mhondoro. The same letter on the sketch map indicates the province of which this mhondoro is the guardian.³

As each mhondoro is said to be the son of the mhondoro one above him on the genealogy, it would seem that the only people who could claim descent from any of these ancestors would be the royal lineages. Again, this is not so. Within many of the spirit provinces live lineages that claim to be descended from the mhondoro of that province and can provide a genealogy linking them to that mhondoro. The distinctive feature of these claims not dealt with in earlier chapters is that these lineages maintain that they are descended only from their mhondoro and his ancestors. They are not descended from any mhondoro junior to their own.

For example, in the spirit province of Chivere, the Kwainona lineage claims descent from Chivere but not from the more junior mhondoro Mukombwe, Mavura, Chiurinyanga, etc. (see genealogy 3 page 222). Of all the lineages that make these claims, only the royal lineage claims descent from all the mhondoro. They however make a particular point of their descent from the mhondoro Chiwawa. The different branches or houses of the chieftaincy derive from Chiwawa's various sons and Chiwawa is said to be the sekuru, the 'grandfather' or ancestor of all the Korekore. Logically it should be correct to say the same of any of the mhondoro senior to Chiwawa. In fact this is never said and it is denied when it is suggested.

The royal genealogy contains a number of other apparent inconsistencies. For example, Nebedza is thought of as the conqueror of the whole of Dande and of other territories besides but he has only a small spirit province of his own, no bigger

Diagram 8Diagram 9Diagram 10

than those of many mhondoro junior to him. Further, all the lineages that claim descent from the ancestors of the royal lineage are members of the Elephant clan but they are not all royal themselves. Only those who claim descent specifically from Chiwawa are eligible for election to the chieftaincy. The rest belong to the category I have termed 'commoners'.

From the point of view of the royal lineage, the relationship of the ancestors to the living is as contained in diagram 9. From the point of view of the many 'commoner' lineages that claim descent from the mhondoro, it looks more like diagram 10.

Drawing on no more evidence than this, it would seem that the royal genealogy has been compiled from a number of independent smaller genealogies and traditions. These traditions consist of myths such as Myths I to V, discussed in Chapter V, (there are many similar) which concern the conquests by Korekore mhondoro of territories previously controlled by autochthons, and of rituals, especially the offerings for rain made by the inhabitants of each spirit province to their own conqueror/owner mhondoro which precede the elevation of these requests to the higher, encompassing tradition (corresponding to Myth I, Mutota's journey from Guruuswa) by the transmission of the offerings up the hierarchy of ancestors.

The apical ancestors of each local tradition seem to have been linked to each other as father to son, forming a list which has had Matope Nebedza and Mutota placed at its head. The list as a whole is claimed by the royal lineage as its genealogy. The effect is that ownership of this genealogy is a claim to ownership of all the spirit provinces that it names. If the descendants of Chiwawa were no different from the descendants of any other mhondoro, one would expect them to lay claim to no more than Chiwawa's province. But because they own this genealogy they are different. They are chiefs and they claim the provinces of all the mhondoro as their own.

Some qualifications are necessary. I do not have information on every spirit province. From those for which I do have information it is clear that not every spirit province contains a lineage claiming descent from the local mhondoro. Where these exist they are the lineages that provide intermediaries for the mediums, the vatapi. Again, it is only the lineages of intermediaries that have lived in the province for a number of generations who claim descent from the mhondoro (see Chapter VI).

Secondly, not all provinces within the realm are recorded on the royal genealogy. The provinces listed at present are those which either have resident mediums or have had in the recent past. The royal genealogies are not static. The genealogy reproduced on page 150 is only one of the many I recorded. These differ from each other only in detail, but they differ more from those recorded by Garbett twenty years ago (1977: 64) and still more from those recorded in the more distant past (Beach 1976b).

Thirdly, in a few cases the territory of a mhondoro associated with one chieftaincy is found in the territory of another. In each case there is a specific explanation for this, either mythological (e.g. a mhondoro moved from his home to a foreign territory as a result of an incident of the past) or historical (e.g. a medium received permission from the mhondoro of that place to take up residence there). That such explanations always exist indicates that these overlappings are experienced as inconsistencies. Perhaps in the past, before the permanent delineation of the territories of the chiefs by the state, such inconsistencies provided argument for a rethinking of the boundaries by the chiefs concerned. If this is so, consistency would have been re-established in a manner not possible for almost 100 years.

These qualifications do not deflect the thrust of the argument. The royal genealogies appear to contain a history far more extensive than that of any other lineage. But, although the genealogy does to some extent extend backwards in time, its

more significant extension is in space.⁴ There is no doubt that the names higher on the genealogy are thought to refer to people who lived before those whose names appear lower down. This is shown by the 'X gave birth to Y' method of recounting the sequence and also by explicit statements that the senior ancestors lived long ago, long before the birth of the ancestors of the person reciting the genealogy for instance. Nonetheless, the history recorded on the genealogy appears to be an account of the progressive subordination of independent lineages to a lineage whose royal status is acquired, expressed, maintained and extended by its right to distribute or withdraw rights to the basic requirement of agricultural production, land. The acceptance by the dominated lineages of their subservient position is expressed, ideologically, by the inclusion of their ancestor on the genealogy of the chiefs and, in practice, by the obligation of the members of this lineage to either pay tribute to the chief and accept the rulings of his court or to abandon their land.

That 'history' is a mirror image of rights in territory is clear from the self-perception of royal lineages that have lost their land. The Tande claim that in the past they owned all of Dande until the Korekore conquered it. This corresponds to the location of the heartland of the Tande Matsiwo chieftaincy, its core villages, on very dry soils, far from a major source of river water. The many Tande who live there suffer from poverty of a severity extreme even in Dande. In contrast to the Korekore royal genealogies that contain upwards of eight generations and are widely known, the only Tande who could supply me with a genealogy more than three generations in depth was the medium of the mhondoro Madzomba speaking in trance.

An extreme version of this condition is displayed by the Dema people. It seems that their determined resistance to incorporation within the Mutapa state (kudema means 'to defeat') led eventually to the loss of their lands (Beach 1980:66, 148). When they were finally conquered by an ancestor of the Chisunga chieftaincy,

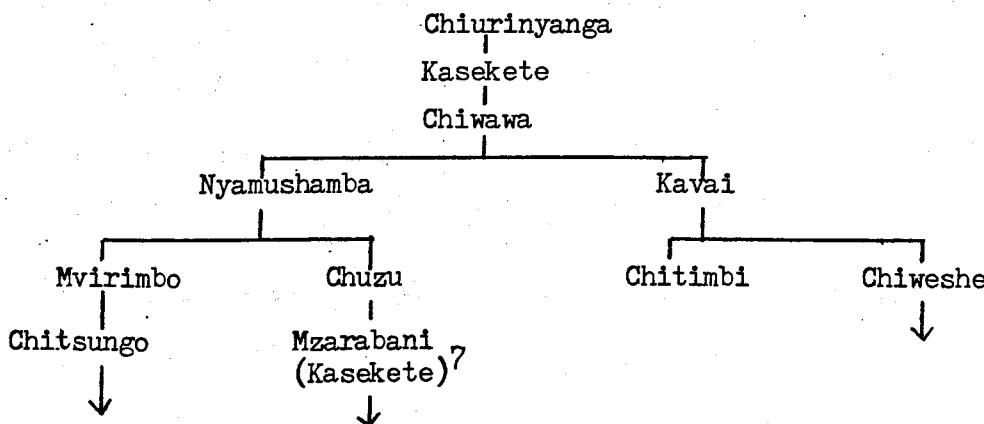
they took to the hills in the north-west of Dande living principally as hunters and gatherers. Their leaders can name only a single mhondoro who is exclusively their own. As one Dema elder expressed their position: 'We are little, little, little children. We don't know where we come from or who we are'.⁵

From Chiwawa to Mutota

The information that territory = history makes it possible to understand why the Kaskete/Chitsungo/Chiweshe royal genealogy is constituted in its present form. On page 150 is reproduced the basic genealogy of these three houses. It has been simplified but contains all the significant ancestors. More detail is given in the discussion that follows.

A) Chiwawa

The genealogy given below is a detailed version of the lower reaches of the main genealogy. This contains by itself as many and as varied ancestors as are generally found in the upper reaches of a royal genealogy. As the ancestor whose sons founded the independent chieftaincies, Chiwawa is thought of as the musikarudzi, the founder of the lineage.⁶ His father, Kasekete, is less clearly defined as a personality and his father is no more than a name.



B) Mukombwe and Mavura

Mukombwe is an enigmatic figure marking a major shift in the history of the area. The name may refer to two or more individuals, rulers of the Mutapa state, or to a whole period, the late 17th century. Mukombwe is famous in Shona tradition

as a goveranyika or sharer out of lands. According to this tradition, he was a Mutapa who redistributed and created a large number of chieftaincies, a tactic which has been interpreted as an attempt to stabilise the Mutapa state and shore up 'his' own power (Beach 1980:131). This tradition has a pale reflection in Dande. It is said by some, notably those who live near Mukombwe's own large spirit province on the eastern border of Dande, that all the spirit provinces of Dande were allocated to the individual mhondoro by Mukombwe.

I am not concerned with the historical accuracy of the Mukombwe traditions but with the appearance of his name on this genealogy. The break between Mukombwe (an actual ruler or set of rulers operating in the real world of politics) and Chiurinyanga his 'son' (no more than a name) is significant. Breaks of this kind contain information about the structure and durability of the genealogy.

In some versions of the genealogy Mavura is placed one above Mukombwe. In others he is omitted (Beach 1976b, see page 244). Mavura is the earliest of the mhondoro mentioned by name in Portuguese records (Beach 1980:118). It is possible that he is the Mavura who in the 1620s gained Portuguese support to defeat the established Mutapa and gain temporary control of the state. But this is by no means sure. Mavura means simply 'water'. Samvura (owner of the rain) is a common term of address for any mhondoro. Garbett's genealogy contains two separate Mavura figures (Garbett 1977:64).

C) Nyahuma

Turning to the upper reaches of the genealogy, among Nyahuma, Chikuyu and Chivere is found a sense of lineal unity similar to that from Chiurinyanga downwards. Garbett's map (page 83) shows an uncharacteristic lack of definition in the provinces attributed to these mhondoro. Chikuyu's province in the west flows into Nyahuma's as it approaches the centre of Dande, and then into Chivere's and Chikuyu's in the east. The impression given is that these mhondoro share land rights in a manner

quite dissimilar to the other mhondoro on the same map. The reason for this is that this is a case where the provinces of 'sons' are found within those of their 'fathers'. The provinces of Nyahuma and Chikuyo are adjacent. If you are in Chikuyo's province it is legitimate to say that you are in Nyahuma's. However, though Nebedza is 'father' to Nyahuma, if you are in Nyahuma's province it is wrong to say that you are in Nebedza's. Chikuyo and Nyahuma form a set but the break between Nyahuma and his 'father' seems of the same type as that between Chiurinyanga and Mukombwe. From Chiurinyanga to Mukombwe one moves from a vague figure appropriate to the top of a genealogy to a real historical individual. From Nyahuma to Nebedza one moves from, possibly, the ancestor of a conquering Korekore lineage (see Myth III) into the realms of mythology and symbolism. Nebedza Matope, son of Mutota, appears in the mythology as an image of the mud rolling down the Escarpment after the rain (Mutota) has fallen on the top (see page 184).

D) Chivere

I have no space for a full analysis of this mhondoro. Within his own spirit province myths are told which claim that Chivere originally entered Dande from the north (i.e. the opposite direction to the Mutota journey) and that his original clan was Eland (Shava Mukonde). He is especially remembered by the Tande Matsiwo chieftaincy as the Korekore who conquered them 'way back in the past'. He is said to have stolen rain-making magic from Musuma in order to bring fertility to his own descendants.⁸

I have already discussed Mutota and Nebedza Matope. That Nyahuma/Nebedza is a structural break is confirmed by the fact that many other lineages exist with Mutota and Nebedza or Matope as the two senior ancestors.⁹

One final point. Some versions of the genealogy I collected include the mhondoro Kagoro. Kagoro has a territory just east of Dande but he has no ritual significance for the Dande Mutota tradition despite the fact that he is considered by some to be a brother of the senior mhondoro Nehanda.¹⁰ In one of these

versions Kagoro is placed between Mukombwe and Kasekete (Chiurinyanga is missing). In another the order of Mukombwe and Mavura is reversed and Kagoro comes after Mavura before Kasekete:

<u>lineage fragment i</u>	<u>lineage fragment ii</u>
Chivere	Chivere
Mavura	Mukombwe
Mukombwe	Mavura
Kagoro	Kagoro
Kasekete	Kasekete

The significance of this is that it is only at these particular places on the genealogy that alterations (or indeed mistakes) in reciting the lineage occur. Chiurinyanga and his descendants form a set as do Nyahuma and his descendant. Stray mhondoro are never inserted within these.

The evidence I have presented is only a small part of that available, but it is enough to justify the division of the royal genealogy into two purely mythical figures (Mutota and Matope), two sublineages (Chiurinyanga etc. and Nyahuma etc.) and three names relating to separate historical traditions (Chivere, Mavura, Mukombwe).

The making of the modern Mutota

In the most important of their myths, Mutota leads the future Korekore towards their new home. It seems natural therefore that Mutota should be the senior Korekore mhondoro. However, as I demonstrated in Chapter V, far from being 'the first Monomotapa' (Abraham 1959:84), Mutota was not even a chief. Therefore he cannot logically be said to be a mhondoro. The first ancestor who fulfills all the requirements of a mhondoro is the Nebedza aspect of Nebedza Matope, the chief who conquered Dande and who has a spirit province named after him.

If Mutota is not a mhondoro, he cannot have a medium. In the Portuguese records that exist for the area, many other mhondoro are mentioned.

The documents of Zumbo covering the period 1770s to 1800s are full of examples of the roles played by the mhondoro Nyamasoka, Samarengu, Inyamapfeka, Bedza and Namkova as arbiters in matters of war and peace, trade disputes and political misunderstandings between the Portuguese at Zumbo and the neighbouring African rulers as well as among the rulers themselves (Mudenge 1976:35).

But there is no reference in any Portuguese document to a medium or mhondoro of Mutota (Mudenge: personal communication). According to Beach there is not even any mention of Mutota as a 'state founder' before the 1860s (Beach 1980:61). When he does appear, in Pacheco's description of his voyage up the Zambezi, he is mentioned only as an ancestor who came from the original home of the people (Pacheco 1883:21). And here, as elsewhere, it is Nebedza who is described as the leading 'prophet' in Dande and neighbouring Chidima (22).

In the account of mediums active in the 18th and 19th centuries published by Abraham, the same mediums as those listed by Mudenge are mentioned along with the note that the mhondoro who appears most frequently in the Portuguese records is Nebedza (Abraham 1966:30n). He writes that a 17th century Mutapa 'was influenced by the mhondoro-spirits with regard to policy to be followed versus the Portuguese' (Abraham 1966:44n) and suggests that one of these may have been Mutota but provides no evidence of this. The first definite mention of Mutota as a mhondoro occurs in the 1880s (Abraham 1966:3in).

Two conclusions are possible. Either there had been previous mediums of Mutota but because Mutota's spirit province is on the Plateau, Portuguese informants made no contact with him and have left no record. Considering the amount of trade carried out by the Portuguese on the Plateau, it is highly unlikely that they would not have come into contact with the major political figure the medium of Mutota would undoubtedly have been. Moreover, according to Mudenge, Nebedza is frequently referred to in Portuguese records as the most senior of all Korekore mhondoro (personal communication). If there had been a Mutota mhondoro and medium, Nebedza is unlikely to have been referred to in this way.

The other possibility is that the medium of the 1880s was the first medium of Mutota and that this medium converted a non-mhondoro ancestor, an anthropomorphic fertility principle into, as it were, a flesh and blood spirit. Who was this medium?

We know that the grandfather of George Kupara, the medium active throughout this century, had been the Mutota medium before him.¹¹ Kupara was first possessed in 1919. Before him a Tsenga man named Jonasi Kuriwuri had been the medium, but he died after a very few years. As it is unusual for a mediumship to last less than a lifetime the medium of the 1880s mentioned by Abraham is quite likely to have been Kupara's grandfather.

As there are so many traditions accepting Mutota as their original ancestor, why did the first Mutota medium appear on the Escarpment overlooking Dande and claim the three Kasekete chieftaincies rather than any others as his descendants?

From the little that is known of the first Mutota medium, an answer can be suggested.

Kupara's grandfather, a man named Gavanga, was a member of the Whata chieftaincy that had produced a number of mediums of the Mazoe Nehanda tradition. He was in fact related to two of these, including Charwe, the medium of Nehanda active during the rebellion (Garbett 1977: 81).

It is recorded that Nehanda/Charwe thought of Dande as the home of her mhondoro. In the 1960s an oral historian recorded a number of memories and traditions of the 1896 rebellion:

Nehanda sensed the dangers of being surprised and captured in her caves...She called Chidamba, Chiweshe and others and told them to take care of themselves since she was going to Dande where she originally came from (Chivanda 1966:12).

It is clear from the context that this refers to the home of the mhondoro not the medium. If this medium considered Dande to be the home of the mhondoro it is possible that the Guruuswa tradition that includes Nehanda as the daughter of Mutota (there are other versions with other daughters) was known and that this persuaded Gavanga that Dande was where his possession by Mutota was most likely to be recognised and effective.

The evidence is slight but the important point is this. It has come to be accepted that only the 'descendants' of the Dande Mutota are the 'real' Korekore and that others who claim descent from Mutota have in some way tampered with their traditions in order to affiliate themselves to him (e.g. Bourdillon 1971:16). All Korekore Mutota traditions are equally legitimate. Once the idea of an historical Mutota of the mid-15th or any other century is set aside, it is apparent that the disproportionate amount of attention the Dande Mutota tradition has received is due to the chance decision of the medium Gavanga to make the Dande area his home when he gave Mutota human expression for the first time.

Little more is known of the first two mediums, but there is a great deal of information about the reorganization of the structures of authority carried out by the third.

When Kupara became Mutota in 1919, the Tavara mhondoro Dzivaguru and Karuva were the most powerful rain-bringers in the eastern part of the Valley. But early in his career the influence of these mediums was abruptly terminated. This followed the arrest and conviction of Chief Chigango, protector of the shrine of Karuva in 1923 for the ritual execution by burning of a man accused of causing a drought by deflowering the virgin wife of Karuva in his sacred grove (Bourdillon 1979:247; Garbett 1977:67). No new mediums of the senior mhondoro of this tradition have appeared since this traumatic incident. In addition it appears that there had been no medium of the Tavara mhondoro Musuma for many years.

Perhaps, whether there were Tavara mediums active or not, Mutota/Kupara would still have claimed to be the most powerful bringer of rain. Certainly this is implicit in the Guruuswa mythology. But the absence of Tavara mediums in the Valley must have helped to establish the overwhelming authority of Mutota as senior rain-bringer.

His authority expanded in other areas as well. In addition to the many lineages of mhondoro who had considered Mutota to be their original ancestor before the first Mutota medium, some of the mhondoro who are today considered to be 'sons' of Mutota have only recently joined his family (Garbett 1977:82). This has been achieved by the senior medium discovering in trance that a mhondoro not previously thought to have any relationship with him is in fact a forgotten son or daughter, either left behind in Guruuswa or born after their mothers had run away from Mutota's village. For example, until the mid 1950s the mhondoro Madzomba was known to be an ancestor of the Tande people. Even today, speaking in trance, the medium of Madzomba describes his mhondoro as a sister's son of Bangomwe, the senior Tande mhondoro. However, after the death of the medium of Bangomwe, the medium of Madzomba 'revealed' that his mhondoro was in fact a son of Mutota. His mother had been a wife of Mutota who had deserted him and taken up with Bangomwe. The medium argued that as his mother had become pregnant before she left Mutota her child Madzomba was Mutota's son. This was accepted by the medium of Mutota (Garbett 1977:82). Madzomba is now entrenched as a leading Korekore mhondoro who travelled with Mutota from Guruuswa. Tande elders claim that Madzomba's spirit province was given to him by the Tande just as they gave provinces to all the other Korekore mhondoro when they arrived in Dande.

Korekore mhondoro have also become attached to Mutota in this and similar ways (Nyajore, Nyachava etc) and so have Zezuru mhondoro from the Plateau. They have affiliated themselves to Mutota in order that his authority as super-apical ancestor, as well as the enormous prestige accumulated by the medium Kupara over his very long mediumship, might provide them with authority within their own spirit domains (Garbett 1977:83).

Garbett, following Abraham, attributed the stability and authority of the mhondoro Mutota to his historical role as 'Monomotapa' and his consequent position as the senior of a stable lineage of deceased Mutapas. The argument that the genealogies of mhondoro

are equivalent to king lists of the state is no longer acceptable. The Mutota/Mutapa association is only tenable in a very limited symbolic sense (see page 190). For many of the mhondoro on this royal genealogy there is no evidence that they were Mutapa at all and it is clear that the genealogy itself is far from stable.¹²

It seems far more likely that the pre-eminence of the medium of Mutota is the result of the achievement of human form by a previously incorporeal, uncontrollable principle of authority. The mediums of the new mhondoro provided a focus of political allegiance especially effective because it enabled all existing royal lineages to retain equal status one with another. Before Mutota the most powerful mediums had been those possessed by the senior mhondoro of the individual lineages (Nebedza, Nyamapfeka etc.). Now a single medium was able to unite these lineages and exert authority over all the chiefs of the Valley Korekore.¹³

The power of possession

If royal genealogies change over time, and the evidence is that they can be altered and rearranged quite radically, this presents a problem. The authority of a genealogy derives from the belief that it is an accurate account of events of the past. For example, the authenticity of an aspirant medium is proved if he can recite the royal genealogy in trance. This is evidence that he is possessed by a mhondoro who participated in these events long ago. And yet the genealogy recited by mediums today is not precisely the same as that recited twenty years ago. If genealogies change, how do they retain their authority?

Part of the answer is that the genealogy retains its authority because it is spoken by a medium possessed by a mhondoro whose knowledge, unlike that of humans or of any other kind of spirit, is perfect and complete. The mhondoro is dead. What he says must be true. The mhondoro is thought of as altruistic, of benefit to the society as a whole. Why then should anyone doubt the truth of whatever a mhondoro happens to say?

But there is more to it than this. The way in which the notion of possession is constructed allows the established medium to, as it were, change his mind. When a medium is first possessed he must repeat precisely the royal genealogy as it is generally known. Should the medium fail to convince it is not presumed that he is a conscious fraud but that his possession is not yet strong enough for the truth which is known by the mhondoro to 'come through'. The medium is sent away, usually into the care of an established medium, and told to return when his possession is stronger. However, once a medium has been accepted as genuine and established in a spirit province, 'new' information that he gives out is interpreted to be the mhondoro coming through even more strongly and clearly than he had before. Alterations to the accepted royal genealogy (or any other body of knowledge) are therefore readily assimilated into the category of 'truth'. The genealogy has not changed. Its true form has at last been revealed and is now as unquestionable as was the version accepted before.

The mediums' authority to produce 'new' versions of accepted truth is not unconstrained. I said that the speaking of certain ideas by a medium while in a state interpreted as possession by a mhondoro legitimates those ideas. But the mechanism by which truth is established is more clearly seen if this is put the other way round. If a medium fails to achieve legitimization of the statements he makes he is not believed to have been truly possessed.

For example, in 1981, the medium of Madzomba, speaking as the mhondoro, appointed the son of the late chief Matsiwo to succeed his father. The late chief Matsiwo had been extremely unpopular and this choice was rejected by a well-liked, newly-elected council member who was present at the ritual. The councillor argued with the possessed medium, challenging the truth of the claims he had made to justify his choice. This is extremely provocative and unusual behaviour. It is believed that a mhondoro will use mystical means to punish those who behave disrespectfully towards them. The intention of the council member was to demonstrate by his attitude that the medium was not actually possessed but had been bribed by the late chief's son.

The attack came off. No-one present defended the medium and he capitulated. The medium was already unpopular because of the sympathies he had expressed during the war but his authority had never previously been challenged in public. Now the fear of challenging an established medium was swept aside. Soon afterwards it was common gossip that the medium was taking bribes and could no longer become possessed. Some months later he was declared a fraud by a more respected medium and forced to admit this by the mediums' symbolic recantation, the wearing of trousers.

Success in achieving acceptance of his interpretation of important matters is evidence of authentic possession by a medium. Failure can lead to disaster. But not all matters are equally important in this respect.

In the course of his working life a medium will be asked to give judgement or advice on a vast array of subjects. At any of the major rituals he leads, numbers of people will ask the medium to solve their problems and cure their diseases. Many private consultations are held day by day. Failure to solve one or many of these problems has no serious consequences. The sick are notoriously eclectic in their choice of healers. That a medium is unable to cure an illness and the patient goes on to consult another source of power, either hospital or healer, may lessen the medium's prestige but does not threaten his legitimacy. What is damaging is failure to resolve problems of significance for the chieftaincy or the lineage as a whole, problems about the control or the use of particular areas of land, or about who may legitimately be given control of them. It is the claim to intimate knowledge of what is right in these matters, acquired during participation in the events of the past when things were as they should be, that defines the mhondoro in distinction to all other sorts of spirits. If a medium does not manage to persuade in these matters this may be taken as evidence that he is not genuinely possessed by a mhondoro.¹⁴

The ritual in which the mhondoro mediums participate determines the subject matter of the discourse that will take place between ancestor and descendants. At the minor ritual consultations this may be the health of an individual. At the major rituals at which representatives of the entire society attend, the subject matter is the relationship between a lineage and its land, between a chief and his territory. The medium goes into trance. Because of the past history of the medium this is interpreted to be possession by a mhondoro. The answers given by the medium to the questions or problems put to him will confirm this interpretation or cause it to be doubted. If it is not doubted then at the end of the session a new version of the past has been articulated, a new genealogy, a new attribution of rights in land and authority over people has come into being and has been accepted as true, unchanging and eternal.

The genesis of a genealogy

Once Mutota had been established as the senior mhondoro of the Valley Korekore, the authority of his medium was greater than that of any other. Standing at the apex of a number of previously independent royal genealogies, claiming to be the only one who knew the complete 'history' of all the ancestors (Garbett 1963:210), this medium was in a position to rearrange the hierarchies of authority within his 'descendant' chieftaincies, not without any restriction but with an extremely free hand. We have seen Mutota/Kupara exerting the authority of his mhondoro over the Tavara mhondoro who were in disarray in the early years of his mediumship. We have seen him adding numbers of new sons to his family, drawing on Tande and Zezuru as well as adjacent Korekore traditions to do so. It seems very likely that Mutota/Kupara was also responsible for the form which the royal genealogy of the three Kasekete related chieftaincies takes today.

Typically, the successor to a vacant chieftaincy is chosen by the medium possessed by its senior ancestor. This may be the mhondoro that stands at the juncture of the royal genealogy and

a senior branch or it may be the earliest known ancestor of the lineage as a whole. Whichever it is, the mhondoro that selects the chiefs always has a specific and intimate relationship to that chieftaincy.

The medium of Chiwawa, as immediate ancestor of the three Kasekete houses, claims the right to appoint their chiefs.¹⁵ This is accepted by the Kasekete and Chiweshe houses and by some of those who live in Chitsungo's territory. Others, notably those who live outside Chiwawa's spirit province, claim that a more senior mhondoro is responsible for the Chitsungo house. This mhondoro is not, as one might expect from the genealogy on page 231 Mvirimbo or Nyamushamba, the ancestors which Chitsungo shares with no other house. It is Nyahuma, inside whose spirit province many members of the Chitsungo chieftaincy live. When Nyahuma has no medium, this duty devolves on his 'son' Chikuyo. But neither Nyahuma nor Chikuyu have any direct genealogical connection to this house. On the face of it there appears to be no reason why the Chitsungo house should not have its chiefs chosen by its immediate ancestor Chiwawa as its brother houses do.

The reason is this. At the turn of the century the Kasekete Kamota chieftaincy which had been the rulers of Dande for generations (Beach 1980:146) was divided into three by the newly established white government.¹⁶ A certain Mzarabani who was chief during the 1896-7 uprising lost his position as leader of this house because of the support he had given the rebels. His chieftaincy was demoted to a headmanship and made subservient to the newly created Kasekete chieftaincy with which those who had supported the Europeans were rewarded. A branch of this chieftaincy living some distance away in the west of Dande was created an independent chieftaincy under the name of Chitsungo, largely to reduce the authority of ex-chief Mzarabani. The Chiweshe chieftaincy on the Plateau was also demoted to a headmanship and placed under Kasekete.

Once the Chitsungo house had been established and a subsidy had begun to be paid to the chief (in 1936 it stood at £2.00 per annum) a mhondoro was required to select each chief in succession. Chiwawa was ancestor of this chieftaincy as he had been its

ancestor when it was a non-chiefly lineage segment. Logically he could have selected the chiefs and many mediums and vatapi in Dande today believe that he should have that right. But he has not. Why he has not will very shortly become clear.

The mhondoro Nyahuma and Chikuyo form a set separate from those above and below them on the royal genealogy. They appear in the genealogy recorded by Abraham from Kupara/Mutota (Abraham 1959) and in every genealogy collected subsequently. But in records previous to Abraham and previous to the creation of the Chitsungo chieftaincy there is no mention of them at all, (see genealogy 5). They are not the direct ancestors of the Chitsungo house and yet they appoint the Chitsungo chiefs. Who are they? Where do they come from?

GENEALOGY 5

RULER LISTS OF THE MUTAPA STATE: PRE-MUKOMBWE (from Beach 1976b)

	[1] Mello de Castro 1763	[2] Pacheco 1861-62	[3] Abraham 1958	[4] Chitsungo 1960	[5] Mushoshoma 1965	[6] Kupara 1967	[7] Kasekete 1967
Nemapangere							
Nemangoro	Mutota	Mutota	Mutota	Mutota	Mutota	Mutota	Mutota
Nebeza	Matope	Matope (Nyanhehwe)	Nhebedza	Nemhedza	Nobedza	Nobedza	Nobedza
		Nyahuma (Mukombero)	Nyahuma	Nyahuma	Nyahuma	Nyahuma	Nyahuma
		Chikuyo (Chisamarengu)	Chikuyo	Chikuyo			Chikuya
		Chivere (Nyasoro)	Chivere	Chimvere			Chivere
		Nogomo (Chisamharu)			Chitoo		Gome
		Gatsi Rusere					
		Nyambu Kapararidze					
		Mavura Nhande		Mavura	Mavura	Mavura	Mavura
		Siti Kazurukumusapa					
Mucombe	Mucombe	Mukombwe Kamharapasu	Mukombwe	Mukombwe	Mukombwe	Mukombwe	Mukombwe

I can suggest an answer to these questions by interrupting this narrative for the last time to give a brief account of an incident of in-fighting between mediums that took place in Dande in 1981.

For various reasons the authenticity of the current medium of Chivere had been for some years the subject of suspicion and doubt. One of his most vehement opponents was the medium of Chiodzamamera whose name was Enos. In March 1981 a young man living near Enos' village displayed the signs of possession by a mhondoro. Enos took him under his care and within a few weeks he announced that this young man was the real medium of Chivere. This, he maintained, proved the fraudulence of the earlier medium whose enemy he was.

It was at this time that the selection of the new chief Matsiwo took place. As described above, the medium of Madzomba received a powerful challenge from a recently elected councillor about his choice of the late chief's son as successor to his father. Two pieces of information are necessary to understand how these two events fit together. For the first we need to go back a little in time. The reason that the medium of Madzomba had been charged with making this selection was that there was no medium of the senior mhondoro of the Matsiwo chieftaincy, Bangomwe. Had there been one he and not Madzomba would have chosen the new chief. When the Madzomba medium had capitulated to the challenge from the councillor he had said that he (that is, the mhondoro) would consult Bangomwe to discover his choice for the successor. The convention he was drawing on is that, in the absence of a medium, a mhondoro who has a medium can be asked to consult the mhondoro whose opinion is required 'in the bush', and then reveal his message. If the councillor was to secure the succession he preferred it was suddenly of importance that there should be a medium of Bangomwe so that this mhondoro could speak directly to his descendants and not through the medium of Madzomba whose veracity was not beyond doubt.

The second piece of information is that the councillor was a close friend and long-time political ally of the medium Enos.

Within a short time Enos had announced that there had been a mis-diagnosis of the mhondoro possessing the new medium in his care. His mhondoro was not Chivere as was previously believed. That battle was put to one side. The mhondoro was, in fact, Bangomwe. And this is the mhondoro that was eventually confirmed to be possessing the new medium.

The emergence of a particular mhondoro at a particular time is the product of the relationship between a new medium and his professional associates, his vatapi, and especially the medium that sponsors and advises him. As a senior medium and the principal tester of new mediums Mutota/Kupara was in an extremely powerful position to control which new mhondoro emerged and where. Perhaps a tradition of spirit provinces associated with the mhondoro Nyahuma and Chikuyo had existed in the area where the Chitsungo chieftaincy was created but without mediums until the need for one to appoint the leaders of the new chieftaincy arose. It is now impossible to say. But all the evidence points to the conclusion that Mutota/Kupara produced Nyahuma and Chikuyu mediums by assigning these names to aspirant mediums precisely when and where he needed them. It is not possible that the medium of Nyahuma could have begun to appoint the Chitsungo chiefs without the approval or authority of Kupara. By allowing Nyahuma this right, Kupara/Mutota was considerably reducing the authority that the medium of Chiwawa had held.

This hypothesis also explains why these 'new' mhondoro appear on the genealogies at such a senior position. A set of ancestors senior to Chiwawa, with the responsibility for selecting chiefs and owing their allegiance only to the medium of Mutota was an admirable solution to a contradiction of authorities and statuses that had emerged within the system because of the transformation of Mutota from fertility principle into mhondoro.

In short, all the evidence suggests that the present shape of the Kasekete royal genealogy, as it is used in the most important rituals of the Valley Korekore, is a consequence of the desire of the medium of Mutota to establish incontrovertibly his authority over the three descendant chieftaincies despite the powerful claim of Chiwawa to be musikarudzi or founder of the line.

CHAPTER VIIITHE POLITICS OF TRADITION II: THE INDEPENDENCE OF CHIWAWA'S SHRINE

In the organization of the shrines of the mhondoro spirit mediums, the key official is the mutapi. It is the mutapi who takes care of the day-to-day business of mediumship, especially those matters which the medium, when in a state of possession, is unable to see to himself. His main task is to intermediate between the mhondoro and his descendant chief and his followers. Although he is closely associated with the medium, he is, as I described in Chapter IV, in reality an official of the court of the chief.

Up till now, I have used the term mutapi to indicate the five lineages that perform these functions for the mhondoro Chiwawa at his shrines. But in fact, unlike all other mhondoro, Chiwawa does not have any vatapi. The individuals who perform these tasks for him say simply 'We are Chiwawa's vazukuru' (grandchildren or descendants). By saying this they are drawing on the idea that everyone who lives within the mhondoro's spirit province is his muzukuru and, in the absence of a recognised mutapi, may perform such rituals as are necessary from time to time. But these five lineages have all the necessary credentials for fully-fledged vatapi and are known and referred to as such beyond the borders of Chiwawa's province. And yet they refuse this title.

To explain why Chiwawa has no vatapi takes us to the heart of the recent changes within the institution of mediumship. These have affected all mhondoro mediums in Dande. I concentrate on Chiwawa because the position taken by his medium, a close associate of the guerillas, allows the radical nature of these changes to be clearly demonstrated. This analysis requires, firstly, an outline of some of the changes that took place in the structure and authority of the chieftaincies during the colonial period. Following this, I describe how the structural opposition between the mhondoro Mutota and Chiwawa, described in the last chapter, developed into a political battle between the mediums of these two spirits. Finally I return to the question of why Chiwawa has no vatapi at his shrines.

From chiefs to mediums

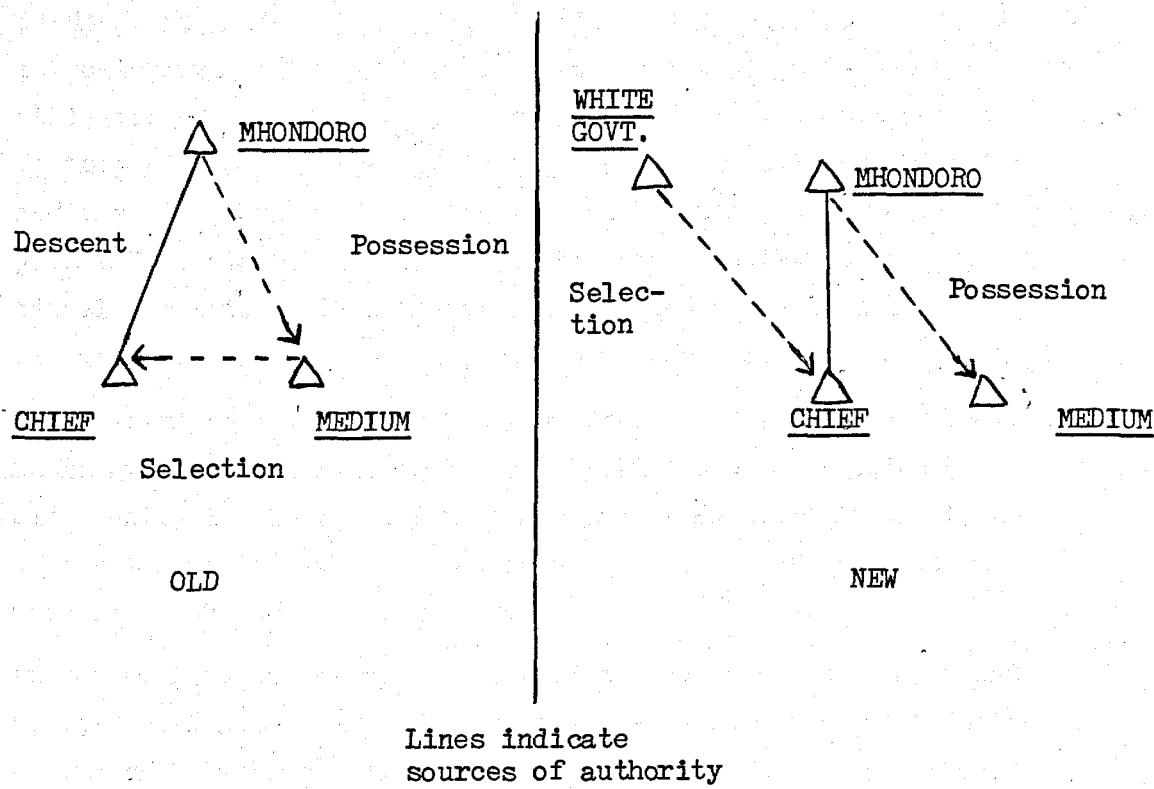
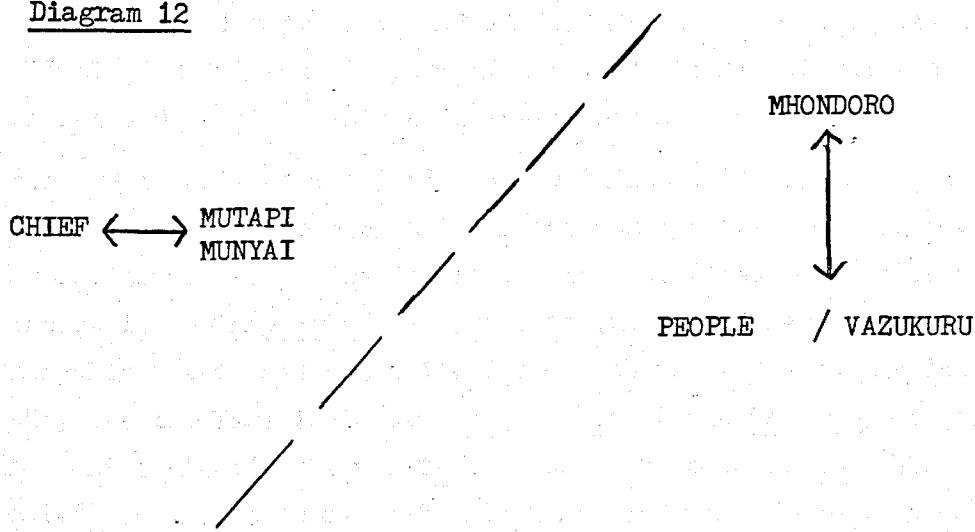
In earlier chapters the most important powers of the chiefs were said to be i) control of the land and ii) administration of the law through the courts. I described how acceptance of the authority of the royal lineage and of the individual chief was expressed by prestations made to the chief by members of all the lineages resident in his territory. These prestations took the form of labour on the chief's fields, gifts for access to land and fines as reparations for crimes such as incest and murder. This is the position described by Garbett as 'traditional' (Garbett 1963, 1966, 1967) and as I was told had been the practice in the past.

Other ethnographers have given a similar picture. Regarding the allocation of land among the Zezuru, a grouping of Shona chieftaincies in the central part of Zimbabwe, Bullock wrote:

...the real owner of the land is on the spiritual plane... But, in practice, the human chief, as the earthly vicar of these powers, was recognised as the landlord from whom each head of a kraal derived his right to till the soil. ... A stranger...must first approach the chief bringing him a hoe (Bullock 1928:71). It is the chief's prerogative to institute the proceedings for witchcraft (303). In the case of homicide...the bereaved family could claim compensation from the killer...(and) the chief imposed a fine of one bull for the blood spilt (300). In a case of inter-clan incest, people...ease their minds of any scruples by "cutting the kin". This is done by sacrificing an ox. The chief of the tribe should carry out this rite (80).

Holleman has described the pangolin as 'a delicacy which may be eaten only by an independent and lawful chief' (1952:378) and his monographs on the political organization of the Hera chieftaincy (1952, 1969) present key relationships precisely as do Garbett and Bullock. The land, the law and morality were all under the direct protection of the chief.

However, in Dande, at least until the end of the war, it was not the chief who allocated land either to his own people or to strangers. It was the mhondoro medium. It was, and it continues to be, the medium who performs the ceremony of 'cutting the kin' in the case of inter-clan incest. It is the medium to whom a fine must be paid as reparation for murder. And it is the medium who is charged with

Diagram 11Diagram 12

finding and dealing with witches. It is the medium to whom a pangolin must be brought if found in the bush. It is not obligatory for people to work on the fields of the mediums, nor do they work on those of the chief. But they build huts for the mediums' use during possession and, on occasion, they tend his yard and do other household tasks for him as well. In sum, the ritual prestations that indicate acceptance of political authority are all made not to the chief but to the medium.

The comparison I am making has two aspects - over time and between Shona groups. The fact that Zezuru politics were organised differently in the 1920s from those of the Korekore in the 1970s need not mean that the one has changed into the other. But what does it mean?

In the earlier chapters, I described the roles of the medium and of the chief separately. I stressed the different rights, duties, customary behaviours and rituals associated with each position. If then a medium takes on the responsibilities associated with a chief, or is treated by his followers as one would expect them to treat a chief, a possible interpretation of this behaviour is that the medium is 'acting as a chief' or even pretending to be a chief. This has the implication that it is in some sense illegitimate for a 'religious' leader to participate in 'politics'. But the people of Dande do not see things in these terms.

'The real owner of the land', wrote Bullock, 'is on the spiritual plane'. The same can be said of the other expressions of political authority as well. The 'real' enforcer of fines for murder or incest is the mhondoro just as he is the 'real' recipient of the pangolin. Both mediums and chief owe their status to the fact that they are the legitimate representatives of the mhondoro on the 'material plane', the medium because he is possessed by him, the chief because he is descended from him and was selected as chief by his medium (see diagram 11 page 250). What varies from one account of political organization to another (for example from Garbett's picture of 'traditional' relationships in Dande to my own experience of them twenty years later) is the conception of which of these two

representatives of the mhondoro is the most suitable to perform the rituals that protect the descendants of the mhondoro from drought, the consequence of immorality and crime.

In effect the choice is between making an appeal to a chief of the present or, through a medium, to a chief of the past. As long as it is believed that both chief and medium are legitimate representatives of the mhondoro, either or both may be the recipients of the ritual prestations which are, in reality, directed at the mhondoro. But if legitimacy is lost, the flow of prestations will stop or be redirected to the legitimate representative of the mhondoro, chief or medium, that remains.

In Dande, as I have described on page 15, it was the chiefs who over the course of this century, lost their legitimacy and their authority. The reason was the integration of the chiefs into the state as low level administrators. The key factors were that they were selected by the state rather than by the mhondoro and that their authority to control land and try criminal cases was taken by the District Commissioner.

The loss of these powers did not presage a total loss of authority. The integrity of the Korekore royal lineages is customarily protected by virilocal residence and resistance to migrant labour. To achieve this solidarity requires unusual wealth. The income lost to the chiefs as collectors of fines and tribute was made up by the salaries paid to them by the government. The size of the royal lineage, their wealth and the support of the District Commissioner allowed them to continue their domination of the lineages resident in their territories. But two factors crucially altered the content of their authority.

Firstly, in the past the system of labour service on the chief's fields provided a store of food for distribution in time of shortage. Now chiefs could rely on their government salaries for their own security, as well as loans on advantageous terms to finance private development projects. Until very recently, chiefs were the only people in Dande who could afford trucks, grinding mills, water tanks and so on, all used largely to their own advantage. The ties of

moral economic obligation between chief and followers were cut. But an equally powerful blow to the traditional authority of the chiefs came from another direction. This related to the new system of state controlled justice.

The local conception of murder, arson, theft and many other illegal acts coincided more or less with that of the state. Some benefit may have been perceived in the new judicial system in so far as it dealt with these crimes (though the guilt of individuals and the nature of guilt was frequently a matter of dispute). However in regard to one crime there could be no agreement. In the view of the villagers, one of the most serious and prevalent crime was witchcraft. In the view of the government, witchcraft simply did not exist. The Witchcraft Suppression Act, drawn up in 1899, declared the making of an accusation of witchcraft to be as great an offence as attempting to practise it (Chavanduka 1982).

To legislate against terror, however unfounded it may seem to the legislators, does not cause it to disappear. The fear and anxiety that cause and are caused by witchcraft accusation, the social disruption which might in the past have been resolved by the chief at his court, all these powerful emotions were forced below the surface of social life.¹ One solution that presented itself to people who believed that they or their children were at risk of death from witchcraft was to kill the suspect. Numerous accounts of murders carried out for this reason appear in Zimbabwean newspapers to this day. That victim and culprit are frequently members of the same family makes these cases especially horrifying and the law that prevents the hearing of witchcraft accusations in open court is in urgent need of reform. But taking the law into one's own hands was not the only solution. An alternative was to refer witchcraft cases to the mediums. In Dande this course was frequently taken.

The significance of this course of action, the logic of referring witchcraft cases to mhondoro mediums can only become clear once it is realised that it is neither the individual chief or medium who deals with witchcraft, but the mhondoro, the ancestor of the

royal lineage, the protector of all those who live within his spirit province who does so. When it was no longer possible for people to take these overwhelmingly significant and troubling problems to one representative of the mhondoro, the chief, they took them instead to the other, the mhondoro medium. In either case it is the mhondoro who presides.

This technique for dealing with witchcraft is the key factor that explains why, as the prestige and authority of the chiefs declined, so that of the mediums rose.² (The new and old sources of authority are compared in diagram 11.)

Mutota vs Chiwawa II

I return now to the opposition between the mhondoro Mutota and Chiwawa, and describe the conflicts that arose between the two most recent mediums of these mhondoro.

To summarise the argument so far: the royal genealogy of the Kasekete, Chitsungo and Chiweshe houses contains different sorts of information at different levels. The lower sections refer to actual ancestors of the chieftaincies; other sections contain ancestors of no direct ritual or historical significance to the three chieftaincies; yet others contain the names of mythical figures that represent the unity of the Korekore as opposed to the Tavara peoples. A particularly clear distinction is that between the mhondoro Mutota and the mhondoro Chiwawa, the first associated with wide ranging control of fertility and the ancestor of a large number of royal lineages, the second associated with the power of war and regarded as the crucial ancestor of the chieftaincies whose genealogy it is.

Many, if not all royal-type genealogies, that is genealogies of the ruling lineage of a hierachised political system, grade, as this one does, from the clearly defined, most recent ancestors at the base to an amorphous symbolic representative of the birth of the society or state at the top (Henige 1974:17f). But it is only in societies that combine genealogies of this kind with ancestral spirit possession that the abstract contradiction between the two styles of authority, that of the ancestors at the base and those

at the head, can develop into concrete antagonism. Names on a genealogy cannot argue with each other, they can only be argued about. But it is the habit of mediums to embellish the bare name and structural position of their spirit with their own personalities, attributing their own idiosyncrasies and desires to that spirit. They then use these materials as an argument to demand and to justify the enhancement of the authority and status of their spirit as against the spirits of other mediums.

Even so, antagonism does not inevitably follow from contradiction. It need not have arisen between the mhondoro of Dande even after the fertility principle, Mutota, had been converted into a mhondoro if the Mutota medium had followed the prescription of his mythology and kept out of Dande. But he did not.

In 1957 a large area of land crossing both Mutota's and Chiwawa's spirit provinces on the Plateau, previously designated as a 'tribal trust land' was requisitioned by the government as a 'native purchase area', one of the few areas of land in the country which could be bought by black farmers. The medium of Mutota, George Kupara, was among those who were forced to give up their land and find somewhere else to live. Together with many of his followers and assistants, he moved down from the Plateau into Dande and took up residence in one of Chiwawa's spirit provinces.

The medium of Chiwawa at the time was Pondai who is still the medium today. Four earlier mediums of Chiwawa are remembered. The most recent died in 1943. Pondai was first possessed in 1954. When he believed himself ready, he went to Mutota/Kupara to be tested but he was not accepted as genuine and was sent away. Despite this, there is no doubt that he was accepted by the people of Dande as genuine. It is recorded that by the early 1960s he had established a large following and was frequently consulted by chiefs descended from the mhondoro (Garbett 1963:247).

When Mutota/Kupara made his home in Chiwawa's province, Pondai objected very strongly indeed. It may be that this objection contained an element of hostility towards the medium who had rejected his claims to possession but he had far more powerful reasons as well. He argued, firstly, that Mutota had no right to enter the Valley and,

secondly, that it was extremely dangerous to him for another medium to live within his spirit province. Garbett, who lived in Dande soon after these events, reported them like this:

(Chiwawa) argued that Mutota's medium had now placed him in mortal danger. The senior medium (Kupara) countered this by arguing that since the whole region was Mutota's, he could settle wherever he chose. Eventually, after a protracted dispute, Chiwawa's medium moved in 1962 to take up residence at a site said to be sacred to Chiwawa within the small spirit province of Chuzu (Garbett 1977: 66). (See Map 3, page 83.)

In fact, the territory to which Chiwawa/Pondai was forced to retreat was his province in the east of Dande. The notion that Chiwawa had to seek refuge within another mhondoro's spirit province appears to be one more instance of Mutota/Kupara's minimization of Chiwawa's significance to add to those recorded in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, the basis of the argument is clearly presented in this passage. The reason that Mutota/Kupara claims Dande is because it is in Dande that the spirit provinces of all his children are found. Chiwawa/Pondai argues that Dande does not belong to Mutota but to his children alone. Mutota claims to be senior mhondoro of all the Korekore. Chiwawa/Pondai's rejection of this claim is founded on his own claim to be direct lineal ancestor of the chiefs.

The subsequent battles between these two mediums which have survived into the historical record concern the question of which of their mhondoro had the authority to appoint the successors to the three local chieftaincies.

There is no doubt that Chiwawa/Pondai accepted that Mutota is a more senior mhondoro than his own. But he certainly did not accept that any mhondoro but his own had the right to appoint the chiefs. Many vatapi and elders in Dande support this view. In addition, he forcefully rejected the interference of the state in local political affairs.

In the early 1960s, Chiwawa/Pondai challenged the appointment of a chief made by a District Commissioner but failed to install his own candidate (Garbett 1963:248). In 1967 he opposed Mutota/Kupara's candidate for the Kasekete chieftaincy, but ultimately accepted the

senior mhondoro's choice and paid a fine of \$1.00. This fine was interpreted by the District Commissioner in his report on the matter as a present, signifying that Pondai accepted that he had done wrong in trying to impose his will over that of the senior mhondoro.³ The process of selecting a successor to the Chitsungo house which was taking place at the same time was the occasion of a much longer and harder fought battle. An account of this case takes up most of the rest of this chapter.

In 1966, the current chief Chitsungo died after a six-year reign. Traditionally, the chief of this house is chosen from each of the three lineages descended from the original Chitsungo in turn. Lazarus, a man of the same house as the dead chief, was appointed acting chief to serve until the mhondoro Nyahuma had selected the successor for the house whose turn was next.⁴ The medium delayed until 1969 and then named his candidate. Immediately charges of bias and malpractice were made. A rival candidate wrote to the District Commissioner:

The trouble is with the mhondoro who takes a person who does not belong to the clan. I have never seen any mhondoro selling a chieftaincy before. This man who wants to buy the chieftaincy has been at the mhondoro Nyahuma's kraal for five months...He is not related to us.⁵

But shortly after being chosen, the candidate died of sleeping sickness. The medium of Nyahuma made another choice from the same house. At this, a man named Kindo, a rival from the second of the two eligible houses, went to put his case to Chiwawa/Pondai who was living near the Msengezi River at the other end of Dande. He persuaded the medium to support his claim and Chiwawa/Pondai presented him with a black cloth telling him to take it to Nyahuma and announce that he, Chiwawa, had appointed Kindo as chief.

The medium of Nyahuma's response was to assert that only he had the right to appoint the chief of Chitsungo. 'Chiwawa cannot rule in my area' he is reported to have said, 'I refuse to be ruled by my muzukuru (grandson)'. In reply, Chiwawa/Pondai sent Chief Whata, who had recently been resettled in the Valley in Chiwawa's spirit province, to the District Commissioner to inform him that Chiwawa had

appointed Kindo the new Chitsungo. The result was that all the mediums and elders of the Chitsungo chieftaincy were summoned by the District Commissioner to an official meeting at the village of the medium of Nyahuma.

At this meeting, Chiwawa's candidate received overwhelming support and the District Commissioner agreed to forward his name to the government ministry for approval. Kindo himself refused the chieftaincy saying he was too old to rule well, but recommended that his brother's son serve in his place. Chiwawa approved and this man was appointed. Within three months he was dead.

The cause of his death was officially recorded as cancer but some of his potential successors feared that other factors were involved. One wrote to the District Commissioner:

Now please do not give this portfolio to us again. We have left very few. We are afraid otherwise we may all die a ruthless death.

And another:

Never in Rhodesia had such things happened...Once he is appointed chief, it wont be long before he dies. Now please...it's wise of you not to select anybody from our family to be a chief. It's better to give it to those who may wish to.⁶

Kindo, who had engineered Chiwawa's support for his house, was selected acting-chief with the backing of all three houses in the chieftaincy.⁷ Although the final decision of who the chief would be had not yet been taken, it must have seemed to Chiwawa/Pondai and his associates that despite the powerful opposition of the medium of Nyahuma and the mysterious death of his first nominee, the right to appoint the Chitsungo chief had been successfully retrieved.

Around this time the larger flow of national history cut across the history of this chieftaincy. A note in the Commissioner's files records that although the chieftaincy was a minor one, the forthcoming succession was 'significant from a security point of view because of the proximity of these people to the border with Mozambique and Zambia'. The year was 1970. The first armed offensive of the war had come in 1966. Guerillas had attacked Sinoia, more than a hundred miles away on the Plateau. To reach Sinoia, the guerillas

had travelled across the northern border and through the Valley. Through the late 1960s and the early 1970s small groups of guerillas continued to cross into Zimbabwe.

During most of this period Chiwawa was living in Chiweshe's territory on the Plateau and in his eastern spirit province immediately below it on the Valley floor. In many parts of north-east Zimbabwe government security officers were able to do a deal with headmen and chiefs and even with some mediums promising that their followers would not be placed in the so-called protected villages if all incursions into their territories by guerillas were reported. These arrangements quickly proved unworkable and the camps were built. But in the areas under Chiwawa's jurisdiction deals of this kind were never a possibility. Discipline was rigorous. No information about guerilla activity ever reached the police or the district administration whose officers were afraid to enter the area. Those who did rarely returned.⁸

The organizer of this support for the guerillas was Chiwawa/Pondai. He protected them and guided them through his area as well as guiding out people who wished to join them at their bases in Mozambique. Two of Chiwawa/Pondai's brothers also joined the struggle and recruited a large number of people mostly from within Chiwawa's spirit provinces.

It is, of course, impossible to account for individual choice and commitment by making use of conceptual and symbolic structural oppositions. Why the medium Pondai gave his support to the guerillas has to do with his personal history. Perhaps his work experience as a labourer on a building site on the Plateau was a factor. There are no doubt a thousand other relevant factors beside. Nonetheless, it remains the case that the underlying structural opposition between the two mhondoro Mutota and Chiwawa which has already emerged as a contradiction involving the rights and duties of their mediums and as a series of arguments and enmities between Pondai and Kupara, the mediums themselves, was not contradicted by the political stances taken by them with regard to the war.

The argument by which the administration attempted to win the loyalty of the mediums was that only they could protect the customs and traditions of the people against the irreligious communist guerillas who, so they said, planned to collectivize children and wives and do away with individual rights in land and property. Soldiers and police serving in the Valley were instructed to behave respectfully to the mediums in order to demonstrate the government's support for the traditional leadership. The medium of Madzomba, for example, who was sympathetic to the government and had moved his village to a site very near the Escarpment, received special treatment. A large number of gifts including cattle were made to him and he was sent to the capital to have cataracts removed from his eyes. 'This is an extremely important personage in this district', wrote the District Commissioner to the doctor who performed the operation, 'despite his somewhat disreputable appearance'.⁹ But the most valuable personage of all as far as the administration was concerned was Mutota/Kupara. Mutota/Kupara had long been a favourite with the white administration. At least three times he had allowed himself to be studied by white historians and anthropologists and the local District Commissioners fell into the habit of stopping off at his village for 'advice' on arcane matters of native custom. As a result Mutota/Kupara had become expert at playing the administration off against his followers. His technique was to claim all Korekore as his vazukuru, his descendants, whether nationalists or government employees.

At the start of the war the interest of the administration in this medium rose sharply. The work of Abraham was known to the local District Commissioners who 'regarded him as an oracle'.¹⁰ Having read that Mutota was the first 'emperor' of the Monomotapa state, as Abraham believed, they concluded that all junior mediums would be subject to his control. If they could get this senior medium on their side, all the others would surely follow.

All of Pondai's professional life as a medium had been carried out in opposition to Mutota/Kupara who had rejected him and made numerous attempts to reduce his importance to the Korekore of the Valley. But Kupara's position was monumentally secure. With each new

mhondoro he discovered to be his daughter or son his authority increased. It cannot be argued that he needed the support of the officers of the state to shore up his authority as the leading mhondoro medium. But whether he had solicited it or not, a close relationship with the District Administration had been formed. And this, I suggest, by force of the opposition between the two mediums, would have driven Chiwawa/Pondai into the arms of the guerillas even had he not sufficient reason for joining with them of his own.

And join with them he did. At the start of the second phase of the war, it was directly through Chiwawa's spirit province that the first convoys of guerillas and weapon-bearing porters made their way up the Escarpment. The attack that announced the resumption of the war in 1972 took place in Chiweshe's territory, some six miles south of Chiwawa's most easterly shrine.

And it was no coincidence that the first blow was struck here. The chiefs of the Chiweshe house had for years been engaged in a battle with the government. In the 1900s this house had lost its status as a chieftaincy, but the royal lineage had resented and resisted its demotion and, over the years, made many attempts to regain its former grandeur. In 1954, the year of Chiwawa/Pondai's first possession, the head of the lineage, a government sponsored headman and tax-collector, died. His chosen successor, a man named Murwira, refused to be appointed in his place, insisting that he would be chief or nothing. In 1961 he and his sons were arrested as political agitators. On his release from prison, Murwira made contact with the guerillas who had recently begun to penetrate his territory. After Chiwawa/Pondai's arrest in 1972 he joined the medium of Nehanda and her three lieutenants on their journey to Mozambique.¹¹

It is not clear what the administration's attitude towards Chiwawa had been in the first round of attempts to replace the Chitsungo chief. By 1972 it was crystal clear. Chiwawa's candidate Kindo had been selected but had given way to a younger member of his house. This man was dead and Kindo had Chiwawa's support once again. Although in the past the District Commissioner had attended a

meeting at which Chiwawa's case was put and he had accepted Chiwawa's candidate as chief, now the administration was adamant that Chiwawa had no right to appoint chiefs in the Chitsungo area.

Mutota, Nyahuma and Chikuyo rule in Chitsungo's territory. Chiwawa has nothing to do with appointing chiefs here.¹²

So runs a memo in the Commissioner's files. It is hard to think who else this information might have come from if not from Mutota/Kupara, the Commissioner's main informant on 'local custom'.

Kindo's claim was dismissed out of hand.

Undoubtedly Chiwawa has been bribed by Kindo to put his spoke in the wheel... (I am) sick and tired of Kindo holding beer parties, giving money and gifts... (he is) weak... against development... been going to see mhondoros all over the place and greasing palms.¹³

Nowhere is it mentioned that this is the same man who, only two years before, had been accepted as chief by popular acclaim. The candidate favoured by the Commissioner was Lazarus who had been appointed acting chief at the start of this saga in 1966.

As the medium of Nyahuma had died in 1971, the case was taken to Mutota/Kupara. Predictably he chose Lazarus. The (black) district assistant who filed a report on the ceremony at which the chief was chosen reported that 'the people hope that Lazarus will not be too hard' to which the Commissioner added the comment: 'they will no doubt feel the beneficial effects of having a chief who cannot be twisted round their little fingers'.¹⁴

Lazarus, who was 60 years old, was appointed in March 1972 with a 'subsidy' of \$1440.00 per annum. He was assassinated by guerillas six years later at the height of the war in the Valley.

Chiwawa's shrine

We are now in a position to understand why the officers of Chiwawa's shrine refuse to be called vatapi.

I have described the disruption caused by the colonial government to the traditional structures of political organization, and how the lapsing of the chiefs' power to eradicate witches led to the gradual take-over of their authority by the other representatives of the all-powerful mhondoro, the mediums.

The organization of the shrines of the mhondoro is structured so as to provide communication between the mhondoro and the chief. The mutapi or intermediary of the mhondoro is also a munyai or royal messenger who carries information spoken by the mhondoro to the chief and his followers (see page 134). But if the mhondoro or his medium has no desire to communicate with the chief, he has no need of a munyai. If information sent from the mhondoro to the chief is, in effect, being sent to the representatives of the white state to which the medium and his followers feel considerable antipathy the link with the chief must be snapped.

This is precisely the action that Chiwawa/Pondai took. Having achieved, through ritual, the authority of a chief, he acted independently of the chiefs, speaking not through the vatapi, who are also headmen subservient to the chiefs, or the vanyai, but direct to the people. The officials who prepare his rituals were no longer regarded as vatapi or vanyai. They were simply vazukuru, the descendants and followers of the mhondoro. By means of this break, this most radical of mediums was able to free himself from association with the 'de-ancestralized' chief and consolidate his independent authority and power.

I give one example of the consequence of this break: Chiwawa/Pondai appointed one of his vazukuru/vatapi to the status of wardhead (sadunhu). The present chief Chitsungo insists that this man is simply a sabhuku or lineage head, but those who live with him claim that he is a sadunhu because Chiwawa said so. It is no coincidence that this wardhead was one of the villagers most stalwart in support of the guerillas. (Diagram 12 illustrates the new relationships between mhondoro, chief and followers.)

The politics of tradition

The structural opposition between Chiwawa and Mutota was played out to the end. In December 1972 Chiwawa/Pondai was arrested, tried for subversion and for 'assisting terrorists' and sentenced to 25 years' hard labour. His rejection by Mutota/Kupara eighteen years earlier was dredged up and publicised in an attempt to

convince the people that any medium who helped the guerillas could not possibly be genuine. Leaflets were scattered over the Valley from helicopters attributing the serious drought that occurred in that year to Chiwawa's support for the guerillas (Maxey 1975:129).

In 1973 it was felt necessary to provide Mutota/Kupara, defender of the traditions of his people, with a guard of soldiers to prevent him being 'abducted', as was believed had happened to the medium of Nehanda. This guard camped in his village and screened all his visitors. After five weeks of this treatment, Kupara died. People say that the mhondoro could not bear the smell of petrol from the soldiers' jeeps and, as the medium could not get away, the mhondoro killed him.

The 'psychological operations' department of the government forces had tried to win the support of the mediums on the grounds that only by defeating the nationalist guerillas could they protect their traditional status as leaders of the people. Their view was that traditions never change unless they are disrupted (or 'corrupted') by external forces. In fact, all that distinguishes traditional knowledge or practice from other sorts is that it is believed to be unchanging. But the changes that occur are never arbitrary. They are tactical, subtle and highly meaningful and they take place all the time. Far from damaging the authority of the mediums, collaboration with the guerillas greatly enhanced their individual reputations as well as adding to the authority of the profession of the medium as a whole.

The tendency of some ethnographers and historians to interpret the residue of social process as a record of the actual past ('euhemerism' in Henige's terms; Henige 1974:48) has itself had an effect on one tradition at least. The only reason that Mutota/Kupara was living in Dande when he was interviewed by Abraham was that he had been ejected from his home on the Plateau by government edict. It is clear from Abraham's reports that Kupara claimed Dande as his traditional home. I have explained why, in the context of a power struggle between Mutota/Kupara and Chiwawa/Pondai, this claim was made. Today, those who lived with Kupara before his death are

adamant that the spirit province associated with Mutota on the Escarpment is his home. Mediums in the Valley and on the Plateau state categorically that Mutota may never enter the Valley. The Guruuswa myth makes precisely the same point.¹⁵ But Abraham had available to him information from only one moment of time. Believing what Kupara told him to be true, he transformed Kupara's ten years in Dande (he moved back up the Escarpment in 1967) into an invasion of the Zambezi Valley by an army of Karanga people in the mid-15th century.

Nyatsimba, who assumed the praise name 'Mutota Churuchamutapa', and became known, for short, simply as 'Mutapa', invaded the Dande or southern sector of the Zambezi Valley and established his headquarters there, his people being nicknamed Korekore by the local Tavara (Abraham 1964:108).

This has been taken up by a number of historians (eg Isaacman 1976:130 and 155n100) and has finally found its way into a history textbook recently prepared for primary schools:

Mutota settled among the Tonga and Tavara people who were already living in the Valley (Sibanda, Moyana and Gumbo 1982:56).

This tradition is now very firmly established.

The mediums, lacking written records, combine the numerous traditions that exist side by side and make what use of the resulting concoction they please. But one element of the royal genealogies is unchangeable. They must remain linked to the two most senior ancestors: Mutota, the source of fertility and authority and Nebedza/Matope, the first chief and first owner/conqueror of Dande. The authority of the living chiefs depends on the belief that they will in their turn become mhondoro and live for ever as the source of the fertility and authority of the lineage. Only by being plugged into the upper symbolic reaches of the genealogy is the authority of the living chiefs made unchallengeable.

Or so it would seem. Because of their integration into the apparatus of the state throughout this century, the chiefs progressively lost more and more of their power. The mediums took over a great deal of their ritual and political authority, but a moral and political dilemma of massive proportions remained.

Nothing could be done to change the fact that the chiefs were the descendants of the mhondoro. Their authority was crippled and partial but finally ineradicable without the overturning of the whole moral basis of the society and the demotion of the mhondoro along with their descendants. This dilemma was resolved only by the intervention of the guerillas. This intervention is the subject of Part Four.

PART FOUR

THE SONS OF THE SOIL

CHAPTER IXTHE LEGITIMACY OF RESISTANCE

This is one young man's account of his first experience of the guerillas:

At the start of the war I was living at home. At that time we had no idea how much we would suffer in the course of the war.

When the soldiers spoke to us of the terrorists, they told us they were animals with tails and we believed this for a long time. Then one day people with guns came to the village. We did not know who they were. They said 'Cook sadza (stiff porridge) and chickens. None of us eat vegetables, only meat.' So all the people brought sadza out of fear of the guns.

The people were asked to sit down and one of these men came and stood in front of the adults. He said 'Forward with ZANU!' and told them that they should answer by saying 'Forward'. Then another came to the front and said 'Forward with ZANU!'. Everyone answered 'Forward!'. He said he wanted to talk to all the unmarried boys and girls. We stood up and went where we were told to go. He said 'How are you, boys and girls?'. We answered 'Fine'. He said 'Do you know us?'. We said 'no' and he said 'We are the terrorists who you heard about' and he turned round to show us that he did not have a tail.

They began to teach us politics. They said 'We are called Comrades, not terrorists. We came from Mozambique because the government of Rhodesia does not treat everyone as equals. A white man works for a month and has enough money to buy a car. Can you people do the same as he can?' We answered no.

They told us the work that we would do. They said 'You are ZANLA youth' which means we are the mujibas.¹ We agreed with everything they said. We chose our leaders, one boy and one girl. Then we were dismissed. The next day we began to do our work, looking after all the people who were members of the party. The work of the girls was to wash and sew the clothes of the comrades, the boys' work was to guard the camps when the comrades had to sleep. All of us used to inform the comrades of who would support them in the villages, who they could trust and who would sell them out.

As the war went on, many people were crying to go to Mozambique with the comrades. They wanted to get guns, get trained and come home to fight the enemy. Some went but had to come back again because in Mozambique there was not enough food for all. The number of mujibas grew and grew because many of our schools were closed at that time. All the children who could not go to school lived in the bush with the comrades and helped them in the struggle.²

After some months as mujibas many of the young people became known to the Security Forces and their usefulness inside the country was

at an end. At this stage, they crossed into Mozambique for training. The account that follows is that of a young man from Dande who received his military training in Yugoslavia and then returned to fight in Zimbabwe.

When we came to a village, the first thing we would do is hold a rally. The Commander and the Political Commissar would go to the place where the rally was to be held. The rest of us would go to all the houses and make sure that everyone came to the rally. Some people would want to come, others would not, but there was no choice about it. You had to come. We wanted everyone there because if anyone wasn't there at the rally they could go off quietly and betray us.

First we would explain who we were. We were ZANLA. We were not ZANU. ZANU was a political organization, and we were the military wing. It was ZANU's job to go to other countries, to talk and negotiate. We did not go to other countries, and we did not need the help of soldiers from other countries. We were Zimbabweans in Zimbabwe. And we did not use talk, we used guns. Freedom would come out of the barrel of a gun.

We explained the structures of the ZANU party. We then explained the structure of the army, and told the masses about the ten people on the army high command and described their duties. We next explained national grievances, then colonialism, then neo-colonialism and capitalism. We explained that ours would be a socialist government and what that would mean to the masses.

The pattern of the meeting would be: talk for half an hour, then teaching the masses songs for an hour, then talking for another half-hour and so on, so that people did not get bored.

At the end of the meeting, which was always at night, we would say to the older people: 'Mothers and Fathers, go home now and sleep in peace. But children you must stay here'. The younger people would stay, and we would then say, 'What is our support here? Are people in favour of us, are people speaking against us, and who is doing so?' Then they would say, well some people are saying that they havn't enough food to eat themselves, without giving it to these comrades. They take our chickens, our goats and so on.

While the rally was taking place, one of us would go on to the next village and find out quietly what our support was there, and if it was safe for us to enter. He would look like an ordinary person. There was no way you could tell he was a comrade.

But those who always supported us were the spirit mediums. Even if we had four or five rallies one day after another they would be with us, leading the people in the songs of the struggle, explaining to them about everything they need to know to understand who we are, why we are risking our lives for their sakes and what to do to help us. Either possessed by their midzimu or not they were our allies and the masses will never disbelieve whatever they say.³

The ancestors in the struggle

When the people of Dande discuss the liberation struggle, they make clear their belief that it was waged on two levels. It was fought by guerillas with the support of the people in the villages and concentration camps, and it was fought by the ancestors, the mhondoro and the midzimu. The medium of the mhondoro Kavhinga put it like this:

They helped us. The midzimu really helped us. If not for the midzimu this war would never have ended. If the war had gone on, we would have had such troubles here. These midzimu said: no, help is needed. We must help.

The popular songs of the time celebrate the role of the ancestors:

Isu nemidzimu yedu	We and our ancestors
takabatana	worked together
muno muhondo	here in the war

The especially important part played by the mhondoro spirits, as protectors of the nyika, the country, is also recognised in popular song. In this one, for example, the senior mhondoro are celebrated together:

Takapinda nekuGaza	We entered (Zimbabwe) at Gaza
kusunungura Zimbabwe	in order to free Zimbabwe
Ambuya Nehanda	Grandmother Nehanda
Sekuru Chaminuka	Grandfather Chaminuka
Monomotapa	Monomotapa
Mulambo ⁴	Mulambo
midzimu yehondo	the spirits/ancestors of war

All categories of participants in the war - guerillas, mujibas, those who joined the guerillas in the bush, those who stayed in the villages, those who fled to safer places - maintain that their ancestors protected and advised them either in dreams or by means of signs that gave them warnings and instructions. In my experience, the only dissent came from a small group of ZANLA guerilla commanders who were politically to the left of the ZANLA leadership (see page 303). Apart from these, belief was universal. Indeed, it was not only members of the resistance who believed that the ancestors take an active part in warfare. Many Shona members of the government forces - soldiers, policemen and local government administrators - relate accounts similar to those of the insurgents telling of timely warnings

and miraculous escapes engineered by their ancestors. But only within the guerilla army was the belief in the participation of the ancestors elaborated into a system of ritual practices believed to place the combatants under their protection.

What if the spirit mediums had rejected the guerillas? Would the local population still have offered them support? Perhaps if this had happened, a programme aimed at winning the peasantry from its traditional allegiances would have been started by the guerillas and the course of the war would have taken a very different direction. We can go some distance towards understanding why this did not happen by considering the factors that persuaded the mediums to lend the weight of their authority to the guerillas.

These factors can be summed up in two words: land and fertility. The guerillas promised to liberate Zimbabwe from the grasp of the whites, to free the land they held in abundance and return it to the peasants who had barely enough to keep their families alive. The single most important function of the spirit mediums is to protect the land. From the grave, from the depths of the forest, from the body of a lion or of their mediums, the mhondoro control in perpetuity the land they conquered during their lives. The guerillas offered land as fertility and land as restored tradition. They offered a Zimbabwe returned to its original and rightful owners. The support of the mhondoro mediums could not be withheld.

The guerillas and the mediums shared a desire to regain the land, to renew its lost fertility and their lost wealth. From this common aim the sharing of ritual and weapons, of symbolism and strategy, the union of the mystical power of the ancestors with the military strength of the guerillas were to flow.

The major functions of the chiefs had been temporal control of land and administration of the law. With the loss of the right to allocate land, their authority had been fatally undermined. The claim made by the guerillas, in the name of the people and the past, to all the land in Zimbabwe was sufficient to begin the process of establishing them as successors to the chiefs. By means of this succession the guerillas became the descendants of the mhondoro. The legitimization of this succession was the central contribution of the mhondoro mediums to the war.

Spirit mediums and resistance

It is important that the chronology of the relationship between guerillas and mediums is made clear. From discussion with ex-guerilla commanders it is clear that the search for support carried out by the first guerilla groups to operate in Dande was pragmatic. Their intention was to lay down a durable foundation for long-term cooperation with the peasants. They were prepared to work with whomever they could trust. Certainly they knew of the part played by the medium of Nehanda and other mediums in the rebellion of 1896. This had been a source of nationalist propaganda throughout the 1960s. But they did not enter Dande with the intention of recruiting the mediums. It was only after they had ascertained that the mediums held the respect of the peasantry that the guerillas made efforts to win them to their side.

When discussing this matter with historians and others concerned with the chronology of the war, the suggestion is frequently made that the only reason that the guerillas approached the mediums at this stage of the war was that their leaders had read of the exploits of earlier mhondoro mediums in Ranger's history of the rebellion which had appeared in 1967. This view severely underestimates the significance of the mediums in the life of the peasantry.

A number of observations are pertinent. Firstly, there is no doubt of the influence that Ranger's work has had. He has charted it himself (Ranger 1979:xv) and it is acknowledged even where its conclusions are disputed. But even had the guerilla commanders read this book, and some of them had, what is significant is that their soundings of the mediums had so resonant a response. The central position held by the mediums in Dande society is theirs because they are owners of the land, healers of social rupture and individual illness, the source of the authority of the ancestors, of fertility and of rain. The incorporation of the chiefs into the state brought about a further increase in the importance of the mediums as they became the sole focus of political and moral authority. It is entirely mistaken to assume that the knowledge the guerillas had of the rebellion led them to foist on to the mediums a political significance they would not otherwise have had.

Secondly, although the motivation of the guerillas in recruiting the mediums was the belief that they could persuade the rest of the population to support the resistance, there is no reason to see this as a cynical, purely manipulative strategy. There were those among the ZANLA leadership who did not take seriously the claims of the mediums to speak with the voice of the ancestors, but there were many who did. And some who at first valued the recruitment of the mediums simply for the popular support it would bring, came in the course of the war to reconsider their early rejection of the mediums' claims.⁵

The third point is the most significant for it allows a small window to be opened into the consciousness of the mediums themselves. All through the 18th and 19th centuries the mhondoro mediums had played a major part in the political life of their followers, acting as mediators between rival chieftaincies and, in times of peace, between the chiefs and the Portuguese. In times of war, mhondoro mediums were at the forefront of the resistance to colonialism both in combat with the armies of the Portuguese themselves or with those of the leaders of the 'secondary states' along the banks of the Zambezi (Mudenge 1976:35; Isaacman 1976). It is entirely consistent with these traditions that the mhondoro mediums of Dande should have seen themselves as leaders in the war against the colonial Rhodesian state.

Indeed, by the restrictions which they observe in their daily lives, generations of mhondoro mediums have demonstrated opposition to white society and white culture. They do not wear European clothes, eat European foods, use European modes of transport, smoke European cigarettes, walk on European roads. Few allow whites to be present when they become possessed and some refuse to come into contact with whites in any circumstances.⁶

One interpretation of these restrictions is that they indicate the inherent conservatism of the mediums. In this view, the mediums protect their 'traditional' authority by refusing to participate in those spheres in which they cannot compete with the authority of the whites. But it is not only in relation to whites that

restrictions of this kind are practised. For example, the traditions of the medium of the autochthon Musuma do not permit him to have contact with the mediums of any Korekore mhondoro. The reason given is that 'long ago' the Korekore killed Musuma and stole his rain-making powers.⁷ The antagonism between the medium of Musuma and the Korekore mhondoro is an articulation of the fundamental opposition between the conquering Korekore and the autochthonous Tavara arising from their conflicting claims to rights over territory.

The refusal of mhondoro mediums to have contact with whites and the artefacts of white society is an articulation, in terms of an established symbolism, of another deeply rooted opposition. This opposition also arises from conflicting claims to land but it is supplemented by the effects of the military defeat of the 1890s, the destruction of the chieftaincies, the forced labour, the taxation and the devastating loss of land. In this most recent formulation of the old set of symbols, the Tavara, the Korekore and all the other Shona populations are together in the position of autochthons. The lineages that have achieved the status of conquerors are those whose homelands are, ultimately, in Europe.

In fact, despite this underlying opposition, some mediums did involve themselves quite closely in white society (Mutota/Kupara is the outstanding example) and yet yielded up little of their authority. But to take this path involved grave risks. The medium of Madzomba, like Kupara, allowed himself to be wooed by the local government administration. But, unlike Kupara, he succumbed to the temptations of European food, the convenience of rides in motorcars and the advantages of wearing prescription spectacles. By adopting these alien practices he invited a challenge to his authority which, in the end, he could not withstand.⁸

Within the context of colonialism, which is the only context any living medium has known, authentic possession is possited on opposition. The profession of the mhondoro medium is inherently radical. Though this radicalism grades from the symbolic to the interventionary, it is ineradicable from the make up of the modern mhondoro medium. By observing the conventional restrictions on

their behaviour, the mediums imitate the chiefs who held undisputed authority before the coming of the whites. These restrictions are therefore, in the first instance, a rejection of the subservience of Shona society. They assert the integrity and significance of its past and demonstrate a commitment to the protection of its central institutions from further incursion and disruption.

The argument that mediums in their everyday lives enact their conception of the lives of the chiefs of the past is supported by the evidence of the Chikunda mediums who live on the banks of the Zambezi River near Kanyemba. These mediums do not observe any of the restrictions to which the Korekore and the Tavara mediums are subject except the avoidance of blood, menstrual or otherwise, which is the central symbol of mediumship, the triumph of life-through-possession over life-through-birth. The reason they give for this absence of restrictions is that their ancestors, their mhondoro, were Portuguese, that is whites, who wore boots and shirts, carried guns, lived in European style houses and so on. Chikunda mediums dress in ordinary clothes. Only a few ritual items, such as beads and snuff boxes, distinguish them from non-mediums. As the Chikunda ancestors were white, or at least nor perceived as opposed to whites, the set of symbols elaborated by Korekore and Tavara mediums, deriving from their notions of how their ancestors lived in the pre-white past, has no power for the Chikunda.

This should not be taken to imply that Chikunda mediums were not committed to opposition to the authority of the governments of Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa. What it does mean is that they were not able to express their opposition by means of the same symbolic materials as those used by the Korekore and the Tavara.

Before going on to describe how the legitimization of the struggle was achieved, I want to summarise the view of the relationship between guerillas, spirit mediums and peasantry I have given. The matter is contentious. It is as well to risk repetition for the sake of clarity.

First let me be clear about what I am not saying. I am not suggesting that had the guerillas been rejected by the mediums they would have failed to establish themselves in the countryside. Nor am I arguing that the peasantry was incapable of perceiving the advantages and disadvantages the guerillas offered without the mediation of the mediums. Certainly the collaboration of the mediums brought more advantages to the guerillas than those I have outlined so far. For example, the Security Forces offered huge rewards for betrayal. \$5,000 was offered for information leading to the death or capture of a 'senior terrorist leader' (Maxey 1975: 133). The authority of the mediums and the claims of loyalty to the community they represented was a powerful argument against cupidity and treachery. But, in the end, each individual peasant had her or his own cause for discontent, her or his own reason for siding with or against the guerilla army.

The point I am making is simple and specific. The contribution of the mhondoro mediums to the guerilla war was the facilitation of the acceptance of the guerillas by allowing this new feature in the experience of the peasantry to be assimilated to established symbolic categories. This was achieved by the imposition of certain restrictions on the behaviour of the guerillas. By means of these, the authority of the ancestors was tapped to provide legitimacy to armed resistance and violent insurrection.

Hunters, warriors and guerillas

The support given to the guerillas by the mediums took three forms. Firstly, certain mediums worked closely with the guerillas, putting their detailed knowledge of the countryside at their disposal, guiding them by little used paths out of sight of the gravel roads that had been built to allow the Security Forces access to this remote but strategically critical part of the country. Bute, the snuff used exclusively by mediums, was rubbed on the foreheads of the guerillas. This is believed to confer good health and fortune. The guerillas believed it would protect them from bullets and make them invisible to their enemies.

Secondly, the mediums taught the guerillas how to interpret signs in the bush which would allow them to predict the outcome of their actions. A tortoise crossing the path as they set out on a foray was a propitious sign whereas a snake warned of danger. Bataleur eagles (zvipungu) seen at rest heralded a successful mission whereas conflict between these birds was a sign of impending attack by the enemy and so on.

Thirdly, the mediums offered the guerillas protection from the dangers the forest contains for those who do not know its ways. This protection is believed to have been extremely effective. As the medium of the mhondoro Kavhinga says:

You know in the bush there are wild animals, very dangerous ones. There are plenty of snakes in the bush and many elephants. But not a single comrade was chased by elephants. Not a single comrade was bitten by a snake. They just went their own way without harm.

The endless obstructions which the forest and its inhabitants had presented to the guerillas was transformed into a resource which the guerillas could draw on in time of danger or need.

If you were separated from your comrades after a battle, you would find that a hare would guide you straight back to your camp. One time we were sleeping in the bush. During the night a herd of elephants made a circle round our camp. At 3.00 am they made a noise and woke us. Then they began to move away. We followed them and when we looked back through binoculars we saw we had been sleeping right next to a camp of Security Force soldiers.⁹

This relationship of mutuality between the forces of nature and the guerillas could continue only as long as they observed the restrictions explained to them by the mediums. If these were broken the forest would become hostile, the protection afforded by bute, the snuff of the mediums, would be rendered powerless. They would be hit by the bullets of their enemies or even (as I was frequently told) shot by their own side.

These restrictions were:

- 1) That guerillas, both male and female, were forbidden to have sex either with each other or with villagers.

You could not sleep with a woman or even shake hands with her though there were women there with us, fighting with rifles. If a man and a woman fell in love, they could tell

each other, but then they had to tell the Commander of the Platoon and he would write it down so that after the war they would have to live up to their promise to marry. But to sleep together during the struggle was forbidden.¹⁰

- 2) They were to avoid contact with women during their menses, and forbidden to eat food cooked by them. Menstruating women were not allowed to touch guns or other instruments of war. Female comrades were therefore periodically sent out of the operational zones. Some male comrades claim to have kept records of their companions' menstrual cycles in order to protect themselves from the dangers forgetfulness might bring.
- 3) The guerillas were forbidden to kill wild animals, specifically elephants and baboons. It was believed that they would go mad if they did so.
- 4) A number of foods were forbidden, especially derere or wild okra and the internal organs of any animal. The guerillas were also discouraged from eating salt.

All of these restrictions were observed by people other than guerillas. Some will be recognised as characteristic of mhondoro mediums. Others are observed by hunters. The set of typical male activities - hunting, soldiering and acting as a mhondoro medium - needs to be considered as a whole for the logic of these restrictions and their implications to become clear. I will therefore deal briefly with the restrictions observed by hunters to ensure their success. This leads on to an explanation of the final set of taboos observed by the mhondoro mediums which I have not dealt with so far, their refusal to eat pepper, onions and certain kinds of meat as well as their objection to the use of strong smelling soap.

The opposition between hunters and mhondoro is inherent in the activities that define them. The power of the mhondoro consists in their ability to transcend the biological processes of life and death through possession. This is marked by their abhorrence of contact with blood, with death and with birth. A dead body of any kind is dangerous to the mediums. Hunters are killers. They shed the blood of animals on the earth and provide their dead bodies to be eaten. But the opposition goes deeper still.

All things that grow wild in the bush, both game and uncultivated plants, are under the protection of the mhondoro. When wild animals are killed, an offering should be made to the local medium.

Strangers wishing to hunt in the spirit province of a mhondoro must gain the permission of the medium before they do so.¹¹ The reason why mhondoro protect wild animals is that, as their name implies, they are wild animals. They are lions. When the spirit is not in the body of a medium it lives in the body of a lion. If you kill a lion the chances are that you have killed the temporary home of a royal ancestor.

The shave spirit that possesses and assists hunters is known as Kaporí. This is not an animal shave. The Kaporí were

so-called hunters...possibly survivors of Early Iron Age Sinoia culture (Beach 1980:73).

Over time, the memory of these hunting people of the past has been converted into a possessing shave spirit which confers the talent to hunt exceptionally well. The colour of the beads the Kaporí mediums wear on their wrists is red, the colour abhored by the mhondoro mediums. It symbolises the blood of the animals they kill.¹²

This use of the symbolism of blood, when taken together with the use of blood to symbolise the biological forces of life and death which are antipathetic to the mhondoro, seems to make the following statements: the bush is the place of the incorporeal, unpolluted, deathless ancestral spirits. Into the forest stride the human, death-dealing hunters. The mhondoro are animals of the bush; the Kaporí/hunters are men who kill wild animals. The mhondoro hate blood; the Kaporí hunters display blood on their wrists as a sign of their identity.

Ancestors are the quintessence of all that is 'good'. Following the logic of these oppositions, it would seem that hunters must be 'bad'. But of all foods, meat is the most highly prized. If hunters are forbidden to practise their skills it will be impossible for people to eat meat.

The prime duty of the mhondoro is to care for their descendants and provide them with all they desire or deserve. A compromise with the hunters is struck. If hunters observe certain restrictions they will be permitted to catch game. The most important of these is that they abstain from sex on the night before they go out hunting. They should also abstain from eating onions, pepper and derere (okra).

The avoidance of sex has been dealt with already. The bush where the animals live is the domain of the mhondoro. By abstaining from sex, the hunters allow the bush to remain free of the pollution of sexual reproduction. In return, the mhondoro allows a sufficient number of animals to be caught.¹³

Hunters say that they do not eat pepper or onions or use soap because the smell announces their presence to the animals they stalk and trap. But there is more to it than this. In the past when people did not use soap, it is said that they cleaned themselves with bits of bark. In those days they had power over animals and could see many things in the bush that are invisible to humans now. These days those skills are lost. But I was told by a woman who had lived with her husband in one of the larger towns that she had seen the last man to retain these powers. This was in a travelling circus. The man was a lion tamer. My informant explained that the lion tamer did not use soap when he washed. If he did he would lose the powers that make the animals obey his commands.

According to the guerilla leader Urimbo, it was well known that the medium of Nehanda would never wash her body (see page 28). It would seem that the reason why mhondoro mediums do not use soap and cultivate the reputation that they do not wash is in order to stress their at-oneness with the bush, their identity as wild animals. It may also be relevant that the colour of the pepper pod is bright red.

The restrictions on hunters therefore fall into two categories. Hunters avoid sex to please the mhondoro who send them game. They avoid strong smelling things to gain power over animals and to be able to kill them with ease and little danger to themselves.

The avoidance of derere (okra) is a different matter. A number of different wild plants are referred to by this name. Common to all are that they are never cultivated, that they exude a highly glutinous substance when boiled and that they are avoided by those whose work or reputations depend on physical strength, such as hunters, soldiers, boxers and so on.¹⁴ The reason for this avoidance is that derere is considered to be the least desirable form of food. Derere is only eaten as a relish when no other food is available. It is associated with failed hunting, lack of control over animals, disfavour from the mhondoro.¹⁵

If this information about hunters is applied to the restrictions placed on the guerillas, another class of human death-dealers, their relevance begins to become clear.

Amongst the Shona, soldiers do not form a separate section of the population. All men are potentially soldiers, chiefs are military leaders, mhondoro were the military leaders of the past. There is little information available about the customs of pre-occupation warriors that is pertinent. However a reference made to the Korekore Matope chieftaincy of Mount Darwin in Hodza and Fortune's study of 'praise poetry' is useful.¹⁶ They write that:

Kakono as a gamba (heroic warrior) never allowed himself to eat food cooked by vanhu vaziza (women who had matured) (Hodza and Fortune 1979:180).

This prohibition is also observed by mhondoro mediums, as we have seen. This is further evidence that the set of symbols associated with the mediums has a wider and more general reference. It suggests that they are associated with an ideal type of male activity of which fighting and killing are extreme though typical examples. But the mhondoro are not exclusively male. They have overcome the male/female duality of life-giving/life-taking by establishing permanent life-after-death through possession. Killing, the occupation of the soldier, is anathema to them, as their avoidance of death, bodies, funerals and blood makes clear. How then can the mhondoro have been soldiers? How can their mediums have allowed themselves so close an association with modern day warriors, the ZANLA guerillas?

It is said that when the guerilla leaders approached the mhondoro mediums on first entering their spirit provinces, they explained that their campaign would be the cause of much death, the killing of their enemies. At first the mediums refused permission for this as the spilling of blood on the land causes drought. But when it was explained to them that the intention of the guerillas was to liberate Zimbabwe they agreed, though they insisted that the killing be kept to a minimum. 'We don't want a lot of blood', they said, 'don't just kill people for nothing'.

What this frequently repeated story is intended to illustrate is a distinction between killing and murder, between legitimate and illegitimate killing. For the mhondoro, killing is defined in two ways. Firstly, there is the secret killing of a member of one's own lineage. This is witchcraft and is always forbidden. Secondly, there is the public killing of a member of one's own or another lineage. This is extremely dangerous and causes drought unless a fine is paid to the mhondoro. Mhondoro, therefore, are able to rid killing of its dangerous and pollutant aspect. They can legitimate killing in the same way as they can convert incest into legitimate marriage if the specified fine is paid and the appropriate ritual performed. One way of seeing the arrangement arrived at between guerillas and mediums is as an agreement, in a good cause, to waive the fine. After all, in the conception of the mhondoro as a conqueror, he is always assumed to have killed a good deal himself, though in the best of all possible causes, the establishment of the territory within which his descendants now live. If one sees the guerillas as the warriors of the past returned in new guise, their association with the mhondoro seems neither innovative nor surprising, no more than the desire of the guerilla leaders to gain their permission for (or, better, the legitimization of) the killing which they knew would ensue. Though the mhondoro have overcome death and their mediums avoid contact with killing of all kinds, nonetheless, as the source of all political authority they can, as it were, give killing the stamp of their approval if they believe it is in the interests of their descendants to do so.

Having agreed to support the guerillas, the mhondoro mediums taught them how to protect themselves, how, in other words, to avoid their own deaths. They did this, as the mediums do, by disassociating themselves from actions and substances anathema to the ancestors, by keeping themselves uncontaminated by the biological processes of life and death, by avoiding sex and contact with menstrual blood. As ancestors are thought never to eat salt, the avoidance of salt by the guerillas was another technique of making themselves more like the ancestors, less subject to the dangers inherent in having a body. Meanwhile the killing that, in the cause of the struggle, the guerillas inflicted on their enemies was legitimised and purified by the mhondoro. It is this technique of placing oneself under the protection of the ancestor when in danger of death that is shared by the mhondoro medium, the hunter and the soldier. By observing these restrictions, one becomes, like the mhondoro, at one with the bush, a part of the life of the forest and therefore able to interpret the messages other inhabitants of the forest - the animals and the plants - contain.¹⁷

This explains the final restriction, that on the killing of wild animals for these, like the guerillas, are under the protection of the mhondoro. In effect the guerillas had become wild animals of the forest and it is no coincidence that it is precisely in these terms (as humanoid monkeys with tails) that the guerillas were first described to the peasants by the soldiers of the state. The argument I have given allows us to go some way towards understanding why this apparently ludicrous view was given some credence by the villagers.¹⁸

This analysis of the symbolic power of the restrictions does not preclude other reasons for the same actions. For example, the taboo on the shooting of wild animals conserved scarce ammunition and made the guerillas reliant on local villagers for their food supplies thereby drawing these people into the resistance. The taboo on sex, in so far as it was effective, protected village women from the attentions of the large number of strange men who had come to live among them. But whether or not all these restrictions were obeyed in all circumstances, the demand that they should be obeyed was an expression by the spirit mediums of their approval of the goals of the guerillas as well as a means of protecting them from the potential dangers of their actions.

But it was also more than this. The guerillas claimed the land. By instructing them in how, as 'strangers', they could make themselves acceptable to the mhondoro who owned the land, the mediums converted the guerillas from 'strangers' into 'commoners', members of the royal clan who have rights in the territory, who are 'at home' on the land.

Of the four modes of incorporation into Dande society, descent and territoriality were employed to achieve this transformation. The policy of the ZANLA commanders was that guerillas should not be deployed in their home areas. Therefore none of the guerillas in Dande was actually descended from the mhondoro in control of the spirit provinces. But, as I have shown, it is possible to achieve descent from the mhondoro by working land allocated by the mhondoro in his spirit province and by participating in his rituals. In normal circumstances, the transformation of strangers into descendants of the mhondoro requires duration, the participation in work and ritual over a long period of time. The brief duration of the guerillas' residence in the spirit provinces was compensated for by the fervour with which they participated in ritual. They attended the possession rituals of the mediums, sang the songs of the ancestors and danced their dances. They ensured that the rituals of the agricultural cycle were properly carried out and universally attended. It was widely believed that if one ignored the prohibition on work on the chisi rest days enforced by the mediums, one could expect to be punished by the guerillas. Many guerillas wore the black bead wristlets associated with the ancestors. For some this indicated that they themselves had become mediums of their own ancestors. For the rest it served to identify them with the local source of political authority, the mhondoro.

Once they had established themselves as descendants (vazukuru) of the mhondoro, their displacement of the chiefs was inevitable. Three factors contributed to the ease with which this was achieved. The most conspicuous was the opposition the guerillas demonstrated in action to the chiefs. At the most extreme, chiefs and their loyal headmen were assassinated. But other measures were taken as well. I give one example. Secret support committees were established in

many of the villages. Where villages lay near the boundaries of two chieftaincies, a single committee would be established including individuals who had allegiance to both chiefs. The new forms of political organization projected for the future were thus initiated during the struggle itself.

Secondly, speaking in trance, the mediums declared the legitimacy of the resistance. The instruction to support the guerillas had the force of absolute truth characteristic of all statements made by the long dead ancestors. This is not to say that these instructions were universally obeyed, but political allegiance could no longer be regarded as an individual issue, nor as a purely pragmatic one. The intervention of the mhondoro made unavoidable the public, social and moral implications of the choice every individual had perforce to make.

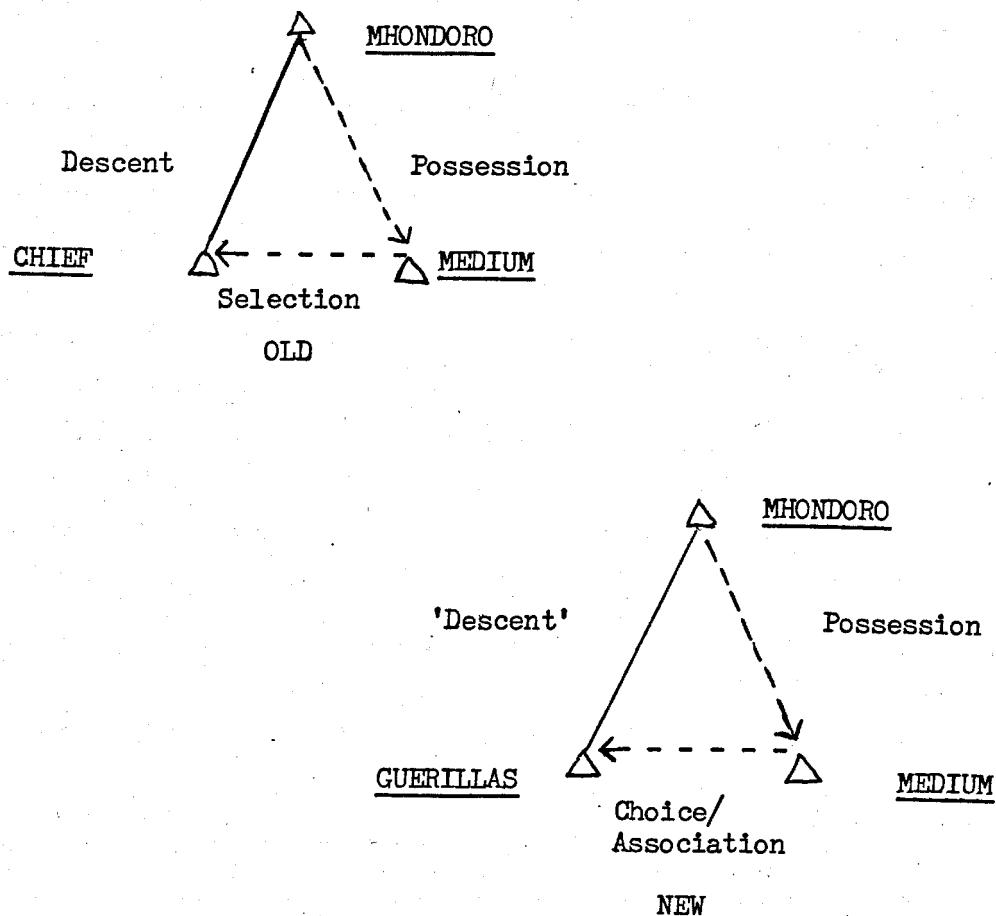
Thirdly, the loose and tactical affiliation of individuals to chieftaincies which has long been characteristic of the Shona allowed the transference of political loyalty from chief to guerillas with a minimum of anxiety. Despite the attempts of the state to impose a bureaucratic structure on the institution of the chiefs, it remained the case that the individual who is acknowledged as controller of the land and who successfully administers the law is mambo or chief. On both counts, the guerillas had established their succession. (Diagram 13 illustrates the new form of the structure of political authority.)

The most powerful evidence of the extent to which the guerillas had been assimilated to the category 'descendants of the mhondoro' is the attitude taken by the guerillas to the belief in witches. Witchfinding was, perhaps, the most controversial of the techniques used by the guerillas to gain support. It is certainly the most open to misinterpretation. It is only once the mode of incorporating the guerillas into Dande society has been understood that an evaluation of the significance of their witch-finding can be made.

Witches as traitors

When I first arrived in Dande some five months after Independence, the almost invariable answer to the question 'Who protects you from witches?' was 'The ZANLA guerillas'. This response was based on

Diagram 13



Lines indicate sources
of authority

the experience of the war. On entering villages in which they were not known, one of the common tactics of the guerillas was to identify the local witches. In some cases they would ask that witches be pointed out to them. Alternately, they would wait until complaints were brought about individuals and then 'interrogate' them. The punishment for convicted witches was, in many cases, decided by the villagers. Some were set free. Others were mutilated or executed.

The guerillas provided protection against witches in other ways as well. Medicines were placed around the perimeter of the camps into which most villagers were collected in the last years of the war. It is said that twenty-four hours later witches would come crying to the guerillas asking to be forgiven. These medicines were obtained from the mhondoro mediums, especially the medium of the autochthonous Tavara ancestor Musuma. It is well attested that when guerillas found traditional healers (n'anga) in the villages, they would force them to swallow their own medicines. If they refused it was concluded that they were witches and that their medicines were poisons. They were punished accordingly.

The term muroyi can be applied to a large variety of malfactors. It is extremely important to understand precisely who the witches dealt with by the guerillas were.

Inevitably, some of the individuals pointed out as witches were participants in the tensions and hostilities that follow from unexplained death or misfortune. Individuals believed to be jealous of the more successful or the more fortunate may be judged to be the cause of their subsequent downfall. On occasions, the guerillas won support by taking the side with the greater number of backers. But the fact that the guerillas had become imbued with the authority of the mhondoro meant that another category of people came to be included within the category 'witch' as well.

The mhondoro typify the ideology of descent. Witches are typically members of one's own rudzi who wish you harm, rudzi being interpreted as 'type' or 'kind of person', as lineage or clan, depending on context.

If the guerillas, who were sponsored by the mediums, were the representatives of the mhondoro, those who opposed the guerillas in effect opposed the mhondoro. Many of those who were pointed out as 'witches' were also described as vatengesi or 'sell-outs', those who sided with (or were believed to side with) the white government.¹⁹

There can be little doubt that some of the individuals named as sell-outs were innocent people identified for reasons of malice. But it is clear that many of those who were described to the guerillas as witches were those believed to be politically untrustworthy or treacherous, those believed to be acting against the welfare of the people as a whole. My discussions with guerillas and villagers supports this view but there is objective contemporary evidence as well. As late as 1981, members of rival political parties, especially Muzorewa's United African National Council (UANC) were described to me by people in Dande as witches. They claimed that if they were to attend their rallies, they risked being poisoned.

This does not mean that the people of Dande are unable to differentiate between people who use poisons, people who fly through the air in winnowing baskets, as witches are believed to do, and members of rival political parties. The point is that all these categories of people have one element in common: they are all opposed to the arbiters of the moral order: the mhondoro. That sell-outs were called witches is not evidence of the 'backwardness' of the rural population of Zimbabwe and their unreadiness to participate in the institutions of democracy, as some commentators have argued. It is evidence of the extent to which guerillas and, by extension, the nationalist politicians, had become identified with the mhondoro. For, all who oppose the public, altruistic mhondoro for private and selfish reasons are placed in the category to which the ancestors are structurally opposed, the witch.

This analysis of the political use of kinship symbolism can be advanced one final step. The three categories of people who were believed to be able to identify witches are the mhondoro mediums,

guerillas and children. Children are said to have this ability because they are not sexually mature. In an earlier chapter I made use of this idea to support my contention that the Korekore experience an opposition between sex (the intrusion of one lineage into another) and a certain kind of knowledge, the knowledge that preserves the identity of one's lineage (see page 116). This is the knowledge that the spirit medium displays when, as part of the procedure by which he is tested, he recites the genealogy of the royal lineage. He is not able to do this if he is engaging in sexual activity during the period of his testing. The guerillas too avoid sex as instructed by the mhondoro. Like children, like the mhondoro mediums, the celibate guerillas are believed to possess knowledge which gives them the power to identify witches, the enemies of the rudzi (the lineage, the clan) of the ancestors and of the liberation war.

The new Vazukuru

Few, if any, of the guerillas relied exclusively for their safety on the magic means of protection which the mhondoro mediums supplied, nor would the mediums have expected them to. Sound planning, courage and discipline were the recognised requirements of a successful operation. Just as few guerillas were prepared to renounce the use of these techniques altogether. Nonetheless, the primary significance of the rituals and techniques I have described does not rest on the generality of the belief that they offer protection from danger. Their importance is that they demonstrate the particular kind of authority achieved by the guerillas in the eyes of the peasantry.

That the mediums agreed to support the guerillas had two effects. Once the mediums had agreed to endorse them, the support of the people followed. But more importantly, the support received from the mhondoro meant that the guerillas were able to fill the political vacuum left by the chiefs when they became administrators of the state. The two main responsibilities of the chiefs had been to take care of the land and to punish immorality by the enforcement of the law through their courts. They had failed in both respects. The land had been lost and witches abounded unchecked. For a period the mediums seem to have taken upon themselves the traditional duties of chiefs, but with the coming of the guerillas, the mhondoro gave their allegiance to the new defenders of the land. The familiar duality of mhondoro and muzukuru, medium and descendant of the chiefs of the past had emerged at the heart of political practice once again.

CHAPTER X

TO ZIMBABWE AND BEYOND

The black man belonged to the Soil. It claimed him. He and millions of others to come belonged to the Soil which had given birth to millions of his kind stretching back well beyond the human memory and lost in antiquity. The Soil had given birth to thousands and thousands of generations and it had received them back into its bosom after their sojourn on earth. The black man belonged to the Soil by right of birth. He belonged to it by right of death as well. To deprive him of it was to rob him of his birth-right and his death-right! The Soil possessed him by right of his many ancestors who had lived on it and who had been buried in it. The Soil gave him life, and when that life left him, it claimed him back. He came from it and therefore he belonged to it. No-one comes from where he does not belong. At death he returned to it. No-one returns where he does not belong. He is of the Soil in life and death - 'Mwana we Vu', Child of the Soil...But of course 'Vana Vevu', Children of the Soil' was more than a designation for all the black people of Zimbabwe. It was a clarion call to all those who were denied their full rights and freedoms in their own native land. It was a rallying point. It was political through and through. It had political nuances that aroused the deep emotions of the black man against the Nordic nonsense which in Rhodesia went under the appellation 'white supremacy'. 'Children of the Soil' meant the downtrodden black man - downtrodden by the white man. But it was never a doctrine of self-pity. Never a philosophy of pessimism or doom. Never a theory of passiveness. Never a programme of withdrawal. It was a political doctrine of self-realization, of self-assertion, of determination, of hope, of resolve to be free of the heavy yoke of white supremacy which the white man fastened on the necks of all the blacks of Zimbabwe nearly a hundred years ago. Hence 'Vana Vevu' carried with it the militant Message: 'Sons of the Soil! Arise and fight!' To divorce it from its militancy, or its militancy from it, would be to miss its true meaning and relevance (Sithole 1977:18).

Long before he wrote these words, Ndabaningi Sithole had lost the leadership of the Zimbabwe African National Union which he had helped to found in 1963. ZANU was to change radically in the years that followed, but the metaphor of vana vevu, the sons of the soil, so strikingly elaborated here, reappeared in its political programmes under Sithole's successor, Robert Mugabe, and, in a variety of forms, of many of the other nationalist parties as well.

The power of this symbolism is its incorporation of the economic and political aspects of the struggle in one image. The root cause of the poverty of the majority of the population was the unequal division of the country into black and white farming areas. This was to be abolished and the land returned to the peasantry. Simultaneously, the white rulers of Rhodesia were to be replaced by the elected representatives of the indigenous people of Zimbabwe. This is not to say that nationalism and land reform were the only elements in these programmes. Nor is it to minimise the differences in the significance attributed to nationalism in the various models proposed for the reconstruction of the country. But for socialists and conservatives alike, the declared priority was to win back the land - the soil and the state - for the indigenous inhabitants of the country who were conceived of as its true, original and inevitable owners.

All nationalisms make use of metaphors of the land, of soil and earth, of territory and boundary, of monuments and graves. By drawing on semi-conscious layers of symbolism, they unleash the emotions that sustain long-term commitment to the creation or defence of the nation. In this chapter I examine some of the implications and consequences of the symbolism used by the ZANU nationalists in the struggle for Zimbabwe.

The victory of the autochthons

Sithole translates vanu vevu (or vana vepasi, an alternative version of the same idea) as 'children or sons of the soil', which is a less pedantic rendering of the set of ideas I have referred to as autochthony. In relation to the white population of Rhodesia, all black Zimbabweans were regarded (and regarded themselves) as autochthons. Despite their function as soldiers, the guerillas were not conceived of as conquerors. Within this symbolic framework, this would imply that they were not the true owners of the land. Rather, they were thought of as the military vanguard of the autochthons, the original, displaced but authentic owners of the land.

Within Shona jurisprudence, ownership rights in a territory are expressed as the ability to control the fertility of that territory. He whose ancestors bring the rain, owns the land. This is precisely the statement made by the guerillas' acceptance of the restrictions imposed on them by the spirit mediums: We own the land, therefore we bring the rain.

In fact, the guerillas never claimed the power to produce rain by themselves, any more than the chiefs had done before them. The characteristic separation of religious and political authorities was retained in the political order that emerged in the course of the war. But the guerillas did display other characteristics typical of autochthons. By means of the techniques taught them by the spirit mediums they were placed under the protection of the land, able to perceive the meanings contained in the behaviour of animals. These animals were not sent by the ancestors or the mediums to convey messages to the guerillas. Of their own volition they gave their support to the guerillas either actively, like the hares and elephants who led the guerillas through the bush and the birds, tortoises and snakes who gave advance warning of the outcome of their missions, or passively, like the lions and snakes who allowed the guerillas free, untroubled passage through the forest. The mediums who taught these techniques were not drawn from any one ethnic group but included the Korekore Chiwawa and the Tavara Musuma. The guerillas, all the residents of Dande, Korekore, Tande, Chikunda and Dema, the poorest farmers who had hardly left the Valley in their lives, and those who had invested wages earned in the town in expansion of their fields, the school-teachers, the shop-keepers, the mothers, the widows, the youngest children organized in their mujiba platoons, the young women who disappeared from their homes and returned as armed, trained guerilla fighters, elders, headmen, healers, drunkards - all of these and their ancestors and their mediums, in opposition to the conquering whites, were placed in one category: children of the soil, or autochthons.

This categorization has significance on another level. It is believed that it is only under certain conditions that the benefits of natural fertility are made available to the owners of the land. Fertility

would be continuous were it not for the contraventions of the moral order that occur from time to time. Murder, incest and witchcraft disrupt fertility and dry up the rain. The wickedness of man is a threat to the fertility of the land he occupies.

But the ancestors, who are more fully autochthonous than their living descendants, can restore morality and fertility. They cure, balance and reorder, overcoming the disturbances caused by man. The spirit mediums, part man and part ancestor, combine in one body the disruption latent in the social order with the curing powers of the natural order. By living in the bush away from the villages, under the tutelage of the ancestors and their mediums, the guerillas demonstrated their mastery of the forces of nature and their acceptance by them. As autochthons, as protégés of the ancestors, they were capable of overcoming and eradicating the disruptions caused to the land and its people by the immorality of the white conquerors.

I have described the processes whereby strangers and even conquerors are assimilated into Dande (and, more generally, Shona) society. To a large extent the reason why the whites were not assimilated in these ways is obvious. They did not wish to be. They had their own spirits, their own gods, their own ancestors. But their refusal had certain implications which are worth drawing out to complete the discussion of the power of the symbolism of the land.

Strangers are assimilated in two ways. Firstly, they may be awarded stretches of land to farm. By working this land and performing the rituals of the mhondoro who owns the land, over time they come to be accepted as members of the community in which they live. In all cases this occurs in the weak sense, when strangers are treated as descendants (vazukuru) of the mhondoro. It may also eventually occur in the strong sense, when strangers change their clan affiliation to that associated with the territory in which they have come to live. One might say that this process expresses the belief that those who work on the land should thereby acquire rights in that land. This is recognised not by awarding rights in land which reduce those of the original land-owning group and diminish

the area they control. Rather, it is recognised by assimilating the stranger into the original group and converting him from a 'stranger' with no rights in land, into a 'commoner', one who is 'at home' on the land.

The second means by which ownership of land changes hands, and the one used by the whites, is conquest. Typically, over a period of time, conquerors accept that the ultimate owners of the land are the autochthons, its previous owners, and they participate in the established rituals that ensure the continuation of its fertility. Even non-Shona conquerors such as the Ndebele assimilated themselves to the indigenous religion in the parts of the country in which they became politically dominant and made regular offerings at Shona shrines (Daneel 1970; Bhebe 1979:287). But for the whole of the period that they held political power in Zimbabwe, the white conquerors refused to accept the supremacy of the indigenous ancestors as owners of the land or as bringers of the rain.

The tribulations brought upon the Shona by their conquest might have been borne had it at least brought them prosperity and fertility. But, having claimed absolute ownership of the land for themselves, the whites proved unable to guarantee its fertility, its freedom from drought. Indeed, the lands allocated to the black farmers by the various Land Acts were the least fertile of all and, due to overcrowding and overworking, such fertility as they had rapidly declined.

In the pre-colonial political ideology of Dande which persisted, though in a weakened form, right up to the period of the guerilla war, the authority of the chiefs was perpetuated by the belief that their deaths were the source of the fertility of the land. The death of a chief is the birth of a mhondoro. Thus a potential discontinuity in the authority of the royal lineage, the death of a ruler, was transformed into the source of the persistence of the society as a whole, while the authority of the chiefs was presented as a natural rather than a social (i.e. political) phenomenon.

Amongst the Chikunda in the north of Dande, the white Portuguese land holders took full political power into their hands. But they intermarried with the local peoples, they participated in all aspects of the society that surrounded them, they made offerings to the autochthonous shrines. Their behaviour was a source of never ending dismay to their superiors in Lisbon but it brought them undreamed of rewards, unmeasurable in gold. At their deaths many of these land holders became mhondoro (or pondoro as the Chikunda call them) a source of power and fertility to their descendants for all time to come (Newitt 1973:169f). But the white British land holders in Rhodesia kept themselves to themselves. They broke apart the structures of authority that they found, took power into their hands and gave back nothing in return. The death of a District Commissioner adds nothing to the fertility of the earth.

It is therefore quite logical that the predominant expression of opposition to white rule stressed the powers of perpetual fertility held by the mhondoro, the true owners of the land. And it was inevitable that the mediums of these mhondoro would, in conformity with their traditional role as installers of the chiefs, declare the guerillas to be the new chiefs who would restore natural fertility and social justice to all.

It was no surprise to the spirit mediums that the harvest of 1980, the first after Independence and the victory of the autochthons, was one of the most bounteous in living memory.

Beyond autochthony

But the following year brought very sparse rains and a poor harvest. And the next year, 1983, was a year of acute drought and hardship throughout the country. The autochthons had reestablished their ownership of the land and yet after one brief, happy burst, fertility refused to flow.

And with the successive failures of the rain, the power of the symbolism of autochthony to express the unity of black Zimbabweans was exhausted. The ancestors had promised victory and fertility.

Victory had come but fertility had failed. Logically, the drought might have been explained by arguing that, for one reason or another, the ancestors had changed their political opinions and no longer desired majority rule. But Independence was too long sought, too hard won a goal to be rethought in those terms.

But even had Independence been followed by one successful harvest after another, the symbolism of autochthony would still, sooner or later, have broken apart. By a paradox, it was doomed to lose its authority at the moment of its apotheosis, the nationalist victory, the symbolic return of the land to the people. The 'conquerors', in opposition to whom the unity of the autochthons had been achieved, had been overcome. If unity was to survive, it needed a new motivation and, perhaps, a new set of symbols as well.

The symbolism of autochthony and fertility had absorbed a wide range of social experiences. It had seemed to dissolve their distinctions and combine them through the experience of resistance and of struggle. But in fact the use of this symbolism by itself could do no more than hold these diverse elements intact, in suspension. When the war was over, the towns people lost their immediate need for solidarity with the peasantry, the commercial farmers with the subsistence farmers, the members of each language group with the others. The guerillas, no longer in the bush and the villagers, no longer at risk from the arbitrary hazards of war, had less urgent need of the protection of the most senior, the most powerful, the most encompassing of ancestors. The old strains and contradictions, the divisions of status, of gender, of generation began to emerge once again.

But they did not emerge unchanged. The use of symbol and ritual was only one of the factors that contributed to the success of the nationalist guerillas and politicians in forging unity among the peasantry. Another was political education. A third was the introduction of new administrative structures and a new conception of the source of political authority.

The attempt to regain control of the fertility of the earth is an intensely real and powerfully experienced political ambition. But in practice, the battle for fertility was a battle fought by the peasantry to take back control of their productivity, to regain their political autonomy, their right to determine the ordering of their lives. How far have these battles been won?

The Party

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the central problem in mounting resistance to colonialism had been effective organization. The individual chieftaincies of Mozambique, even groups of these chieftaincies, could not hope to compete with the force of a Portuguese army of mercenaries. No more could the chiefs of Rhodesia survive the challenge of the well-equipped army of the British state (Isaacman 1976:126; Ranger 1967). The problem, in a phrase, was 'how to commit the masses to an effective enlargement of scale' (Ranger 1968:446). The nationalist parties provided the long-sought solution. They represented an alternative to the compromised chiefs both in terms of political aspirations and, with local branches throughout the country, in terms of scale. The role of the parties is the most important feature, and perhaps the only truly original one, that distinguishes the recent war from all past wars and rebellions.

Membership of ZANU was open to anyone committed to the struggle, but in Dande at least few non-militants actually joined until after Independence. Apart from occasional visits from underground Party organizers, the Party was represented in Dande by the guerillas. For most people the way into the Party was by becoming a guerilla.

Guerillas were distinguished from the mujibas, their young village auxiliaries, and from the rest of the peasantry by their military training and their political education. Given the terrain of the Valley and the relatively small size of the operational zone, it was impossible to establish training camps within Zimbabwe undetected by the army of the state. Trainee guerillas were therefore sent to ZANU camps outside the country, either in the 'front-line' states

of Mozambique and Tanzania or, in some cases, as far afield as North Korea and Eastern Europe. This pragmatic necessity was partially transformed into a ritual practice. No-one was considered a fully-fledged guerilla unless she or he had crossed the borders of Zimbabwe into another country for training before taking up arms. During the later stages of the war, the training of guerillas became ever more brief and superficial, but the process of leaving the country, receiving training and returning was maintained.¹

This had the effect of placing a very sharp emphasis on the unusual qualities of the knowledge obtained by the guerillas outside Zimbabwe. Quite apart from the powers they acquired from the mediums, guerillas who had completed their training were believed to have exceptional skills of their own. The most remarkable of these was their ability to vanish into thin air whenever they wished. I have many times heard people describe this phenomenon and insist that there was no question of the guerillas hiding behind trees or scuttling away into the high grass. The disappearance was magical and quite outside the bounds of ordinary experience. These skills, obtained by their esoteric training, together with their ability to control the forces of nature, transformed the young women and men of the countryside into figures of exceptional power and authority.²

It is hard to disentangle this perception of the guerillas from the perception of the political programme which the Party had instructed them to teach. Much of it was extremely challenging. How much was accepted simply because of the authority of the guerillas and how much because it was considered a meaningful and practical contribution to the peasants' knowledge of their world can be estimated by considering the extent to which the changes introduced during the war were retained after the guerillas had left the countryside.

The most striking success the guerillas achieved was in communicating the Party's conception of the nature and the goals of the struggle. While calling for the return of the land to the people in terms of the traditional concepts of autochthony, it was explained that

this could only be achieved by the victory of one class rather than of one ethnic group over another. The enemy was defined as racism and the structures of exploitation rather than as individual members of the white population. Throughout the whole of my time in Dande I was never given reason to doubt that this argument had been very widely accepted.

The second successful innovation was the belief that political authority should be based on popular election. Village committees were established, each with responsibility for the administration and welfare of 15 to 20 households. These developed out of the support groups set up by the guerillas during the war and are a continuation of the mobilizing aspect of their work. They consist entirely of ZANU (PF) members (there are no other political parties active in Dande). A separately elected branch committee has authority over 20 to 25 village committees and sends a delegate to a district committee which has contact with Party headquarters. The internal structure of the committees has been adapted from that of the guerilla platoon, consisting of a Chairman, a Secretary, a Political Commissar and officers responsible for welfare, security, publicity of meetings, women's affairs, youth affairs and so on.

The committees are an entirely new feature of village life. They bring to a conclusion the series of transformations of the structure of political authority that began when the chiefs were incorporated into the emergent white state. As all adults are eligible for election and to vote, one of the three underlying inequalities of Dande society, that between royals and commoners, has been overcome. While chiefs retain some prestige as the descendants of the mhondoro, they are entitled to no automatic political or economic privileges on that account, though they may stand for election like any other villager. In fact only one chief in Dande has been elected to serve on a committee. The rest have no formal authority within the new political order at all. With the exception only of Independence itself, the establishment of the political committees is the major achievement of the liberation struggle.

The second of the traditional inequalities challenged by the practice of the guerillas was that between young and old. During the war it was almost exclusively the young who held political authority. The vast majority of the guerillas were unmarried; in traditional terms, they were not of adult status. Nonetheless, the authority of their knowledge, their skills, the backing of the spirit mediums, as well, of course, as their arms and their military expertise, established them as the masters of the countryside. Some of this authority rubbed off on the even younger people, the platoons of mujibas and chimbuidos who were regarded by adults with a far greater respect than would have been conceivable in the past.

But after the ceasefire, in accordance with the Lancaster House agreement under the terms of which a negotiated settlement leading to Independence was achieved, the guerillas were withdrawn from the villages. They went first into the so-called assembly points and then either into the newly reorganized army or in search of employment in the towns. The consequence was that the most progressive element of the population, those most highly trained and experienced in the skills required to carry the work of the war into the peace and progress from nationalist victory to a transformation of the society in the terms envisaged by the Party were cut off from the countryside. Although many young people were elected onto the village committees, the experience gained by the young in the war was quickly challenged by the accumulated traditional experience of the elders who dominate the committees. In the absence of the guerillas, this challenge was not easily met.

The same can be said of the third traditional inequality which was challenged by the organization of resistance, that between women and men. In the guerilla army, women took a leading role as combatants and commanders, just as the young village girls, the chimbuidos, were as active in support of the guerillas as their male counterparts. But after the war, much of the ground that had been won was lost. Once again a principal cause is the withdrawal of the guerillas from the countryside. The women who

had practical experience of living and fighting alongside men as their moral and intellectual equals are either in the army or in the towns and are not available to share this experience with the women who stayed behind. Although women are eligible for election to village committees, in practice very few are chosen and even fewer are elected to senior positions. Women who are elected are, almost invariably, the wives of unusually wealthy or prestigious husbands. Though there are those who wish to consolidate and extend the progress achieved during the war, in the face of determined male opposition they all too easily fall victim to the traditional conceptualization of women as no more than the providers of biological fertility and domesticity to the men.³

This brief discussion leads to the conclusion that the village committees constitute an innovation on one level only. They have successfully resolved a long-standing political and moral dilemma by equalising the status and the rights of all the dominant members of Dande society, the male elders. By and large, these male elders have used the committees to maintain their dominant position. The inequalities between the genders and between the generations are not experienced by them as a problem and, in the absence of the political will which the guerillas had provided, they are happy to allow wartime practice to lapse in this time of peace.

But the ease with which this dominant group regained their former position after the war cannot be explained simply by the withdrawal of the militants. If the guerillas had wished to institute full-scale democracy, to place women and unmarried men at the centre of a new political arena from which the men's-houses and the tumbledown authority of the chiefs had been cleared, why did they fail? At least part of the answer can be found in the relationship between the guerillas and the spirit mediums.

In the ideology of the traditional political order, the authority of the chiefs is based on the absolute power and incontrovertible knowledge of the mhondoro. This power and this knowledge are defined (or created) in opposition to the biological processes of

life and death which are conceived of as harmful and polluting and are symbolically attributed to women. The glory of the chief requires that the bodies of women be covered with dirt. By their denigration the containment of women within the private, domestic sphere is made to seem inevitable while men, unchallenged, dominate the key institutions of the society.

The chiefs have gone, but the spirit mediums remain as the most prestigious of the specialists whose practice perpetuates this ideology. That they were chosen by the guerillas to instruct them in a moral code of protective behaviour had the effect that the symbolism that supports the profession of the medium was carried into the professional life of the combatant. Menstruation was regarded as a source of acute danger to the guerillas. Despite the accession of women to senior military positions, the notion that femininity constitutes an ineradicable weakness survived intact into the post-war world.

Other criticisms of the cooperation between guerillas and mediums have been made. Throughout the mid-1970s, the use of traditional institutions to achieve non-traditional ends was under constant attack from a section of the ZANLA leadership.⁴

These guerilla leaders claimed to derive their authority not from the mhondoro in whom they placed little faith, but from the nationalist leaders of the past, from the leaders of other nationalist and socialist struggles and from 'the people' as a whole. Their short-term goals, the eradication of inequality between the black and white populations of the country, were identical to those of the majority of the guerillas, but their overriding aim was the permanent eradication of class inequality within the black population as much as between black and white.

The vast majority of the black middle-class lived, or lived principally, in the towns. The most prominent representatives of this class in the countryside were the chiefs. The left-wing ZANLA militants argued that as long as belief in the efficacy and moral authority of the mhondoro remained, the way was open for the return of their descendants, the chiefs, to political

power. They believed it necessary to demolish the ideological basis of the privilege the chiefs had enjoyed and to build their support among the peasantry purely on the basis of a materialist socialism. And they believed that the time for the creation of a revolutionary consciousness is during the armed struggle, not after it has been won. For all these reasons, the cooperation between the guerillas and the spirit mediums was a particular focus of their criticism of the policies of the ZANLA leadership.

The special facilities made available to the spirit mediums in the camps in Mozambique so that they might continue to observe the restrictions that govern their daily lives, including the separate preparation of their food by pre-pubescent girls, were attacked as a perpetuation of unjustified privilege. As mediums were not expected to take part in the fighting, the claim to be possessed was taken to be no more than a convenient cover for cowardice. Although the inspiration of Nehanda was acknowledged, praise was directed at the medium Charwe, the heroine of the 1896 rebellion, and not at the mhondoro nor at the subsequent mediums who claimed to be possessed by her. Quite at odds with the general spirit of Shona nationalism, in which the power of the ancestors was considered a major source of strength, the use of the mediums in any capacity was, from this point of view, a betrayal of the struggle.⁵

These views were rejected and the spirit mediums continued to make their idiosyncratic contribution to the resistance. But it is worth considering, however, briefly, what justification there was for this argument.

In the few years that have passed since the end of the war, belief in the mhondoro has remained as powerful as ever and yet the chiefs have not attempted to reestablish themselves. Legislation has been passed by parliament which severely limits their powers, but this is only part of the reason why an attempt by the chiefs to win back their old authority would be so strongly resisted. The most important factor is the relationship that has developed between the ancestors and the new source of political authority, the village committee.

The village committees and the ancestors

At the beginning of every meeting of the village and branch committees, all the men present remove their hats and their shoes and perform the ritual clapping to the ancestors while the mutapi of the local mhondoro asks for his approval of the business of the day. The same ritual is performed at the end. This is a constant and powerful reminder of the responsibilities which the members of the committee have not only to the people who elected them but to the mhondoro, the owners of the land, as well.

The village committees have taken over the crucial functions once carried out by the chiefs: the administration of law, the settling of disputes, the allocation of land. No-one doubts that the ancestors approve. If the committee acts against the interests of the people, the ancestors will find a way to make their displeasure known. The officers of the committee are not appointed by the mhondoro as the chiefs were. They are chosen by the people. But after they have been elected, senior members of the committees visit their local spirit medium to inform the mhondoro and to ask for his approval and advice.

What does this mean? The introduction of popularly elected committees to replace the discredited chiefs was made by the guerillas. This innovation was endorsed by the radical mhondoro medium Chiwawa/Pondai who abolished the role of the mutapi-munyai, thus allowing the mhondoro a path by which to communicate directly with the people. The notion of a royal lineage which owned the land and supplied a succession of rulers to govern it was expanded to accommodate all the people who live within the territory of the senior mhondoro. All are descendants of the mhondoro and all are 'at home' on his land.

When Chiwawa/Pondai returned to Dande from jail after the war, he reinforced the new egalitarianism by democratising the rituals which had previously enhanced the status of the chief. All forms of ritual tribute, including certain cuts of meat traditionally yielded by hunters, need no longer be paid to the chief. Even the

tribute which in the past was the subject of the most extreme sanctions has been set aside. Chiwawa/Pondai, speaking in trance, announced that it is no longer forbidden for ordinary people to eat the pangolin. They may do so without fear of madness or death.

The centre of political authority has shifted, but the symbols which express it remain the same. More precisely, the use of old symbols in new, previously immoral ways demonstrates with great force and clarity how much has changed. Everyone may eat pangolin; all descendants of the mhondoro are equally 'at home'; everyone should benefit equally from the fertility and wealth of the land.

The problem which confronts the ancestors and will never go away is that though they long to take part in the lives of their descendants they cannot. They have no bodies, no physical form. They are mweya, breath, wind, air. In the past, the ancestors resolved this dilemma by using certain living men as their representatives on earth. They made them chiefs and gave them the power to administer the law and the land on their behalf, to deal with infringements of the moral code and protect the earth from drought. But the chiefs betrayed them. Now the ancestors have new representatives, the ZANU (PF) village committees.

Within Dande, the area administered by a branch committee corresponds more or less to the larger spirit provinces. Of the chairmen of the branch committees it is said: ndimambo zvino, he is now the chief. This does not mean that he is like a chief, or that he is acting as or for the chief. The word mambo is applied to anyone who acts with the authority of the ancestors (see page 138). The old chiefs no longer have this authority. The branch chairmen have and they are the mambo of today.

The ex-chiefs find themselves in an extremely ambiguous position. They are still regarded as the descendants of the mhondoro but the only privilege this gives them is the right to lead certain of the rituals for the mhondoro. But this is no more than is the right of any lineage head at a ceremony directed towards his ancestors. At a meeting held soon after Independence, the elders of Dande

declared their desire to do away with chiefs altogether. They remain only because it is the policy of the present government to continue to recognise the chiefs, and pay them a salary, for 'cultural and historical' reasons. But they receive precious little attention. One example. The ritual held in 1981 to appoint a successor to the Matsiwo chieftaincy took place on the same day as a meeting between parents and teachers at the local school. A handful of people turned up at the chief's village whereas the school was overwhelmed by the uncharacteristically large crowd of parents, many of whom, there is little doubt, went to the school to make quite clear to their neighbours that on no account would they take part in the rituals of the chief.

One further consequence of the belief that the ancestors support the committees is the new function attributed to the Political Commissar on each committee. Their explicit function is political education, the spreading and interpreting of the current party line on matters of importance to the villagers. But in the committees of Dande they are also charged with protecting their area from witches. And this is no surprise. The concept of 'witch' is today, as in the past, the negative of 'mhondoro'. Because the mhondoro have given them their support, the village committees defend the moral code they represent. If anyone breaks ^{is} that code and therefore a witch, it is the duty of the Political Commissar, as it was of the chiefs of the past, to take steps against them. If, for any reason, the mhondoro are believed to have withdrawn their support from the committees, the category of people subject to the attentions of the Political Commissar will be redefined.

If the chairman of the branch committee is a mambo, a representative of the ancestors, he is unlike past mambos in one respect at least. Once installed, chiefs rule for life. The branch chairman, like all other committee officials, is elected for just three years. After this he must stand down, though he may, if he chooses, put up for election again. Moreover, if at any time during his period of office he loses the support of the electorate, he may be voted down and replaced. The question this raises is whether the

political committees are capable of recreating the old links between the earth and the sky, this world and the next, the politics of the present and the past. Will branch chairmen at their deaths become mhondoro, establish new branch-sized spirit provinces and control the fertility of the fields that, in life, they won back from the whites? I doubt that it will be less than fifty years before the answer is known. For the moment the mhondoro that there are, charged with energy from their success in the war, can, if they wish, supply all the fertility required.

In a few cases spirit mediums have been elected to serve on committees, but this is rare. In most cases the traditional separation of the political and the religious, the rulers of the present and of the past is continued. But many mediums attend meetings regularly. In terms of local theory, the mediums are no more than men. What they say is no more worth the hearing than the words of any other man. But their unique ambiguity - part man, part ancestor - lends great weight to any intervention they make.

What if a spirit medium should object to a decision taken by a committee? Or speaking as the mhondoro, what if he should refuse to sanction the appointment of a committee official? As far as I know, this has not happened so far, but it is likely that the same principles will apply in the present as in the past. The unalterable assumption is that the mhondoro care for the welfare of the people. Where the action of a medium in opposing an elected official is considered to be motivated by self-interest, suspicions about the authenticity of his possession will arise. Where the mhondoro's opinions, as conveyed by the medium, are perceived as altruistic, to the benefit of the people as a whole, they will be listened to and usually acted upon.

The fear that the continued authority of the mhondoro and their mediums poses a danger to the newly-established democratic process within the villages is groundless. At the same moment that a medium loses support, his possession and his authority to enforce his opinion simply disappear. Whether continued belief in the

ancestors is compatible with the achievement of political equality between the sexes is a different matter and little progress will be made in this direction until it is given the serious attention it deserves.⁶

This should not be taken to imply that the mhondoro mediums do no more than express the 'consensus' of the opinions of their followers as Garbett (1969:125) and, more recently, Issacman and Isaacman (1977:45n50) have claimed. I have three objections to this argument. The first is its circularity which I have discussed already (Page 131). The second is the fact of the very wide range of opinions expressed by the mhondoro mediums of Dande during the war. It cannot be the case that the mediums of Madzomba who supported the state and of Chiwawa who resisted it both expressed a 'consensus'.

The third objection is to the implication of the 'consensus' argument that the careers of the mediums are shaped largely by opportunism. In my experience this is simply not so. The status of the knowledge spoken by a medium in a state interpreted as possession allows him to express his own views as those of the ancestor. That this occurs is invisible to his followers who perceive him as the passive instrument of his mhondoro. But it becomes visible when the medium loses his aura of altruism, his penumbra of moral concern. There may be mediums who make no statement unless they are certain it will increase their prestige and support, but there are others who are courageous and creative, who venture into unchartered regions of the political terrain. If they succeed, as Chiwawa/Pondai did, their reputations are enhanced. If they fail, as the medium of Madzomba failed, they may lose in time every drop of authority they possess.

The two Zimbabwes

By the nature of their profession, spirit mediums can never be controlled or contained by any one set of political institutions. The mhondoro live forever outside and far above the transitory world of human ambition and desire. The only demand they make of their earthly substitutes is that they take care of their descendants and protect the land. Should they fail, they will

be abandoned and some other group or class will find itself charged with the care of the country.

The mhondoro mediums provided the resistance with the set of symbols with which its moral authority was expressed. They lent it their skills, their knowledge and the weight of their prestige. It was inevitable that after the successful conclusion of the war they should feel that the power to control the destiny of the new nation was in their hands. In 1982 Chiwawa/Pondai, speaking in trance at a public meeting, described his dismay at the slow rate of progress achieved by the government in fulfilling their promises of economic aid to the Dande region. His warning was perfectly clear. It was, he said, the mhondoro who had enabled the present government to come to power. If they failed the people, and therefore failed the ancestors, the mhondoro would transfer their moral authority elsewhere.⁷

But these mhondoro mediums represent only the ancestors of the Shona peoples. There are many other ethnic groups within Zimbabwe as well. The efforts of the Ndebele, the Shangaan, the Sotho and the Venda were as significant to the achievement of Independence as those of the various Shona groupings, and yet, so far, it has been only the religious and political institutions of the Shona which have contributed to the ideology and symbolism of the new state.

The claim to political authority expressed by the Shona mhondoro mediums has been recognised and to some extent encouraged by the new government which is massively dominated by Shona politicians. Ministers of State and senior members of the Party have expressed a willingness to perpetuate the traditional relationship between political and religious authorities that was revived by the guerillas during the war. In this they include mhondoro mediums throughout the country, not just those of the Zambezi Valley. The symbolism of autochthony has been resuscitated. The ancestors, the original and legitimate owners of the country, are now charged with protecting the land against new potential 'conquerors', the

South African state, or the more abstract but no less real forces of neo-colonialism. The hope is that by a propagandist use of the tried and tested symbolism, divisions of class and ethnicity can be overcome.

The borders of the nation state Zimbabwe were established in the late 19th century, but the idea that they correspond to some ancient polity over which the ancestors ruled long ago had its expression, if not its origin, during the war. All the restrictions that were imposed by the mhondoro mediums on the guerillas were observed only within the borders of Rhodesia as then it was. As soon as they had crossed into Mozambique, the guerillas were permitted to have sex, shoot wild animals, and eat any food they pleased. The reason is at once obvious and profound. They were autochthons only within the borders of their own country. When they crossed from Mozambique back into Zimbabwe, they would purify themselves by washing in a river and so place themselves once again under the protection of the mhondoro.

The rituals performed at the territorial borders are reminiscent of the protective rituals that chiefs and mediums carry out before crossing the boundaries of their territories or spirit provinces (see page 202). The whole of Zimbabwe, it would seem, was treated by the guerillas as though it were a single spirit province.

The origin of the word 'Zimbabwe' has not been firmly established. It is either a corruption of dzimba dzemabwe, meaning 'houses of stone' or it is a version of dzimbahwe, meaning 'royal burial ground'. In either case it refers to the stone buildings, of which there are examples scattered all over the countryside, which were the administrative and ritual centres of various polities at various historical periods. The most famous of these is Great Zimbabwe near Fort Victoria. The nation Zimbabwe is, therefore, the home of the ancestors, the seat of their power, the place where they were buried, the rightful home of their descendants.

But if Zimbabwe is to be thought of as a spirit province with all the Shona conceived of as members of a single lineage, all 'at home' within its borders, there must be a single ancestor, a single mhondoro to whom this massive spirit province belongs.

Although the guerillas had dealings with a number of mediums in Dande, there was one above all whose vazukuru or descendants they claimed to be. This was Nehanda. Today in Dande it is said that Nehanda has two spirit provinces. One is her traditional province on the northern border of the country on the banks of the Msengezi River. The other is the country of Zimbabwe as a whole.

Nehanda's progress towards her current dazzling pre-eminence among mhondoro exactly parallels the progress of the nationalist resistance. When Charwe, the medium of Nehanda who was a leader of the rebellion of 1896 was hanged, she is said to have shouted: 'My bones will rise'. The guerillas were not slow to see themselves as the bones of Nehanda, rising to complete her interrupted task. Photographs taken of Charwe before her death contributed greatly to the conceptualization of this ancestor so that today the mhondoro Nehanda who possessed the medium Charwe is not distinguished from the medium herself. Almost invariably when people refer to Nehanda it is the resistance leader of the rebellion they have in mind.⁸

The second impetus to the development of Nehanda's modern reputation was provided by the chance that a medium of Nehanda happened to be living in one of the earliest of the ZANLA operational zones. Although in general practice it is customary to consult the mhondoro of the spirit medium within which one lives, when a particular service is needed it is common to consult the medium with the largest reputation for the skill required. Nehanda's reputation for simba yehondo, the power of war, was very great indeed. It was inevitable that the guerillas within the whole Dande region should wish to consult her. This, of course, enhanced her reputation even further.

The most senior mhondoro in any tradition is the one thought to have lived at the earliest time. As father of all who follow, the first mhondoro is the owner of all the territories of his descendants. But this argument can also be put in reverse. If the earliest mhondoro is the most senior, then the most senior - or the one

currently considered to be the most powerful and therefore the most senior - must logically be the earliest. As Nehanda's fame spread through Zimbabwe so her seniority increased. Where she had previously had no place on genealogies, she was simply accepted as earlier than all known mhondoro and the respectful term ambuya (female ancestor, grandmother) was added to her name.⁹ As the most senior mhondoro, Ambuya Nehanda could lay claim to the territories of all her descendants and hence (in the view of all her followers) of all Zimbabwe. And it is perfectly consistent with the genealogies of mhondoro found throughout the Zambezi Valley that a female ancestor, symbolizing eternal and limitless fertility, should be the senior, the musikarudzi, the founder of the line.

I do not know of any medium of Nehanda who has made claims like these for herself. But the guerillas who performed self-purifying rituals before crossing the border from Mozambique into Zimbabwe thought of themselves as entering the spirit province of Nehanda. And as all those who live in the spirit province of a mhondoro regard themselves as members of one lineage descended from that mhondoro, so they considered themselves and all those committed to the liberation of Zimbabwe as members of one lineage, the vazukuru (grandchildren) of Ambuya (grandmother) Nehanda.

On cloths printed to celebrate Independence in 1980, the face of the medium Charwe, labelled Nehanda, floats above an image of the first Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe. Schools and, with especial aptness, a maternity hospital have been named in her honour. Her name has replaced that of 'Mwari' (God) as part of a common oath. As senior mhondoro, owner of the country, she stands as a key symbol of the unity of all the Shona peoples.¹⁰

There are, then, two Zimbabwes. There is the nation/spirit province, owned by the ancestors of the Shona people in which the Shona have the perpetual, inextinguishable right of autochthons to live and govern forever. And there is the territory that was Rhodesia, the borders of which were drawn by politicians in Britain and Portugal with no regard for the

peoples who lived within them, with a history less than a hundred years long. Within this second Zimbabwe live the Shona, but there also live the Ndebele, the Shangaan, the Venda, the Sotho and a number of other marginal ethnic groups as well.

From the point of view of Dande, the two Zimbabwes are one. From many other parts of the country this is not so. Will the Ndebele and the other smaller populations accept that the Shona ancestors can provide them with their fertility or will they insist on maintaining their own integrity, insist, that is, that their own ancestors, their own political traditions should also form part of the symbolism of the new state?

Since Independence, large numbers of ex-guerillas loyal to ZAPU have taken up arms against the new state. By this action they declare their belief that the state does not adequately represent the interests of the Ndebele people. Of the two Zimbabwes, one, the Zimbabwe of Nehanda and the other Shona mhondoro, Zimbabwe the spirit province, has survived numerous transformations in the past and will no doubt survive many more. But it seems clear that the peaceful survival of the other Zimbabwe, the modern nation state, requires more than the benefits that any one set of ancestors can provide.¹¹

CONCLUSION

Making History

In 1979, a few months after the ZANU (PF) election victory, the three mhondoro mediums who had accompanied the aged medium of Nehanda into Mozambique returned to Zimbabwe. Today they are among the most respected of mediums, attracting patients and visitors from the length and breadth of Dande and from the Plateau as well. All three are adventurous cash-crop farmers who encourage their less confident followers to take advantage of the development and training schemes the present government offers. The medium of Chiodzamamera combines his reputations as rain-bringer and hero of the resistance with his position as elected chairman of a small cooperative farming group established with the assistance of Oxfam a short distance from his village. They remain on the ZANU (PF) pay roll and make frequent visits to the capital to consult with leading Party cadres.

Many of the restrictions observed by mhondoro mediums before the war have been lifted. In particular the avoidance of the artefacts of western society is much less rigorously enforced. The mediums explain that their cooperation with the guerillas necessitated their riding in military vehicles, eating food out of tins, coming into contact with white people and so on. As they were forced to ignore these restrictions in the war and 'have got used to doing so', they continue to ignore them in the peace. And they feel justified in this for, with the coming of the peace, the hostility between black and white is at an end. The cultural nationalism which the restrictions dramatise has triumphed and these mediums feel that under their control, the beneficial aspects of white society should now be absorbed. The medium of Musuma grows cotton and maize for sale, he has been elected chairman of his local village committee, he makes frequent trips to Harare by bus, he sleeps on a metal frame bed and he runs a small store, the only one in his extremely remote village.

The restrictions that are still observed are those central to the theory and practice of mediumship, the triumph of life-through-possession over biological life and death: the avoidance of blood, of the colour red, of death and dead bodies, of food cooked by mature women. Possession still occurs only when the moon is visible. The chisi days of chiropo and rusere remain days of rest from all non-domestic forms of labour.

Since Independence, two large-scale revisions of the mythology of the Korekore have taken place, the first by the medium of Chiwawa, ancestor of the three Korekore chieftaincies, the second by the medium of a previously unknown mhondoro who spoke for the first time in 1981.

Pondai, the medium of Chiwawa, was released from jail in the amnesty of 1979 after serving seven years of his twenty-five year sentence. After some months of difficulty in achieving possession, the mhondoro returned. Wherever the medium travelled throughout his provinces, his descendants organized ceremonies to thank the mhondoro Chiwawa for his help and protection during the war and to welcome him home.

I have mentioned the democratization of the rituals of the chieftaincy - the giving of tribute and the eating of the pangolin - which Chiwawa/Pondai introduced. His second set of innovations to traditional practice are conceptualised differently. These (also communicated by Chiwawa/Pondai in trance) are not, like the first set, modifications in line with a new political reality. Rather they purport to restore to the history and identity of the Korekore its true and original form which was corrupted by the illegitimate interventions of the medium Mutota/Kupara. Mutota/Kupara had introduced Friday and Sunday as additional chisi rest days. Chiwawa/Pondai has cancelled these. He claims that they need only be observed by people who live in the Guruve District on the Plateau, the 'true home' of Mutota/Kupara.

Two other innovation/restorations are more radical. The first is the claim that the true clan of the Korekore is not Elephant (Nzou Samanyanga) but Heart (Moyo Moyondizvo) a well-known and widespread Rozvi clan. Elephant, says Chiwawa, is the clan only of the Tande Matsiwo chieftaincy. For the mhondoro, the resumption by the Korekore of their true identity is a matter of urgency as many have unknowingly committed incest by marrying people who are members of their own clan. Chiwawa/Pondai maintains that it was Mutota who altered the Korekore clan when he arrived from Guruuswa. This is consistent with traditions, still current in Dande, which tell of the Korekore stealing the Tande's clan (see page 233)

and also with the principle that the key affiliation of a clan is to a territory and not to a people.¹ By restoring the 'original' clan, one further interference of Mutota in the 'true' history of the Korekore is removed. Many Korekore, especially those who live near Chiwawa's home in the Chiweshe area, have adopted the new clan and address each other by its praise name.

The second major revelation is the name of Mutota's father. According to Chiwawa/Pondai he is Dzivaguru, previously thought of only as the senior Tavara mhondoro, an autochthon. And Dzivaguru's father is said to be 'Monomotapa' who comes from gungwa guru, the big sea. That Dzivaguru is said to be Mutota's father suggests that a claim is being made to the autochthonous status of the Korekore. But 'Monomotapa', the new most senior Korekore ancestor is thought of as a Korekore, a conqueror. He is also referred to as 'Mambo Mutapa'. Perhaps the intention is to suggest that there were no people in Dande before the Korekore arrived. The presence of water at the top of the genealogy ('the big sea') is consistent with the symbolism of the other Korekore genealogies discussed in Chapter V.

But there is, I think, another level of significance to the combination of these elements in one genealogy. Certainly by naming Mutota's father and grandfather, Chiwawa/Pondai is able to diminish Mutota's claim to be musikarudzi, founder of the line. But even more interesting than this is the implication that all the people of the Valley derive from the same source and are members of the same lineage. From discussion with Chiwawa/Pondai it is clear that the new genealogy is a reflection of nationalist ideology, that the one significant identity of all these people is that they are all equally members of the same territory, the new state of Zimbabwe.²

The same ideology of pan-Shona unity underlies the second recent elaboration that the Mutota mythology has undergone. This was recited for the first time in 1981 at the testing ceremony of the medium of the previously unknown mhondoro Gomorinonuhwa. The medium is a Zezuru speaker who had lived in Zambia for some years before becoming possessed and returning to Zimbabwe to take up his

profession in the traditional home of his mhondoro. In view of the powerful nexus of symbolism focussed on the Escarpment in the myth of Mutota's journey from Guruuswa, it is no surprise nor coincidence that this traditional home is on the highest peak on the very edge of the Escarpment with a clear view over large stretches of the Valley and the Plateau.

When he arrived at this peak, the medium discovered that a police radio station had been built there. As this was very near where the medium of Mutota had lived before his move into the Valley in 1957, it was quite widely assumed that the new medium would prove to be the new Mutota returned to his descendants once again. In fact the medium revealed that he was possessed by two spirits. He was prepared to reveal only the name of the more junior of the two, Mutakuramatenga. The name of his other mhondoro he would not reveal until the police station had been dismantled. The police and the District Administration refused to cooperate until the name of the second, major mhondoro was known, fearing that if they bowed to the authority of the medium and he turned out to be possessed by some previously unheard of, insignificant mhondoro, their own authority would be undermined.

The medium threatened to destroy the police station unless his wishes were obeyed. The case was referred to the then Minister of Health, Dr. H. Ushewokunze, but before he could intervene the station was struck by lightning. Radios and a small armoury were blown up. This greatly enhanced the reputation of the medium and on the evening when the spirit was scheduled to speak for the first time a huge crowd gathered. The genealogy which he recited is summarised in diagram 14.

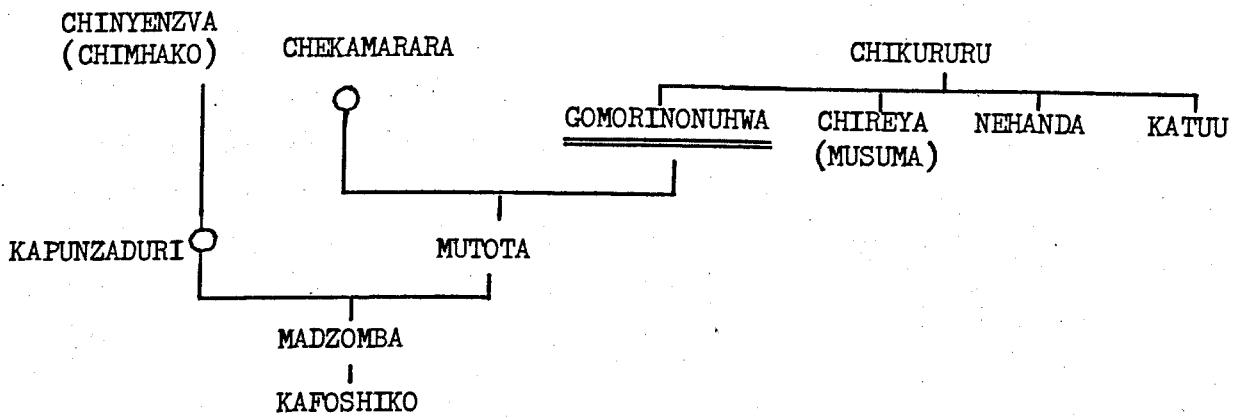


DIAGRAM 14

The new medium's claim, in brief, is that his mhondoro, Gomarinonuhwa, is the father of Mutota and brother of Nehanda (generally thought of as Mutota's daughter), of Katuu (usually considered a descendant of Mutota) and of Chireya which is another name for Musuma, the Tavara ancestor. Chinyenzva, another name for the Dema mhondoro Chimhako, is said to be Mutota's father-in-law. None of the other names given (those of the mhondoro's father and wife, of Mutota's wife and of Madzomba's son) had been heard before.

I retraced the journey made by the medium from the Zambezi River to his new home and there is some evidence that these names belong to traditions he picked up along the way. But his major innovation is to have combined all these names into a single family of ancestors, which if it were accepted, would provide a structure of historical unity for the Korekore, the Tavara, the Tande and the Dema. The medium would in that case find himself the most senior medium of all.

When the medium spoke this new 'traditional history' for the first time it was rejected by the other mhondoro mediums present and by the people who heard and discussed it for weeks afterwards. The revisions seemed too radical. It was hard to understand why, if this was the true history, other mhondoro had not told it to them before. There was no suggestion that the new medium was a fraud. The principle that at their first possession many mediums find difficulty in allowing their mhondoro to communicate clearly was sufficient to explain the unacceptable features of this account. It was suggested that the medium should try again at some later date, and in the months that followed he made a number of visits to the medium of Musuma who is said to be especially skilful at helping mhondoro mediums who are having difficulties at controlling their spirits.

Some months after I left Dande, Gomarinonuhwa re-emerged, this time as a powerful force in the land. He has challenged the authenticity of the mediums of Katuu and Musuma on the grounds that they make use of western goods which he maintains, in conservative opposition to the modern interpretation, should still be avoided by mhondoro mediums. He has forced the very long

established medium of Madzomba, who had acquired a reputation as a fraud and a sell-out during the war, to give up his profession. He has had his uniform of black cloths stripped from him and is obliged to display his lack of ancestral authority by the wearing of trousers. It is not yet clear whether the medium has managed to gain acceptance of precisely the same genealogy as he had spoken at his first possession, but there is no doubt that the ancestor Gomorinonuhwa is quickly establishing a major challenge to the reputation of Mutota and even of Chiwawa to be the senior ancestor of the Korekore of Dande.

Both these remakings of history, that of Chiwawa and of Gomorinonuhwa, spring in part from the newly established consciousness of Zimbabwe as a united land. Were these the only traditions of the Korekore that had been recorded, the history of this area as made by academic historians would look very different indeed. From a comparison of the large number of alternate traditions now available two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, how flexible is the ideology of descent and how powerful is the authority of the ancestors who through their mediums can absorb and overcome any alteration to the political and economic circumstances of their descendants, emerging time after time as the ultimate controllers of morality and fertility. Secondly, how significant is the context within which traditions are made and told for an understanding of their meaning.

The particular context of these most recent traditions is the consciousness of the new relationship of people to territory and of the power and authority of the autochthons brought about by the victory of the nationalist guerillas, politicians and mediums, their followers and supporters who themselves made history when, by the destruction of Rhodesia, they created of themselves a single rudzi - a clan, a nation - and took control of the territory of Zimbabwe.

APPENDIX - Speaking with Spirits

Obtaining information from spirits presents the ethnographer with some special problems. The knowledge that mediums acquire in the course of their professional careers is usually made available to others in one type of social situation only, that in which a clearly defined problem requires solution. Whether the problem is sickness, irreconcilable rivalry for the position of chief or the failure of the rain, the statements made by the mhondoro spirit through the medium will be directed towards the resolution of the problem. Questions are rarely put for the sake of intellectual speculation or disinterested research. The state of possession only acquires its full meaning and reality in terms of the relationship between a medium and his or her client or patient who believes in the authenticity of the medium's possession and desires the help of the mhondoro.

The many questions I put to the various mhondoro I was permitted to visit were quite out of the ordinary. I was interested in the knowledge the mhondoro/mediums had about the ancestors and their descendants in order to write an account of them, and I was interested in the techniques used by mediums to acquire this knowledge and to pass it on. I was interested in the state of possession itself.

All the mediums I spoke to knew that I would interview other mediums as well and that I was, in a sense, testing the limits of their knowledge and the integrity of their practice. Although this did not preclude the development of a certain intimacy with several of the mediums, it did mean that the relationship between the mediums and myself differed far more from that between them and their clients than if the subjects of my study had been, for example, teachers or conventional politicians. It seems likely that the information I recorded from the mediums was of a different sort from that which might have been recorded during possessions at which I was not present and at which my sort of questions were not asked. (For a discussion of the nature of these differences and the effect they may have had on previous research see Chapter V and Chapter VII, note 2.)

Moreover, it was necessary to establish the degree to which the answers given to questions (mine and others) by the spirits were conventionalised, the degree to which the answers would be different depending on which mhondoro/medium was questioned and on the circumstances in which the questioning took place. The partial solution I found to this attempt to estimate the individual creativity of the mediums, was the simple expedient of asking all mhondoro/mediums the same set of questions irrespective of which tradition of mhondoro they belonged to, as well as to put the same questions to numbers of other people whether or not they were reputed to have particular knowledge of the past or the ways of the mediums, women as well as men, children as well as adults. In addition, I attended possession sequences at which 'real' problems were put to the mhondoro. But this was not always easy to do.

For reasons which I discuss in Chapter IX, mhondoro mediums generally refuse to allow whites to be present when they become possessed. All fifteen mediums whom I interviewed were willing to discuss the aspects of their lives and work in which I was interested. But in all cases, certain questions brought the response that this was information unknown to the medium and only the mhondoro itself would be able to answer. For most of my twenty months in Dande I carried a letter from the ZANU (PF) National Political Commissar requesting all mediums to help me with my research. Nonetheless, in some cases, I was refused permission to question the spirits directly or to be present when they took possession of their mediums. In the majority of cases, however, permission was given and interviews with the mhondoro were held.

In the list of all the mhondoro and the chiefs mentioned in this thesis that follows, my various forms of contact with them are indicated in the following way:

- 1 indicates that an interview was conducted with the medium;
- 2 indicates that an interview was conducted with the mhondoro, i.e. with the medium in a state of trance;
- 3 indicates that an interview was conducted with the mutapi or intermediary of the medium.

MHONDORO AND CHIEFS OF DANDE

3 BANGOMWE - the major Tande mhondoro, selects the chief

CHAPOTO - Chikunda Chieftaincy, clan Marunga Hangaiwa (pigeon)

1,2,3 CHIDYAMAUYU - Korekore mhondoro, Chisunga Chieftaincy,
one of Nehanda's three 'lieutenants'

3 CHIGUWA - Korekore female mhondoro, daughter of Nyamapfeka,
Chisunga chieftaincy

1 CHIHUMBE - Chikunda mhondoro, Chapoto chieftaincy

2,3 CHIKUYO - Korekore mhondoro, Chitsungo chieftaincy

CHIMHAKO - Dema mhondoro

CHIMOMBE - Soli 'mhondoro', takes no mediums, is an 'iron god'

1,2,3 CHINENGBERE - Korekore mhondoro, son of Mutota, lives on
Plateau

1,3 CHIODZAMAMERA - Korekore mhondoro, Chisunga chieftaincy, one
of Nehanda's three 'lieutenants'

1,3 CHIPFENE - medium unsure of his possessing mhondoro, one of
Nehanda's three 'lieutenants'

CHISUNGA - Korekore chieftaincy, clan Nzou Samanyanga (Elephant)

CHITSUNGO - Korekore chieftaincy, clan Nzou Samanyanga (Elephant)

1,2,3 CHIVERE - Korekore mhondoro

1,2,3 CHIWAWA - Korekore mhondoro, selects Chiweshe and Kasekete chiefs

CHIWESHE - Korekore chieftaincy on Plateau, clan Nzou Samanyanga
(Elephant)

DZIVAGURU - senior Tavara mhondoro

2 GOMORINONUHWA - new mhondoro, father of Mutota?

KASEKETE - Korekore chieftaincy, clan Nzou Samanyanga (Elephant)

1 KATUU - Korekore mhondoro, no clear chieftaincy affiliation

1,3 KAVHINGA - Korekore mhondoro, Chisunga chieftaincy

1,2,3 MADZOMBA - Tande mhondoro who has become Korekore mhondoro

MATSIWO - Tande chieftaincy, clan Nzou Samanyanga (Elephant)

MAVURA - Korekore mhondoro

MUKOMBWE - Korekore mhondoro

1,3 MUSUMA - Tavara mhondoro, the major Dande rain-bringer

3 MUTOTA - the senior Korekore mhondoro, approves the choices of all the Korekore chiefs

MZARABANI - Korekore senior headman, clan Nzou Samanyanga (Elephant)

NEBEDZA - Korekore mhondoro, son of Mutota

NEHANDA - Korekore mhondoro, daughter of Mutota, considered to be a leader of the first and second liberation wars

3 NYAHUMA - Korekore mhondoro, selects Chitsungo chiefs

NYAMASOKA - Korekore mhondoro, Chisunga chieftaincy

1,2,3 NYAMAPFEKA - senior Korekore mhondoro, Chisunga Chieftaincy, selects Chisunga chiefs

1 NYANEHWE - Korekore mhondoro, son of Nyamapfeka BUT ALSO another name for Nebedza Matope

SEREMWE - Korekore mhondoro, no clear chieftaincy affiliation

TOMBWE - Korekore mhondoro with a female medium.

Unless indicated, all Korekore mhondoro are ancestors of the inter-related Kasekete, Chitsungo, Chiweshe chieftaincies.

See genealogy on page 150.

Interviews were conducted with all the chiefs named.

NOTESIntroduction

- 1 Many of the towns of Zimbabwe have acquired new names since Independence. Sinoia is now Chinoyi, Salisbury is Harare, Sipolilo is Chipuriro. Few others are of significance for this thesis, but I will use the name current at the time of the events I describe when they occur.
- 2 The other is the Zimbabwe African People's Union or ZAPU, now known as the Patriotic Front.
- 3 Many writers have discussed the ambiguities inherent in the use of the term 'peasants' to refer to the cultivators of Zimbabwe and of Africa as a whole (see, for example, Saul and Woods 1971 for a summary of this discussion). As I do not deal with these issues in this thesis, I use the term simply as the briefest, the most convenient and the most general available.
- 4 This process is not, of course, exclusive to Zimbabwe. Since Fallers (1964) it has been described for many other countries in Africa as elsewhere.
- 5 See Chapter I, note 6.
- 6 In the past Dande extended into what is now Mozambique but I was unable to make visits across the border.
- 7 A brief discussion of the problems of interviewing spirits is found in the Appendix.
- 8 Copies of all tapes, as well as Shona transcriptions of them, have been deposited in the National Archives, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Chapter I

- 1 This is the name adopted by ZANU at the time of the election in 1979 to distinguish it from a new party formed by ex-members of ZANU that adopted its name while ZANU (PF) was a part of the Patriotic Front. The Patriotic Front was the title used to refer to ZANU and ZAPU together during their period of military and political cooperation but was adopted by ZAPU as its exclusive name during the election campaign. Therefore ZANU styled itself ZANU (PF). Any reference to ZANU throughout this thesis is to the original ZANU which became ZANU (PF) in 1979.

- 2 This section is based on interviews with the mediums of Chidyamauyu and Chiodzamamera and with Comrade Mayor Urimbo.
- 3 Although it sometimes happens that more than one medium claims to be possessed by the same spirit, typically each of these mediums will deny that the others are legitimate and may challenge them to prove their authenticity. In the case of Nehanda, two separate traditions exist and the mediums of each will acknowledge the legitimacy of the other. However, competition may arise between mediums within each tradition.
- 4 See Ranger (1982a) for a description of the ascendance of Chaminuka to the status of nationalist hero, and Chigwedere (1980) for a full-blown history of Zimbabwe in nationalist-mythological terms.
- 5 After the ZANU (PF) victory in the 1979 elections, government officers systematically destroyed large quantities of records and documents of the war, including trial records, fearing that they would be used to incriminate civil servants of the old government. I arrived in Chipuriro District early enough to find that some files had not yet been purged and a fragmentary record of the war against the mediums in this district has escaped the shredding machines. I had access to the District Commissioner's files on the chieftaincies in the Chipuriro, Centenary and Urungwe districts (classification Per 5 in the archives of the Ministry of Local Government, Harare) as well as a compendium of information on mediums abstracted from all districts in the country. The historical sequence described in this section is, in part, based on interviews with three ex-District Commissioners responsible for the north-east districts in the 1960s and 1970s.
- 6 Copies of all materials quoted in this thesis which are not to be found in Government files will be placed in the National Archives, Harare and may be consulted there.

Chapter II

- 1 The Tavara and the Tande were considered to be distinct groups by Bullock (1928:33) and by Posselet (1935:117). In terms of the territories of the Mutapa state, it would seem that the

Tavara were the indigenes of Chidima and the Tande of Dande, (Pacheco 1883). Alpers refers to a Bangomue who defeated the ruling Mutapa around 1806. This may be the Bangomwe who is a senior Tande ancestor and suggests that the Tande may have experienced a brief resurgence of indigenous political power but the evidence is slight (Alpers 1970:208).

2 In his recent study of the Middle Zambezi Valley, Lancaster (1981) applies to all the people of Dande the same name as he uses for the subjects of his study, the Goba. But he is not consistent in this. On page 132 he writes: 'Technically the Goba are simply Valley Korekore but I have used the former term to distinguish them from a distant group of Valley Korekore in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and Mozambique previously studied by G.K. Garbett'. But his map on page 134 labels the home of the Tande as well as the Tavara and Chikunda with the name Goba, distinguishing them from the Korekore who are placed only outside the Valley. As Lancaster himself has demonstrated, (1974b) Goba means 'low lying people'. Over the centuries the terms Goba, Tonga, Nyai have been used for the inhabitants of the Zambezi Valley depending on how their relationship with other groups at different historical periods has been conceived ('Tonga' emphasises independent status, 'Nyai' subserviance, 'Goba' geographic position). As Lancaster shows (1981:18) the Goba participate in the Mutota/Nyanehwe tradition of ancestors common to many Korekore groups. The economic life of Lancaster's Goba is so similar to that of the people of Dande that his excellent account of this aspect of their lives serves for Dande as well. But the distinction between 'Lancaster's' Goba and 'mine' is significant for two reasons. Firstly, the people of Dande do not use the term Goba for themselves. To indicate where, in their view, the Goba live they point north-west towards the middle Zambezi region. The second reason is that Lancaster's Goba are matrilineal, whereas the Tande and the Korekore are not. Nor can they be characterised as matriarchal which, according to Lancaster, 'his' Goba are.

3 There is no Shona word for my category 'commoners' and both Holleman (1952) and Garbett (1967) refer only to two groups, machinda and vatorwa. Because Garbett categorises (in my terms) royals and commoners as one group called 'royals' his estimation that a quarter to a third of the population are members of the royal lineage applies to my categories royals and commoners taken together. Two-thirds to three-quarters of the people in the chieftaincy, therefore, are members of clans (and therefore of lineages) other than that of the chief (Garbett 1967:314).

4 From the indigenous point of view, the clans that Europeans are thought to have are 'French', 'Scottish' etc., each indicating a different 'type' of people and a different place of origin.

5 I use the term Elephant to stand for the Nzou Samanyanga clan. Both Tande and Korekore royal lineages belong to the same clan and subclan.

6 Among the Chikunda, it is said that if one eats one's clan animal, the teeth of one's brother's son will fall out. This neatly demonstrates the possibility of a descent group stress alongside and secondary to the 'consubstantial' aspect of clan membership.

7 In 1929 Schapera described kugarira or uxorilocal marriage as typical of the 'Mazizuru, Makorikori, Wabudjga, Bafungwi and a few other so-called 'Mashona' peoples of N.E. Mashonaland' (Schapera 1929). Lancaster (1981:151) contains a discussion of bride-wealth vs bride-service marriages among the Shona and their neighbours in the Zambezi Valley.

8 That virilocality as practised by the chiefs is in some sense the preferred or ideal form of marriage is suggested by a part of the burial ritual. The daughters-in-law of the dead man or woman are required to sweep round the grave as though they were sweeping the yard of the dead person's house.

Chapter III

- 1 In ChiKorekore there are two words meaning 'lion' mhondoro and shumba. Only mhondoro refers to the ancestral spirits of chiefs but it is also commonly used to mean lions. Discrimination is made between mhondoro dzemwari, lions of god, i.e. lions which are not used as homes by wandering mhondoro spirits and mhondoro dzemidzimu, lions of the ancestors which are.
- 2 Very few mhondoro mediums are women. Those that there are are possessed by spirits that stand at critical points on the genealogies of royal ancestors and will be discussed in Chapter V. I use the male pronoun to refer to all mhondoro mediums and indicate specifically where the reference is to a female medium.
- 3 Some mhondoro do not have provinces associated with them. In each case a distinctive reason is given for this. Chimhako is the mhondoro of the Dema who lost their territory many years ago. Consequently Chimhako has no province today. Tombwe is a newly emerged mhondoro with no tradition of possession and has not yet been allocated a province, and so on. Of the more than fifty mhondoro for whom I have this information, only six have no provinces.
- 4 See appendix for a full list of all the mhondoro and mediums of Dande and details of my contact with them.
- 5 The villages in which the use of fertiliser was forbidden by the mhondoro (Chikuyo) were cultivating land which had not been used for generations, if ever. In areas where the soils have been continuously cultivated, fertiliser is greatly desired and encouraged by the mhondoro mediums. Immediately after independence it was reported from other parts of Zimbabwe that some mhondoro mediums had forbidden the use of fertiliser in any circumstances.
- 6 The reason for this is probably that male dominated courts prefer to ascribe non-hereditary forms of witchcraft to men and thereby save a whole local lineage from suspicion, whereas a non-local affinal lineage can, with less danger of retribution, be condemned as witch-ridden through and through. The rate of uxorilocality will obviously affect how this tendency works out in practice.

7 When I first arrived in Dande I was told that I was safe from witchcraft because, being of a different rudzi, no witch could harm me by itself and there were no other whites in Dande through whom I could be attacked. After a year, the quasi-kin ties I had established made me susceptible to attack.

8 This was first discussed by Mitchell. 'The political and ritual roles of the chief which in other Bantu groups are usually combined, are separated amongst the Shona speaking peoples... This separation of ritual and secular power is...normally achieved among them through the mhondoro cult' (Mitchell 1961:34).

9 This opposition has been discussed by many authors, including Middleton 1960, MacGaffey 1970, Douglas 1966, Chapter 6.

Chapter IV

1 This has been discussed for the Shona by Gelfand (1964:81) and more generally by Lewis (1971:37f) and Crapanzano (1976) among many other writers.

2 Among the Tonga, the basikatongo who correspond to the Korekore vatapi are said to inherit the shade of the first man to have lived in that area and their wives to inherit the shade of the first woman (Colson 1971:226).

3 Bourdillon observed a similar contradiction among the Eastern Korekore of Mount Darwin district (Bourdillon 1971:59).

4 'In May 1629, following a crushing defeat by the Portuguese, Mavura, the newly installed puppet mambo, signed a humiliating treaty with them which included this obviously offensive article which ran directly counter to established court ritual:

'that ambassadors that come to speak to him shall enter his zimbohe (dzimbahwe) shod and covered, with their arms in their belts, as they speak to the King of Portugal, and he shall give them a chair on which to seat themselves without clapping their hands; and other Portuguese shall speak to him in the manner of ambassadors...' (Alpers 1968:15).

Chapter V

1 Mitchell (1961) was the first to discuss the ritual significance of the relationship between autochthons and conquerors in the Zambezi Valley. The myth of Chidzere which he analyses is structurally similar to and contains the same set of meanings as Myths II to V which I analyse here.

2 Cf File N 1/1/6 in National Archives, Harare, Zimbabwe.

3 Cf File Per 5 (Chitsungo) in Ministry of Local Government Archives, Harare, Zimbabwe.

4 The notion that the wife's father's lineage supplies the rain is in contrast to the general southern African pattern as described in Kuper's comparative study. In these systems, rain-bringing is associated with semen and therefore with the husband's lineage (Kuper 1982:16). Although I argue that in the Mutota mythology and in the rituals of possession the claim is made that the husband's lineage can produce rain, the force of this statement is that it contradicts what one might call the received wisdom which is that the opposite is true. However, I am dealing only with the Korekore and only with them as conquerors of Tavara territory. One would expect non-conquering Korekore (if such exist) to conform to the general rule.

5 Bourdillon writes of the relationship between the Korekore Nyombwe chieftaincy, descendants of the mhondoro Nyabapa (who is sometimes described as a 'brother' of Mutota) and the Tavara mhondoro Karuva as follows: 'The people of Nyombwe call Karuva the 'wife' of Nyabapa. In explanation they claim that Nyabapa is stronger than Karuva, that Nyabapa sends Karuva cloth as a man should give his wife cloth with which to clothe herself, and that Karuva supplies Nyabapa with rain as a woman fetches water for her husband. This subordinate position of Karuva is not, however, accepted by the people of Choma' (Bourdillon 1979:242). My Korekore informants made similar statements about the Tavara mhondoro Musuma (a 'brother' of Karuva). I do not see these comments as explanations of the characterization of the Tavara mhondoro as wives or women. Rather they are a commentary, almost a trivialisation, on the expression of claims to the ownership of land as a relationship between affines. That this commentary is made goes some way towards confirming my analysis while demonstrating the way in which this relationship is consciously perceived. See Note 15.

6 It is not only the two Korekore lineages of Dande that feature women as ultimate ancestors. Many others in the Zambezi Valley and on the Escarpment do so as well e.g. Kotswa, mhondoro of the Chiruwa chieftaincy; Nyahuwi, mhondoro of the Diwa chieftaincy; Anadondo, mhondoro of the Rusambo chieftaincy etc. (Latham 1965; Bourdillon 1971).

- 7 The black/white; rain/no-rain; death/lightning distinctions are also made by the Tonga of the Zambezi Valley. Colson reports that animals sacrificed to the ancestors for rain must be black, any white on its skin would bring lightning with the rain (Colson 1977:126). Different coloured beads are offered to the mediums depending on the service required. Black or blue beads are given for rain, white if a dry spell is required (Colson 1969:76). (Black and certain dark shades of blue are also categorised together by the Korekore and the Tande.) Weinrich reports that the Tonga sacrifice black animals to their ancestors because 'black is the colour of rain clouds' (Weinrich 1977:43).
- 8 In Chapter IX I argue that certain objects which mhondoro mediums are not allowed to use are tabooed because they are thought of as foreign to Dande society. There are no red dyes locally available and even when cloth was made locally, the only red cloth was imported. Nonetheless it was made clear to me that the reason the mhondoro may not see red cloth - scarlet, in fact - is because 'it is blood'.
- 9 See page 98 where it is suggested that the sanctions against murder as a drought producing crime apply, in the first instance, only to the murder of members of one's own clan or lineage.
- 10 See Aschwanden (1982 Chap.1) for a full-scale exposition of these ideas. Although he deals with the Karanga of southern Zimbabwe, the symbolism is entirely consistent with that of the Korekore.
- 11 Garbett gives a slightly different version. He says that during ritual periods menstruating or pregnant women and women suckling babies whose teeth have not yet appeared may not approach the tree shrines of the mhondoro (Garbett 1963:190).
- 12 Randles writes of the burial rites of the kings of Quiteve (NE Zimbabwe) in the early 19th century that 'the corpse was guarded until decomposition had reduced it to a skeleton' (Randles 1981:63).
- 13 Various remarks by Colson suggest that there may be another set of symbols used to achieve the same effect. The ndoro is a large white conus shell which, I was told, used to be worn on the forehead in certain Valley chieftaincies to indicate the person of

the chief. Of the Tonga Colson says only that they were 'once worn by those of wealth and authority' (1969:83) and they are worn by other people as well (Pacheco 1863). However, in ChiTande, the word ndoro can be used to mean month or moon. The appearance of the conus shell certainly resembles a full moon. But the possibility that this may be a related example of mediums 'stealing' the symbolism of the moon from women is suggested by her statement that 'Among (the Tonga's) Shona speaking neighbours in Rhodesia, the conus shell is known as mhondoro, the term also used for their great prophets' (Colson 1971:243). I never heard this usage myself, but the subject would repay further research. See also Posselt (1937:32) and Bullock (1928:122).

14 When the medium of Nyamapfeka sends a request for rain to Chimombe or Musuma he is asserting his independence of the Mutota lineage of mhondoro; when he sends a request to Nyajore he is accepting his position within that lineage (see genealogy 1). In Chapter 7 I go further into the tactics used by mediums to declare their independence. For the moment note that the medium of Nyamapfeka may send offerings to an autochthonous spirit and to Nyajore at the same time.

15 A very brief analysis of two Tavara myths collected by Bourdillon in the Mount Darwin district east of Dande demonstrates that these deal with precisely the same issues as the Korekore examples but from the complementary point of view.

I The conquest of Karuva, a major Tavara rain-bringing mhondoro (and 'brother' of Musuma) by the Korekore Nyabapa (a 'friend' or agnate of Mutota) contains all the familiar events. The Korekore fail to capture Karuva because of a mist etc. but 'After many unsuccessful attempts at raiding Karuva, Nyabapa captured Chirumbi, a son of Karuva, whom he threatened with torture and death and bribed with the offer of a neighbouring country...until he revealed the secret of how to defeat Karuva's magic by approaching the home of Karuva carrying a red cloth. When Nyabapa did this, Karuva submitted to him and taking his wives, children and livestock descended with them into a small pool near his home' (Bourdillon 1979:241. Another version in Posselt 1935:121).

From the Korekore point of view, as presented in Myths II to V they triumph by getting their daughters to seduce the autochthons. From the Tavara point of view, as in this myth, it is a son who betrays his father. The Tavara narrative does not mention

affinity, which is only of significance to the conquerors, but the red cloth motif appears and leads directly to the autochthon 'becoming' water. This myth, like II to V, is of the blood=water type, stressing the symbiotic relationship between conquerors and autochthons in gaining access to fertility. (see Diagram 15.)

II 'Dzivaguru was the father of Karuva. 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. Karuva came from Guruuswa and settled in this country.... Karuva came before Nyabapa. When Nyabapa came from Guruuswa, he told his followers to inform him when they arrived at Chioneso...so that he could use his protective medicines. They failed to inform him and before he was able to perform his magic, he met Karuva. Now Nyabapa was the first born of Karuva, left behind at Guruuswa when Karuva came to this country. Karuva told Nyabapa to have intercourse with his sister, Chirimanyonga. He obeyed, and ever since he has sent cloths for Chirimanyonga, his wife, so that she has something to wear. That is why the people in Nyabapa's country say that Karuva is the wife of Nyabapa - they confuse Karuva with his daughter Chirimanyonga. It is Chirimanyonga who is the wife of Nyabapa' (Bourdillon 1973:115).

This is a Mutota blood ≠ water story, told from the point of view of the autochthons. From the Korekore point of view as in Myth I, the conqueror has intercourse with his own sister, brings his own rain and therefore owns the land. In this Tavara variation, the same event takes place but the autochthon claims that the Korekore is in fact his son, and therefore the land belongs to him once again. The 'confusion' stated in the myth is an attempt by the Tavara to explain away the fact that the Korekore see them as affines, rather than as agnates which the Tavara need to insist on to continue to claim the land.

(See Diagram 16.)

The claim that Dzivaguru owns Guruuswa and that his son comes from there is an attempt to dismiss the distinction between conqueror and autochthons. This myth, then, is the precise inversion of the Mutota narrative. Whereas that makes the claim (by means of incest) that conquerors are really autochthons, this makes the claim (by making Karuva father of the conqueror) that autochthons are really conquerors. (See Diagram 16.)

Two further points. The names of the Tavara spirits form a sequence: dzivaguru = big pool, karuva = little flower, musuma, depending on the spelling, is either 'shrub' or the name of a species of tree. As in Myth I, the imagery derives from water but is here imagined as spreading out from one point in the Valley rather than as moving in a sequence from outside to inside the Valley as with Mutota, Matope, etc.

Secondly, in the past a virgin was kept at the shrine of Karuva. It was believed that if she was 'seduced', drought would follow (Bourdillon 1979:246), a particularly clear example of the antipathy between 'biological' and 'natural' fertility.

('Only white and black colours are permitted (at the Karuva shrine), red being strictly taboo', Posselt 1935:123.) Note also that a man convicted of deflowering the virgin was burnt to death (this is reported as recently as the 1920s), a means of execution that prevents blood falling on the earth.

DIAGRAM 15

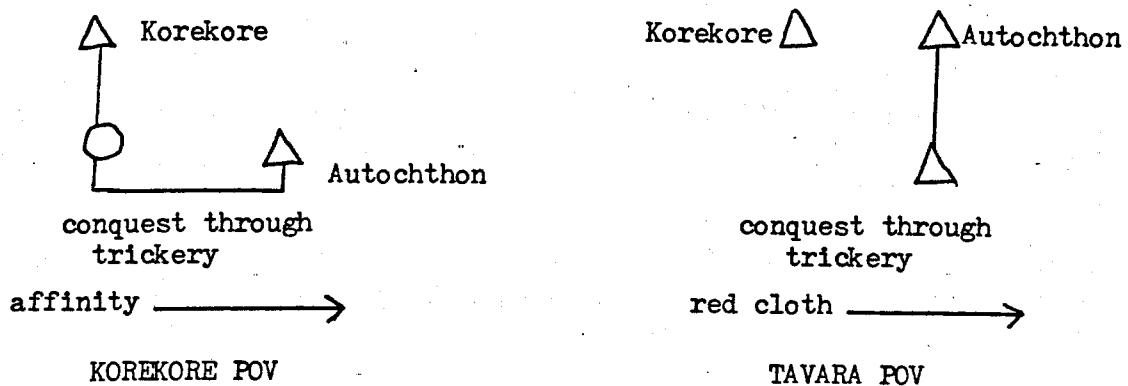
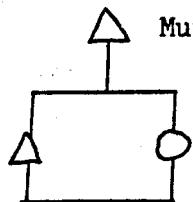


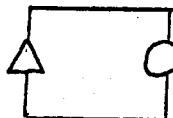
DIAGRAM 16

Mutota (Korekore)



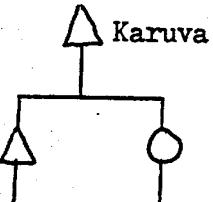
Nyabapa (Korekore)

Nyabapa



Karuva (Tavara)

Nyabapa



16 From Beach's survey of the archaeological evidence of the cultures and states believed to derive from Great Zimbabwe, it would seem that Abraham's series of interpretations suggesting that the Mutapa state was a break-away from the Zimbabwe state has created a number of problems (Beach 1973:29). A different interpretation of this myth which does not involve a migration from Zimbabwe might help to resolve some of these difficulties.

17 In early accounts of the Shona, chiefs are frequently described as 'divine' (e.g. Bullock 1928). On the basis of Portuguese documents, Randles (1981:62) describes them in this way and Mudenge says the same of the Rozvi mambos, the 18th and 19th century successors to the Mutapas (Mudenge 1972:96). What 'divinity' usually means in this context is rain-making power. And yet presentday chiefs have no divine powers at all and few or no ritual responsibilities. The reason for this may be apparent from the argument I have just given. At a time of conquest and state formation, when areas of land are being absorbed within a centralised polity, the claim by the ruler to rights in the newly conquered land would be expressed by a claim to be able to control the rain in that area and thus to divine 'rain-maker' status. As the centre weakens, so rain-making powers are taken back by individual political units. This interpretation fits very well the transformations of the Musikavanhu cult described by Rennie (1979). In this case, the original ancestor, said to be a fugitive Rozvi mambo was able to bring rain by himself because of certain charms he possessed. In time the chiefs lost these charms and rain-making power was taken over by mediums possessed by the spirits of the original mambos.

The life-bringing power of the state was symbolised by fire as well as water. 'The Monomotapa once every year sent emissaries throughout his empire, carrying with them fire from him; on the approach of these emissaries, everybody had to extinguish their fires and then relight them from the royal flames. If a village refused to carry out this ceremony of submission, the army was sent to bring it back to its allegiance' (Randles 1981:60). In Barwe, an eastern province of the Mutapa state, this fire was lit and handed on by the medium of the senior mhondoro of the royal lineage (Isaacman 1973:396).

18 In his description of the eastern Korekore chieftaincy of Chiruja, Bourdillon mentions the existence of a ritual officiant called Nyamvuri ('owner of the shade' ie shadow) whose job it is to help build the roof of the dendemaro in which possessions by mhondoro take place. He was informed that in the mythology, it was the job of Nyamvuri 'to go ahead of the ancients on their way from Guruuswa looking for shade for them to rest in' (Bourdillon 1971:119). This is a further suggestion of the isomorphism between the myth of Guruuswa and the mhondoro possession rituals.

This isomorphism is given even more significance by the following personal communication from Dr. S.I. Mudenge. In the past the spirits of the Tavara did not possess mediums. Portuguese documents refer to sacerdotes, priests of the shrines of these spirits such as Dzivaguru and Karuva, rather than to pondoro (mhondoro), the mediums of the Korekore. Under the influence of the Korekore possession cults, the Tavara spirits began to possess their priests who were thus transformed into mediums.

Chapter VI

- 1 One account of the death of the autochthon Musuma describes how, when his head was cut off by the conqueror Nyahuma, it rolled for miles until it came to a place called Nyagwikwi which became the traditional home of the mhondoro. This combines the boundary-crossing and the bounded traditions. Musuma's tiny spirit province is unlike all others in that its borders are not rivers but a circle of trees.
- 2 File FYNN N3/33/8 in the National Archives, Harare, Zimbabwe.
- 3 There is apparently more than one species of pangolin. I do not know how many species are found in the Zambezi Valley or whether all, one or a few are treated in the way that I describe here.

Chapter VII

- 1 For a discussion of the effects of this attitude to tradition on scholarship in Zimbabwe, see Garlake 1983.
- 2 The difference in detail and elaboration between Abraham's genealogy and the royal genealogy used in ritual should be explained. Apart from the royal genealogies, many other genealogies and genealogical fragments are known by ritual experts and others. Some of these contain ancestors who have not come out as mhondoro and of whom only their names and places on the genealogy are remembered. These genealogies, which may be called 'discursive' to distinguish them from the 'formal' genealogy used in ritual, generally emerge out of discussion about the relationship of one chieftaincy to another or of one local lineage to another. Individuals within one spirit province may discuss its relationship to another in terms of kin relationships of the relevant ancestors who do not appear on the royal genealogy because they are not significant in ritual practice. Such discussions rarely produce extended genealogies comparable to the royal genealogies as only the fragment relevant to the relationship being considered is discussed. Usually little more is known. The senior mediums have a great deal more knowledge of 'discursive' genealogies than other people. The genealogy collected by Abraham was obtained by question and answer (Abraham 1959:59) and so is of the 'discursive' type. Whereas the 'formal' genealogy is a claim to specific territories expressed with the imagery of history, the extent to which discursive genealogies correspond to real or desired spheres of economic and political authority, past or present, is far from clear.
- 3 Garbett has given a substantially similar account of this relationship (Garbett 1969:108).
- 4 See Henige (1974:47) for a discussion of this phenomenon in a range of other societies.
- 5 A further elaboration of the same idea: 'No-one may recount to a stranger the traditional tribal histories without the prior permission of the mhondoro because to do so would be to pretend to own the country' (Bourdillon 1971:43).

6 In the 18th century account of the Dande and Chidima areas by De Melo de Castro it is stated that Derere is the 'Prince' of Dande (Mello de Castro 1763). Derere is one of the names of Chiwawa, claimed by the present medium and attributed to him by the medium of Mutota (Abraham 1959:69).

7 See page 243 for an account of the reconstruction of these chieftaincies by the early Rhodesian government.

8 In Mitchell's account of the shrine of Chidzere, west of Dande, (Mitchell 1961), he mentions that some of his informants gave the name of this mhondoro as Chivere. This is a shred more evidence that Chivere is an independent tradition that has been incorporated into the Mutota genealogy.

9 For example, among the Matopi chieftaincy of the Mount Darwin district, the following genealogy has been recorded:
 Mutota - Nyanewe (Nebedza) - Nyamusengwa - Nyangara...Matopi (Fynn N3/33/8 National Archives, Harare, Zimbabwe). Nyanewe or Nyanhehwe is a third name for Matope Nebedza (see for example Lancaster 1981:18). Many mhondoro in the Valley bear this name which means 'owner of the hide' and possibly refers to a pre-Korekore ancestor who has been absorbed into the Korekore tradition.

10 According to Isaacman (1973:396) Kabudu Kagoro was the senior mhondoro of the Barue Kingdom, a province of the Mwene Mutapa state far to the east of Dande. Why he should have a province in this part of the Zambezi Valley has not been explained.

11 This account is based on an interview with Newton Gavanga, a classificatory FB of Kupara who lived with him for many years.

12 A number of writers have based their analyses of aspects of the organization of mhondoro mediums on the permanence genealogies of this kind are presumed to have/records of the Mutapas of the Mwene Mutapa state, notably Ranger (1967) who draws on Gelfand (1959 and 1962) and Fry (1976) who draws on Garbett (1963, 1966, 1969, etc.). It was only in 1977 that Garbett presented the genealogies as capable of change and adaptation. Bourdillon (1982a) has recently argued that there is little difference between the organization of the Zezuru mhondoro (labelled 'charismatic' by Fry) and the Korekore (labelled 'bureaucratic').

Many of his observations are valuable but he fails to account for the presence of the spirit provinces among the Korekore, the crucial point of difference between the two institutions. It is worth noting that Garbett's explanation of the interaction between the Korekore and Zezuru systems is posited on the assumption that differences between them (especially stability of the core genealogy) do exist (Garbett 1977 and in press).

- 13 An equally radical restructuring of the hierarchies of the mhondoro of Dande is taking place at present. The case of Gomorinonuhwa, recently revealed father of Mutota, is discussed in the Conclusion.
- 14 Bourdillon (1982:261) has given an account of a mhondoro medium who lost credibility when he attempted to maintain traditional attitudes to land use and opposed the building of a dam that his followers believed would be of considerable benefit to them.
- 15 It is possible that, in the distant past, it was Nebedza who, as senior mhondoro, was charged with selecting the chiefs of his various descendant chieftaincies. The Kasekete and Chiweshe houses insist that Chiwawa has chosen their chiefs for as long as anyone can remember. From the available evidence, it seems likely that he has done so at least since the present constitution of the three Kaskete chieftaincies.
- 16 This account is based on information collected in Dande and on scattered references in the Government Per 5 files for the three chieftaincies. See, for example, Per 5 Kasekete letter dated 9/6/1947. Also records of the recent reconstitution of the Chiweshe house in Per 5 Chiweshe have been consulted.

Chapter VIII

- 1 Throughout most of Zimbabwe, one traditional means of dealing with witchcraft accusation, village fission, was made impossible by the acute land shortage in the Tribal Trust Lands. This was less significant a factor in Dande but even here fertile land along the banks of the rivers was a scarce asset.

2 A similar revision in the structure of political authority took place during the Makanga rebellion of 1901 (Isaacman 1976: 136). Here too 'sell-out' chiefs in league with the colonial power (in this case Portugal) were thought to be betraying their ancestors and the mhondoro mediums moved up to replace them as the leaders of resistance.

Another fascinating case is described in a report submitted to the Rhodesian Front government (Kaschula 1965b). This concerns the Chipuriro chieftaincy on the Plateau immediately above Dande. In protest at the appointment of an unacceptable chief, the senior medium of the mhondoro Chingoo attempted to recreate a lapsed office, the nhova, and proposed a defeated candidate for the chieftaincy to fill it. 'The interpretation given to nhova now is "the owner of the soil". It would be ^{wrong} if this was allowed by political strategy to take control from the duly appointed chief. It is unfortunate that the modern svikirif (medium) is influenced by (and not averse to accepting bribes from) political agitators (and) power-hungry hot-heads' (Kaschula 1965b:21). It seems that the title nhova is really a local synonym for mambo, the usual word for chief. The existence of an alternative title was used as a pretext to establish an acceptable political authority in opposition to the government chief. It is especially interesting that the 'traditional' responsibilities which, it was said, fall to the nhova are very similar to those of a spirit medium: he should deal with cases of incest, he protects the earth against pollution caused by the death of a woman in childbirth, he is the only person who may eat the pangolin.

3 Memo of meeting of 12/12/1967, Per 5 Kasekete.

4 All the names of the principal actors in this story, except for those of the mediums, have been changed.

5 Letter of 18/3/1969, Per 5 Chitsungo.

6 Both letters dated 7/8/1970, Per 5 Chitsungo.

- 7 Letter dated 21/9/1970, Per 5 Chitsungo.
- 8 Personal communication, ex-DC Mount Darwin.
- 9 Letter dated 29/11/1976, Per 5 Chitsungo.
- 10 Personal communication, ex-DC Mount Darwin.
- 11 Report on re-establishment of Chiweshe chieftaincy, Per 5 Chiweshe. That it was the Chiweshe chieftaincy rather than either of the other two Kasekete houses who supported the guerillas suggests structural reasons for collaboration or resistance. The structural factor is the practice of adelphic succession. To some extent this limited the ability of the state to control the people by means of their own institutions. Adelphic succession was condemned by a number of commissions set up to survey one aspect or another of 'native life and custom' (Holleman 1969: chapter 1). It had two effects of which the government disapproved. Firstly, chiefs selected under this system tended to be old men with, in government terms, reactionary attitudes, unlikely to encourage 'progressive' agriculture, the introduction of councils, etc. Secondly, it was never possible to predict in advance who the chief would be. Amongst the Ndebele where chiefly succession is in the direct patriline, the chiefs' sons, heirs presumptive, were identified at birth and given the education which the state considered suitable (Garbett 1966:119). Amongst the Shona this was not possible. But in the long run, the very looseness of their succession rules worked to their disadvantage. As a chieftaincy fell vacant, of the many contestants for whom a credible case could be made, there would always be one more pliable, more 'progressive' than the rest. The Native, and later the District Commissioners either simply appointed this member of the royal lineage or put pressure on the mediums (there is ample evidence of this) to stress a lineal or a lateral aspect of the succession rules so as to select the preferred candidate. This is not to say that interference of

this kind did not cause widespread resentment. It did. But the arguable legitimacy of the government selected chief did not encourage the development of de-legitimised branches of the royal lineage who might have organised in resistance. The case of the Chiweshe chieftaincy suggests that it was those chieftaincies whose status had been dissolved altogether who were most active in the nationalist movements.

- 12 Letter dated 8/2/1972, Per 5 Chitsungo.
- 13 Letter dated 8/2/1972, Per 5 Chitsungo.
- 14 Memoes and reports March 1972, Per 5 Chitsungo.
- 15 A ruin at the base of the Escarpment is associated with Mutota as is a baobab tree that bears his name. As far as I have been able to trace, the first record of this association is in Abraham (1959). It is subsequently mentioned in Mathews (1960) and Robinson (1965). As the ruin and tree are within a mile of the village where Kupara lived while in Dande I assume, until better evidence contradicts this, that the association derives from the presence of a medium of Mutota in the Valley.

Chapter IX

- 1 The mujibas and their female counterparts the chimbwidos were young people who acted as intermediaries between the guerillas and the adults in the villages. They were organised into platoons with officers (security, medical, political commissar) similar to those of the guerillas themselves.
- 2 This account is taken from one of a series of notebooks written at my request by approximately thirty people in Dande, mostly from the village of Mauhwe. Many of these notebooks contain information on the author's experience of the war but they cover a wide range of other subjects as well. The original notebooks have been deposited in the National Archives, Harare, Zimbabwe.
- 3 This account is taken from an interview conducted by Nicholas Wright on 14/7/81 in Dande.
- 4 I was told that Mulambo is a Ndebele ancestor but am unable to confirm this.

- 5 These paragraphs are based on discussions with Cde Mayor Urimbo and Cde Josiah Tungamirai. Both were leading ZANLA commanders throughout the war; Tungamirai was for many years second in command of ZANLA. He is now in command of the Zimbabwean Air Force.
- 6 For a brief description of my experience of making contact with mhondoro and their mediums see the Appendix.
- 7 There are many other examples of mhondoro mediums not being permitted to see each other for reasons of murders and defeats said to have taken place in the past. Nyamasoka may not see his father Nyamapfeka because he killed his mother, Nyamapfeka's wife. Nyatseru may not see his father Chidyamauyu, etc.
- 8 For the fascinating case of Muchetera, the medium of the Zezuru mhondoro Chaminuka whose career was similar in some respects to that of Mutota/Kupara see Ranger 1982a.
- 9 From an interview conducted by Nicholas Wright on 14/7/1981 in Dande.
- 10 From an interview conducted by Nicholas Wright on 14/7/1981 in Dande.
- 11 A mhondoro may welcome newcomers to his territory by making it especially easy for them to catch wild animals. When caught, these animals are referred to as huku or chickens, the customary gift to visitors.
- 12 See also the simirongo hunting shave of the Korekore Dotito Chieftaincy to the east of Dande. Their mediums wear red ribbons on their chests and red and white spotted cloths (Gelfand 1962:88).
- 13 It is possible that it is as compensation for allowing animals to be killed that the mediums restrict their own meat eating. Almost all mediums refrain from eating at least one animal commonly eaten by other people in Dande. Some avoid as many as six. One has given up meat altogether. It may not be irrelevant that this medium is particularly anxious to assert the genuineness of his possession in the face of widespread scepticism.
- 14 So common is this avoidance that it is included as an example of the use of the word derere in the Standard Shona Dictionary, Hannan 1974.

15 Describing the game mahumwe (keeping house) Hodza writes: 'The boy) will try to hunt or trap mice, birds and even hares. If he is unsuccessful...the family will have to fall back on 'wild spinach' (derere) or other vegetables collected by the girl for the relish which goes with the stiff porridge (sadza)' (Hodza and Fortune 1979:289). The same association is made by the Zulu: 'A man who resorted to eating wild vegetables was a man in a position of need, one who had been driven from his country by war' (Webb and Wright 1979:188, quoted by Kuper 1982:180n6).

16 For Chief Matope's relationship with the Mutota tradition see page³⁴⁰ note 9.

17 Other restrictions were on eating the leaves of bean and pumpkin plants. These are foods of a status as low as that of derere and are possibly avoided for the same reason. Groundnuts or nyimo were also taboo. I can offer no explanation of this. I can only suggest that, as in the Maji-maji uprising in Tanzania 1905-7, they may have been associated with bullets and were therefore not to be allowed to enter the body (Gwasse 1972b:135). I was told that the avoidance of the internal organs of animals by guerillas made it less likely that bullets would enter their own bodies. This seems to be a separate magic, independent of any symbolism pertaining to hunters and mhondoro.

18 A common word used by the Security Forces for the guerillas was magandanga which means literally 'wild, savage persons' (Hannan 1974). This word was also used by the villagers with no derogatory intention.

19 Fry made a similar observation of the Chiota District in the early 1960s: 'The search for 'informers' and 'sell-outs' was accompanied in the religious sphere by a new preoccupation with witches and sorcerors, or, rather, a new preoccupation with the public accusations of them....It seems that the battle with witchcraft was an attempt to control a situation which had got out of control; the conflict between white and black had been transmuted into a conflict between the ancestors and witchcraft' (Fry 1976:121).

Chapter X

- 1 There is therefore a sharp distinction between entry into the army of ZANU guerillas and, for example, entry into a band of the Mau Mau warriors of Kenya or the militants of the Maji-maji revolt in Tanzania to take two earlier examples of organised resistance to colonialism in Africa. In these earlier cases, the rituals of initiation into the armies of resistance were based on symbols derived from the culture of the people themselves (Gwasse 1972a, 1972b:123; Barnett and Njama 1966:114f). In the case of ZANLA, the distinctive training of the militants was acquired outside their own traditions, outside their own country.
- 2 Magical events of the kind appear almost invariably in accounts of battles of the past. The most common is the story of the warrior who, when forced into a corner from which he could not escape, flew up into the air and disappeared. This is told of well known heroes of the past, but I have also heard people give accounts of the exploits of their grandfathers and other ancestors of equally recent vintage in very similar terms.
- 3 See Urdang (1979) for an extended discussion of female/male relations in post-Independence Guinea-Bissau. Many aspects of her argument are relevant to Zimbabwe.
- 4 This section is based on discussions with ex-guerillas who had been active in north-east Zimbabwe as well as in other parts of the country. For a number of reasons, the history of the left-wing opposition within ZANU has yet to be written. Until this has been done, certain aspects of the struggle, especially the formulation of strategies for the mobilization of the peasantry will remain unclear. I offer these paragraphs which deal with only one aspect of their policies, their attitude to traditional religious practice, as a gesture in this direction.
- 5 This argument has another aspect. It is that belief in the ancestors as active participants in human life is antipathetic to improvement in the techniques of economic production. In other words, people blame failed crops on undetected incest or other crimes rather than overworked soils. This is a complex issue and I will not deal with it here except to refer to my discussion of the particular circumstances in which the products of Western technology were rejected by the mhondoro mediums (page 274).

- 6 The more immediate threat to democracy at village level is the gradual loss of the powers of the committees to the Councils which have been established under the Ministry of Local Government, and the Primary Level Courts set up under the Ministry of Justice. Both of these institutions are organised by elected representatives, but allow for a far lower level of participation in the political process. They correspond more or less to the old ward system and remove power from where the village committee system placed it: in the hands of the villagers themselves. The effect has been to transfer authority from the Party, with its direct experience of the liberation struggle in the countryside, to the institutions of government which are based in the capital and staffed largely by career politicians.
- 7 I am grateful to Andrew Ladley for information of this meeting which took place after I had left Dande and also for the information in Note 11.
- 8 This was borne out in a recent (1982) trial of a medium of Nehanda for murder. (The details are given in Garlake 1983.) The then Minister of Health, Dr. H. Ushewokunze, giving evidence on behalf of the defendant, made it clear that he believed that the 'Nehanda spirit' possessing her was 'the revolutionary Nehanda' of the 1896/7 rebellion. (Copy of trial transcript in author's possession.)
- 9 See, for example, Chigwedere's mythological/historical account of Zimbabwe's past (Chigwedere 1980) where Nehanda with her 'brother' Chaminuka is said to be the founder of the entire Shona nation. I am grateful to Mr. Aaron Hodza of the University of Zimbabwe for stimulating discussions about current attitudes to the mhondoro throughout Zimbabwe.
- 10 It is possible that 'originally' Nehanda was a Tavara rain-spirit similar to Musuma and Dzivaguru. Despite her present eminence, many features of her cult point in this direction. All three were, perhaps, at some time in the past, 'spirit wives' or priestesses of a pre-Korekore territorial high-god cult. This is suggested by certain similarities they bear to the religious institutions of the Chewa as described by Vail (quoted by Ranger 1973:584). The most striking similarity, apart from the female aspect of

these spirits, is their association, in some traditions, with snakes or 'snake-gods' typical of other cults in the region. That the lion spirits were introduced by the Korekore is suggested by the partial absorption of these ideas by the nearby Tonga peoples (Weinrich 1977:80; Colson 1977:123). The example of Madzomba (Garbett 1977:82 and see page 238 above) explains how non-Korekore mhondoro can become integrated into Korekore genealogies. The same may have occurred in this case. This does not affect the significance of the incest theme in the Mutota mythology. What matters there is that Mutota has a daughter; her name is insignificant. In some versions the daughter is not Nehanda but Nyamita. Nyamita is the name of a mhondoro belonging to other traditions (see for example Edwards 1928) but it is also one of the three names attributed to Nehanda today - Nyamita Nehanda Nyakasikana. All this remains speculation and awaits further research.

- 11 It has recently been reported in the Zimbabwe press that officers of ZAPU, the Ndebele based opposition party, have attempted to establish the Njelele shrine in the Matopo Hills in Matabeleland as the national rain-making shrine. In their application to have this shrine declared a national monument they have claimed that it is older than any other Shona rain-making shrine in the country.

Conclusion

- 1 Garbett reports that he was told that the clan of Mutota was originally Moyo (Garbett 1963:4n).
- 2 The appearance of the mhondoro 'Monomotapa' (there is said to be a medium of this spirit in Mount Darwin district) is possibly a consequence of feedback into the traditions from the history taught out of textbooks in local schools. See also the chimurenga song quoted on page 271.

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