

THE DYNAMICS OF THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION  
IN ZIMBABWEAN COMMUNAL AREAS.

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of

DEGREE AWARDED 1989.

Registered in the School of Combined Honours.

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**To Maria**

Acknowledgement

Support for this research was provided by a Faculty Studentship from the Faculty of Social and Environmental Studies, University of Liverpool.

The comrades, friends and colleagues who stimulated, supported and helped me to finish this thesis are far too numerous to mention here. They know who they are and, I hope, of my gratitude.



ABSTRACT

The concern of this thesis is with the nature of the social relations of production and reproduction in the Communal Areas (CAs) in Zimbabwe. These were created as labour reserves during the colonial period, yet today stand as the combination of this legacy with the activities of a contemporary peasantry. The thesis embraces three tasks. First, an identification is made of the most useful analytical and conceptual tools for this analysis. Second, these are used to analyse significant aspects of historical change. Third, these tools are used again to uncover the finer workings of the social mosaic in a contemporary village case study. The general discussions about the CAs are limited to Shona areas, and where possible particular attention is paid to the precise District of the case study village.

The many approaches which are 'on offer' for such a task require an extensive review. This reveals several recurring themes, the most important of which is confusion about the meaning of reproduction. A framework is developed from this discussion which facilitates concrete investigation of social relations through the use of concepts of gender and class. The status of this framework in relation to more abstract analysis is also clarified.

The historical development of the CAs is traced in order to identify the roots of, and changes in, several key social institutions which figure prominently in the case study village, and contemporary situation generally. The focus taken reassesses historical change as the



result of *interaction* between the demands of capital and the terms on which these were met. Important changes in the relations of production and reproduction in the CAs are traced through the themes of marriage, chiefs, land tenure and the farming system.

The contemporary village case study reveals the significance of historical changes in the examination of social relations. The relations of households to capital, the state and each other are examined in addition to intra-household relations. Through these some of the dynamics of class and gender are revealed, and particular attention is paid to the way in which they interact. Gender relations are seen to vary with economic circumstance, but women share a common material insecurity within marriage. At times gender reinforces economic differentiation within the peasantry, and thus the internal dynamics of this class. The class bases and functions of petty commodity producers and proletarians also combine with those of the peasantry within households and over the lifetimes of individuals. Shifts to either of these classes, or the survival of a peasant class, are shown to depend in part on the interaction of these class dynamics with those of gender at the sites of production and reproduction.

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## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The concern of this thesis is with the nature of the social relations of production and reproduction in the Communal Areas (CAs) in Zimbabwe<sup>1</sup>. The CAs were historically created as labour reserves in the colonial economy and today exist as a combination of this legacy and the dynamics of a contemporary peasantry<sup>2</sup>. This complexity presents certain conceptual problems, which I have approached in several ways. Thus the thesis embraces three tasks. That of Part I is the identification of the most useful analytical and conceptual tools for the job. That of Part II is the use of these to analyse significant aspects of historical change. In Part III they are also used to uncover the finer workings and political complexity of the social mosaic in a contemporary village case study<sup>3</sup>.

In Part I, I examine a variety of approaches which have been used for this task in other African countries. All of these remain important influences on further inquiry, yet none of them are by themselves satisfactory. They fall into two groups, the first of which includes approaches which are informed by the most abstract analyses of society, largely concerned with the usefulness of a mode of production analysis. The second includes those which arose out of dissatisfaction with these debates and turned instead to more concrete analyses of class and gender.

In some sense the latter approaches might be regarded as a 'flight from theory' in response to the increasingly abstract language of modes of production debates, and their distance from concrete political issues.

However, there is also another theme to the developments which followed. The abstract debates on the modes of production collapsed in confusion over the concept of *reproduction*. This is in turn what was taken up and refined (particularly by feminists) in the aftermath. Moreover it has remained an undercurrent even where it does not figure explicitly as the main focus of other approaches, such as those more concerned with peasant differentiation. I conclude from the analysis which follows that this continues to be a sub-plot in the development of theory, which needs to be placed more centre-stage if certain theoretical problems are to be solved. In so doing I join the company of a limited number of authors who, from different marxist perspectives, argue for certain aspects of reproduction to be considered as a unity with production. I review these theoretical advances in the concluding section to Part I.

I begin by examining the usefulness of the articulation of modes of production debate to the present context, even though it is pitched at a more abstract level than that which facilitates the immediate project of the thesis, ie a detailed examination of social relations. I reject its usefulness in this context, yet the articulation of modes of production approach retains currency in the analysis of African societies as an explanation for the presence of any relations other than those of wage labour. Its explicit dangers are that it tends to result in an ahistorical analysis and, ironically, obscures the dynamics of change, which was the focus originally intended by those proposing the concept of *articulation*.

Some writers who have adopted the concept of a mode of production in a fuller sense, as the appropriate interpretation of Marx's work (as

described by Banaji (1977)), do not in fact use the concept in their analysis. They include Bernstein (1977) and Snyder (1981). They do not do so because they are concerned to focus at a more concrete level of analysis on uncovering the relations of production. Thus this wider use of the concept has not in fact figured prominently in analyses of African societies, although it is cited by these, amongst others, as the appropriate theoretical framework. However, a concept of a mode of production in the narrower sense is currently being resurrected, by those arguing for the existence of a patriarchal mode of production. This approach has developed from a different origin and is generally not analysed against the backdrop of the earlier, complex debates on modes of production. I do this at the end of Part I of the thesis.

Part of the reason why the mode of production analysis is not used as much as others lies in the difficulty in switching from the different levels of abstraction, and is one which is not generally resolved by individual authors. I do not claim to have resolved this difficulty, which is not the aim of the thesis, but indicate some <sup>of</sup> the points at which it occurs and some of the conceptual problems which result.

The approaches for understanding African rural societies which developed out of the aftermath from much of the discussion on modes of production may be divided between those which focus on household differentiation and those which examine the difficulties with the concept itself and then focus on differentiation *within* households. Several of the former are particularly useful in the Zimbabwean context, such as those of Bernstein (1977; 1979) and Martin and Beittel (1987). Robertson's work on sharecrop contracts (1987) is not very relevant in

this case in the form in which he proposes it. However, an adapted version of his concept of share-crop contract which I propose, can facilitate a shift in focus from inter-household to intra-household relations in this context. In this adaptation, the contract is regarded as being between husband and wife rather than between household heads.

Even this innovation however, is clearly insufficient to examine and explain the extent and nature of differentiation within the household. Many different feminist approaches have been developed and used to this end in other contexts, and it is here that the problem of reproduction figures prominently once more. Summarising the different approaches inevitably distorts to some extent, but I show that the most valuable and appropriate of these to Zimbabwe are the most recent analyses of the interaction between gender and class in Africa. Here gender and class are taken as having equal conceptual weight, whilst their relative explanatory value remains a matter for investigation. Careful examination of the different meanings and locations of reproduction suggests that whilst they are conceptually separate, reproduction and production often exist as part of the same process and may be organised through the same social contract. This applies to the reproduction of the means of production and the reproduction of labour (both material and human). The specification of production and reproduction as a site of investigation is outlined in the final section of Part I on recent proposals for considering them as a unity.

The dynamics of gender and class at the sites of reproduction and production are thus clearly the most useful conceptual and analytical tools for illuminating the social relations within the case study village

in the Zimbabwean CA. However, any interpretation of contemporary social relations must also be founded on an understanding of their historical development. Martin and Beittel (1987) stress this in their examination of different approaches to household differentiation in Southern Africa and propose that such histories should be analysed as the outcomes of a process of *interaction*. Such interaction is principally between the demands of capital and the terms on which they are met, over which capital often has little control. These terms then determine and shape future demands. This approach is compatible with those which focus on the importance of gender relations of production and reproduction, and the ways in which they interact with those of class.

As a whole this is the approach which I have taken in developing a history of the CAs in Part II. To re-state: by focusing on the interaction between the dynamics of gender and class at the sites of production and reproduction, the interaction between the demands of capital and the terms on which these are met is revealed. The means and relations of the reproduction of labour do not appear with any prominence in the historical accounts published to date, but I have traced these through the available sources as far as possible. Thus I have summarised a particular historiography through which a picture emerges of how social institutions and the appearances of social relations have in some ways remained outwardly unchanged, whilst in fact undergoing fundamental transformations in response to the demands of industrial and other settler classes and the state. At the same time this brings a new perspective to prevailing accounts of Zimbabwean colonial history by showing the ways in which changing social

institutions also affected and shaped some of these demands, thus highlighting the *agency* of the African population.

The case study in Part III examines the dynamics of gender and class at the sites of reproduction and production. In this way, production and reproduction are at times revealed as part of the same process and controlled by the same social contract. The dynamics of gender and class relations are examined through the perspective of their history, as outlined in the previous chapters. Thus what emerges from the village study is a far more complex, and I suggest complete, picture than would be the case from that which has emerged from alternative approaches to date, or from that which would emerge with the use of others reviewed in Part I.

The conclusion identifies the usefulness of this approach by identifying the points at which it reveals insights which clarify the contemporary social relations examined.



## CHAPTER TWO

## THE USEFULNESS OF THEORY

## Part One: From Articulation to Reproduction

## ARTICULATION OF MODES OF PRODUCTION

The persistence of social relations of production which are not of the classic capitalist type (proletariat vs capital-owning) in agrarian sectors of contemporary societies of the third world has been the subject of much pondering. The dual economy thesis suggested a sense in which these remained separate, either within nation-states or worldwide, along sectoral lines, with 'backward' or 'modern', or even 'town' and 'country' denoting the duality. These formed the backdrop to the modernisation theorists who suggested that the developed, 'modern' sectors, or economies, would eventually modernise, and hence transform, the 'backward, traditional' sectors. Dependency theories criticised these and identified important links between the two sectors in which the latter were shown to have been used and transformed by the establishment and growth of the former.

Criticisms of the dependency approach came from several directions. The most enduring of these was that relations between the two spheres were considered only at the level of *exchange*. Criticisms of this approach from more orthodox Marxist (as opposed to neo-Marxist) positions brought about the development of approaches which considered more closely the *relations of production*. In developing the articulation of modes of production theories, the possibility has been considered not only that the apparently non-capitalist relations of production in

agriculture have their roots in pre-colonial relations, but also that, in fact, they are still reproduced and induced through dynamics of non-capitalist *modes of production*. For this to be the case they have to have some separate identity and existence from the capitalist mode of production (CMP), and the key question became the nature of these relations with the CMP, ie their *articulation* with it.

The conundrum of how and why these apparently non-capitalist relations are like they are, and thus how they are likely to change, was also discussed at length in the debates about the peasantry across history and geography which came to be considered under the rubric of the Agrarian Transition Debate. In many ways they were the precursors of the articulation of modes of production debate historically and intellectually. I consider these in more detail, together with other debates about the peasantry, in a later section.

#### ***Articulation of Modes of Production and the African Context***

(T)here is room for debate in relation to Africa precisely because African economies and the rural economy in particular do *not* conform to forms and trends that every one would accept as clearly "capitalist". African agriculture is not tending to ever-larger units of production in private hands employing labour, nor to the conversion of all peasants to proletarians (or capitalists).

(Cliffe, 1987: 630)

The debates around the articulation of modes of production in the late 1970s and early 1980s remain amongst the most influential - both in their hey-day and aftermath - in explaining the persistence of social relations and forces of production which appear not to be capitalist in Africa. In contemporary situations where the CMP is making its presence felt ever more strongly within the society, this led not only to a

renewed interest in Marx's explanation of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, but to a rejection of other modes of production described by Marx as applicable to the history of many third world countries. Attempts to construct alternatives took place in this context of trying to theorise the process of articulation.

The initial excitement was in being able to give some explanation for these different relations of production. Different African modes of production, as they were thought to have existed in the past, were constructed theoretically (Amin, 1976; Hindess and Hirst, 1975; Meillassoux, 1981; Rey, 1976; Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1972, 1976), as were others specific to different parts of the world'. In the wake of this innovative approach, many local situations were explained by the articulation of the CMP with other modes, but the precise nature of local conditions resulted in the definition of new modes for almost every situation (eg Cliffe, 1982).

This burgeoning of descriptions of different modes of production provided fuel for theoretical discussions about the definition and use of the concept itself. These resulted in further refinements of the concept on the one hand and contrasts with conceptions of a *social formation* on the other. These are considered separately below. The articulation approach was found by some to have important political value in attributing some social dynamism to forces other than capitalism, thus breaking away from the legacy of the dependency approach in its crudest forms. It was possible to show the advantages to capital of these different forms, or modes (Wolpe, 1980c), thereby imbuing the capitalist mode with the dominant tendency, but at the same time to allow space

for some other explanations than the development of capitalism for the way that things were. The former appeared as a very functionalist approach, the latter had the inherent risk of blurring what the relations between the different modes actually were.

At the same time some perceptions of Marx's use of the concept of mode of production were different from many of the contemporary uses. In retrospect Kitching (1985) regards them as having been specifically Althusserian interpretations of the concept, which focussed overwhelmingly on the economic level, whilst other interpretations were ignored (also see Gèschiere and Raatgever, 1985). Attempts by these marxists to refine concepts of modes of production other than those used by Marx, and the concept of articulation itself, developed into debates which became increasingly further removed from the political questions of why such an analysis was necessary, and took place in increasingly inaccessible language (Booth, 1985).

Ostensibly the purpose of the whole debate was to develop a theory of the process of articulation, but instead it often became focussed on what was meant by mode of production *per se*. One suggestion was that in the articulation process such non-capitalist modes would be *conserved* and at the same time *dissolved* (Foster-Carter, 1978). On the one hand there were forms and relations of production which persisted, and remained the basis of survival for many people, whilst at the same time reducing the cost of labour-power and products to capital. On the other was the fact that in many fundamental ways society, including the social organisation of production, had been profoundly altered with the onset

of colonialism, from changes in the power base of chiefs to the forcible extraction of labour.

Others sought to resolve this dilemma through conceiving of social formations as the social totality (or society) in which modes of production could co-exist, dominate and interact. This meant that modes of production did not have to *explain* everything, and thus avoided, to some degree, the pitfalls of functionalism and allowed for some changes to be explained without resorting to naming new modes of production (Amin, 1974; Foster-Carter, 1978; Wolpe, 1980b; Friedmann, 1980). Moreover, the boundaries of social formations had to be determined empirically in each set of historical circumstances, and could not be read off from the mode of production, which remained conceptually separate (Snyder, 1981: 4-5).

Wolpe's seminal discussion of the state of the art (Wolpe, 1980b) was an important attempt to identify the roots of these different perceptions and their implications for explaining articulation. He showed how two different concepts of mode of production were currently being used, which went some way to explaining the circular nature of some of the debates. On the one hand some writers (Laclau, 1977; Hindess and Hirst, 1975) saw it as the sum of the forces and relations of production, and excluded other elements which Marx developed for one of his uses of the concept of the CMP, and which others have tried to do in explaining the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe (eg Banaji, 1977). This limited concept of the mode of production, ie the sum of the forces and relations of production, Wolpe termed the *restricted mode of production*.

These 'missing' elements were incorporated into the concept of a mode of production by others (Balibar, 1970; Bettelheim, 1972) and are those which make up the *dynamics* of such a mode of production, or its *laws of motion*, over an epoch of history. These are perhaps the most complex and obscure elements to identify and yet are those which explain its continued existence, or *reproduction*, sometimes referred to as *social reproduction*, or *extended reproduction* (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1981). This refers to all elements of society which contribute to the maintenance of a particular mode of production, however this may be conceived.

A distinction was made by Marx between *expanded/extended* reproduction and *simple* reproduction of the mode of production. Simple reproduction refers only to that which is necessary to reproduce the same conditions, not that which is necessary to ensure that the mode of production continues over time (Harris and Young, 1981). Expanded/extended reproduction is the process which involves the 'missing elements' referred to above and is that which Marx outlined for the CMP as being the valorisation process (2nd vol of *Capital*, 1978, ch 21). In addition, the ideological, political and cultural arenas are included in some Marxist writings. Within these debates such arenas have mostly been considered at the level of state organisation (Poulantzas, 1973). The concept of the mode of production which includes these elements Wolpe termed the *extended mode of production*.

He went on to suggest that these extended and restricted modes were two different things and could in fact co-exist, showing new possibilities for the development of theory. The concept of *articulation* also captured the possibility that the CMP need not necessarily be

dominant all the time. Wolpe suggested that relations of production which do not seem to be capitalist could belong to a restricted mode of production, which would be possible if their existence did not impede the development of capitalism in the form it took at that time. Some use of this insight was made (eg Kimble, 1981) which suggested that laws of motion of the extended mode of production could be totally detached from the restricted mode, or they could be part of its reproduction, or lead to its downfall.

This approach also allows space for the conservation-dissolution dilemma. The dissolution of the laws of motion etc does not preclude the conservation of the relations of production. An important point here is that evidence of transformation from pre-colonial production is often given in the form of changes in the technology of production, but what is important is the *social relations* through which this takes place. Otherwise a different mode of production would have to be conceived for each change in the technology of capitalist production. Nonetheless it is often through changes in technology that changes in the relations of production are also transformed (Bernstein, 1977; Cliffe, 1987) as examined in more detail below.

Wolpe also added an important element of process over time in the conception of articulation. He acknowledged the importance of the work of Bernstein and others in showing how non-capitalist relations could come to be dominated by the CMP, and thus be said to be part of it, whilst not necessarily being completely transformed in appearance. This he described as a situation in which a restricted mode became dominated by the laws of motion of the CMP. However, he stressed that this need

not always take place at all, and that it almost certainly need not take place at first, where there could be articulation between the two modes without the non-capitalist one changing from an extended to a restricted mode. In this initial stage the contact would be through exchange relations, but would not transform production relations in the way outlined by Bernstein (see section below).

This then allows room for the critiques of theories of articulation which suggest that initial contact with the CMP fundamentally alters production processes and relationships (for example the critique by Martin and Beittel, 1987: 220-2). This change could be (conceived as being) a change from an *extended* to a *restricted* mode of production at some point. Thus extended reproduction has become determined by the laws of the CMP, which some suggest is what happens immediately, whilst the relations and forces of production remain part of a non-capitalist *restricted* mode of production (with capitalism buttressing old forms of patriarchy (Martin and Beittel, 1987: 224)). But once such relations of production are in fact essential to the *simple and extended* reproduction of the mode of production, they cannot be conceived of being part of any other mode (Martin and Beittel, 1987: 217). The most important addition of Wolpe here is the notion of *process* over time, without immediate inevitability.

The work of Banaji (1977) stands as one of the most enduring critiques of theories of articulation of modes of production, in spite of the insights of Wolpe. Banaji suggested that there are many different forms of production and types of exploitation which can be found within one extended mode of production, so simply identifying these forms,



whatever we might call them, is insufficient to characterise a mode of production. Hence at different moments of world history one could find the incidence, or even prevalence, of wage labour, serfdom, and sharecropping, but one cannot simply read off from these the prevalence of capitalism or feudalism. This conception has been widely accepted by marxists who write on African societies from perspectives outside this theoretical debate (such as Bernstein, Snyder, Gibbon and Neocosmos, see Chapter Three).

In spite of the more refined versions of conceptions of modes of production, debates about their use and definition have fallen more or less into a state of irrelevance with regard to empirical enquiry and theoretical development (with a few exceptions to be considered later). This has often been blamed on the inaccessible language in which the debates were conducted, and their distance from political imperatives (see, for instance, the discussion in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1985). However, Booth (1985) has suggested a more fundamental reason for their demise. The modes of production debates (and other Marxist approaches) sought to offer generalised explanations and trace the *inevitability* of third world societies being as they are (Booth, 1985: 775).

Behind the distinctive preoccupations, blind spots and contradictions of the new development sociology there lies a metatheoretical commitment to demonstrating that the structures and processes that we find in the less developed world are not only explicable but necessary under capitalism

(Booth, 1985: 776)

The seductiveness of functional explanations has inhibited exploration as to whether they are in fact causal explanations. Booth suggests that this is a tendency running through much of Marxist analysis (also

suggested by Hindess and Hirst, 1977; Giddens, 1981) which has also prohibited further examination of the following two proposals. First, the social structure and politics of less developed countries can be explained by the particular nature of their insertion into the international system of capitalism. Second, given socioeconomic processes take the form that they do simply because of the way they contribute to capitalist accumulation on a world scale (Booth, 1985: 774). One could include with these the refinement that social structures and politics are able to retain the form that they do only because they do not inhibit capital accumulation. These assumptions do not allow for the investigation of any explanations other than those directly related to capitalism.

This functionalist tendency affected the central unresolved question of the debate: the 'missing elements' of reproduction, or laws of motion of (the extended concept of) the mode of production. Attempts to theorise them and identify them for non-capitalist modes of production led to a plethora of meanings and uses of the term 'reproduction', which resulted in the tautology of reproduction simply meaning continuation. This problem was taken on most successfully by feminist critics of such debates, as I describe below.

### *Reproduction and Modes of Production*

From dissatisfaction with many aspects of these debates, feminists were more concerned to explore the aspects of simple reproduction relating to the reproduction of labour, which they showed had to be conceptualised within modes of production. This much was recognised, but

not discussed in detail, by Marx and Engels (Dickinson and Russell, 1986: 2), and remains ignored or blurred by many marxists (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1981: 23). Marx himself suggested that the reproduction of labour power could be left to the workers' 'instinct for self-preservation and of procreation' (Marx, *Capital*, volume 1, 1976: 718). In spite of the clarification of the different concepts involved in *reproduction* offered in the important work by Harris and Young (1981, developed from Edholm, Harris and Young, 1977), they are still often confused and mis-used. For this reason, I summarise below the principal definitions and conceptualisations of reproduction.

The most important distinction between conceptions of the term, and one which is often confused, is between that which refers to the collection of factors which ensure the survival and continuation of a mode of production or a social formation on the one hand, and the means through which people in general, and their labour-power in particular, meet the basic needs of survival and adequate socialisation, on the other. I discuss the latter separately below. The former was that which was central in the debates about modes of production described above. It may be referred to as *reproduction*, *social reproduction*, or *extended reproduction of the mode of production*, or *secondary reproduction*. Where a mode of production is conceived of as conceptually distinct from a social formation, this definition of reproduction is used to refer to the continuation of the latter<sup>2</sup>. Marx's work on the CMP examined the ways in which capital is reproduced, and how this ensures the extended reproduction of the CMP.

The reproduction of people is something quite analytically separate from the extended reproduction of the mode of production, although ultimately there is a need to identify the links between them. The reproduction of people consists of two main elements, making three different conceptions of reproduction in all (Harris and Young, 1981: 113). *Human reproduction* is conceived of as the set of relations which determine the operation of fertility and sexuality, and hence 'biological' reproduction. Principally these are relations of marriage and kinship. The production of adequately cared for and socialised people contains many other elements. These are considered separately.

Clearly the reproduction of people is necessary for the reproduction of the system as a whole, but should not be conflated by it. Leaving aside human reproduction for the moment, the other aspects of the reproduction of people may be considered in three ways. These are by no means inevitably successful, but rather are conflict-ridden, especially under capitalism (Harris and Young, 1981; Mackintosh, 1981). Harris and Young identify three main processes at work in this process: the *allocation* of labour to different purposes; the role played by *ideology*; and *material* reproduction. Together these contain both the day-to-day and generational aspects. The links between them and social reproduction in general can best be considered by analysing them separately under capitalism and in non-capitalist societies.

The means through which appropriate socialisation is passed through the generations is primarily through *ideology*. Ideology here should be thought of not just as a set of ideas, 'but as material practices embodied within patterns of behaviour and social institutions'

(Harris and Young, 1981: 125). Women are important transmitters of this to the next generation, but play different roles in this at different times in their lives, particularly in non-capitalist society. Where their relation to the labour of others changes, then their role in transmitting socialisation changes too.

The *material* reproduction of labour on a day-to-day basis and over lifetimes has received most attention under capitalism in the West. In this context, the value of domestic work in the production of labour power for capital is examined. However the same activities reproduce people who do not yield labour power to capital, both under capitalism and in other societies, so this is more usefully referred to as the reproduction of labour, rather than of labour power. The material reproduction of labour is not completely ensured by workers' wages under capitalism as 'the specific requirements of capital include that of a reserve army of labour' (Harris and Young, 1981: 124-5) which by definition has no wages (also see Hemmelweit and Mohun, 1977). The reproduction of this labour is met through state welfare, through the informal sector and petty commodity production *combined with* the labour of women as domestic, or reproductive labour.

Under capitalism the work involved in the material reproduction of labour is generally done by women and is, to a large extent, separated from the site of 'productive' labour. It is partly commodified for the wealthy who have servants and in some industries where, for example, canteens are provided. Analyses of domestic work under capitalism have given rise to debates about the effects of the way this is organised on the general level of wages, ie whether it lowers the wage as not all

reproductive needs of labour are commodified, or whether the economic dependence of women and children has increased wages for men able to earn a 'family wage' (Beechey, 1977; Barrett and McIntosh, 1982)<sup>3</sup>.

In non-capitalist societies, production and material reproduction are more intimately linked. The tendency to assume that the only work that women do must be this kind of work has sometimes hidden their contribution to production. There has also been an over-emphasis on a narrow definition of the household as the unit of production. Non-capitalist societies are linked to international economies, and production often in reality takes place through wider networks of kin. Overlooking this latter aspect has also obscured the ways in which labour is reproduced in non-capitalist societies. The definition of what is reproductive work is in any case socially defined and not universal in content, the way it is organised or in its gender division (Harris and Young, 1981: 127-8).

*Human reproduction* is likewise not the universal condition it is sometimes assumed to be. The biology of conception and parturition does not dictate fertility rates, the survival of children or the way in which they are cared for as babies. There may be controls on fertility which affect sections of, or whole, populations, such as famine, war and disease. There may also be controls which are more consciously applied, such as the timing of marriage and restrictions on marriage altogether, or infanticide, abortion and sexual abstinence.

These definitions of reproduction went some way towards a more complete analysis of the components of a mode of production. However, the specific challenge taken up by feminists of explaining the existence

of the subordination of women was still not answered satisfactorily by this marxist approach. The discovery that the subordination of women was of benefit to capital did not explain its existence, nor did it account for the fact that men also benefitted directly from it. These questions led a wide range of investigations into the gender division of labour, decision-making and economic stratification. A key contribution from the sum of these findings has been the revelation of the need to analyse the relations of reproduction (Oboler, 1985; Mackintosh, 1977; Harris and Young, 1981).

(The feminist problematic is) the fact and implications of women's subordination to men, and of women's struggle against that subordination ... this feminist problematic provides a necessary basis for the integration of the social relations of human reproduction within modes of production.

... we should seek ... to grasp the way in which specific forms of these oppressions operate, how they are maintained and reinforced, how they are overthrown or why they are not overthrown.

(Mackintosh, 1977: 119, 121)

The classic relation through which the forces and relations of reproduction are structured and ensured is referred to as *patriarchy*. The subordination of women as an integral element of human and social reproduction appears universal. However the particular forms it takes and the ways in which it is ensured in the face of resistance to it vary over time and across societies. The purpose of exploring these dynamics is not simply to uncover a hidden sphere, but specifically to uncover the relations of reproduction.

The term patriarchy is now largely rejected within anthropology and has been widely criticised (Edholm *et al*, 1977; Beechey, 1979; Barrett, 1980) for obscuring more than it reveals.

The limitations of the concept of "patriarchy" were quickly noted: its universalistic character, its purported autonomy,

its lack of division into types, variations or degrees, made it impossible to link to any changes in the organisation of production or to any historical trends.

(Stichter and Parpart, 1988: 3)

Nonetheless, it is useful in an interdisciplinary sense as it neatly captures aspects of a relationship to be further explored, ie resource control between women and men, and the dominance of men (Guyer and Peters, 1987: 201-2). Like reproduction, it is a term used to mean a variety of different things in different contexts. (For instance, Stamp (1986: 31) suggests that patriarchy should only be used to apply to capitalism. Molyneux (1977: 122) suggests that it is simply 'the control of women, especially of their fertility and sexuality, by men.'. Also see Mackintosh (1977; 1981: 10).) The need to trace the links between marriage, sex, kin and economic relations and accumulation suggests a need for a political economy of sex (Rubin, 1975).) Thus patriarchy is posed as a subject for investigation, rather than the definition of a set of relations.

Some writers (notably Snyder (1981); Secombe (1986); Folbre (1986); Henn (1988)) have attempted to incorporate a more sophisticated analysis of reproduction within that of a mode of production. Other feminist writers have proposed conceptualisations of the relations of production and reproduction outside the mode of production debates. I consider these in more detail in a later section as they have not informed most of the research on African societies in recent years, and are more appropriately discussed along with the alternative conceptions of reproduction and production which I present at the end of the chapter. However in general, those engaged in the articulation of modes of



production debate did not incorporate patriarchy or the social relations, and other aspects, of reproduction into their analysis. Moreover feminists working on these issues did not apply their findings at the level of theory to the articulation debate, or often locate them within a mode of production analysis. Thus this comment, made over ten years ago, provoked little response,

No conceptualisation of a particular mode of production is complete unless it can account for the reproduction of the people within the system and of the system as a whole. In order to do this three elements have to be considered: the social relations of production, the social relations of human reproduction and the method by which reproduction of the system is ensured/enforced.

(Mackintosh, 1977: 126).

Out of the frustrations with the mode of production debate, alternative approaches developed for understanding African societies, which I consider in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

## THE USEFULNESS OF THEORY

## Part Two: From Household Differentiation to Gender Relations

## INTRODUCTION

Out of the stalemate in theoretical debates on the articulation of modes of production came various approaches which have refined conceptions of rural producers in Africa. There has been continuing concern with the processes which were under investigation in attempts to theorise the articulation process. This concern has resulted in various attempts to identify the precise nature and pattern of household activities, and discussions about whether these indicate the development of classes, or whether they are determined by economic 'laws' particular to peasantries.

This reawakened interest in the discussion about the Agrarian Transition which had existed prior to the articulation of modes of production debate, and in theories of the class base, and nature of differentiation between households, of rural producers. At the same time, recognition of the need to examine the means and relations of primary and social reproduction stimulated inquiry into the concept of the household, as the most common site of reproduction, and relations within it, particularly those of gender. In spite of the fact that in all of these approaches acknowledgement is given of the importance of considering relationships within and beyond the household, they have on the whole remained discrete foci. Thus I divide them here into two. First, there are those which do not pay a great deal of attention to

intra-household relations and instead focus on inter-household, household-state, or household-capital relations. Second, there are those which focus more attention on conceptions of the household and relations within it.

All of these approaches are currently 'on offer', and so need to be assessed, yet they are all inadequate in some way. The common flaw which runs through many of them is confusion over the concept, site and role of reproduction. The best of the analyses of intra-household relations are only occasionally combined with those which analyse the relations of households with each other, capital and the state. Conceptually these approaches only become linked in the most recent discussions of class and gender in Africa. In the final section of this chapter I attempt to resolve this in a preliminary way by identifying a framework which combines the most useful of these approaches and an alternative conception of reproduction and production. I begin with a summary of the aspects of the work of the Agrarian Marxists which are further developed by other writers.

#### EARLY PEASANT DEBATES AND THE AGRARIAN TRANSITION

The roots of many discussions about the peasantry in the third world lie in those which took place in Russia in the 1920s, where the substance of the arguments was much the same as in this context: what is it which is making rural change take the form it does? Are the differences between peasant households to be explained by the development of capitalism, as Lenin thought in Russia? Or are some other influences, such as the stage in the lifecycle of a household, at least

shaping, if not resisting, the development of capitalism, as Chayanov and others thought? A major legacy of these debates has been the methodology of focussing on the household as the unit of production, and the relations between them (in contrast to a sectoral or class approach).

The significance of these debates in Russia was to try to establish what should be done - if capitalism was developing in the agrarian sector, this already signified a revolution (over feudalism) and was creating the pre-conditions for socialism. The implications of this for Lenin were that there would be an increase in the level of the productive forces and the creation of a proletarianised class which could then form an alliance with the urban proletariat. The development of agrarian capitalism and a strong kulak class, which was ultimately to become one of capitalist farmers, was regarded by Stalin as a block against the transition to socialism which needed to be eliminated. The alternative position of the Narodniks and populists was based on the assumption that the extent of differentiation amongst the peasantry would remain the same over time, and would not develop into different classes. Hence they proposed that other measures be taken to transform the peasantry which would not form an easy class ally, nor create a revolution alone.

Lenin's model of the development of capitalism remains influential in analyses of peasantries today (Cliffe, 1987: 630). Crucially, he assumed that differentiation would increase amongst peasant households which would in turn develop into class differentiation. They would then appear as classes of capitalist farmers and proletarians. Clearly many

peasantries have not (yet) followed this path, so some authors reject his work on the grounds that it was founded on mistaken assumptions and that he simply got 'the laws' of peasant differentiation wrong (Djurfeldt, 1982). The real value of his work in this area, however, was in his description of the ways in which differentiation between households might become class differentiation. He suggested that the presence of wage labour did not indicate capitalist classes, and that *kulaks* would not necessarily invest in agriculture as they accumulated wealth: the economic conditions in the agrarian sector had to be sufficiently attractive for that to be the case. These and other insights were developed by other scholars.

A.V.Chayanov concluded that other Marxists working on the agrarian question (presumably including Lenin, although he never openly stated as much) were misapplying Marx's theory of capitalist society by trying to apply it in peasant society at all. He maintained that the latter had different dynamics altogether, summarised as a striving for balance between investment of the labour of the peasant family or household in its own production and the level of consumption demanded by family members. Extra production would not seem worth the labour once the subsistence needs of the household were met, along with enough for reinvestment for next year's crop, maintenance of the household, farm and implements, taxes and dues, and a small number of commodities which they could not produce themselves. Hence social mobility would only be cyclical, according to the ratio of consumers to producers within the household at any one time (Cox, 1979: 8).

In order to explore the validity of these perspectives, dynamic studies were undertaken in the Russian countryside by a group which became known as the Agrarian Marxists. At that time they were able to undertake studies of what they deemed appropriate and to discuss class struggle in the countryside, although later it cost them their lives under Stalin (Cox, 1979: 6). The dynamic studies were descriptive of the same families over time. There was much debate about the significance of the voluminous data produced by the studies, and about the methodology used to collect them. Khryashcheva suggested that they showed that wealth was accumulated in the countryside, but was siphoned off to the towns, leaving the countryside more impoverished and differentiation still taking place on a cyclical basis (Cox, 1979: 9). Kritsman, whose work perhaps has the most potential use in other contexts, suggested that polarisation had to be measured through the identification of processes of exploitation, rather than simply describing social categories. This was necessary 'to uncover the social relationships through which new wealth was being created in the countryside and on the basis of which a rural capitalist class could potentially grow up and increase its power to exploit and undermine peasant agriculture.' (Cox, 1979: 10). Other than Chayanov, the Russian debates in general did not examine in detail the relationships within the household. Kritsman did and suggested that there could be the development of several different classes within one household. Unfortunately the legacy of the former has been far stronger and much attention to the disaggregation of the household is only a relatively recent phenomenon.

The overall legacy of the Agrarian Marxists has been an awareness of the different interpretations possible from data that has been collected in certain ways. Their criticisms of each other continue to inform contemporary discussion about peasants and socio-economic differentiation in the countryside (Harriss, 1982). All the same, the points stressed by Lenin and Kritsman about the necessity to uncover the basis of relationships, rather than simply identifying categories, have to some extent been ignored in the past (Murray, 1987). The debates are often characterised as being between Lenin and Chayanov, but the work of the agrarian Marxists also holds useful lessons. Post-Revolutionary Russia was perhaps unique in the nature of the political agenda, ie what was considered possible, and in the level of scholarship which was devoted to discovering the dynamics of social relations in the countryside. Nonetheless the task in hand is often, as here, still to describe the particular nature of rural social relations, with a view to considering the implications for future social change. In essence this often is a question of assessing whether such relations are *capitalist* or not, and if not, what are they? This is a necessary precondition of the development of political strategy.

Capitalist relations in agriculture are in any case difficult to recognise as they do not appear in the same way as in industry in even the most developed centres of capitalism, ie a complete separation of the worker from access to the means of production. Kautsky's later work remains perhaps the most lucid account of what the nature of these relations may be. He was at pains to try to analyse the differences between small and large capitalist farms, and suggested that there was

no inevitability that small farm units would develop into larger ones with the further development of capitalism. In this he had a more accurate view of what has in fact come to be the case than did Lenin. From his work much discussion has taken place as to the class relations on the large capitalist farms, where workers often retain access to some of the means of production, and often enter into share-crop contracts rather than those of wage employment (Morris, 1976; Williams, 1988).

Large capitalist farms exist in Zimbabwe, as in South Africa, which were established on a racial basis with White owners, Black labour, and varying degrees of support from the state. Historically, people from the Reserves, now called Communal Areas (CAs), have provided considerable amounts of this labour in Zimbabwe. However, the main focus of this thesis is on those Zimbabweans who appear to be peasants, ie those in the CAs. In other words, it is with the development of small scale agrarian capitalism. Collectively the Russians' work in this regard remains unequalled and has the following basic lessons. We do not look simply at what transactions take place, ie look for the wage labourer and the employer and see a proletarian and a capitalist, but instead have to investigate the nature of the relationships involved and try to identify the processes underlying these. For instance, Kritsman uncovered the fact that those peasants in Russia who sold their labour to till the land with their own plough teams gained more from the transaction than those employing them. The selling of labour *per se* did not indicate exploitation by those employing others, but rather the basis of the relation was ownership of a scarce means of production (Cox and Littlejohn, 1984; Cox, 1986). At the same time we must consider the ways



in which these relationships interact with the demography of households, as stressed by Chayanov.

These lessons have been absorbed to varying degrees by contemporary writers on African societies, as considered below.

## THE HOUSEHOLD AND BEYOND

### *The Simple Reproduction of the African Peasantry*

Henry Bernstein rejected the usefulness of the articulation of modes of production debate earlier than most, taking the extended mode of production (ie with laws of motion and means of extended reproduction) as the definitive concept, thus rejecting the articulation debate on the same grounds as Banaji (1977). In practice he did not adopt this level of analysis, however, and instead took as his focus the relations between African peasants, capital and the state (Bernstein, 1977; 1979; 1981). In this way he took up the challenge of the agrarian marxists and undertook the project of class analysis at the level of the household.

He showed how, over time, a household's relations with capital could fundamentally alter its own nature without transforming its appearance. This is said to occur with increased commodification. Falling prices for commodities which peasants sell, especially *vis á vis* those which they buy in order to meet primary reproduction, brings about a *simple reproduction squeeze*. This may be intensified by the exhaustion of land and labour, or development policies which encourage the use of relatively expensive means of production, eg seeds, tools, fertilisers. In

order to survive this, a household must reduce the level of consumption, intensify commodity production, or both.

Hence the *simple reproduction squeeze* is brought about by increasing commoditisation, which increases the costs of survival, and hence increases the amount of labour needed to meet these costs. The effect of this for capital is the provision of greater amounts (or at least a sustained supply) of commodities, without incurring the costs of management and supervision of production. Peasant products are cheap in any case because of the production of use-values within the household, which in turn devalorises labour-time and cheapens commodities. Hence appropriation takes place through exchange, but is located in production, and is usually increased through absolute surplus value (lengthening of the working day and the intensification of work). The use of better-developed technology and cheap reproduction-goods also make increases in the appropriation of surplus value possible.

This transfer of value between sectors has been taken up by many writers, and is seen variously as the transfer of value between subsistence and productive sectors (Evers *et al*, 1981: 28-9), or between women and men (Robertson and Berger, 1986: 23; Bujra, 1986: 126-7), the latter being discussed in a section below. Bernstein's work was especially useful in the debate about whether the nature of the exploitation of peasant households by capital and/or the state was one of unequal exchange (as proposed by Amin (1976)) or one of the transfer of surplus value. He argued that although interaction takes place through the market, nonetheless these are essentially relations of production. From this there have been suggestions that value theory

should in fact include subsistence production and the reproduction of labour, as well as the wider realm of social reproduction (eg Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1981: 27). This approach also insists that the focus remains on the way production is organised, which remains vital if we are ever able to understand the processes through which rural producers reach a point where they can no longer feed themselves (Hyden, 1986: 678; Cliffe, 1987: 327).

Bernstein developed a distinction between how these mechanisms of exploitation operate differentially with either international capital, or national capital, with the support of the state at the helm. The former is able to relocate from a situation in which it can no longer extract sufficient surplus. National ruling classes, however, depend on a fixed location for their existence. The latter will continue to operate where the former would leave, and hence often require the support of international aid in many ways, including that of food production itself.

This distinction about what might be meant by capital also serves as a warning against assuming that everything which occurs is in the interest of capital, whereas a specific examination of each case is required (Wolpe, 1980; Evers *et al*, 1985). Although Bernstein and Wolpe use different terminology, they refer to the same things. For Bernstein a transition occurs whereby peasants lose their ability to withdraw from the market, in part or completely, and guarantee their own subsistence. For Wolpe, production relations may begin as part of an extended non-capitalist mode of production, but become transformed to the relations of production of a restricted mode of production (ie simply the relations and forces of production) dominated by the CMP and with no laws of

motion of its own, and hence unable to withdraw from the demands of capital.

Thus general explanations are offered at different levels of abstraction in the work of Wolpe and Bernstein for the situation in which people are no longer able to guarantee their own subsistence (by any means), where the reproduction and survival of the labour force is threatened. Others have developed their lines of argument in different contexts (for instance Bush *et al*, 1986). A recent approach (Martin and Beittel, 1987) in stressing the different ways in which this situation of threatened reproduction can be reached, rejects the strength of any generalised arguments about the nature of such a 'crisis of reproduction'. The alternative approach taken is considered in more detail below, but the general point is of relevance here. In rejecting general *explanations* for the threatened reproduction of labour, they also seem to reject generalisations about the phenomenon at all. The work is an invaluable contribution to ways in which the complexity of social change in Southern Africa may be understood, but there are also problems which can be conceived in a general sense. Thus although there are several routes through which households arrive in this predicament, it is still one which they share. This may also be conceived as being a crisis of reproduction which occurs because of the fact that individual and productive consumption are separate. Disjuncture can occur between the economy and households because reproduction (primary - of labour) is not directly controlled by capital (Dickinson and Russell, 1986: 9) and hence capital does not ensure the reproduction of all the labour force.

Greater understanding of the complexities in the ways households arrive in this situation has also added depth to the debate about the terms on which migrant labour develops or undermines agricultural production in Southern Africa. Extreme examples are found in Southern Mozambique and Malawi, where remittances from migrant labour income seem to have sustained agricultural production. By contrast, in Lesotho and the Bantustans of South Africa, migrant labour has had a much more destructive effect (Martin and Beittel, 1987: 227). The nature of the transformation of the household seems to have been very important in these processes, as considered below. The Zimbabwean case contains many of the complexities within it, as will be shown, where it is also necessary to have an understanding of periodisation, geographical location and the nature and extent of direct state action in undermining African agriculture (Phimister, 1986a)

The work of Goran Hyden stands in isolation from these debates about the crises faced by African households which are no longer able to guarantee their own subsistence. He asserts that African peasants are still able to withdraw from the market and argues for the recognition of a peasant mode of production characterised by an 'economy of affection' (Hyden, 1980; 1983; 1986; 1987). His lack of analytical rigour or attention to the insights offered by other writers has laid him open to fundamental criticism (Snyder, 1986; Cliffe, 1987; Williams, 1987). Nonetheless this work has received a lot of attention, perhaps because he focuses on the issue that continues to intrigue and puzzle, in spite of the unsatisfactory explanations he offers, ie. the fact that  
the social relations of production and consumption have still  
to be understood through the practices and ideologies of

descent and inheritance, marriage and bridewealth, residence and seniority.

(Guyer and Peters, 1987: 200).

As suggested above and expanded below, this is largely because Western marxists have only relatively recently recognised that there are non-commodified relations persistent in their own societies, which are often fundamental to the social reproduction of the CMP - hence it is puzzling to account for non-commodified relations in other societies.

#### *Petty Commodity Production*

Bernstein has recently revised his position to one which concurs with that of Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985). They propose an alternative way of analysing African rural producers who they suggest have, to a large extent, become petty commodity producers. They develop a concept of petty commodity production to describe those households which are able to reproduce themselves through engaging in this activity with the use of unpaid household labour and without employing labour or selling their own. In this sense they suggest that petty commodity production in agriculture is analytically no different from petty commodity production in other sectors, such as shoe-making or watch-repairing and that generalisations may be made about petty commodity production anywhere in the world. They insist that whilst individual households are destined to become proletarians or capitalists, the institution of petty commodity production itself (ie with other households) persists.

Their approach is flawed in many ways<sup>1</sup>, not least because of the way that they define an institution from one key household activity and

assume that this is the only one of any significance. Thus they define out of the picture households which do not conform to this concept, ie all those which are not 'middle peasants', and many which are. An analysis of the activity of petty commodity production is nonetheless important and their work stands as the most recent detailed analysis. However, their approach does not replace the usefulness of Bernstein's work. I make just one further comment here, as it relates to the lack of clarity about definitions of households which are discussed below.

Throughout the work of Gibbon and Neocosmos, the petty commodity producer, the peasant and the proletarian are referred to as individuals (of either gender), when by definition at least the first two have to be households. It is assumed that they are discussing household heads, because of the dependence of peasants and petty commodity producers on household labour, yet in spite of their non-sexist language the analysis is in fact gender-blind in assuming that these could equally well be women as men. Women do not have an equal chance of being effective household heads in patriarchal and patrilineal societies and they recruit labour on a different basis from men. Their ability to recruit labour is in part dependent on their generation and rank, whereas men always have certain rights to the labour of their wives. Typically in Southern Africa, petty commodity production is undertaken by a male household head and the majority of labour is provided by women within the household.

I now turn to other general approaches which have been adopted to analyse African agricultural producers.

*Differentiation*

In his earlier work cited above, Bernstein also analyses differentiation between households. He divides differentiation into two types: sociological and materialist, and argues that in determining class the latter is the more important. Sociological differentiation is derived from indicators of inequality and relative levels of privilege and deprivation. The causes of this are many, including the extent of 'accidental' household endowments, such as distance from transport routes, quality of land, sickness etc, and also demographic features of a household at any one time. By contrast, materialist differentiation is manifest in the social relations of production. He draws on the work of the Soviet agrarian marxists (cited above) in producing an analysis which does not define types simply by appearances. For instance, the employment of wage labour alone cannot indicate class (as Kritsman argued), and in any case may be taking place in disguised forms, such as payment in kind. He describes a rich, middle and poor peasant league in which the poor are unable to survive through household production alone and sell their labour as well; the middle peasants reproduce themselves with specific relations to other groups and forms of production; and the rich peasants accumulate enough to invest in production and/or labour.

There has been a tendency to read into the appearance of the sociological categories the significance of materialist categories, as Bernstein and others have warned (Murray, 1987: 247). In exploring other types of explanation for differences between households, there has been a resurrection of interest in the use of the anthropological concept of



the *development cycle* of a household (Murray, 1987) in Southern Africa. Having antecedents in Chayanov, it was developed in the 1950s by Fortes with reference to the Ashanti (Fortes, 1958), where it

showed clearly that changing household composition over time was not a simple function of "growth", but rather of the cycle of options and constraints which a particular social structure ... placed before people at different strategic points in their lives.

(Guyer and Peters, 1987: 199)

It has continued to inform work on household differentiation in West Africa, (Brydon, 1987; Gastellu, 1987) but it has been ignored until recently in work on Southern Africa partly because in some cases it seems as though

large numbers of people have been wrenched out of any context remotely describable in terms of the cultural uniformity and long-term stability implicit in the original models.

(Guyer and Peters, 1987: 203)

Part of the reason could also be that the nature of South African society made it such a focus for the debates about modes of production and the development of class relations that other approaches were neglected.

Colin Murray has developed a use of the concept in Lesotho, however, and suggested that it might have some explanatory value in other countries of the region,

The development cycle is a concept whose analytical strength lies in its capacity to reconstruct observations of the complexity and variety of everyday life within a temporal frame. The primary test of its continuing analytical relevance must be its capacity to situate cyclical changes within a historical understanding of particular trends and divergences. It must be sensitive to the changing structural determinants of the "total situation" of rural households ... (and it) must

be applied in a manner that is subordinate to and not alternative to a class analysis.

(Murray, 1987: 247)

This concept could prove useful in future work in the region, with the proviso that it is clearly not applicable in some situations (such as the Bantustans of South Africa), and with the example of the careful work of Murray on Lesotho in which he shows some of the pitfalls (eg Murray, 1987: 239). Its relevance to Zimbabwe will be discussed in later chapters.

Another approach which picks up elements which have been ignored by marxists is that proposed by Wally Seccombe. His focus is not on the African peasant debates, but it is worth mentioning again here (see also Chapter Two) because of its possible use in conjunction with the development cycle concept. He suggests that the 'laws of population' of each mode of production (Marx's term) might provide the motor for change from one mode to another, rather than being simply the *outcome* of changes in the economy (Seccombe, 1986: 34). In another sense, the options for household members at any one time, which have to be analysed in a consideration of a household development cycle, must also be shaped by these laws of population, which define the pattern of fertility.

### *Sharecropping*

Robertson's recent work on share-crop contracts in Africa also focuses on the relationships between households, but suggests an alternative view of this type of contract to the classical and

contemporary ones (Robertson, 1987). He suggests that it is a relationship which enables households with different and complementary endowments to combine resources in such a way as to share the burden of risk in situations where there are often important risk factors outside their immediate control, such as weather, markets, or official policy.

Despite the fact that, as he defines it, this is a fairly common type of arrangement in Africa, it has received relatively little attention. His perspective is particularly challenging in the sense that it suggests that share-crop contracts in Africa may not be exploitative to the party supplying the labour, as is usually assumed. Where labour is the factor of production in relatively short supply, the party supplying the land could be in the weaker bargaining position. A feature of its practice is the flexibility which is possible, where the gains to both parties are determined by the size of the crop, rather than a fixed sum. Also, different types of contract are possible at different stages of a household's development, and in response to changing macro-economic conditions and long term changes in the structure of the economy, such as through technical developments, changes in land-labour ratios or world recession.

Nonetheless, this approach is compatible with the other approaches above in that it takes the household as the unit of study. He does not, however, examine either the implications of these contracts for relations within the household, or demands made on particular members because of existing relations within the household. Nor does he examine the ways in which such relations actually shape the nature of the

contracts (Roberts, 1988). Apparently it is assumed that the household head makes all the decisions as an individual. Even where this might be the case, what is not examined is the degree to which the range of options is curtailed by his/her knowledge of socially constructed limitations on the amount of resources available for investment in such a contract. For example, the gender division of labour could restrict the amount of labour available for some tasks. The pattern of resources available to a household are not simply determined by demography.

This analysis of the basis of inter-household relations has potential for adaptation to the analysis of intra-household relations, where husband and wife are the parties engaged in the contract, rather than two household-heads. I consider this potential in the context of the case-study but turn now from this review of studies which take the household as the unit of analysis to focus instead on those which critically examine the concept of the household and consider relations within it.

## INSIDE THE HOUSEHOLD

### *Conceptions of the Household*

The idea of a generalisable model of the household in Africa developed from the political imperative to emphasise cross-cultural similarities in newly independent nations (Guyer and Peters, 1987: 197). It remains the most common unit of analysis in rural studies, yet its use continues to be prefaced with misgivings about its shortcomings (Guyer, 1981: 98). Studies which have recently confronted these problems

have in general considered them to be of two types. First, the boundaries of households, wherever drawn, are persistently permeable and yet also hide important social relations. Second, in spite of the many differences which can be found, households seem to provide some universal, cross-cultural needs, in terms of what they provide for members and the way in which they shape peoples' relations to the economy, and as though there must be some essence in which there are generalisable characteristics.

These two sets of problems both point to the importance of what goes on within households, yet how to conceive of this activity has received relatively little attention from the same quarters. Such conceptual work has been done by feminists, who are not necessarily always concerned primarily with Africa. They have developed conceptual tools from studies of patriarchy, reproduction and the gender division of labour, as outlined in an earlier section. The impact of this has been felt to the degree that the importance of intra-household relations is formally acknowledged, which is one of the few things which has been taken on board from feminist work right across disciplines. Nonetheless it is also the case that some of the most useful studies on the household concept neglect this aspect, as shown below.

The location of the boundaries of households has perhaps received more attention than any other aspect, with various arguments at times proposing the unit of production, investment, co-residence, consumption, or reproduction. The degree of difference across societies makes this a difficult debate to resolve. In an invaluable review, Guyer and Peters

(1987) argue for two things. First they suggest that by looking at organisational structures it is possible to recognise two types of membership: *overlapping memberships*, 'where some but not all of the members of the minimal unit belong to a single encompassing unit'; and *nesting units*, 'where each minimal unit is totally assimilated to the larger unit' (Guyer and Peters, 1987: 205-6). Second they suggest that rather than allow the research questions to be about the boundaries of the household, they should be

"what are the significant units of production, consumption and investment in this region/group/people?" and "what are the major flows and transfers of resources between individuals and units?"

(Guyer and Peters, 1987: 208)

The prevalence of *income pooling* within households has been a central assumption in the general use of the concept. The persistence of this assumption is surprising, given the acknowledgment of the complex, but often unequal, relations within households. (For example it is used by Martin and Beittel, 1987, in spite of their acknowledgement that it is essential to analyse the different types used, ie the relationships which determine the nature of resource-flows within households.) Income pooling implies at least a mutuality of interest, if not a sense of equal rights and responsibilities, which is definitely not always born out by reality. Studies of West African data refute the concept on the grounds that there is often separate accounting by members (Staudt, 1986). The problem is to uncover the nature of the activity alluded to as *pooling*.

The dynamics of these relationships have been explored to some extent by the *new home economics*, which apply micro-economic theory

within household structures, measuring and allotting value to all activities. These have been criticised by other economists for assuming that the results must be based on mutuality of interest and hence the differences are explained through comparative advantage. Instead, alternative conceptions, such as bargaining, negotiation and contracting are proposed by economists, and less formal terms by other social scientists. These approaches are certainly useful in uncovering the material basis of household relations (Folbre, 1982).

They are inadequate frameworks on two counts, however. Firstly they only give insights into dynamics in the short term, because of their focus on the narrow, immediate economic concerns (Guyer and Peters, 1987: 208). Secondly, they are economistic. This is different from materialist, in that the latter incorporates the importance of ideology. Households are not just loci of economic activity and subsistence production and consumption, but are also 'sources of identity and social markers' (Guyer and Peters, 1987: 209; also Martin and Beittel, 1987: 219)

I now turn to the second type of focus on the household, where the concern is with the universality of the household as a site of reproduction, which plays a similar role in many societies *vis á vis* the economy, albeit in different patterns and with different outcomes. This research is exemplified by the Fernand Braudel Center's Research Working Group on the Household (see, for example, Smith *et al*, 1984). Martin and Beittel (1987) apply this concept of the household to Southern Africa, suggesting that it should be considered an institution as essential to capitalism as 'states and capitalist enterprises'

(Martin and Beittel, 1987: 217). They concur with Murray in his proposition that the articulation of modes of production is not a useful perspective in understanding what has changed in the relations of production and reproduction of households. They agree with his alternative analysis that the development of capitalism has put more pressure on and reinforced some institutions, such as the household, whilst undermining others (Murray, 1987: 222).

In addition they are at pains to show the necessity of analysing the different ways in which households respond to the opportunities and demands presented by capital. This is necessary for many reasons, but in particular it would help to explain the particular forms of resistance that take place. They suggest this might be possible with the use of the conception of differentiation between households offered by Murray.

As mentioned above, these approaches acknowledge the importance of what goes on within households, but in general have not developed ways of conceiving these activities. They have developed ways of conceiving the household in the Southern African and world economies and stressed the importance of internal relations in structuring the differential positions held by households. Nonetheless, there are very few studies which actually incorporate the best developed approaches of these and the studies done by feminists on the nature of intra-household relations (exceptions are Murray, 1981; Kitching, 1982; Oboler, 1985). A perspective which informs recent inquiries takes as the crucial focus the interaction of gender and class.



## GENDER AND CLASS

This ... combination, within a single household and with marked gender overtones, of persons with quite different relations (wage labour compared to petty commodity production and commerce) to the dominant form of production (capitalism) reappears again and again in Africa. The link between this pattern and women's roles in the reproduction of labor power in Africa has hardly begun to be discussed.

(Bujra, 1986: 119)

Focussing on the interaction between gender and class has many advantages. A primary one is that such an investigation must cut across intra- and inter-household relations, as well as those between households and capital, or households and the state. It reveals the inadequacy of simply allocating the class position of women to that of their husbands or fathers, but also prevents the lumping together of women in a universal category. The predecessors of recent work on gender and class in Africa were those who took as their starting point Engel's work on the origins of class-based society (see Leacock, 1972; 1978; Sacks, 1974; cited in Robertson and Berger, 1986: 8). They related the decline in the position of African women in the twentieth century to the development of new class systems in the colonial period, largely based on the work of Ester Boserup (1970). The relationship between gender and class is a complex set of intersections in any context, but is particularly so in Africa, where even the concept of class is problematic.

### *Definitions of Gender and Class*

Gender relations have been conceptualised as

a set of social relations which have historically and in all cultures been based on the domination of men and the subordination of women. Gender relations ... are distinct from

those of class in capitalist or non-capitalist societies. They are, however, embedded in the social relations of production and reproduction such that the subordination of women serves the interests of, say, capitalism as well as those of men.

(Roberts, 1984: 175-6)

Thus gender relations constitute relations of production, through control of property, the division of labour, etc; and reproduction, through the control of fertility, sexuality and the division of labour. They also constitute many social divisions at the level of ideology and culture. Gender is used, rather than sex, in order to distinguish between what is biological (denoted as sex differences) and what socially constructed (that which forms gender). There is still considerable debate about the extent to which they operate to the benefit of men's material interest, and the extent to which they operate more at the level of ideology (Roberts, 1984: 179-181; Hirschon, 1984; Whitehead, 1984).

Definitions of class have a longer history and greater variety. Non-marxist uses of class are usually taken from Weber. For Weber, class is defined in the market-place, where people arrive differently endowed in terms of skill or ownership of assets. Hence it is via the market that the evaluation and allocation of people to class positions takes place. A more common use of class draws on Weber's concept of status in which society is stratified into sets of people with contrasting social attributes (such as income, occupation, attitudes, lifestyles). These only give static pictures of society at any one time, measured in terms of absolute values. By contrast, marxists define class not by attributes, but by relations. Hence the bourgeoisie is thus defined not because of what it owns, but because of its exploitative relationship with the proletariat. In this sense class is not determined in the market, but in

production itself, and cannot be understood simply by detailing existing inequalities, but must be seen as the outcome of unfolding historical contradictions. Hence classes in the Marxist sense are 'relational', rather than 'gradational'; are essentially conflictual (Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985: 190; Bujra, 1986: 139-40); and their identification exposes relationships which underlie inequality.

A short-hand version of marxist concepts of class (or 'neo-marxist') defines it according to the relations to the means of production, rather than focussing on social relationships *mediated* by the means of production. In this sense the bourgeoisie is defined as owning them, the proletariat as having being dispossessed of them. This has caused problems when considering societies where the principal means of production are not owned in the full capitalist sense by anyone. As several writers have shown, property ownership by an individual should be seen as a phenomenon distinctly located in capitalist society, and not as an ahistoric, universal concept (Hirschon, 1984; Strathern, 1984; Whitehead, 1984). Marx showed this in *Capital*, Volume 1, in his explanations of the fetishism of commodities, which Whitehead summarises thus,

What we are to understand by the fetishism of commodities first and foremost is the nature of the production processes which underlie commodity exchange. What we see are objects exchanging through the medium of money. However the quality which is being exchanged - their value - is concealed labour time deriving from socialised production. Moreover it is the set of social relations implied in the capitalist form of socialised production which is concealed by the commodity form.

(Whitehead, 1984: 179)

In addition, the fetishism of commodities under capitalism also conceals a specific set of social relations under the guise of private property.

Marx traced the particular relations which developed under capitalism whereby individual rights in ownership incorporate the *lack* of rights for other people. In other words the development of *exclusive* rights was specifically part of the development of capitalism.

It is difficult, with the short-hand (neo-marxist) definition, to view much of African society as having classes, a fact which has produced a tendency to assume that there are classes in-formation in African societies. It may well be the case that the appearance of classes will change, but viewing present African social relations as embryonic verges on the evolutionist and does not take account of the reasons why the discussions about the articulation of modes of production developed. As described above, this debate developed because even in the prolonged presence of capitalism, in many places the outward appearance of social relations, including property relations, has been preserved rather than transformed to those resembling the social relations of production in the West.

The means of production include all the necessary factors of production, and therefore labour. In societies where agriculture is the main productive activity, as is common in rural Africa, *land* has previously been viewed as the principal means of production. This has been reassessed in recent years, and in many cases over-turned in favour of *labour* being the most crucial, and frequently scarce, factor of production (Ranger, 1985b: 70, cited by Robertson, 1987: 268; Hyden, 1987). This focus on the importance of labour facilitates a greater focus on the relations between people, rather than between people and things.

In the Southern African context, there is such a high degree of spatial and sectoral separation between the activities of different members of the same households that this complexity is perhaps greater than elsewhere in Africa, and certainly more stark. Examining the possibility of there being more than one class within a household is most frequently done by those concerned with the interaction between class and gender, but the antecedents go back to Kritsman in 1920s Soviet Union (see earlier section). Murray (1981) concluded that in Lesotho there are not only people within the same household holding different class positions, but that individuals themselves may hold more than one position at the same time. He has since reassessed this position to one which takes greater account of factors other than class (Murray, 1987: 239), including the developmental cycle of the household and gender relations. Robertson insists that the differences must be explained in terms of class, suggesting that, in the Lesotho case, class boundaries are more malleable than previously thought (Robertson, 1987: 201). Part of the reason Robertson cannot accept the proposition that there might be more than one class represented within one household is that his perspective scarcely analyses relations within households at all, including those of gender.

Dissatisfaction with marxist conceptions of class arose in terms of their inapplicability in the African context and in their assumption that all household members share the class position of the household head. From this alternative ways of conceiving class have been proposed. One such is that *access to critical resources* should be the defining criterion determining class position, where these might include jobs, wages, land,

labour power, cattle or other animals, education and skills. Access could be direct, or indirect, such as through a husband (Robertson and Berger, 1986: 14-15). This perspective is particularly useful in that it facilitates analyses which distinguish between the class positions of people within the same household, rather than assuming that all have the same class position. An additional refinement is that of the *control over the use of such resources* (Robertson and Berger, 1986: 22), which is useful for analysing the differences between the positions of people who earn the same wages but who do not have the same control over their expenditure.

These approaches are limited in the same way that are Weberian-derived definitions: they present snapshot pictures of access to resources, status *etc*, which do not illuminate the relations which underlie them. Rather than seeking explanation for all social differences in class, and changing the definition to fit the nature of the differences, it is more revealing to analyse them in terms of the intersection and interaction of other factors, including race and gender, with class.

#### *Points of Intersection Between Gender and Class*

Colonialism in Africa was founded on racism, which inevitably has a legacy today in determining, to some extent, the class and racial position of much of the population. However, the more complex, and further neglected, theoretical problem here is that of gender. In this

section I use gender and class with the same conceptual weight, although their relative explanatory value in particular situations is a matter for investigation. Such analysis is nonetheless marxist, as it represents an inquiry into the basis of materialist relations.

A particular question arises in this context of the extent to which the class position of women can be said to be the same as that of their husbands or fathers. In the past, much of Western sociology has been guilty of suggesting that it is, in part because of the particular way in which capitalism developed in the West, where women's dependence on men increased with the separation of work and home. Thus women were identified as having the same class destiny as their husbands or fathers on the assumption that the male monopoly over the productive forces makes women dependent upon men (Barrett, 1980: 254; Parpart, 1986: 141; Bujra, 1986: 118).

This is easily challenged from the perspective of the Weberian-derived notions of class. A definition of class derived from occupation, clearly shows that many women in the West are in a different position to their husbands and fathers, whether they work as housewives (Fox, 1980), or as wage-earners. An orthodox marxist perspective tends to assign the class position of all members of a household to that of the household head. Typically, that of the wife is assumed to be the same as that of the husband. Marxist feminists have regarded the situation as being more complex and have considered the possibility that different class positions may be held simultaneously by different members of the same household. Thus the class position of a woman is mediated by her

location in relations of reproduction, and gender relations more generally (Bujra, 1986: 118-9; Barrett, 1980; West, 1978).

The limited nature of the transformation of relations of production by capitalism in African society has meant that the nature of the intersection between gender and class is also different (Bujra, 1986: 119),

rather than relegating them to an "unproductive" and privatised sphere of domestic labour, it has indirectly channelled their energies into petty commodity production and petty commerce.

(Bujra, 1986: 137-8)

Thus it is harder to ignore the very different class positions of women and men, as determined by their productive activities. In any case there are clearly other reasons why the possibility of women having different class positions (whether determined in marxist terms or not) from men has to be examined rigourously. These include the rarity of extensive resource-sharing within households; the frequency of divorce and remarriage; the proportion of female-headed households; the degree of autonomy obtained by some women in polygynous marriage; the presence of extensive female solidarity organisations (Staudt, 1986: 198). These are found to varying extents in different parts of Africa. The important point here is that women's material situation, and thus potentially class position and interests, are different from those of men because of gender relations.

For instance, women in some places have control over independent economic resources (Staudt, 1986: 198). In this situation, their allegiance to the class of their husbands may be very weak. This may also be true because of the instability of marriage in places where



divorce rates are high: because the marriage is not assumed to be permanent, they have a stronger sense of *female* solidarity. An example of this is where women consciously practice hypergamy.

However, the fact that women need not necessarily hold the same class position over time, or the same one as their husbands, does not necessarily mean that they do not: this is a matter for investigation. Women's class position may change upon marriage, to become more closely allied with that of their husbands, or may not. This can often be greatly influenced by the operation of gender relations. Remarriage may change the class position of a woman, but gender relations could also be very similar in the second marriage, and may again dramatically mediate the experience of class.

Thus the point of intersection of gender and class which has received most attention is that within the household, in response to previous assumptions that the male household head determines the class position of all household members, especially wives and daughters. Having established that there is not automatically an identification between the two, it is possible to examine the *processes* that combine to structure women's class positions. At the same time there are processes of gender relations, ie the relations between women and men, which affect class, both in the sense of the development of classes, and in the determination of the range of class positions which are possible for women. I examine these processes further in the section below.

*Interaction Between the Dynamics of Class and Gender*

The point is that gender differences find differential expression at different class levels - gender is qualified by the places women occupy in newly emergent classes.

(Bujra, 1986: 118).

While class position mediates the experience of gender, gender is an important determinant of class position, a relationship largely responsible for the high level of difficulty encountered in defining gender-class relations.

(Robertson and Berger, 1986: 14)

Studies which have focussed on gender stratification have been crucial in developing methodologies for how to analyse gender relations. In identifying areas of autonomy held by women and men, the groundwork was set for analysing gender relations in a fuller sense than simply documenting a set of rules imposed on women by men. In other words, rather than simply outlining the nature of patriarchy (see earlier section) in any society, the terms on which this is enforced and the ways in which it is resisted have to be accounted for.

Following Schlegel, autonomy is the freedom from control by others (Oboler, 1981: 186). Oboler (1981) has indicated that accounts of autonomy alone are insufficient for accounts of gender relations. An assessment of the *significance* of different areas of autonomy is also very important. For example, peasant women may well have the freedom to make decisions about what to plant, but may be constrained in other ways than patriarchy in making such decisions (such as their relation to capital through the market) and hence may not regard this as a significant area of autonomy. If this is the case, it is unlikely that men will contest it. From this she suggests that the situations most revealing of gender relations are those where autonomy is not sustained but is *contested* between men and women. Thus the most useful

methodology is to examine the frequency and nature of disputes (*op cit*: 292-3).

The danger in not clarifying the concept of autonomy in this way is readily translated into development policies where women are targetted for income generation projects. An assumption is often made in designing the projects that because women have extensive autonomy in the areas of food production and the care of children, that this is highly valued and that full autonomy extends to the use of any income they may earn. Often an increase in their income simply means that they have to bear more of the responsibility for supporting the family, and hence this autonomy in income generation and reproductive work may not be highly valued (Robertson and Berger, 1987: 17). This practice may not operate through the overt oppression by men, but through a value-system which means that women's first concern is the well-being of their children and men's is not (Whitehead, 1984: 185).

Another problem in exploring areas of autonomy, particularly in situations where the operation of patriarchy seems particularly oppressive to women, is in making the assumption that where men have areas of autonomy this in itself is oppressive to their wives. Yet in the same situation, areas of autonomy for women are regarded as liberating. If a simplistic notion of gender relations operates, it is possible to become caught in this double bind, with no means to explain why they are different. A greater sense of the dynamics involved is gained if instead a complex approach is taken, where the significance of the different areas of autonomy is analysed, *along with* the responsibilities and rights of women and men in their relationships with

each other, and their power to enforce these. As suggested, this is most vividly revealed in disputes between women and men, but conflict is often hidden. Where there is a high degree of oppression there may be no expression of conflict at all, simply a conflict of interest.

The interaction between class and gender dynamics can be analysed in two ways. First, at any one time there will be interaction between the conflicts and tensions, as well as the elements of co-operation and collusion, within both sets of relationships. In order to uncover these, there has to be analysis of the elements in class relations, such as the conditions under which labour is supplied and surplus-value extracted, including the forms of resistance and bargaining that take place. Second, the same task also applies for gender relations, and how they operate in production and reproduction. This interaction may take a different form, and is likely to contain more complex elements when changes in class and gender dynamics are viewed over time.

In her study of the Copperbelt from 1926 to 1964, Parpart uses these elements of analysis to show how class and gender interacted at different moments, with women at times identifying with the struggles between men and capital, and at others having a separate agenda for action, because of the nature of their relationships with men (Parpart, 1986: 41-59). She shows how women tried to gain and keep their economic independence from men, but how the state, capital and the chiefs combined to exert social control over them and make them more dependent on men. As a result of this they supported the men in their struggles against capital.

In this they could be said to have identified with the class position of men, but Parpart suggests<sup>2</sup> that it is important to remember that they evaded authority in order to get to the Copperbelt in the first place. Once in this<sup>t</sup> situation they had to be married in order to evade eviction, and they had no legal rights to the wages of their husbands. As a result of this several strategies were followed to increase the amount which they could get. These included deference and persuasion, and various forms of income generation within marriage, including prostitution (also giving the husband the opportunity to get money from suing the 'adulterer') and beer-brewing. Alternatively they chose the abandonment of the marriage either for another husband which would increase the amount of resources at her disposal (hypergamy), or for a precarious life outside marriage altogether.

Thus these Zambian women at times identified with the class position of their husbands, but at others ignored their class allies in order to marry into a situation which would make them better off. Parpart suggests that this was because of the inherent material insecurity of women within marriage. In other words, the nature of gender relations, within and outside the household, made it impossible for them to retain economic independence and so in general they chose to be dependent in the best possible position.

Other studies have taken a longer time-frame in order to compare pre-colonial, colonial and independent African societies. They often conclude that contemporary situations in which the lowest stratum of society is composed of women, are very different from pre-colonial

societies, which were stratified to a greater degree by age than by gender (Robertson and Berger, 1987: 11).

Bujra takes a long-term perspective of the development of capitalism in Africa to outline the major features in the interaction of class and gender. She does this through analysing the way in which the development of classes has affected the economic activities and forms of resistance of women. She traces how men have taken up new class positions with the development of capitalism, but that the changes which women have had to face do not bring them to the same new class positions.

Even though women had always played the major role in agricultural production, the departure of men has inevitably intensified their burden of work without in most cases enlarging their freedom to make decisions.

(Bujra, 1986: 124-5).

Where remittances from migrant husbands are low, women have to work harder, or expand their economic activities into new spheres, but this has to be compatible with their role in reproducing labour. This often draws them into production for the market as well, whilst at the same time 'this non-capitalist sector continually reconstitutes a reserve army of male labour for capital' (Bujra, 1986: 125).

Both studies show how the particular nature of gender relations was useful for the development of capitalism. Bujra also indicates the ways in which capital has structured the space in which women may be economically active and suggests that this is the reason that their struggles take the form that they do. Where proletarianisation draws on male labour, it 'intensifies their [ie women's] struggles in, and struggles over, petty commodity production and commerce' (Bujra, 1986,

121). She goes on to stress that in the short run this is in line with women's interests, even though it also serves capital's needs, providing cheap agricultural commodities, cheap consumption goods for male wage workers, new generations of cheap male labour power, and the circulation of commodities produced in the capitalist sector (Bujra, 1986: 137-8).

She describes how the development of capitalism changes the conditions for women in two ways simultaneously: on the one hand where the extension of capitalist relations of production renders non-capitalist forms less viable, women are drawn into processes of class formation as members of *families*. On the other, the outcome of struggles *within families* means that as women assert their autonomy and make a living they become members of emergent classes in their own right, whether as petty commodity producers, marketeers or wage-labourers, 'Gender struggle and class formation thereby go hand in hand' (Bujra, 1986: 139)

The elements which are missing here, and which are the most inaccessible for the purposes of historical reconstruction, are the ways in which gender relations have shaped what capital has been able to demand or, in other words, the terms on which its needs have been met. As Martin and Beittel (1987: 215) have suggested, it is not only necessary to inquire about the terms on which people have survived the demands of capital, and provided the reproduction of the labour force (both for capital and for other forms of production). It is also necessary to examine the extent to, and the ways in, which the dynamics of gender relations (as well as other structures, processes and institutions) have shaped the supply of labour, the development of class

within the countryside and the terms on which commodities other than labour power have been sold to capital: in sum, the development of capitalism itself.

Martin and Beittel describe this process as one of discovering which household forms emerged 'in conjunction with' different patterns of labour-force segmentation, thus side-stepping a focus on the relationship between the two. Like many of the analyses outlined above, Martin and Beittel are guilty of working on the assumption that the terms on which capital historically obtained labour and commodities were *those which were the preferred, or ideal, form*. Instead, it is more fruitful to consider the ways in which the demands of capital, for labour for example, were shaped by what was most easily made available, and the extent to which these demands were obtained. It is only in this way that the *relationship* between the dynamics within household types and the development of capitalism and class formation will be uncovered.

Bujra alludes to this interaction when she describes the fact that women are forced into defending non-capitalist forms of production as their main form of struggle. Although it is not an overt confrontation with capital, nonetheless such struggles can be in direct defiance of the expressed demands of capital, such as for instance, in situations where women peasants withdraw partially from the market. In addition, it is not simply the restructuring of the economy by capital which has forced women to react in this way, but the nature of gender relations which makes them responsible for reproduction, thus limiting their possibilities.

An approach which focuses on the two-way relationship between gender and class facilitates an analysis which gives agency in history



to processes and relations other than the demands of capital. It is particularly useful in the African context, because it combines approaches which consider both the differentiation between, and that within, households (as well as between households and the state, and households and capital).

Through much of this discussion, the sub-theme of reproduction has not always been apparent. Nonetheless, confusion over the status of different meanings remains in these, as well as in more abstract analyses, and has been the reason behind some of their failings, as I have indicated. In the following section I place reproduction centre-stage again in order to highlight recent conceptions which propose elements of it as a unity with production.

## A UNITY OF PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION

### *Introduction*

A recurring theme of the foregoing analysis is that of confusion between *levels of abstraction*. This is also the case in the work of writers who have focussed explicitly on the issue of reproduction. Some writers stress the importance of conceptualising reproduction at different locations in a mode of production of the type described by Banaji (1977) (eg Snyder, 1981; Seccombe, 1986). Others conceive of the relations of reproduction as a restricted mode of production itself and return to the concept of articulation (Henn, 1988; Folbre, 1986). The latter in particular, I suggest, falls foul of the dangers of slipping

from one level of abstraction to another, principally because the analysis is not conceived from within the debate on the articulation of modes of production. Writers who focus at a more concrete level on the ways in which the reproduction of labour interacts with production *per se* collectively indicate a useful perspective which I further develop for the analysis of African rural societies.

Some of the most recent work on issues of gender and reproduction, by marxist feminists in particular, concludes that there is a need to conceptualise reproduction and production as one whole. This is the conclusion of a range of work which has a variety of different foci, not all of which are on African societies (Connell, 1987; Redclift, 1985; Snyder, 1981; Stichter and Parpart, 1988; Seccombe, 1983; Henn, 1988; Folbre, 1982; 1983; 1986).

Obviously no material production can take place without human reproduction, and *vice versa*; each massively conditions the other. Theory must reflect this interdependence. ... The most adequate concept would seem to be "mode of production/reproduction".

(Stichter and Parpart, 1988: 13)

The challenge of developing this conceptualisation has been taken up more frequently by those writing from a feminist perspective than those who previously wrote as marxists. Perhaps as a consequence of this, the importance of reproduction in the process of production has still not in general gone beyond the rhetorical position of saying that reproduction is of course necessary for production to take place. Thus Stichter and Parpart conclude,

Much work remains to be done in theorising the relations between production and reproduction, and in tracing their historical interconnections.

(Stichter and Parpart, 1988: 14)

Below I indicate some of the most important work which has tried to do this, and its significance for understanding African societies. Subsequently I propose an analytical framework which incorporates this conceptualisation.

### *Modes of Production Analysis*

In seeking to use the tools of marxism to deal with this problem, Marx's own description of the unity of production and reproduction has been resurrected,

(A) society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed, therefore, as a connected whole, and as flowing on with incessant renewal, every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction.

(Marx, 1967: 566, cited in Snyder, 1981: 3)

Yet the confusion between the different meanings of reproduction (especially between primary and secondary) often remains, and the importance of human reproduction either gets lost or is considered to the exclusion of all else (Stichter and Parpart, 1988). In stating the need to ensure that it does not, Engels is also often quoted,

According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life. This again, is of two fold character: on the one side, the production of the means of existence, ... on the other side the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social organisation under which the people of a particular historical epoch live is determined by both kinds of production.

(Engels, 1972: 71-2, cited in Stichter and Parpart, 1988b: 5)

Snyder suggests that a cost of relying on Engels' distinction is that production and reproduction have been conceived as separate spheres which are both necessary but which do not appear to be very linked (Snyder, 1981: 3). His theoretical position takes production and reproduction as being part of the same process, and locates them within

the conception of a mode of production similar to that of Banaji. Thus he defines a mode of production as including its own laws of motion, and able to include a variety of forms of production.

However, this conception does not prevent him from losing sight of some aspects of reproduction at the concrete level in his detailed analysis of Banjal society (Snyder, 1981). He separates his theoretical position from his analysis, like Bernstein, but does not manage to carry through the lessons of theory into the practice of his analysis. Thus in spite of his careful inclusion of the means of access to crops for food and control over property and women through marriage, he does not discuss the relations of human reproduction or much of the material production of labour, such as the production of food from raw materials.

The danger in arguing for a unity of production and reproduction at the abstract level is that some aspects of reproduction become obscured when switching to a more concrete analysis. This happens partly because it is difficult to make this switch in any case, but also because there is little explicit *conceptualisation* at the theoretical level of the importance of the form and relations of reproduction of labour to anything else. This simply remains rhetoric.

The relations and form (technology) of human reproduction are those which are most neglected in their relationship to anything else. For instance, the 'population explosion' and the average age of populations are in fact a direct result of the relations and forms of human reproduction, but the connection between them is usually ignored and the determination of these relations is still paid less attention

than those of other relations. Conceptualising this within other explanations of crisis remains an unresolved theoretical problem.

Arguing for a conceptual unity does not mean a search for a single explanation. One of the lessons in the rejection of much of the vulgar marxism of the articulation era was that simple explanations were often functionalist and obscured much of reality. Thus in identifying links, and relations, these should not be conflated. Some writers have tried to focus attention on these links between different types of reproduction and production, and Seccombe in particular has stressed the importance of human reproduction. He suggests a refinement of the concept of mode of production which includes three types of reproduction, which he calls production - considering the means and relations of:

- (i) the production of the means of production;
- (ii) of subsistence; and
- (iii) of labour power (both daily and generational)

(Seccombe, 1986: 29). This work proposes a different way of conceiving change from one mode of production to another, which has received relatively little attention. Marx suggested that each mode of production has its own laws of population, and Seccombe points out that marxists have ignored these as motors of change. Demographic changes have tended to be viewed as a *response* to changes in the mode of production. The ways in which demographic changes prior to and during the transition to capitalism in Britain affected the transition process itself have been largely neglected. His work is pioneering in this respect.

Seccombe has been criticised for *assuming* that there are different population laws for different classes, and thus for assuming the determinancy of class (Stichter and Parpart, 1988: 12-13). However, his demonstration of the importance of different demographic patterns during the transition is nonetheless compelling (Seccombe, 1986).

The theoretical omission of a place for the reproduction of labour or of the means of production in the conception of a mode of production has had several consequences. It has made it difficult to see at what point the relations of production from a non-capitalist mode of production become part of the CMP, whether as relations of production, or of reproduction. There is room within the mode of production conceived by Banaji, Bernstein and others for forms and relations of production other than wage labour and bourgeoisie. But these other relationships are assumed to be *production relations pure and simple*, or relations of reproduction which are of benefit to capital. Hence they are not subject for investigation. Also as the links between primary and secondary reproduction are not specified historically, they are often ignored.

Two other writers have tried to resurrect what was regarded as useful from the articulation of modes of production approach, and incorporated analyses of production and reproduction. Folbre (1982; 1983; 1986) and Henn (1988) both suggest that a patriarchal mode of production (PMP) has articulated with different modes through history, including the CMP in the West and in Africa. They have both outlined what they define as its main components and the ways in which it has articulated with the CMP in different contexts. The main advantage of

their analysis is that they attempt to calculate a value for women's labour. In this sense they present analyses of societies which take production and reproduction as a unity. They also reassert the prevalence of certain aspects of gender relations in many different contexts. I believe, however, that this approach is theoretically flawed.

Their construction of a mode of production is based on the assumption that all differences are in fact those of class, and their manifestation along gender lines, which is the distinguishing feature of the (PMP), nonetheless has no basis other than class. This is discussed in terms of the relations and forces of production and reproduction, and the ideology which maintains these. Thus they present a unity of production and reproduction *work*, at the economic level, along with the ideological components of society which maintain the division of this work. All these are viewed as aspects of class relations.

Their analysis illustrates some of the dangers of sliding between the <sup>to</sup> levels of analysis. They do not confront the conceptual problems which in fact were major contributory factors in the demise of the articulation debate, relating to the conceptualisation of a mode of production. They do not conceptualise the laws of motion of the mode itself as being any different from simply the reproduction, in the sense of continuation, of the form of relations and forces of production and reproduction which they define. In other words their conceptualisation of the mode of production is limited to the sum of the relations and forces of production, combined with the relations and forces of the reproduction of labour and the means of reproduction. Thus they are

working within a definition of a 'restricted' mode of production, in Wolpe's terminology.

The reproduction on which they focus is *primary*, or *simple* reproduction and in practice they are concerned with the social relations of production and reproduction. They do not confront the need to conceptualise a *secondary* level of reproduction, ie *extended*, *expanded* or *social reproduction*, or that of the system. Their definition of the PMP is restricted in this way and contains no capacity for change within itself. In this way it differs from the more complex concept developed by Marx for the CMP, as described by Banaji (1977), and thus ignores the most difficult aspects of the debate. Henn suggests that the driving force for the PMP is the patriarchy's need to increase their control over other class members, but the way in which this must be inevitable within the mode is not explored.

Folbre and Henn are working from a perspective which asserts the importance of the reproduction of labour but, in doing so, do not confront the complex demands of a mode of production analysis which requires a conceptual separation of the two levels of reproduction. Marx identified the reproduction of capital at these two levels. The work reviewed here has been important in identifying the reproduction of labour at the primary level. What is missing is the reproduction of labour at the level of the *system* (an absence also indicated by Dickinson and Russell, 1986: 2, for the CMP particularly). I suggest this level might include the 'laws of population' proposed by Seccombe, but it has yet to be adequately conceptualised for any mode of production. For this reason, discussions about production/reproduction take place at the



primary level of analysis, and have not yet yielded an adequate alternative to the conceptualisation of the mode of production which identifies extended reproduction as being determined exclusively by the *needs of capital* (for expanded accumulation to counteract the declining rate of profit). This remains a theoretical impasse.

One impetus for the theoretical exploration of Henn and Folbre came from the desire to conceptualise elements within society, which are not overtly controlled and determined by capital itself, at the level of ideology and material practice of the relations of production and reproduction. Thus these writers share a political objective of many others who used the articulation approach to theorise concrete relations. Through the construction of a patriarchal mode of production, which they claim has very wide application (including in Western society) they replace one set of total explanations, ie that non-commodified relations exist to maintain capital, for another, ie that non-commodified relations exist for the benefit of patriarchs.

They argue that the ideological level is important, but in fact they only describe the material basis of the relations and forces of production and reproduction, and present no argument as to why these should not be conceived within a social formation dominated by the CMP or other mode. Much of their analysis is based on the calculation of labour time exerted by different groups, in order to calculate a subsistence minimum, and the appropriation of a surplus by some groups. This is useful in developing concepts for analysing value in non-capitalist societies. However, their analysis is based on a calculation of

time expended on manual tasks and excludes planning and decision-making as work, or a calculation of the intensity of work.

Their exploration of the common traits in gender relations also blurs many of the differences, and by suggesting that they are there because of the power of a class of patriarchs, they actually undermine the determination they wish to elevate. For instance, they suggest that all women are members of an exploited class in this mode. This undermines the very clear differences between women in some societies (including pre-capitalist societies), how these can change over time, and what determines them. It also implies that for women now, the only hope of change in their position in society is through another mode (most likely the CMP) further dominating the patriarchal one.

To sum up, I suggest that their work is stimulating and enlightening in extending our ability to calculate the differential returns along gender lines for hours of certain types of work in production and reproduction. It has been an important challenge in suggesting a source, other than that of capital, for determining the shape of the relations of production and reproduction in many African societies, but has been flawed in conceiving this as a mode of production. Thus at a concrete level their insights are useful, but their analysis is wrongly pitched at the level of abstraction of a mode of production.

*Production and Reproduction*

Returning to the usefulness of the unity of production and reproduction at a concrete level then, Redclift highlights the problem raised by Stichter and Parpart in relation to the primacy of class when she suggests,

The central issue in the analysis of the penetration of capitalism and its effects on social groups must be the differential levels of reproduction that are created in the process. *Levels and styles of reproduction are the markers of class* and to blanket them all by the assumptions of some absolute standard of need is to confuse the issue.

(Redclift, 1985: 119, my italics)

She down-plays the importance of human reproduction *per se* (but her approach is nonetheless compatible with that of Seccombe) and she concludes that the difficulties so far encountered in conceptualising production and reproduction may be because the questions have been posed in the wrong way,

It may be more fruitful to see a totality in which each is enmeshed in the other, to see determination as lying in the process of interaction itself and to examine the relationship between the way systems are reproduced and the gender relations which constitute them.

Production and reproduction are a unity, but of an often contradictory, rather than a functional kind. They are neither independent, determined, nor determinate in any simple mechanical way. Nor is an explanation of one necessarily to be found in the other; rather their intersection shapes the form of the whole at any given time.

(Redclift, 1985: 119-20)

Reproduction should thus be conceived of as an aspect of production itself, and under capitalism it is part of the process of production of commodities and labour-value. The specific relations through which it takes place are not determined by capital, but the work itself is an essential part of capitalist production, as without it there

would not be labour-power. It becomes incorporated into the process of production, with a time-lag (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1981: 20), in a similar way to that in which Marx conceived of the labour of past generations being incorporated into contemporary production as objectified labour. Also production forms an essential part of reproduction because important aspects of it are fulfilled through the purchase of commodities (the bit that Marx did talk about) (Mackintosh, 1981: 10).

This also means that it is necessary to re-think the concept of reproduction within production generally. The division placed by marxists between the work embodied in production and reproduction in the articulation debate was always somewhat false. There was an assumption that those who worked for capital for wages were solely engaged in productive labour. This conception obscured the process of simple reproduction, which Marx identified as the reproduction of production itself, particularly of the means of production. Those who service machines, make tools and build factories, are engaged in one kind of reproduction. Within agriculture outside the advanced centres of capitalism, the overlap between the two is even greater. Someone planting a live fence is engaging in production (for the product from the fence); reproduction of the means of production (protecting the field from which produce will be reaped); and reproduction of labour (as the field will also yield crops which will become food). Similarly the work on the field itself is for all these (fertilising is reproducing the means of production; everything else produces crops which are part of production and the material reproduction of labour).

The cultivation of crops in peasant economies is perhaps the most extreme example of the unity of production and reproduction. Often this cannot be predetermined as production or reproduction, as the use to which the crops reaped will be put is not decided until after harvest. Indeed it could be changed long after then, if grain which has been stored as a potential food source is subsequently sold, or used as seed. Peasant agriculture is an extreme example, but not an exception.

### *Conclusion*

I propose the following framework. At the level of a mode of production, that outlined by Banaji should be refined as follows. Within the analysis of production there must be tasks which are reproducing the means of production. There is also work which reproduces labour in different ways and in different locations within the mode of production, as material reproduction and human reproduction (including the control of fertility and the care of babies). All these together form a unity and, along with ideologies which reinforce and restructure them, describe what is production. An analysis without all these components is incomplete and incapable of explaining the basis on which production takes place, or how it changes. Thus *primary or simple reproduction* is part of the process of *production*.

The relations which structure these are not anywhere *necessarily determined or controlled* by the market, capital, the bourgeoisie or the state. Nor are they determined *automatically* in the interests of men, or necessarily through an overarching patriarchy. What they are and how they are structured is a matter for investigation, as proposed by Mackintosh (1977). They develop as the outcome of the *interaction*

between a variety of social relations and the demands of capital, and the balance between them changes over time as their substance changes. Thus it is their interaction which determines the outcome.

Secondary reproduction remains the most difficult aspect of a mode of production to conceptualise, as described above, and the object of this discussion has not been to resolve this difficulty, but to assert the need for primary production and reproduction to be conceived as a unity.

As I outlined in the previous section, marxists have undertaken the project of class analysis at a different level of abstraction to that of a mode of production in order to uncover the ways in which production takes place, and feminists have contested the usefulness of class analysis alone as it cannot explain all social relations of production, particularly those of gender. The analysis of gender should take place alongside that of class in order to understand much of the relations of production and reproduction within societies. The project of analysing production in its new, complete sense is most efficiently undertaken through an analysis of class and gender together. Thus only a materialist analysis of class and gender, and the ways in which they are constituted and reconstructed through ideology, will together yield an understanding of societies necessary to describe, in its full meaning, the operation of a mode of production within a particular social formation.

## THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN ZIMBABWE

The political economy of South Africa has been the focus for much of the earlier theoretical discussion of the articulation of modes of production. The similarities between it and the colonial state of Southern Rhodesia (later Rhodesia) are striking in some ways and so it is perhaps surprising that by comparison the latter has been the focus for so few of these debates. Rather it has mostly been the object of discussion with regard to the effectiveness of liberation struggles in setting the pre-conditions for the transition to socialism. For this reason, histories of the countryside from the 1960s onwards focus on the development of the liberation struggle and rather neglect other aspects of changes in social relations in the countryside.

The conceptual tools identified in the theoretical review above are adopted here for the purpose of developing an assessment of the social relations within one of Zimbabwe's CAs. This is done through the use of a detailed village case-study placed against the perspective of a broader analysis of the history of changes in relations of reproduction and production. This entails reference to recent conceptions of differentiation, class formation and the interaction between class and gender dynamics in the countryside.

## CHAPTER FOUR

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNAL AREAS: THE INTERACTION  
BETWEEN PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION, GENDER AND CLASS.

## Part One

## INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this historical part of the thesis are two-fold. First, to provide explanation for the basis of contemporary social relations of production and reproduction which are examined in the village case study. Second, to uncover the pattern of interaction between the demands of capital and the terms on which these were met. These are tall demands on any historiography. To indicate this I sketch below the sort of history that might be revealed through several of the approaches outlined in the theoretical chapters.

At the more abstract level, an articulation of modes of production approach would be useful in identifying the agency of the Shona population, by identifying the resulting social mosaic as the articulation of a non-capitalist mode of production with that of the CMP. Several problems arise with this approach, however. Its restricted concept of a mode of production obscures any motor of change other than from the CMP. In spite of the intended focus on the process of articulation, in effect the approach tends to provide a static, structured account, which tends towards being ahistorical. The continuation of relations of production which are not wage labour is assumed to be because of the preservation of aspects of a non-capitalist mode 'at the will of', or at least consent of, the CMP. In this sense it



cannot reveal the detailed changes which take place in the relations of production and reproduction which are *not* determined by the CMP, or uncover the very processes of change which are of concern here.

At a similar level of abstraction, the use of an extended mode of production would avoid the structured approach of the articulation of modes, and would provide clearer analysis of the way the CMP works. It allows space for the conception of other forms and relations of production besides wage labour, and it does not assume these to be part of another mode, with all the problems which such an ahistorical perspective creates. Nonetheless, analysis at this level of abstraction cannot explain the formation and development of classes, their internal dynamics, or those of gender relations. In other words, it obscures the very dynamics I seek to uncover.

At a more concrete level, the approaches which focus on the household as a unit are more promising. The relations amongst groups of households, and between them and the state and capital, provide many useful insights as to the ways in which households responded to colonialism, but also at times limited the options for capital. Of the approaches reviewed in the previous chapter, Bernstein's approach can tell us a great deal, and is implicitly used in some of the social history already written. The concept of a development cycle as an additional means to understand the differential relations of households is too rigid a concept to reveal much of the complexity of the history of communities in which there has been so much disruption by the state. Petty commodity production is only one aspect of the many activities

engaged in by household members through Zimbabwean history, and does not account for the different relations between households.

As a whole the good approaches here can reveal much of the history I wish to highlight, but they stop at the threshold of the household, wherein lie important aspects of the social dynamics of class, as well as differentiation which cannot be explained by class. To get to the heart of the matter we need tools of analysis which focus on relations within the household. The best combination includes those which focus on bargaining and control over labour and other resources within the household; and those which identify the bases of these relations as a combination of gender and class. Thus we need to use the concepts of both gender and class, but also the site of focus and inquiry has to be that of production and reproduction. By combining the lenses which allow us to examine class and gender relations between and within households, we can obtain a clarity of vision sufficient to analyse the changing relations of production and reproduction. This is what I shall attempt to do. Below I indicate the type of history published so far, and then indicate some of the problems in this task.

#### *Political Economy and Social History*

Analyses of Zimbabwean society have taken two forms: that of political economy and social history. They have focussed in large measure on the changing nature of the relations between capital and African labour. This has included examination of the state, as arbiter between different forms of capital, and as instrument, through coercion and law, for measures designed to guarantee labour for production, and its reproduction on terms suitable for various European interests. They

have revealed many of the ways in which the relations of reproduction and production within the reserves *adapted* to the demands made on the African population by capitals and the state.

The work of social historians has yielded much valuable local detail and, taken as a sum, the overall contribution has been to highlight the ways in which responses to the demands of capitalist production and the demands themselves varied through time and space. In some places this involved the creation, or reinforcement, of a peasantry; in others a greater level of migrant labour occurred. In both situations people at times responded with violence and partial withdrawal from both labour and commodity markets in attempts to resist the demands of other classes (Phimister 1986: 240).

Studies on the historical development of the political economy of the country have focused to a greater degree on the development of classes, principally identified by the activities and consciousness of men. Backed up by a violent and repressive state, the demands of European farmers, mine owners, industrialists and other settlers changed over time and interacted with imperialist capital. The outcome of the interactions between different capitals, and the ways in which they were translated into state policy and action have been the important story line along which social historians have created pictures of the varied reactions of the African population (Cliffe, 1981: 16-17). This history changes its focus from the 1960s onwards, and becomes more concerned with the development of resistance to colonial policies into nationalist political movements. Tracing this history has been done rather at the

expense of the implications for changes in the social relations of production and reproduction within the Shona areas.

It is rarely clear from these accounts how the responses to the demands of the settler state and population were made. These perspectives neglect the agency of the African population which determined the conditions under which labour was reproduced. These at times provoked the curtailment, alteration, and *restriction of the* demands from capital. This is most blatantly evidenced by the fact that, in spite of the extreme measures to procure labour taken throughout the colonial period, there was a persistent perceived shortage of indigenous labour for the European farms and mines until the 1940s. Even up to 1950, more than half of their labour force was foreign born (Kay, 1980: 100; Folbre, 1987: 17)<sup>1</sup>.

In resisting particular demands of capital and the state, such as those for wage labour, the African population was often *reacting* to new opportunities, but they were also often *defending* against changes. How this might have been possible is not explored through these histories. The sum of actions and responses taken by the Shona and Ndebele cannot be *explained* by the actions of the state and the settler population, but nor can they be totally explained by what is known of the pre-colonial society.

The responses which were made in the new and developing situation of colonialism involved *changes in the gender relations embedded in the social relations of production and reproduction, and also changes in the means of primary reproduction*. Gender relations are manifested in production and property relations (Hirschon, 1984: 5) as well as those of

reproduction, yet the ways in which they developed receives only passing comment in these historiographies. Primary reproduction (or even the reproduction of labour) was not solely the responsibility of women, yet obscuring gender relations has certainly had the effect of obscuring the ways in which primary reproduction changed. Over time there were shifts in the meaning and functioning of marriage, the gender division of labour, and the gender differences in rights to land. The means of agricultural adaptation to the conditions within the Reserves often had an important gender aspect to them. There were also changes in the ways people obtained food and the definition of the products and skills considered necessary for survival. Over eight decades there were also changes in the ways fertility, and human reproduction generally, were controlled.

At times the state interfered directly to structure these changes (although not always in a clear, calculated fashion), and actions taken by the state and European communities had specific effects on changes in reproduction and gender relations. At other moments such changes were a *direct development from the social relations within communities*, particularly those of gender relations. These in turn were not static representations of the pre-colonial social formation, but rather were the outcome of developments in social relations which had their roots in pre-colonial Shona society and changed in response to the new situations.

Transformations in the social relations of material and human reproduction were, I argue, of fundamental importance in shaping the particular history of what is referred to as *production*. The changes

were the necessary preconditions for the perpetuation of migrant labour, for instance, as well as developing in response to this. The nature of social change amongst the Shona population shaped what happened in the sphere of 'production' and in part determined what was available to European capitalists and the state. This can only be fully uncovered through an examination of the changing dynamics of gender and class at the sites of production and reproduction.

This Part of the thesis goes some way to redressing the imbalance in the existing historiographies. The story is only just beginning to be uncovered through the use of oral history, most of which I have not been privy to. The chapters are therefore, of necessity, in parts anecdotal and sketchy, and the main contribution here is to pose new questions and re-evaluate the evidence in the light of these. The validity of this exercise hangs on the importance of indicating the extent of some of these changes, even if it is not always possible to document *how* they occurred. These chapters go some way towards offering a path of explanation for changes in the relations of production and reproduction from the pre-colonial situation to that since independence in 1980.

The contributions of this Part II of the thesis are threefold: first, to synthesise often varying accounts of the actions and demands of the state, and foreign and settler classes; second, to highlight the responses of the Shona population; and third to indicate the results of their interaction. Most attention has been paid by other writers to the first of these (although much of this historiography remains contentious, as I shall indicate). With regard to the second, I have undertaken archival research and re-interpreted other secondary sources

in order to highlight changes in the relations of production and reproduction. It is only through focussing on both these elements and their interaction that the real nature of historical change can be understood, and hence the basis of contemporary social relations be uncovered in the case study in Part III.

In the following section I outline some of the problems associated with the material available.

### *Reconstructing History*

One consequence of the neglect of changes in the social relations of production and reproduction has been a political abuse of the concept of 'tradition' in contemporary Zimbabwean society. Ranger has illustrated some of the dangers of this, particularly with the social construction of the tribal identities of Shona and Ndebele (Ranger, 1985c; and n.d.). He has also illustrated the ways in which the colonial state at times deliberately tried to reconstruct the 'traditional' powers of chiefs, as I describe for the period of the 1960s.

Since independence, 'tradition' has been resurrected as a tool for use by men against women. This is not a new phenomenon, nor is it particular to Zimbabwe (Obbo, 1980; Staudt, 1986). It has a particular bitterness for the women in Zimbabwe who were politically radicalised through their participation in the war for independence and had high hopes of the new government. The government has depended on popular concepts of tradition to defend its moral and political rights to take

certain actions against women, whilst at the same time<sup>it</sup> has undertaken some of the most radical legal reforms for women in Southern Africa (Kazembe, 1986: 380). I will assess the significance of these two tendencies. The dangers inherent in a misunderstanding of the nature of social change exist not only for women as a gender, but also as members of a peasant class. Government proposals for restructuring the CAs on the basis of a distorted view of their nature do not stand much chance of success. As yet little attempt has been made to do this in any fundamental way, but certain measures have not had the desired effects, as I discuss later.

This appropriation and abuse of 'tradition' has been made easier by the fact that there is no major ethnographic work on the Shona. Commenting on this situation as late as 1951, one writer points out that,

Major works, such as C.Bullock ... (1913; 1928) and the writings of F.W.T.Posselt ... (1927; 1935), though containing much valuable information, are too generalised to serve as a basis for classification. The rest of the Shona literature is mainly topical.

(Holleman, 1951: 354).

Writers who summarised the different systems of land tenure and use in Central and Southern Africa in 1945 did not mention the Shona pre-colonial systems (Allan, 1945; Gluckman, 1945). A summary of marriage systems in Africa in 1953 did not include those of any of the peoples of Southern Rhodesia, about whom little had been published (Phillips, 1953: 9).

Piecing together the details of pre-colonial society is an even more obscure task, although the extensive colonial records have become



invaluable additional sources for later periods. The density of colonial administrators posted in rural areas seems to have been greater than in other places, which may have relieved the necessity for the colonial administration to support the work of anthropologists in order to discover more about the African population. In any case their extensive records are kept in unusually good order in the National Archives which have been of great value in reconstructing history, and continue to be so, albeit with the usual problems involved in relying on colonial accounts alone. The National Archives themselves have an Oral History Project which is gradually building up an invaluable counter-balance to the colonialists' versions of events.

I have concentrated on the Shona in this history as they form the majority of the people in Zimbabwe, including those in the case study area considered later in the thesis<sup>2</sup>. The term *Shona* was originally coined by the Ndebele for most of the inhabitants of what is now Zimbabwe (Kuper, 1955: 9; Bourdillon, 1982: 16-17). The Shona did not constitute a single polity: rather they were peoples sharing a mutually intelligible language who sometimes combined to form a larger political identity, such as the *Rozvi*. Tribe was associated with the dominant lineage in an area, and subsequently with the locality itself (Brand, 1981: 40; Kuper, op cit). Over time the similarities grew between different groups, particularly as colonialism increased the amount of interaction between them (Ranger, 1968: 113).

The formation of a recent Shona identity has encouraged some writers to paint a picture of a uniform, probably idealised, version of pre-colonial society, supposed to apply to all the non-Ndebele areas, and

which ignores the careful periodisations and distinctions developed by other historians. There is also a tendency in local studies done from the 1950s to project back images of the present into the past, assuming that the society which was observed had remained unchanged through time. The insufficiency of data about the pre-colonial periods makes detailed examination of many changes over time very difficult. Nonetheless, some writers have relied on what is available to conceptualise pre-colonial modes of production and social formations (Weinrich, 1979: 13-15; Folbre, 1987: 1-12; Weiner, 1986: 71-98). As indicated above, this is a danger inherent in such an approach.

Instead I have taken the approach outlined above, of seeking to uncover the dynamics of gender and class wherever possible, and doing so by focussing on the sites of production and reproduction. Wherever possible, I also give examples from the area of the case study described in later chapters (Mangwende Reserve, in Mrewa District, now spelt Murewa)<sup>3</sup>. As much of this history has yet to be uncovered, a comprehensive analysis is impossible. Thus throughout I focus on the changing relations of production and reproduction in the CAs in order to highlight the ways in which these met with the demands of industrialists, settler classes and the state, but also to indicate some of the ways in which they in turn shaped future changes.

**THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

This section summarises several accounts which are subsequently used by commentators as benchmarks of 'traditional' Shona society. It is impossible to be sure about certain crucial aspects of nineteenth century Shona society, such as chiefly succession, the extent of chiefly authority and flexibility in the administration of 'law'. All of these, as well as other aspects, had implications for the relations of production and reproduction, but these have a particular significance for two reasons. First, colonial governments at various times made *assumptions* about them and on this basis subsequent action by the state reinforced and restructured various social institutions which affected the relations of production and reproduction. Second, in spite of the ambiguity of the evidence, the assumptions made by some writers have attained a certain currency which has had consequences for political issues in contemporary Zimbabwean society.

The analysis of nineteenth century Shona societies here serves several functions for the thesis as a whole. By indicating where there is variation, and considerable unreliability, in practice and in the evidence, I show later how this has been confused and abused to re-create tradition. I also indicate here the areas where there is thought to have been uniformity in practice and there is consensus in the evidence and later show how this was ignored in the re-creation of tradition by the state. This most obviously refers to the role and power of the chiefs, but as this is connected with the administration of 'law' and the management of disputes, it has also had implications for land tenure, marriage, and for gender relations of production and

reproduction. I also indicate where there is consensus about the nature of production and reproduction, which I myself use as a benchmark by which to measure later transformations.

In spite of the fact that it is impossible to reconstruct a full picture of nineteenth century Shona society, it is worth placing that which we do know within the jigsaw of questions about the relations of production and reproduction so that these can then be counterpoised against the interpretations presented as fact by the state and other commentators.

Various Shona groups existed in this part of Africa before the nineteenth century although our knowledge of their rise and fall remains sketchy (see Ranger, 1968a; Beach, 1979; Garlake, 1967, 1968). Most of the historians exploring the effects of colonialism take as their starting point the late nineteenth century. Broadly speaking the nineteenth century saw the end of the empire of the *Rozwi* dynasty. This continued to have supremacy over the chiefs in all districts, but had never been a strong, centralised state system (Kuper, 1955: 9). Under its authority many political changes took place, with new groups moving in and others fading in importance (Beach, 1983). Some neighbouring Shona groups were also subject to the Ndebele state, based in the south west of the country, to which they paid tribute. Others were exposed to piecemeal raiding by Ndebele groups, but the extent of this may have been exaggerated by early European visitors (Bourdillon, 1982: 14; Beach, 1983: 271-2)<sup>4</sup>.

### *Political Structures*

Below follows an account of traditional political structures among the Shona, which I have summarised from a variety of sources which are often vague, contradictory and localised (Bullock, 1950; Holleman, 1951; Kuper, 1955, Ranger, 1982; Garbett, 1966). The summary is nonetheless important because at particular moments the colonial state was to act with the intention of transforming these political structures. At some moments it was also to try to 'restore' them to their 'original' state. The latter attempts (mostly during the late 1960s and 1970s) were undertaken with a mixture of ignorance of, and intention to distort, the pre-colonial forms and structures, particularly that of chiefly succession. The political structures described are also important for the management of access to land and marriage.

The Shona occupied distinct tribal territories (*nyika*), which were controlled by chiefs (*ishe*). In some places and in some periods some united and accepted a paramount chief<sup>s</sup>. The chiefs had legislative and judicial authority over their peoples, although the cases brought to their courts were usually limited to those which involved some crime against the community, such as incest, murder, witchcraft, or crimes against the person of the chief. Chiefs' courts also acted as 'higher' courts for more common disputes which were difficult to resolve at lower levels of jurisdiction.

The legitimacy of the chiefs was largely derived from their descent from founding ancestors who were alleged to have brought fire, cultivation and to have settled village society. The chiefs worked with spirit mediums, who passed on the wishes of the founders with regard to

what crops would be planted, when hunting should be undertaken and when rest (*chiso*) days taken (Ranger, 1982: 24). The chiefs were also the ultimate caretakers and dispensers of land-use rights. They commanded tributes of goods and labour, and were paid for passing judgement in cases brought to them. These payments enabled them to meet the high costs of hospitality which they were expected to provide, and their responsibilities to provide food for the communities in the event of a drought or other disaster. Garbett sums up their position thus,

In general Shona chiefs in the nineteenth century did not have a great deal of power. They were entitled to certain tributes ... and had the right to tribute labour. However, they did not possess or command standing armies. The chiefs had advisers and councillors but these occupied informal positions and the chief could call for advice from his sub-chiefs, from senior village headmen, and from important relatives.

(Garbett, 1966: 114)

The rules of succession to the chief, and to other positions of authority, were collateral, but application varied. Garbett wrote in the 1960s at the time when this becomes of great concern to the state and to which I return. He summarises what he regards as having been the case in the nineteenth century, and his account concurs with that of other writers, but he uses the present tense, as he regards this still to be the case at the time of writing,

After the founder of a kingdom dies, his sons succeed him in turn. When the last of the filial generation dies the eldest son of the founder's first son ought to succeed and so on. There are individual variations, eg. amongst some Shona people it is held that a man may only succeed if his father has been a chief, whilst amongst other groups this rule does not exist. The effect of the rules is to create a series of royal kin groups - 'houses' - among which the title rotates. However, it is not very long before a difficult position arises in which men of junior generations entitled to succeed are as old as, or older than, men of senior generations. Usually there is another rule which states that no man of a junior generation ought to succeed whilst a man of a senior generation is still alive. There is thus a tendency for the senior branches of the royal descent group to be generally excluded from office if

the rules are strictly adhered to, and ... the chiefs tend to be old men when they succeed and to rule for only a short period. Before the arrival of the Europeans the problems were solved by secession, so that new chiefdoms were established and the process begun again before a royal descent group had developed any great genealogical depth.

(Garbett, 1966: 119-20)

He explains this process of secession,

... In the nineteenth century chiefdoms appear to have been constantly proliferating. There was a strong tendency on the part of royals who were competing for office, and others, who for one reason or another were disgruntled, to break away and join or form new chiefdoms if they felt their personal ambitions were being thwarted.

(Garbett, 1966: 114-5)

This competition between houses, or *chizvarwa*, was resolved in a variety of ways (including murder), at different times and in different localities, *but no uniform principles emerged* (Bourdillon, 1982: 102-7). It is important to note here that for resolution to take place by secession, there had to be sufficient territory. This was clearly checked once land fell into the control of the colonial state, although this was only one of several factors which affected succession to the office of chief, as I shall discuss later.

Consolation to a related *chizvarwa* which had been deemed not eligible for the chiefdom was sometimes provided by dividing up the *nyika* into tribal wards (*dunhu*), which were then each allocated to a sub-chief/headman. They could then also be subdivided into other wards (*masadunhu*), each with a headman. These posts were both inherited and selected, although they were usually selected from the same lineage as the chief. The headmen held the 'communal' right over all the territory within the boundaries, which they could allocate to those agnatically related, but also to others who requested land (Holleman, 1951: 369).

They had to allow anyone from a related group passing through to use the water resources within the territory. These headmen also dealt with formal complaints and disputes which could not be resolved within villages, although if they assessed that a case was particularly complex, it would go straight to the chief whose ruling was accepted. The headmen were paid for the cases they judged and were able to command small amounts of labour and other tributes.

The *dunhu* was composed of a number of kraals, or villages (*musha*), varying from a half to several dozen, each of which contained a varying number of family units. Each *musha* had a kraal head, or headman (although Weinrich suggests that in some places this was not always the case, with only the chief having authority (Weinrich, 1964: 14)). Within a *musha* there was usually a nucleus of tribesmen who were agnatically related, into which unrelated women married. Often, however, many non-related men were incorporated into these communities, and eventually became heads of established lineages themselves. The headmen dealt with informal conflicts which arose, eg 'petty jealousy and scolding between women, strife between husband and wife, disobedience of grown-up children towards their parents, garden disputes etc' (Holleman, 1951: 363).

Land was allocated by the chief to the *dunhu* headman, then to the *musha* head, who then further allocated it to individual families, based on estimates of their needs. Land tenure is described as communal, because it is thought that there was a fairly equitable distribution between households and every man had a right to some land. This is considered in more detail below.



The clan and sub-clan (*mutopo*, *zvidao*, *mitupo*), were also important sources of identity, and were closely identified with, but distinct from, lineages. They incorporated concepts of geographical location and extended beyond lineages. There were also hierarchies between different clans and lineages, with some constituting virtually a servant class to those of higher rank (Brand, 1981: 40). Slaves were not very common, but bondsmen (*varanda*) were, and were usually men from 'lower rank' lineages who could not afford to marry in any other way than through bonding themselves to a father-in-law from 'higher rank' lineages. Like slaves, they remained unfree for the rest of their lives, but their children were free (Beach, 1977: 56). Nonetheless, it is important to stress that the hierarchy between clans and lineages, as well as the boundaries of the clans themselves was relatively flexible, and not always clear (Kuper, 1955: 28). Some of the writers on later periods, including Holleman, Bourdillon, and Weinrich, refer to these hierarchies as fixed social structures. The danger in this, as Ranger has indicated, is that more credibility is given to the complaints of chiefs and headmen at their loss of authority than is appropriate. The colonial administration itself was guilty of this, with significant political implications at various times. Ranger comments,

[They did not maintain a] lack of internal social and economic competition, by the unchallenged authority of the elders, by an acceptance of custom which gave every person - young or old, male or female - a place in society which was defined and protected. Competition, movement, fluidity were as much features of small-scale communities as they were of larger groupings.

(Ranger, 1983: 248)

I now turn to focus on the means and relations of production and reproduction.

### *Agricultural and Livestock Production* <sup>6</sup>

The Shona gained most of their livelihood from farming. The household was the basic unit of production. The form of production was hand cultivation on plots of land farmed for up to five to six years, and then left fallow for at least twenty before being used again. Hence plentiful supplies of land and labour were important. There were apparently few problems associated with land shortage, with the total population seeming surprisingly low (Illiffe, 1987: 4). The range of different soils provided various ecological conditions which allowed for a range of crops and required slightly different techniques (Roder, 1964: 44-5; Beach, 1977: 41-2). The main crops grown were finger millet (*eleusine coracana*, known locally as *rapoko*); bulrush millet (*pennisetum typhoideum*, locally known as *mhunga*); sorghum (known as *magwere* by the local population and *kaffir corn* by the Europeans); and small amounts of maize (known as *chibagwe*, or *magwere*). In addition they grew fruits (such as pineapples, lemons and pawpaws), vegetables (such as peas, beans, sweet potatoes and tomatoes), and cucurbits (such as pumpkins, marrows, melons and cucumbers) (Ranger, 1968a: 117; Palmer, 1977: 223).

Land and labour were controlled by senior members of the local patrilineage. Land was abundant, and each adult male who succeeded as a household head, or headman of a *musha*, was given use-rights to a specified piece of land, according to his needs, ie the size of his family. He would then further allocate this to other men within the

household and they in turn allocated some to their wives and sons. Hence gender and generational relations were the conditions of access to land, contrary to Arrighi's claim <sup>a</sup>th<sub>^</sub>t all adults had access to land on equal terms,

Every adult member was entitled to land (which was abundant) in amounts sufficient for his and his family's subsistence.

(Arrighi, 1973: 223, my italics)

The system of shifting agriculture meant that access to particular plots was not inherited, but positions in the hierarchy which determined allocation were governed by the rules of succession described above. Thus some men in positions of authority had greater power to decide which families had access to which particular areas of land, although each man was entitled to land when he married and some, at their fathers' discretion, beforehand. Land was re-allocated by the sub-chief and chief as households formed, or increased in size, and there was a low level of differentiation between households in terms of access to land compared to some other African societies (Arrighi, 1973a: 223).

The household referred to by most writers as the unit of production was composed of a husband, wife/wives, and their unmarried children. When there was only one wife, spouses cultivated jointly one field for the main crops of maize, millets and sorghums. When there was more than one wife, the husband farmed separate fields with each wife. Men sub-divided the land they had been allocated, allotting a further selected field to each wife, on which she could produce her own crops. This was often planted with groundnuts, which were regarded as a woman's crop. This was the usual way in which women were able to gain access to land, ie through their status as wives. They could also obtain

plots if they were divorced or widowed, and returned to the home of their fathers, or other male relative, or if they were widowed and stayed with the husband's lineage. These arrangements following the termination of a marriage through death or divorce are known to have been made, but it is not clear whether they were always applied. Wives also had gardens of wet, black *vlei* soil on which to grow vegetables, if such land was available.

Labour was recruited to the household through kinship and marriage. Elder men could command the labour of some younger male relatives, as well as their wives and children. Younger men were dependent upon their elders for the payment of cattle as bridewealth and so had to maintain this dependent relationship until they were married themselves. Marriages could be polygynous, provided the man could obtain the necessary bridewealth. It is thought that for this reason only the most socially powerful men married more than one wife, and were those in the best position to recruit more labour in this way.

The rigidity of the gender division of labour in agricultural and livestock production is difficult to assess, but it is generally agreed that women were valued for their high labour contribution to agriculture. Early accounts suggest that the gender division of labour was fairly rigid, whilst comments by later writers suggest otherwise. Shifts in the division of labour detected during the colonial period may have been the basis for these more recent writers to assume that the precolonial division was always flexible, or this may in fact have been the case. This could also have varied with locality and over the lifetime of a household. Nonetheless it is usually assumed that women undertook

more of the agricultural labour as a whole, and completed the winnowing alone. Men are thought to have done more of the heavier tasks of land clearing, land preparation and threshing and to have assisted in most other agricultural tasks. Men also tended livestock (primarily cattle and goats) and produced hoes, hatchets, spears and arrow-heads in the small iron-works industries in some parts of the country. Both had the assistance of children.

In normal years the main source of food was through the production of crops in the way described above. Crops intended for future domestic consumption, including a reserve against drought, were stored in grain huts. Where possible, women kept the grain from their fields in separate granaries from those of their husbands, but the extent to which they were able to determine how it should be used is not clear. Grain was supplemented by the vegetables grown by women, along with wild fruits and vegetables which they gathered. In addition men hunted for meat. In drought years there was a greater dependence on these sources, while families with the most severe shortages of grain received assistance from those to whom they had paid tribute or gifts, such as chiefs or sub-chiefs. Women performed all the labour which transformed these products to an edible form, which included the grinding of grain, the collection of wood and water, and cooking.

There seems to have been a fairly rigid gender division of labour over the other work involved in the material reproduction of labour. Women kept order in the home and performed all the tasks associated with the care of children. Men prepared skins for clothes and vessels; wove cloth from bark and wild cotton; and made buildings. However, this

work was not done to the same degree by all women and all men. Younger women and men did more of this work than older ones, so there was differentiation along generational lines as well as gender.

Labour was not only provided from within households, as younger women also provided labour for other members of their husbands' lineages. Collective labour was also used for for some tasks, such as harvesting. This could be organised in several ways, recruiting from a wide or narrow net of kin. The most common term used in Shona to refer to these arrangements is *nhimbe*, but there were others depending on the different composition of people (Holleman, 385-6). These work parties were also important social events. Beer and food, made by women, were often provided, and passers-by were invited to join, but kin was usually the most important basis on which labour was recruited. The chiefs and headmen were in better positions to do both, and also commanded labour from non-related people, as described.

It has been suggested that most of the product of women's labour was appropriated by their husbands, and men in superior social positions (such as members of the chiefs' lineages) appropriated the product of the labour of women and men (England, 1982: 12; Folbre, 1987: 9). The latter was received as gifts and tribute paid to chiefs, and in some places to the *Rozwi* court (Ranger, 1968a: 114). There were socially defined limits to the uses to which men could put most of this wealth. That which a man earned by his own hands and effort was not subject to these rules, but likewise a woman was able to dispose of income earned herself (Kuper, 1955: 27-8; Kazembe, 1986: 379-80). I consider women's property below.

Grain was produced for annual consumption needs and as a stock against famine, to pay tribute and gifts, and for trade. Through trade with other Shona groups, salt, tobacco, cloth, and iron goods were obtained. Gold and ivory was also exchanged with Portuguese, and in some places Swahili, traders for these goods (Bhila, 1982: 253). Those men who were most heavily engaged in this trade were those in the more powerful social positions, who were in receipt of tribute or gifts from subordinate men in the lineage. The latter were only engaged in piecemeal trade in order to obtain goods for personal consumption. Although internal trade was quite well-developed, the extent of external trade with non-Shona groups was always relatively small (Ranger, 1968a). However, there is evidence that in some parts of the country a peasantry producing grain solely for purposes of trade had already developed before invasion by the colonialists (Bhila, 1982: 253).

More usually grain was used to obtain cattle and other livestock. Cattle, and to a lesser extent goats, were the main form of wealth and savings, and were often used for bridewealth, or *lobola*<sup>7</sup>. Livestock were controlled in large part by men and there were many inter-relations between households through the movement of cattle. Wives had no rights in the herds of the patrilineage. Women were not barred from owning livestock, but they had fewer means of acquiring them. They were paid some animals, more often goats than cattle, as part of *lobola* payments (*masungiro* (Kuper, 1955: 21)). *Lobola* and *masungiro* payments varied in different places, and according to the amounts agreed between the families, but were often composed of agricultural tools (Acquina, 1964: 20) and trinkets where the families were not wealthy. This was usual in

places where livestock were not so suited to the environment (Kuper, 1955: 21). Women also received gifts on the birth of their daughters' children, but taken as whole, these gifts and payments were far less than the major payments of *lobola* made to men in the husband's lineage. Some women were able to earn income through trading the extra grain they were able to produce from their own fields, or from practising herbalism, midwifery or pot-making. (May, 1983: 42, 65; Bourdillon, 1982: 39; Forde, 1954: 22 and 63; Holleman, 1952: 63, 321, 351-2; Weinrich, 1979: 119; and 1982: 42). However such property was considered ultimately to be part of the patri-estate and was inherited by their children as members of their husbands' lineages (Holleman, 1952: 323).

The location of the male household head in the lineage and the relations of the household to the overall political structure had implications for the relative social standing and ability of all household members to accumulate. The most prestigious households were able to recruit labour on the basis of their social standing. These few households acted as patrons to client households, offering food and other forms of assistance in return. There were other means of reinforcing differentiation between households, such as having better quality land, or obtaining wives at low prices because of social prestige or political alliances. Running across these differences were the divisions along gender lines, which by all accounts seem to have been very deep. Women's relationships to men, however, changed through their lifetimes and were also affected by their social positions.



### *The Importance of Marriage*

The principle relations through which the allocation of tasks involved in material reproduction, ie the production of food and physical comfort, took place were defined by marriage. Marriages were generally arranged by the parents in the first place, although elopement was a strategy whereby a couple could force the parents to negotiate a marriage which had not been planned, or to speed up the arrangements of one that had. Poor families sometimes pledged (*kuzarira*) their daughters when they were still children in order to obtain the *lobola* at a vital time, such as during a famine. Normally marriage would take place on the girl's attainment of physical maturity. The marriage payments normally consisted of two elements: *rutsambo*, which were a variety of goods for the bride and family, and the *roora*, or *rowora*, proper, which was usually exclusively stock (Acquina, 1969: 68).

The elders from the man's family had interests in delaying agreement and payment in order to keep the cattle for as long as possible. The woman's family also had this interest as they stood to lose her labour. The couple were regarded socially as being married from the time when the agreement was made, although the payments could take anything up to a lifetime to meet. If the lineage was unable to pay, or a man could not persuade his elders to agree to pay, then he could offer labour service (*kutiza mukombo*) to the bride's family for an agreed period. Early commentators remarked that Shona marriages were very stable, but the evidence for saying this is too scanty to give it much weight (Acquina, 1969: 79).

A young wife was required to provide labour for agriculture and domestic tasks and, in effect, her labour was controlled by the mother or senior wife of the husband (Bourdillon, 1982: 35 and 47; Holleman, 1952: 202 and 205-6; Weinrich, 1982: 54). There was an initial period of testing during which time she could be restrained or reprimanded, or then 'sent back' if she did not fulfill her duties, or for quarrelling, laziness, disobedience, or insubordination (May, 1983: 81).

The relations embodied in human reproduction were also structured through marriage. The economic advantages of a high level of fertility which provided them with greater amounts of labour, provided men with strong incentives for control over women's reproductive capacity, which was guarded carefully (Folbre, 1987: 7). These features of pre-colonial Shona society conform to descriptions of other patriarchal pre-capitalist societies where men's control over children provides strong economic incentives for pro-natalist forms of control over women's reproductive capacities and results in high fertility rates (Folbre, 1987: 10, cites Caldwell, 1982; Stacey, 1983; Beneria, 1979: 208). However, women also relied on the labour of children, even if they did not have formal control over the product of their own and their children's labour, so the incentives for having many children were there for women too and high rates of fertility did not operate solely in the interests of men.

On the other hand, there were some controls over fertility, as there were among other peoples in Africa. The control of the *timing* of pregnancies was important for women and men when families had to be able to travel far and leave in a hurry, such as when they lived in fear of attack by other tribes. It was also recognised as important for the

health, and chances of survival, of children and mothers. The most important means of controlling conception was through avoiding intercourse altogether during lactation. In a polygynous marriage abstinence could continue for one wife for up to three or four years. In addition *coitus interruptus* was commonly practiced and there were charms and herbs which could be used to prevent pregnancy, although these could not be used without the knowledge, and therefore consent, of a husband. Abortion was rare but not unheard of, particularly if conception occurred during weaning. Infanticide was practiced on children who cut their upper teeth first, or on (one or both) twins. Strong social pressure was exerted on a husband and wife to ensure adequate spacing of children through the use of these practices. (These are mentioned in oral traditions in Zimbabwe and in Holleman, 1952: 214-5; Mutambirwa, 1979; Reinhalt Jones, 1949: 11; Aschwanden, 1982: 286-9). Hence it is oversimplistic to suggest, as Folbre seems to do (1977: 10), that high rates of fertility were not also *controlled* rates.

A woman could be divorced for infidelity or seeking to avoid pregnancy without her husband's knowledge and consent, for terminating pregnancy, or persistently refusing sex. Women could not divorce men for adultery, and there were few grounds on which she could initiate divorce<sup>9</sup>. Nonetheless, some writers suggest that this was not impossible, and there is some oral history to support this<sup>9</sup>. Barrenness was also grounds for divorce, although if the woman's lineage could provide a fertile woman in her place, then she could have the option to remain as a wife. Men's sterility was kept hidden and a wife might be impregnated by the husband's brother in order to ensure the production of children

for the lineage. Generally divorce would be negotiated between the lineages of the wife and husband (Holleman, 1952: 265), with compensation being the key feature. There was often an equivalent value placed on a child and a cow or ox, so the number of children which the woman had born for the lineage would be deducted from the amount of *lobola* returnable to the man's family. The children of the marriage would normally remain with the father.

The wife and husband could not negotiate this as individuals and so if the woman were the complainant, she would always have to have the consent of her own family to be divorced. As they stood to lose materially from the divorce, they would not usually agree easily. Running away was a means through which women could force the families to reach some agreement (Forde, 1954: 23; Hastings, 1973: 35; Holleman, 1952: 281-2, 287; Bourdillon, 1982: 45, 128; and May, 1983: 83). If an agreement was still not forthcoming, increasing numbers of people from both of the families would become involved, with the most senior being last. This involvement consisted of prolonged discussions of all the facts related to the parties, with the intention of reaching conciliation (May, 1983: 41).

This system has been assessed as one in which there was considerable *flexibility*, and where the aim was for the resolution of conflict (Holleman, 1952: x and throughout; Bourdillon, 1982: 126-132; May, 1983: 40-1). The resolution of a particular conflict was decided by consideration of the interests of all the parties concerned, rather than by static, inflexible rules. The description of marriage offered here is that assumed to form the common pattern of such decisions, but does not

define the limits to such a pattern. For instance, although this was not the usual decision, it was not unheard of for the a man to be awarded the permanent custody of his daughter's children, on her behalf, in the event of her divorce (Weinrich, 1969: 78). This was not common, but remained a possibility in extreme circumstances, such as if the husband was thought guilty of a serious crime against the community (such as witchcraft, or incest). This ability for communities to resolve disputes in a flexible manner, with no *rigid* rules to be enforced, is an important general point as a contrast with later Shona society which has been drawn by other writers and is considered below.

A divorced woman would generally return to her natal home, as there were very few ways in which she would be able to survive without living near to a male 'guardian' who would be able to give her access to land (May, 1983: 81-2; Holleman, 1952; 27, 267; Forde, 1954; 23; Weinrich, 1982; 176). She would take with her any children who were younger than about seven years old, but older ones would stay in the care of their father, as would the youngest when they grew old enough. In other words the divorced woman had no long-term custody of her own children, because their primary social identity was as members of their father's lineage.

Gender relations changed for women as they aged. A widow could be inherited by another man in her husband's lineage, often the man's brother, although this is thought to have been an option for the woman, rather than being enforced. After having spent all their adult lives with their husbands' kin, they may well have preferred this to 'returning' to their own male relations. Kuper suggests that 'When a man dies, his

widows have considerable freedom in choosing other husbands, provided they are kinsmen of the deceased' (Kuper, 1955: 27). Widows were also likely to obtain considerable social prestige if they had produced children, as I describe below.

Women were excluded from playing any overt political roles in the village, with a few notable exceptions, but were often spirit-mediums and healers (*n'anga*) which accorded them both respect and income (May, 1983: 30-1). Older women in particular acquired status with the recognition of the hard work which they had completed in agriculture and the bearing and upbringing of children. This allowed them considerable authority in practice and they would be consulted on many issues, even though this was not translated into formal positions of respect. It is also alleged that wives in general were consulted a great deal 'behind the scenes' about day-to-day decisions, as well as ones of greater import, such as whether to take a new wife. This degree of consultation is thought to have increased gradually with age, being absent when a new wife comes to the village, and to have given women considerable amounts of informal power (Holleman, 1952: 208).

Older women also played an important part in the ideological reproduction of labour. They had a specific role to counsel and train young women in domestic chores and sexuality, although these would not generally be their own daughters. When the *lobola* paid for a woman was used for her brother to pay for his wife, she became a *chipanda* sister to him and had a particular responsibility to his daughters. Men also played a similar role with young male relations other than sons. Although there were no strict initiation ceremonies, or uniform practices

of circumcision, to mark the coming of adulthood this 'informal' education is thought to have been very important. The *chipanda* sister became known as the *samukadzi* when her brother died and was responsible for the distribution of his estate (Mutambirwa, 1979).

Older women were also responsible for seeing that rules about behaviour in the home were adhered to. They mediated in marriage disputes before they became sufficiently major to warrant negotiations for divorce, and although they were in a position which was potentially, and thought to have been often in fact, oppressive to young wives, they were also instrumental in controlling the behaviour of young husbands (Mutambirwa, 1979: 99-101). In this sense there were expectations which a wife was 'entitled' to have fulfilled. These included the right to a certain level of material comfort for her and her children, for some assistance in the fields; to be sexually satisfied and pregnant at certain times, whilst not at others; and the right not to be grossly maltreated physically (Bourdillon, 1982:45; Holleman, 1952: 214, 275-6; Aschwarden, 1976: 211). The authority of senior women in this way also enforced codes of behaviour about contact between people in the household. For instance, young unmarried women and certain male relatives could not be left alone together. This avoided the possibility of sexual assault or consensual relations between them, which was the openly acknowledged reason for these constraints.

Some writers have taken these 'rights', along with the autonomy that women had in their areas of domestic work, to indicate equality between women and men in pre-colonial Shona society (May, 1983: 6). However the value of women's areas of autonomy was characteristically

low, and their labour and sexuality were tightly controlled by men. They had fewer opportunities to control property, even compared with men who did not have individual, exclusive rights in any case. Essentially this was a patriarchal society in which there was a high degree of male dominance.

### *Summary of Nineteenth Century Shona Society*

The families of chiefs and headmen were important links with other communities and the political hierarchy that existed in most parts of the territory during the nineteenth century. Nonetheless I suggest that the most important relationships within Shona communities were those between senior male members and the rest of the community, on the one hand, and those between wives and their husbands' lineage members on the other. Thus marriage was an important institution in determining the ways in which production and reproduction of labour and wealth took place. Disputes relating to marriage were resolved in ways which were as conciliatory as possible and which kept social friction to a minimum, as were all disputes. This meant that although women were generally disadvantaged vis á vis men, their opinions, needs and status were taken into account and were potentially influential in determining the outcome.

This view of the nineteenth century has been developed through focusing on the relations of production and reproduction. Whilst remaining incomplete, it has indicated the bases of these relationships which facilitates examination of how they were subsequently transformed. It also provides the backdrop against which distortions of such relations were developed in later periods.



## CHAPTER FIVE

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNAL AREAS: THE INTERACTION  
BETWEEN PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION, GENDER AND CLASS

## Part Two: From Early Colonial Days to the end of the 1930s

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter traces changes in the relations of production and reproduction amongst the Shona. Reserves were created in the early days of colonial rule, and were later to become what are now called the Communal Areas (CAs). As described in the introduction to this part of the thesis, this period of history has been discussed by other writers, and on the basis of their work I outline first the main political economic changes which took place during the period. Subsequently, I interpret and analyse the work of others, and evidence from the Zimbabwean National Archives (ZNA), in order to present the particular view of historical changes required. The approach focuses on the relations of reproduction and production at the levels of the relations between different households, between these and the state and capital, and the relations within households. In this way I indicate as far as possible the implications for class and gender.

The chapter is in two sections, divided by the constitutional change from Company to Settler Rule in 1923. This early period reveals many dramatic changes in Shona society under the colonial state. As the foundation period of colonialism, there were fundamental changes in agricultural production, with people moving into Reserves, the establishment of migrant labour and widespread payment of taxes in cash.

It is important to highlight these in order to refute suggestions that agriculture remained 'traditional', as is sometimes implied by some writers. This perspective also applies to gender relations, which have received far less attention. I have used archival evidence to show some aspects of how gender relations changed, at times becoming of concern to the government, and were affected by particular state action.

Overall the perspective I offer here is that the relations of production and reproduction changed in many ways in response to colonialism, but were not completely determined or controlled by it. The changes which resulted were the outcome of processes of interaction between the colonial state, settler classes, foreign powers and late nineteenth century Shona social relations.

#### 1. CONQUEST, RESISTANCE AND THE COLONY UNDER CHARTER (1890s-1922)

Regarding history as the outcome of several interactions between classes facilitates a focus upon the changes in relations of production and reproduction of Shona society in these early days of colonialism. Changes occurred as a result of the particular pressures at different times. I have divided these into three periods: the earliest period of invasion, before the war of resistance; the war and its aftermath; and the establishment of colonialism up to the end of company rule in 1923<sup>1</sup>.

##### *Invasion and Adaptation*

In 1890 a Pioneer column from the British South Africa Company (BSAC) entered what is now Zimbabwe, and declared that each member was

entitled to peg up to fifteen gold claims and a farm of 3000 acres (Roder, 1964: 48). Their need for labour was paramount in their early attempts to discover what minerals were available. The Company tried to make treaties with chiefs in order to procure this, but they were never regarded as contracts by the chiefs. The Shona people did not consider themselves conquered as they had not fought or agreed to be ruled. They regarded the agreements as being similar to those which had been made with dominant groups in the past, and sent the new visitors gifts when they arrived. Many of these agreements in the past had involved no appropriation of land or labour, however, so neither were willingly yielded.

The BSAC ruled on the strength of a charter granted by the British Government in 1889, and officially had to have British sanction for legislation or any other action taken. In principle the British were opposed to outright slavery, so this could not be used to solve the labour problem. As the European invaders did not offer great incentives for men to come and work, and were often violent to the workers, whether they did what requested or not, a drastic solution had to be found. The detailed patterns of what happened were very different between the Shona and Ndebele areas, but here I shall continue to focus on the Shona communities.

In 1892 the BSAC created para-military police patrols in order to obtain labour, food and cattle. From 1893 forced labour, *chibaro*, was used where labour was not 'freely' offered, which was achieved through both illegal and legal means. This often *resembled*, and was perceived as, slavery (Van Onselen, 1976: 112-4). Through use of the law the BSAC

imposed taxes and restricted the movements of the African population, whilst criminalising the non-payment of taxes and travelling without the appropriate documents. Thus an 'illegal' hut tax was imposed in 1893, which was given imperial sanction in 1894, and operated more like a form of tribute, as the police raided villages for crops and stock and forced the men to work for the pioneers (Phimister, 1983: 254). A native police force was recruited from families in particularly subordinate positions to chiefs, in order to collect this tax (Ranger, 1968a: 147). Violence was used readily against women, as well as men, who resisted the company's attempts to get labour.

Land had been alienated from the earliest days, although largely for speculative reasons, but this alienation was only enforced where it was militarily feasible and where the resulting proletarianisation provided necessary labour. At the same time there was a blurred boundary between the white settlers and the state (ie the BSAC). Owners and managers of farms and mines took it upon themselves to 'police' their enterprises and punish Africans as they saw fit (Ranger, 1983b). Similarly they stole and slaughtered cattle where it suited them.

Nevertheless the majority of the population was little affected by *chibaro* or the appropriation of goods and land, and in some places the Shona adapted to growing opportunities,

The decade following the invasion of the Shona country by the BSA Company was characterised by peasant prosperity. The mining centres which grew up gave rise to a species of entrepreneurs, known as transport riders, who transported grain from the countryside to wholesale depots or stores. A very lucrative trade developed between Shona peasants and the emerging white settler community. In part the production of surplus grain was rendered possible by the introduction of the plough. The implications of this innovation were that more land was cultivated than before and men turned away from hunting to plough with the oxen. The impact of the plough on

the production of surplus grain in the 1890s should not, however, be exaggerated as most peasants did not have enough capital to invest in a plough. Instead they were able to produce surplus grain by *lengthening the working day and intensifying household labour*.

(Bhila, 1982: 257, my italics)

Bhila was referring here to one particular region of Zimbabwe (the Manyika area in the East). Nonetheless the option of intensifying and expanding production and the extension of commodity relations was achieved in many Shona areas at various times in the next few decades, and was particularly successful before 1912. It was more profitable for European 'farmers' to act as traders of African produce than to try to farm themselves and compete with those who knew more about it (Arrighi, 1973a: 185).

Bhila explains that increased production in this period was achieved by increasing the intensity of household labour. In many contexts, household labour refers to the women and children in the household (as discussed in chapter one), and this may have been the case in Zimbabwe, but the question is not usually asked. It is one which will be explored in the rest of the period. Usually there is little evidence to provide conclusive answers, but there are clues offered at various times and in different places.

Some households were unable to adopt this peasant option because of the distance from markets and roads or because men had been criminalised by the new state and forced to work in the mines as part of their punishment. Before the war of resistance, the numbers of men who chose to go were relatively small, but it was in large part the issue of having to work on the mines which made so many men determined

to fight the Europeans. Nonetheless, even at this early stage, Bhila comments that,

This, in turn, had the effect of deferring marriage from fourteen to fifteen years to over twenty years.

(Bhila, 1982: 258).

This enticing comment is left hanging, with no evidence or explanation here. The possibility that it was the case is examined for later in the period. Meanwhile, the extent of forced labour intensified the anger and resentment building up against the Europeans and became sufficient to make resistance against their domination of paramount importance (Arrighi, 1973a: 194).

### *The Chimurenga War, 1896-7*

The war of resistance by Ndebele and Shona peoples against European rule has received considerable attention. (Bhila (1982: 231) stresses that there is an unresolved debate about the nature of the Shona Rebellion. Ranger (1967) has been accused of accepting the colonial interpretations which suggest that there was a conspiracy organised by religious authorities with a simultaneous outbreak on a given signal. The widespread nature, degree of organisation and of involvement of religious authorities in the *Chimurenga* are all contested (Beach, 1979; Cobbing, 1977).) A further argument is that the Shona did not first accept colonial rule and subsequently resist it, but rather resisted its introduction from the outset (Tsomondo, 1977).) The fighting itself began in 1896 and continued well into 1897 in many places. It ended only with the assistance of the British army and cost thousands of lives and hundreds of pounds. For the purposes of this discussion, however,

I stress several particular effects. The violence and disruption meant that many people died, lost their families and community leaders and were very short of food. Nonetheless warfare itself was not new to Shona groups historically. What was new was that which came as a consequence of defeat. Never before had they been conquered and dominated in the ways which were to follow. Ironically though, the extent of the brutalities acted as a break on the repressiveness of the Company's rule in future years. There continued to be conflict between what the British Government thought appropriate and what the Company wanted to do, but the latter could not overrule the former. The British Government's fear of 'pushing the African people too far' and provoking another war meant that the brutalities of the conquest were not repeated in the same way (Phimister, 1983: 254).

*Company Rule*

Much attention has been paid by historians to this period. Arrighi (1973) and Phimister (1983; 1986) offer different perspectives on the nature of the predominant social tensions. Arrighi considers these to have arisen from the struggle between the demands of imperialist versus settler capital, whilst Phimister stresses the overwhelming importance of the struggles between capital and labour. Along with Palmer (1977) and Ranger's work (1968; 1972; 1983; 1984; and 1985), this historiography has been invaluable in uncovering the details of the African experience outside the centres of capitalist development in the territory. Van Onselen has also provided a major assessment of the relations between capital and labour on the mines. Nonetheless, all tend to focus on *production*, whether this be agricultural or otherwise, and on the activities of *men*. The effect of this is that we remain largely ignorant of the terms on which the provision of male labour for capital and the production of agricultural commodities was possible. Other writers have begun to piece together the picture but, as will be shown, this remains sketchy.

At the end of the 1896-7 war, the Europeans' need for labour was paramount and lay at the heart of most actions taken by the BSAC during this period. Initially this was for the mining industry, but once it was accepted that Rhodesia was not a second Rand, greater priority was given to agriculture as a means of generating wealth for the settlers. This is reflected to some extent in the different policies pursued, as the different interests of mining and agricultural capital were played out through the pressures they were able to exert on the BSAC. In summary



they may be seen as being dominated by the interests of mining companies before around 1912. From then on there was mounting pressure for the state to begin to intervene in the activities of African producers and to assist European farmers.

This watershed was marked by an Inquiry by the Native Affairs Committee of 1910-1911 which, I suggest, provided some ideological justification for the greater intervention into the lives of Africans which was to follow in later years. Up to this point the European community had been virtually entirely dependent upon the African population for the production of food, both for domestic consumption and for feeding workers. European settlers had been content to obtain income from organising trade in grain. Once they chose to become competitors in production, and were able to assert their demands through the BSAC administration, there was a tension in policy between supporting the farmers whilst still needing the produce of the African population until the settlers were sufficiently well-established and efficient. This dependence continued to some extent until the 1920s and so policies aimed at curtailing the peasant option were relatively tempered, compared with later periods.

The methods of procuring and using labour in the earliest period fell into disuse because of the high rates of desertion. In 1901 the *Masters and Servants Act* made an employment contract legally binding and in 1902 desertion was specifically criminalised by making it illegal for 'any nigger to be without a certificate' (the legislator, see Van Onselen, 1976: 80). Punishments for breaking this law included being forced to provide labour for the mines wage-free. Deception was widely

used to trick men into working for longer than they wished and paying them less than agreed (see Van Onselen, 1976). It was also hoped that the chiefs would provide assistance in procuring labour, and so in 1910 the Native Affairs Ordinance defined their legal powers for the first time. They were ranked as constables and were made officially responsible for law and order and the collection of taxes. This was not successful, nor was it pursued with great earnestness, but it set the legal framework and precedent for a policy that was to become more important in later years.

At the same time the alienation of land and the imposition of taxes were increased and were intended to force out labour and curtail the peasant option. By 1902, three quarters of African land had been alienated (Arrighi, 1973a: 195). This was not often enforced to the degree which deprived Africans of its use before around 1912, for several reasons. There were insufficient settlers prepared to undertake farming at this time: many knew nothing about agriculture and were content to act as merchants for the Shona who lived on the land. For those who tried to undertake cultivation, Africans on some of the land were in effect a captive labour force and after 1908 could be forced to pay rent and provide labour (Arrighi, 1973a: 195-7; Roder, 1964: 51). Much of the land was owned by investment companies, or the BSAC itself, and was held for speculative reasons, with no real intention to ensure its productive use (Hodder-Williams, 1983).

The first Reserves had been allocated in Matebeleland, after the defeat of the Ndebele, in 1894. The Land Commission instructed after 1897 that reserves should be set aside to provide some means of support

for Africans, although this was done without disturbing the patterns of land ownership which had been imposed after the war and the Europeans retained almost all of the best land (Phimister, 1986a: 242). Furthermore this was done at the discretion of the Native Commissioners and so was very variable in its implementation. Some allocated land according to what was being cultivated that season (Roder, 1964: 42), and others allocated all land other than that already alienated by Europeans. From 1908 to 1914 the BSAC chipped away 500,000 acres of the best land from these reserves and after the Native Reserves Commission Report of 1914-5 it excised another million acres (Phimister, 1983: 263 and 1986a: 243).

The Hut tax which was imposed in 1894 included a tax on each wife beyond the first. This could be paid in kind. It was made a poll tax on each male over sixteen, doubled and made payable in cash in 1904, raising the African contribution to revenue from 27 percent to 41 percent<sup>2</sup>. The Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau (RNLB) was formed to assist with the labour supply and was able to call on the police force to ensure that those men who did not pay their taxes were taken away to work in the mines (Phimister, 1983: 260).

After 1912, the demands of European farmers were better served by the RNLB than were the mines owners. As the measures which had already been taken to impoverish and criminalise the African population took hold, the mining industry obtained labour as a result. The farmers needed the assistance of the RNLB in the same way that the mining industry had in previous years because it was offering even worse terms of employment.

Shona groups avoided this employment as much as possible, and chose to earn income in other ways. This is reflected in the fact that even when there was much hunger, the mines and farms had major problems finding labour on the terms they wanted. Iliffe suggests that there were famines in 1903, 1912, 1916 and 1922 (Iliffe, 1988: 9). The response of men in the worst-hit communities was most commonly to stay in the Reserves in order to try to obtain food from wild animals and plants, or through adding greater amounts of labour to agricultural production in season (Iliffe, 1988: 64 and 71). There was continual movement to these Reserves from alienated land where Africans had to pay rent. The proportion of the African population living in Reserves changed as shown in Table 1 below.

*TABLE 1*

*Percentage of the African Population Living in Reserves*

1909	54%
1914	59%
1922	64%

(Source: Arrighi, 1973a: 201)

This quickly led to visible signs of deterioration in the resource-base, such as the 'drying up of springs, the extirpation of valuable pasture grasses through overstocking and the exhaustion of fertility' (Arrighi, 1973a: 207).

This reluctance to seek employment did not mean that there were no changes in Shona society. The reasons why some were able to develop the peasant option and others had to seek employment or other forms of

income are largely explained by location. Those which did not have to move as reserve boundaries were drawn up; those with the best climate and land; and those in places closest to areas of European settlement and transport routes were better placed than others for the peasant option (Phimister, 1986a: 246). Near Salisbury and around trading centres (including that of Mrewa) the acreage under cultivation increased almost every year before 1910 as Africans earned income through the sale of grain. Those near mining centres were able to make money from brewing and selling beer, meat and vegetables to miners in the early period (Phimister, 1986a: 241). Also those in extremely remote areas were better able to avoid taxes and the penalties for not paying, at least in the early days. Even within the best-placed areas, however, households and individuals were not all equally able to avail themselves of the opportunities presented. Differentiation between households, and to some extent within them, occurred as a result of the new situations. The pattern of this differentiation was not *determined* by the colonial state or the settlers and must be seen as the development of Shona social relations in response to the new situation.

#### *Different Household Strategies*

Those households which had access to more cattle were able to adopt ploughing earlier and more easily than others, and those who would normally generate larger amounts of grain were able to command more *nhimbe* labour by providing more offers of more food and beer. Thousands did buy ploughs in the earliest period, although only a few had wagons and carts (Phimister, 1983: 264), and so were limited in how far they

could transport crops. In some areas *nhimbe* was only operated between plough owners, and those who were poorer were unable to benefit from these arrangements any longer (Phimister, 1986a: 247-8). There were many crops grown for sale, including an increased range of vegetables, but in particular there was an increase in the proportion of maize grown, as this was what was preferred by the Europeans for feeding African labour in the mines. Ranger also suggests that traditional forms of patronage and tribute started to collapse after the defeat by the Europeans in the east (Ranger, 1983: 32), which meant that differentiation began to be based solely on the nature of involvement in the new economy.

Income from elsewhere was also important. There were some relatively well-paid employees of the BSAC, such as messengers, and these tended to be recruited from the more 'senior' families, such as those of chiefs and headmen (Phimister, 1986a: 248). Remittances from these wages enabled them to occupy a different position in the relations of production, as they were able to employ other people, and were essentially fast developing into a class (Phimister, 1986a: 249-50). A local study of Goromonzi District (just outside the capital) suggests that women sold beer from the early 1900s and used the income to pay for male labour to work in their fields, much to the annoyance of the Native Commissioner (Schmidt, 1986: 4). Further dimensions of this are considered with other intra-household changes below. The differential household strategies clearly followed variable patterns in different areas. One overall consequence was that the impoverishment of the population *as a whole* took longer because of this period of accumulation *for some* (Phimister, 1986a; Moseley, 1982: 404).

On the other hand, up to about 1912, those who chose to earn money from the mines to pay their taxes were the 'outcasts, the dispossessed, the landless, the criminal and those without kin' (Van Onselen, 1976: 123), who were expelled from societies 'buckled under the pressures of social change' (Van Onselen, 1976: 101). They may have included young people who were not destined to marry until a later age than in previous times, as Bhila suggests (Bhila, *op cit*). In any case, they were not able to take part in this early period of relative prosperity. This is illustrated by the fact that even by 1920, about 90% Africans could not afford to buy ploughs (Yudelman, 1964: 238). Those who worked in the mines were in general not those who had lived nearest to them, as these households were able to earn their money from selling food to the mine-owners<sup>3</sup>. Amongst those who went to the mining areas were women who worked as prostitutes in the mine compounds (Sumner, 1981: 32). I consider the implications of this in a section below.

In Mrewa District<sup>4</sup>, the Native Commissioner initially assigned large reserves because of its rocky nature and extensive rotating system of cultivation<sup>5</sup>. As there had hardly been any European occupation in the area, he assigned nearly all of the area of which he was in charge to Reserves (Floyd, 1972: 72, 231). This meant 15-20 acres of cultivable land was allocated per person and he tried to adhere to old tribal boundaries. Like most of the NCs at the time, however, he would not allow the chief, Mangwendi, and his brother to return to their strongholds in the hills after the uprising. In effect this often meant that some of the best land was not available to them. On the other hand he was a relatively paternalistic NC, as seen in the fact that in the

early days of Occupation he turned down an application for a European farm in the middle of one reserve, whilst other NCs considered that the Reserves should be allocated the smallest area possible.

After 1911, 64,000 acres of very rich land was taken away from the Reserves in Mrewa District and after the 1915 Report, Edwards was told to give up a further 420,000 acres. He was prepared to give up 77,000 from Mangwendi but refused to obey orders to give up more. The Native Reserves Commission did this subsequently without his assistance, and took the land from the Fungwi and eastern Mangwendi Reserves. Edwards thought the new restrictions so extreme that he concluded that there must have been some mistake in drawing the boundaries, as the area was densely populated and he had encouraged people to settle there after the Uprisings (NAZ S655 *Letter Book, Mrewa*).

#### *Other Changes in the Means of Reproduction*

At the same time there were other changes in the means of reproduction, so that expenditure which had been 'discretionary' during years of relative prosperity soon became 'necessary', and included that which was socially defined as part of subsistence (Arrighi, 73a: 199). It included a wide variety of commodities imported or manufactured by European and Asian traders, such as food (salt, sugar, tea, coffee, meat), clothes (including boots and shoes, blankets), and other goods (ploughs, yokes, tools, cooking utensils) (Phimister, 1986a: 245-6). I suggest that this represented a shift in preference from a variety of wild foods (fruit, vegetables and game) for some, but for others access to these sources must have become more difficult in any case because of the



increasing number of people in the Reserves. Income also had to be found to pay taxes, which were often of greater value in terms of the goods required to exchange for cash than that of the goods formerly paid as tribute.

In this early colonial period, there is no evidence to suggest that the income from the migrant worker's employment was used to employ people to replace the lost labour of men in production or reproduction. In part this was presumably replaced by women's labour, but other activities were abandoned altogether. As the NC for Mrewa commented,

The native blacksmith and worker in iron has practically gone ... there is no further use for him, the trader's store supplies all and more than ever he could produce and at a quarter of his price ... The woman potter still carries on her trade, but that is also going; grease tins, old paint pots and cheap enamelware is taking its place. The manufacture of wooden plates and mugs was once quite a trade, today in almost every kraal you find enamelware from a saucer to a soup tureen ... and in place of the beautifully moulded little pots an empty herring tin. Today one never sees the beautiful carved 'atlas' of ebony or other dark wood made to carry the water pots on the women's heads, its place has been taken by a discarded 'hempie' or greasy piece of old calico coiled up. Basket making is the only real native industry that has survived and for the simple reason that the trader and storekeeper has been unable to find anything of the same kind cheaper to take its place. River washed shells 'ndoro' and ivory bangles were simple matters to counterfeit, but so far the native basket has been left alone.

(cited in Phimister, 1986a: 245)

This replacement of indigenous crafts occurred for several reasons. The commodities imported by Europeans were often of superior quality and cheaper than those which had previously been traded (such as iron goods). Also the craftsmen had built their trade on systems of barter and it was hard for them to obtain cash instead, which they needed in order to be able to pay their taxes and stay in business. Activities which directly competed with the ambitions of the Europeans were

actively prevented, such as gold mining (Phimister, 1986a: 244-5). These difficulties contributed to a loss of knowledge and skills so that even in times of particular hardship, people lost the ability to revert back to non-commodified means of meeting subsistence needs. These factors, combined with the restrictions placed on agricultural production, and several poor successive seasons from 1912 onwards, meant that many 'poor peasants were slowly stripped of their ability to reproduce themselves through household production' (Phimister, 1986a: 253). Cash transactions also penetrated other aspects of reproduction, such as *lobola* payments, although animals also retained (and perhaps took on a greater) significance (Arrighi, 1973a: 200-1). These changes had implications for the relations through which these needs were met, as considered below.

#### *Pressures Within Households*

There were consequences for household production and reproduction of adopting either of the two available strategies of migrant labour or intensified agricultural production. These may have involved an intensification of labour for those remaining on the farm; they may have involved changes in the division of labour unfavourable to women; they may have involved transformation in the labour process. The evidence for any of these is thin, but is summarised below. In an earlier section, I showed how marriage was an important relationship through which production and reproduction were organised in the nineteenth century, and it continued to be so in the colonial period. This is not to say that

it remained the same contract, or institution. In the following section I also indicate the points at which stress and elements of transformation occurred during this period.

There are several tensions in uncovering this history. First, the evidence from colonial administrators focuses on the work of men to a greater extent than that of women, following the prejudices of their own culture. Thus there is little evidence of the changes in women's work and it is difficult to know how to balance what there is against the more extensive evidence in the case of men. Several feminist writers have recently assumed that this lack of evidence obscures a self-evident truth about the differential experience of women and men, in which women's lot was considerably harsher (Schmidt, 1986; Folbre, 1987). Second, when the colonial administrators did pay attention to women, their own ideological perceptions about women's appropriate role in Shona society so strongly coloured what they recorded that it is difficult to estimate the truth of the matter. Third, investigations into the state of women in Shona society, which occurred several times, were not only set up from this premise, but also often had other concerns at heart, which were not openly stated. As will be shown, the demands and expectations of the male labour force with regard to women were not by any means ignored by colonial rulers.

Arrighi indicates that there was an increase in the *effort price* of producing subsistence for households in the crowded Reserves, but he regards this as being an extra burden on the household as a whole, without further comment on the implications for different members (Arrighi, 1973a: 201). Ranger (1985a: 34-6) stresses the increased

workload of men, in order to challenge the European administrators' assumption that Shona men were lazy. The following comment from the Report of the Native Affairs Committee of Enquiry of 1910-11, is interesting as much for what it says about the contemporary prejudices of European officials as for changes that may, or may not, have taken place.

It is frequently argued that Native males lead an idle life at their kraals. This is not borne out by the evidence which we have received. On the contrary they appear to do the bulk of the heavy work, and the woman is not the slave which she is frequently alleged to be. ... He carries on all the heavy preparation of the land, the greater part of the tillage, in harvesting and threshing he also takes his share, and finally transport. The whole process of hut-building (except grass-cutting and plastering) and the care of cutting are only done by men.

(Native Affairs Committee of Enquiry, 1910-11)

As tillage usually refers to ploughing, this account omits one of the most demanding jobs of the season - weeding - perhaps because this was always primarily the work of women.

Ranger (*op cit*) notes that the work of women increased too, but does not explore this. In order to cope with increased agricultural production, either men must have provided most of the new labour, in which case there was a change in the division of labour as women had previously undertaken most agricultural work, or women must have picked up relatively more of the new labour burden. The fact that men were seen working in the fields (the evidence for which is cited by Ranger, *op cit*), did not signify much as they had always done *some* of this work. As ploughs were adopted in some areas, the bulk of what was traditionally male agricultural work, ie preparing the land for cultivation, was drastically reduced, so men who did not migrate would

have had more time for other tasks in any case. This facilitated the cultivation of larger acreages within the Reserves, but there was no equivalent labour-saving device for women's agricultural work.

Moreover, before the large-scale change to maize as the main crop, and during the early stage of competition with European farms, millet had to be ground in order to find a market, and this work was done exclusively by women (Schmidt, 1986: 7 and 9). The gradual adoption of maize as the main staple in some Shona areas meant less work for women because it does not need winnowing, and takes less time to prepare for food. However, adoption did not become widespread in most places until later than this period, and seems to have been more in response to the demand from the mines, where European employers preferred to buy maize to feed their workers (Shopo, 1986: 225-230). Women's work did not decrease in any other way, and as they still undertook most of the other agricultural tasks once production was intensified, this does not counterbalance the implication of the evidence that women's work increased. If this also represented an increased burden *relative* to that placed on men, then the ability of men to enforce this must have been a necessary precondition. If the increased burden was picked up equally by women and men then this reflected a shift in the division of labour in agriculture.

In situations where men were absent as they worked for the mining companies, the assumption of Phimister that women had to pick up the burden of labour previously undertaken by men seems reasonable:

Women simultaneously experienced a deterioration in their material conditions of existence, and an intensification of domestic oppression as production relations inside the household were reorganised to accommodate the absence of male migrants.

(Phimister, 1986a: 253).

How these relations inside the household were re-organised remains an unanswered question. Labour was remunerated on the assumption that the site of material reproduction remained the rural household for all other members of the household, and the worker himself when not employed. Thus the work of women in these households was not in general diminished and, as they had to pick up that no longer done by men, if it was to be done at all, their burden must also be assumed to have increased. Unlike the situation described where the peasant option was followed, this is not likely to have been an increase relative to men, as it must be considered alongside the horrifying and often fatal work conditions which men had to endure in the mines.

Not all women whose husbands migrated stayed and picked up the pieces in the absence of men. Many ran away and ended up at the mining areas themselves, as did women from other households (Zachrisson, 1978, cited in Shopo and Moyo, n.d.). They may have fled because they came from the same type of poor households as those from which men volunteered for employment. They could also have run away because of intolerable increases in the amount of work they were expected/forced to do. Some of the women who ran away were young and unmarried, and if Bhila's comment on delayed marriage was correct, one could surmise that the prospect of remaining unmarried, and as a source of labour, in the house of their fathers, was an important contributory factor to their running away. .

There were also the attractions of the relative sanctuary of the Catholic and Protestant missions, or the offices of the Native

Commissioners themselves (Ranger 1982: 8). This forced the state to take specific action which affected the operation of marriage. In fact, the state had started to interfere with marriage from an early date. The British thought it appropriate to interfere with those customary laws which were repugnant to a sense of 'natural justice', meaning in effect that which the settlers deemed an appropriate exercise of patriarchal power.

Initially the government outlawed the pledging of young girls in infancy through the 1901 *Native Marriage Ordinance*. This had the effect of giving some legal grounds for young women choosing to run away from marriages into which their parents had promised them.

The status of the Native woman has improved, and they are shown more consideration. This is largely due to the provisions of the Native Marriage Ordinance, under which the 'personal consent' of the woman is an indispensable condition.

((Native Affairs Committee of Enquiry, 1910-11))

Administrators and Missionaries received appeals from fathers and husbands to stop the women running away.

It is complained that Native girls frequently run away from their families to Mission stations, where they are received and sheltered and that they are subsequently permitted to marry by Christian rites without the consent of their parents ... The committee recommend that the taking in of any girls without the consent of her parent or guardian should be prohibited ... The main worry about the lack of tribal/parental control is about young men.

(Native Affairs Committee of Enquiry, 1910-11)

...a universal complaint ... (is that as) there is no punishment for adultery, the marriage tie is much weakened, and that wives are seduced with impunity'

(Native Affairs Committee of Enquiry, 1910-11)

Such complaints are recorded at length by administrators, and focus on the blame attached to the state and church in undermining the

patriarchal control over women. However, it is difficult to establish how frequently women ran away before the relative havens of the missions and administrators were offered. One compromise with African men which was offered by the state was to prevent the churches from training women in anything but homemaking activities, thus limiting the opportunities for training which would make them more economically independent (Schmidt, 1986).

The fears of parents and husbands who lost control over young women were not simply moral, or even to do with the loss of their labour. If elders lost control over potential wives, then they also lost control over young men, which had been an important basis of their authority in the past. This itself became a concern of the state and lay behind many of the comments in the reports.

Parents were also losing control over young men in more direct ways. Those who went to work in the mines and elsewhere did not all have the worst possible experience and even if they earned only low wages, this provided some with the means to transform their dependent relations with their fathers. If they could earn enough to pay their own *lobola*, they were free from patriarchal controls over whom and when they should marry (Chigwedere, 1982: 41; Folbre, 1987: 18; Weinrich, 1982: 61). They still paid *lobola*, and in this sense the form of marriage was outwardly like that of pre-colonial times. But the payment of *lobola* by the young men themselves challenged one of the bases of the elders' authority, in that men could negotiate marriages for themselves. It is difficult to establish whether this situation had become at all common, but I suggest several constraints were acting to prevent it



becoming so. First, the level of wages was such that the accumulation of sufficient savings to invest in *loboia* proved prohibitive for most workers. Second, fathers still had sufficient authority to appropriate their sons' earnings if they chose, and third, sons could not afford to alienate the older men in their lineage if they still wanted to inherit and have other rights in the lineage.

The concern of the colonial administration about the controls over young men is also reflected, in a different way, in comments on the ability of women to earn income at all and to have influence over the decisions husbands made about household resources,

Women frequently adversely affect the supply of labour as they refuse to allow their sons to proceed to work lest they die or be injured ... A woman will sometimes even compel a husband to sell cattle to pay the tax of a son who may, in the opinion of the father, be capable of earning himself. ... the tax on women should one day be abolished. It is found that women themselves frequently earn and pay the tax.

(Native Affairs Committee of Enquiry, 1910-11)

This concern is also reflected in many other reports about women in the mining areas, made in the context of concern about the morality and control of women, and the spread of venereal disease. For instance,

Contact with civilisation has had a retrograde effect (on the African population), especially in regard to sexual immorality and in the lack of respect for parental and tribal authority ... The immorality of women, both married and single, in the vicinity of the mines and other industrial centres, is a growing danger to the future welfare, both rural and physical, of the Native races. It is alleged that husbands allow their wives to take beer for sale to natives employed at these centres, that this leads to prostitution, and that the former share the proceeds of the money so earned. ... prior to our rule prostitution was practically unknown amongst the Natives, as the punishment for the offence was so severe. The sale of beer is contrary to all Native traditions.

(Native Affairs Committee of Enquiry, 1910-11)

On the other hand,

Women go to the mines and sell beer without the consent and against the wishes of their husbands. This usually results in much immorality.

(Native Affairs Committee of Enquiry, 1910-11)

Undoubtedly women went to the mining areas for different reasons and under different conditions: some as 'runaways' from their husbands and fathers, others engaging in trade with their husbands' knowledge and consent. These were as yet the early stages of what was to become a flood of women going to the mining centres.

In 1915 the disruption caused by the movement of women culminated in the government taking overt action to strengthen African marriage (Schmidt, 1986: 14-15). The *Native Adultery Ordinance* provided that men or women guilty of adultery could be sentenced to a fine or imprisonment with hard labour. Polygyny, however, was not made illegal and so a man who had sex with an unmarried woman could claim in his defence that he intended to take her as an additional wife. A man therefore, was usually only convicted if he had sex with another man's wife, but any woman who had ever been married was liable for prosecution if she had sex with any man other than her husband, whether he was married or not. Some of the Native Commissioners saw this as giving the women more protection than they ever had, but an alternative view, sympathetic to the interpretation suggested above was offered in 1924,

There is something more cruel about The Ordinance than anything the natives had under their old system, and that was cruel enough; but a woman even then, if her fate was intolerable, could always flee to a tribe who were warring with her own tribe. She cannot even do that today. This Ordinance has not been touching adultery as the word is generally understood, but the woman who is dissatisfied with her husband whom she has been mated to against her will.

(in Drew's Articles on Native Affairs, part 11, 1924,

NAZ S235/429/431, *Women and Children Forced Labour*)

*Summary of the Early Colonial Period*

During the early period of colonial rule, under the administration of the BSAC, increasing demands were made on the African population for labour, principally for European mining and agriculture. These demands were enforced through various violent means, sometimes backed up by the laws of the new state, sometimes by flouting them. Land was appropriated, taxes imposed, and travel restricted. Still the Shona population was able to resist employment in many instances. The ability to do so depended in large part on geographical location, but varied within communities. Those households already in stronger positions to obtain labour and cattle were able to take most advantage of the opportunities to trade crops. They were also in better positions to gain access to the few positions of employment with higher wages.

As a result of the new situation, which undoubtedly caused hardship and greater amounts of work for many people, tensions developed within communities along gender and generational lines. The lack of clear information about these makes interpretation difficult, but they were certainly sufficiently severe to be remarked upon by Native Commissioners and other administrators. They revolved around the adaptations made to the changes in the form of reproduction of labour, which now included the necessary cost of tax to be met from means other than subsistence agriculture and stock-keeping. As a result there were

shifts in the gender division of labour; resistance by women to the social controls placed on them by men; and efforts by older women and men to increase their control over young men. The response of the state was caution in undermining the control over women and young men, and action to reinforce women's sexual fidelity as wives.

Throughout the period, labour was never supplied in sufficient quantity to relieve the problem for employers. This was because of the changes occurring in Shona relations of agricultural production and reproduction which allowed Shona men to avoid employment to varying extents. Where labour was supplied, this was at the cost of deep social tensions, as well as hardship and suffering on the part of the men who were employed.

## 2. THE DEPRESSION AND ENTRENCHMENT OF SETTLER CAPITALISM (1923–end 1930s)

This second section of the chapter focuses on an even greater degree of interference in the social relations of the Shona by the state. This interference was made on behalf of settler classes, but partly in response to the ways in which Shona social relations had themselves developed in the early colonial days.

In a referendum on the constitutional future of Southern Rhodesia in 1923, the settlers voted for autonomy, rather than joining with South Africa, heralding the era of so-called 'Responsible Government' and the end of chartered rule by the BSAC. The 1920s saw the further

development of changes in Shona society which had been set in train in the previous period, with continuing regional differences. These were compounded by deterioration of the conditions in the Reserves, because of a post world war slump in the prices of grain and livestock. Combined with drought in 1922, the stresses put on the environment from the re-organisation of people and cattle into Reserves caused much hardship in many Shona areas. There were some moves from within the settler community to act to lessen this hardship, and to give support to the 'development' of agriculture in the Reserves. Some areas were reserved for those Africans who could afford freehold land. Called the Native Purchase Areas, these were in remote, waterless and unsurveyed areas. (They — also 'revealed a picture of utter stagnation' as they were bought by urban workers who only wanted the land for their retirement (Palmer, 1977: 243).)

At the same time, European farming expanded and was regarded as an important part of the settler economy. The demand for labour on these farms was considerable and had to remain as cheap as possible in order to compete with Africans because the European farmers were intrinsically inefficient. The European farmers used the same techniques as their African competitors in this period, simply employing more labour, and farming much larger areas (Weiner, 1986). The main strategy for procuring this labour in the 1920s was still to rely on the methods of coercion developed earlier, coupled with the need of young men to earn money in order to pay taxes. An additional way to increase the amount and quality of labour was through providing minimal attention to its health. Some health regulations were introduced for the mines and farms,

although the employers strove to avoid them (Van Onselen, 1976: 48-60; Gelfand, 1976). The government also introduced smallpox vaccinations, quarantine control and some medication, but the motive for this also came partly from a fear of infecting the white population (Illiffe, 1987).

The farmers' lobby grew in strength and needed also to reduce African competition. In response to this, the government sought to restrain the further development of the 'entrepreneur' class of Shona farmers. These entrepreneurs, who were the particular targets of this attack, were young men, rather than the 'traditional' chiefs and headmen. The government identified chiefs and headmen as allies in satisfying the two demands of the European farmers: greater control over the labour of young men and the curtailment of competition from African entrepreneurs. Thus it bolstered the authority of chiefs and headmen by re-defining and supporting their power, and by modifying and codifying Customary Law.

By the early 1930s the interests of the settler farmers outweighed those who were concerned with the conditions of the Shona people in the Reserves (principally Native Commissioners) and a battery of legislation was passed to stop African farmers competing with Europeans (Palmer, 1977: 229; Ranger, 1968: 226-7). Phimister describes it thus,

As settler ideology became even more sharply segregationist, further burdens were added to the black peasantry and working class. Under various controls and levy Acts, African cattle owners and maize-growers were manipulated and taxed in order to subsidise the earnings of the white ranchers and farmers.

(Phimister, 1983: 277)

These measures included the further alienation of land, in the infamous *Land Apportionment Act* of 1930, differential pricing systems for African

crops, and higher taxes on livestock. An additional disadvantage faced by Africans in the Reserves was that in general they were far further from the transport routes and trading centres than European farmers (Arrighi, 1973a: 212; Phimister, 1983: 227-9).

Nevertheless, the Shona increased marketed production enormously (Ranger, 1985a, 54-60; Moseley, 1983: 84). This was partly in response to the demands arising from the increased commodification of material reproduction, but also in order to strive to maintain income in the face of legislative attempts to reduce it (Phimister, 1983: 279). Those households which were unable to meet their needs in this way had to work for low wages. The depressed state of crop and livestock prices caused the closure of many European ranches and farms which were not successfully producing maize. Small-scale gold mining enterprises were the main beneficiaries of this cheap labour (Phimister, 1983: 227-8).

In the mid and late 1930s the government intervened to tighten controls on the movement and organisation of labour even further. The Depression meant that many were no longer able to find work or experienced falls in real wages. This prompted some preliminary labour organisation, in response to which the government acted to create an industrial colour bar, to prevent Africans living in the growing towns unless they were employed, and to prevent any kind of labour organisation<sup>45</sup>. Thousands of these men then had no choice but to go or return to the rural areas. Here the government needed them to be incorporated *peacefully*, and without presenting competition to European farmers. The government intended this to be ensured by their identified allies, the chiefs and headmen. In this way the period is typical of the

1930s in the colonial history of Africa, when the early optimism of the colonialists gave way to pessimism about their ability to transform African society and environment to meet their ambitions. One aspect of this was a new policy which placed greater emphasis on 'tradition' and stability (Birmingham and Ranger, 1983: 362). Below, I consider in more detail the effects of these shifts for social change in the Reserves.

### *Survival and Transformation Within the Reserves*

The sections in the rest of this chapter are based on evidence from secondary sources and government records in the Zimbabwe National Archives. As will be seen, the former are not usually written from the perspective which I have adopted. For this reason many of them have ignored rather more obscure sources and potential explanations. The main contribution here is to bring this variety of sources together and offer a new perspective on them.

Palmer suggests that,

by the end of the 1930s, the agricultural economy of the Shona ... had been destroyed.

(Palmer, 1977b: 243).

Ranger criticises this view by tracing the ways in which some Shona communities were able to adapt, as peasants, to the new situation (Ranger, 1985a: 54). Rather than imbue Palmer with the pessimism which Ranger ascribes to him, I prefer to take his comments as referring to the basis of the previous Shona agricultural economy. Ranger himself describes how many changes had to take place in order for communities to survive as agriculturalists: the form of agricultural production had



in many places been completely transformed from that prevalent during the pre- and early colonial periods. The amount of land available to whole communities was severely restricted, and was often of poorer quality, and the amount of grazing land per head of cattle reduced. The organisation of agricultural labour had already altered. Whole Shona communities refused to conform to the land alienation policies and in many places were able to survive without selling their labour to the white farmers. This survival had a varied regional pattern, however, and had different effects within regions.

The onset of the Depression, and the responses of the state outlined above, intensified the differentiation within communities that had been taking place before. Those who had access to wages from better paid employment, such as the messengers or police, invested their salaries in agricultural production, whilst others had nothing to invest (Phimister, 1986: 248). Although communities as a whole increased marketed output, this was often from only a small number of growers, or entrepreneurs, as Ranger refers to them. These few were able to benefit further from officials' attempts to improve agriculture in the Reserves and also, ironically, they gained some security from the state controls on marketing maize, as this ended their vulnerability to the prices offered by private white and Asian traders (Ranger, 1986: 61-66).

The entrepreneurs were not the allies of the state which they became in other colonies, such as Kenya, partly because of real anxieties about their competitiveness with white farmers, and partly because they did not fit in with state objectives for the Reserves (Ranger, 1985a: 67-8). The Reserves were intended to absorb the African population

whenever it was not required for labour. These entrepreneurs nevertheless spread onto larger areas of land, used ploughs, and were fast *becoming a class*, in spite of their small numbers (Phimister, 1986: 250). Their use of increasing proportions of land within the Reserves threatened the future access of young men to land in particular. This made them targets for the administration, which did not want to see young men made landless. Officials criticised them for being environmentally destructive, having abandoned their previous methods of cultivation for mono-cropping maize (Ranger, 1984: 322; 1985a: 69-70).

To deal with the problem of these entrepreneurs, the government introduced greater state interference in African agriculture than ever before. In 1926 the government appointed an Agriculturalist for the Instruction of Natives who in 1929 introduced the demonstration of 'Master Farmer' techniques of soil conservation, crop rotation and fertilisation. Faced with the complete failure of this demonstration approach to make any difference to the conditions in the Reserves, he subsequently introduced policies of planned *Centralisation*. He proposed that each Reserve should be re-organised into blocks separating grazing from arable land in order to prevent further soil erosion (Arrighi, 1973a: 209 and 211). This *Centralisation* policy was put into practice very much at the discretion of the Native Commissioners, although from the 1930s they were under greater pressure from the government to enforce reorganisation and resettlement (Phimister, 1986b: 271). Furthermore, the entrepreneurs were encouraged to purchase land in the African Purchase Areas, although many did not, and those who did remained very discontented (Ranger, 1985a: 76-8; Cheater, 1985). Thus the

state hoped to get rid of, or transform, those who were becoming capitalist farmers, either through moving them away from the Reserves, or through forcing them to change to more intensive forms of production which would not use so much land.

As in the earlier period, many of these 'entrepreneurs' were related to chiefs and headmen, but were not those who were likely to succeed to such offices (Phimister, 1986: 249). The chiefs and headmen still resisted engaging in entrepreneurial activities themselves and were generally older than them. They sought to retain the tribute and legitimacy which they had had through their control over land, the growing of crops and timing of agricultural tasks. This was becoming increasingly difficult as market production spread (Ranger, 1983a: 24). Along with the headmen the chiefs gained approval and support from the state in measures commensurate with the growing disapproval and anxiety about the prosperity and growth in numbers of the entrepreneurs.

Those men who had begun to organise resistance whilst still in the towns and mines tried to stir up rebellion on their return to the countryside, but they rarely had much influence over the rest of the population. Nonetheless, Ranger indicates that the state was concerned about this potential problem. Entrepreneurs and other returning migrants were threatening the authority of the chiefs and headmen as they became wealthier and gained skills and knowledge, and this was an implicit motive of the state in trying to curb their activities (Ranger, 1984: 322). This was also a period of growing ideological challenges to the state and capitalism in many Shona areas which took the form of sects and religious movements (Ranger, 1983b: 256-7 and 1984: 325-7;

Phimister, 1983: 273). However, the *Centralisation* policy undermined an important basis of chiefly authority: that of allocating land, which is perhaps why in some places Native Commissioners were reluctant to enforce this policy wholeheartedly.

Thus the chiefs and headmen were regarded by the state as tools with which to ensure social order and the ability of the Reserves to absorb the thousands of young men who had lost employment in the towns and mines because of the Depression. Chiefs and headmen had of course lost the real content of their power after the defeat in the Chimurenga, and so were not in any sense the same institutions of pre- or even early colonial days. In addition to losing *de jure* controls over land use they had lost the ability to redress or punish behaviour considered anti-social or immoral. Ultimately the government defined criminality and determined that the state should enforce the legislation which it had created. Nonetheless, it suited the government at that time to maintain some semblance of chiefly authority, and so whilst undermining chiefly power through the growing interventions in land allocation and marriage, it also bolstered it in other ways.

In the following section I outline the main changes which took place in the form of reproduction and production in the Reserves and the changes in the social relations through which these occurred.

#### *Changes in Reproduction and Production*

During this period there were further changes in the bundle of products and commodities considered necessary for subsistence, and in the ways in which reproduction was organised. The demands made on the Shona people in the Reserves, and the transformation of their economies had profound effects during this period. In some places men were no longer present for much of the year, and wages were becoming important for meeting some of the costs of replacing this lost labour. This necessitated a different division of labour in agriculture; tax had to be paid; and food and clothes were commonly purchased.

#### Crafts and Trade

In some places, particularly those which were more remote, men fought to maintain the production of goods which had brought them income for generations. However, most of these crafts and industries collapsed in the early days of colonialism (Phimister, 1986: 244-5). Barry Kosmin has described the struggle of the Shangwe people to maintain their tobacco production in this period, in the face of colonial attempts to force them to work for the European community (Kosmin, 1977: 268-288). They were able to survive through the production and trade of tobacco until a much later period than that at which other crafts and trades had collapsed because they did not overtly compete with any European markets and the trade was readily converted from barter to exchange for cash. A similar set of events took place in a remote northern part of the Mrewa District, in the Fungwe Reserve. The people there had grown tobacco (for use as snuff) and exchanged it for grain and other goods for generations. This activity had thrived until it was outlawed by the discriminative agricultural legislation of the 1930s,

which was intended to remove African large scale, commercial competition with white farmers growing tobacco.

The NC of Mrewa inquired of the Chief Native Commissioner in 1938, Is (the tobacco legislation) intended to apply to natives who have for centuries grown their little patches of tobacco, traded it amongst themselves, and raised a few pounds by it to meet their obligations to the government? If so it will cause a great deal of discontent and ill-feeling towards the government.

They are not seriously in competition with the white man and grew their coarse tobacco long before we ever came to the country. Are they now to be deprived of a lifelong custom to satisfy the demands of the European tobacco growers who came in to the field long after the native did? Is there nothing to be left for the native to raise revenue on? Are they to be turned into criminals whenever they endeavor to pay their taxes by disposing of a few pounds of tobacco grown on their old cattle kraal sites?

(NC Mrewa to CNC, 26.3.38

NAZ S1542/A4 vol 3, 1937-39)

Later that year the Department of Agriculture complained to the Secretary for Native Affairs that some of these people had been found selling tobacco in Salisbury (28.10.38, same file). This was presumably followed up as there was a response to the Mrewa police from the NC,

The natives in the Fungwe area have grown their tobacco in the bed of the Mazoe river for a great many years. It is one of the few sources available to them to supply themselves with the means to procure food, as grain crops of any sort are invariably a failure in this arid part of the country, and the natives are yearly faced with starvation. I know what they go through and know that without the help of their tobacco, what extra suffering there will be.

It has been customary to dispose of their tobacco to natives in other parts of the country, whether in exchange for grain or for money to purchase grain.

...any interference in the sale of tobacco will be a grave matter for the Fungwe. It is the children and women who will suffer most.

(26.6.39

NAZ S1542/A4 vol 3 1937-39)

No more references to the 'problem' appear in the file, which suggests a pessimistic ending to the story, with the Fungwe ending up in a similar situation to the Shangwe (Kosmin, 1977).

Many needs which had been met through household and local production continued to be replaced by European-produced commodities for an increasing number of people (Phimister, 1986: 245-6). These 'new' needs usually had to be provided by men, along with the cash to pay tax, as it was, in many cases, only they who earned enough money. This was cited as a source of tension between women and men living near towns and mines in Matabeleland, but was likely to have occurred in parts of Mashonaland too,

(Women) are acquiring European civilisation which raises their standards of living and their guardians and husbands have to provide food, clothing and other minor luxuries which all cost money and to which the ... female contributes very little. When the husband is unable to provide sufficient for this spendthrift, she is not above prostituting herself to acquire the necessary cash.

(NC Inyati, 31.10.34.

NAZ S1542/512

The tensions between wives and husbands which resulted are considered in more detail below. The point I wish to stress here is that the situation hitherto was one in which women and men both contributed within the household to the production of goods other than food which were important for material reproduction. The new situation was one in which many of these needs were ideally to be met through goods purchased with cash (and cash for the payment of taxes) which *became seen to be the greater responsibility of men.*

### Food

In addition to the reduction of opportunities for gathering wild food, and increases in the amounts of purchased foodstuffs, there was also an overwhelming transition to maize as the staple food. This was expressed by the NC for Mrewa,

the principle food crops of the natives in the District are rapoko and munga (millets), rapoko being the main crop in the Mangwendi reserve ... of late years the natives in the Mangwendi Reserve have been growing more and more maize. To begin with, the crop was grown mainly for trade purposes, but now it is being used increasingly for home consumption, milling facilities being available at several places in the district.

(NC Annual Reports (Mrewa), 1930  
NAZ S235/509)

and also in a letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs to the *Rhodesia Herald*,

There is no doubt that the natives are inclined to grow maize, which in addition to being a saleable crop has now become their staple diet.

(26.6.39, same file)

This was maize that was indigenous to the area, and had always been grown in small quantities, and was also used by the European farmers'. It took up more land than millets and sorghums (Arrighi, 1973a: 210). There was also a change in the way people regarded their crops. They were now not only immediate and potential sources of food, but important trade goods. The NC for Mrewa had indicated as early as 1920 that the importance of trade as a means of income inhibited people from keeping the same amount of reserves as they once had done.

Nowadays the natives do not carry large reserves of food, all surplus over and above their own requirement being sold to traders.

(NC (Mrewa) to the Superintendent of Natives 19.1.20  
NAZ N3/11/6/30)



These two factors may have been connected as maize is harder to store than millets and sorghums (DRSS, 1984: 21). African production of grain per head peaked in 1920, but the extent of hunger due to a drought in 1922 was sufficient to be regarded as a famine. Illiffe suggests that in spite of the attempts of the state to distribute relief, the new economy was the cause of the famine as the traditional methods of food storage and ability to ensure food security had been undermined (Illiffe, 1988: 88). The effects of this drought could have been compounded by the transition to maize, which is also less drought resistant than millets and sorghums (DRSS, *op cit*). An indication of the hardship at this time is the fact that although real wages were only half those of 1914 (Moseley, 1983), many sought employment and in some places people worked only for food on the European farms (Illiffe, 1988: 93).

By the 1930s transformations had taken place within communities along the lines described. This meant that there were richer groups who could always afford to get food, even in the worst years of drought, whereas some had become so impoverished that meeting even the most basic levels of material reproduction had become a serious problem. By the 1930s differentiation within the Reserves was such that while some would always manage to get food, others had no choice but to seek employment at the lowest rates of pay. In the early colonial period people strove to feed themselves by staying in the Reserves, relying on techniques to find wild food which had been used during the pre-colonial times, and by expending more labour on agriculture. In the new situation of the 1930s some of these options were foreclosed as they did not have

access to the same range of wild animals and plants, and many were unable to sustain stocks of food from year to year. The wealthier group of entrepreneurs were in no danger of going hungry, and did not have the same social responsibility to distribute food to the rest of the local population as had pre-colonial chiefs and headmen. Such households had developed new labour relations using labour from other households and also underwent internal transformations themselves, as considered below.

### Land

The shortage of land caused in many Shona areas by the creation of the Reserves gradually forced people to use the land in a different way. There was still wide regional variation, because of different ecological capacities, population densities and proximity to markets (Johnson, 1964: 91). The administration interfered in key ways to try to control the use of land, which are examined in more detail below but, nonetheless, some were able to expand the area they cultivated, and tended towards monocropping maize, whilst others were restrained from doing this because of insufficient labour, ploughs and oxen. As the *Centralisation* policies introduced in some areas, the implications became clearer. The consolidation of blocks of arable land under these regulations required that offspring take up land at locations far from their parents. For this reason *Centralisation* was resisted in many places, and the fragmentation of land-holdings continued, so that sons could be provided with land near to that of their parents (Arrighi, 1973a: 210). This sub-division of land holdings derived directly from the precolonial situation in which men provided their sons with some land before they were married, and

were always allocated land after marriage. However, the subdivision of fields with fixed boundaries was specifically the product of the colonial restriction of access to land defined by the boundaries of the Reserves. Land allocation was at this time still in effect controlled by the headmen, in spite of state attempts to transform the way it was organised (Johnson, 1964: 90).

I also conjecture that in areas where the peasant option was followed, the division between wives' and husbands' fields became blurred. Where land was scarce and as much maize was planted for sale as possible it would have been very difficult for women to insist on the control of grain from their own fields. Earlier reports of women coming to sell grain do not appear in the documents consulted for this later period.

### Labour

The shortage of land caused by its further racial division again caused changes in the division of labour: people no longer kept moving home and rebuilding houses, so men no longer had this work to do. Ploughing became more widespread, as this saved male labour in land preparation (Arrighi, 1973a: 210), although men continued to try to ensure that they were at home at the right time of year for this.

Every year the ploughing season draws an increasing number of native workers back to their own land for the planting season.

(E.T.P., 1926: 122)

This has been assumed not to have relieved the burden of women's work, but the following extract makes interesting reading,

Another factor of civilisation which has a disturbing effect on native social conditions has been the training of the ox. Work which at one time kept the women busy is no longer performed by them. The use of the hoe, gathering wood,

fetching water, carrying the materials for the plastering and floor of the hut and grass for thatching are disdained by our 'mods' amongst native women. These tasks must perforce be performed by men with the aid of oxen, ploughs, and sleighs. With what pursuit can the leisured damsel employ her time? ... (An old man commented,) "A content man has no oxen".

(ANC Fort Nixon

NAZ S1542/512, 1934-5)

Similarly, a comment from E.D.Alvord, the Agriculturalist for the Instruction of Natives, suggests that ploughing relieved the work of women,

Although this connotes an advance in the economy of human labour, *especially of women's labour*, if left unguided it is so unintelligently applied that its result is of doubtful economic benefit. We have the admission of natives that higher yields were obtained from hand-hoed lands.

(E.D.Alvord, 1929: 9, my italics)

I have found no other evidence to suggest that the 'problem' of idle women was widespread, or even accurate in Fort Nixon, but these two comments suggest that the gender division of labour was not in fact very rigid. In the absence of men for much of the year, women had to perform whatever tasks needed doing, as well as continuing to do the work they had done before, under increasingly difficult circumstances.

( Amongst the other difficulties, the pressure of numbers within the Reserves had caused a shortage of thatching grass in some places by the 1930s, which meant that women had to walk further distances to get it (Jordan, 1964: 66).) Men's work came to be defined less as 'sharing' all the major agricultural tasks as they were not present for most of them.

These changes inevitably threw up tensions, some of which were identified by the NC for Mrewa in 1923,

It is quite common nowadays for women to come to the office to complain that their husbands will no longer assist them in

their gardens, nor supply money to buy food and clothing for the woman herself, or her children and on investigation it is usually found that the husband is one of the class of labourers who are educated at Missions and cannot find work as office boys or clerks.

(NAZ file S235/501, Native Commissioner (Mrewa) Annual Report, 1923)

Ranger and Phimister suggest that it was these same men who used income from wages to become 'entrepreneurs' in the Reserves. They invested in ploughs, carts and oxen (Phimister, 1986: 248; Ranger, 1985a: 62). The quote above also suggests that they had become unused to working in the fields themselves, so the investment of income must also have been in additional non-household labour, or to have been accompanied by their attempts to make their wives work harder, or both. The extra non-household labour could have been an extension of the *nhimbe* labour, as described for the earlier period, or wage labour, or some combination of the two. Ranger also stresses the importance for these households of Christian ideology in emphasising the virtues of 'discipline, responsibility and readiness to acquire modern skills' (Ranger, 1970: 16, cited in Phimister, 1986: 249). How important these might have been in mobilising labour is not clear.

Some married women were able to earn money themselves locally and the following quote suggests that this had become an important means of meeting household material reproduction costs. The Chief Native Commissioner had issued a dictum that Native women were no longer to be employed for building roads, because of the undesirability of the employment of women for so-called forced labour. The response of the NC for Mrewa was as follows,

It seems to me that it is rather hard on the native women that they are not to be allowed to turn out if they wish to do so and earn salt, calico, etc for their work in scuffling grass from the roads in the Reserves, they turn out in hundreds every year, more especially in the parts of the reserves far from any stores where salt is hard to procure. There is no compulsion, this work is purely voluntary. I might mention that women go in gangs to the farms in the district to weed in the lands and earn salt for a couple of days work.

(NC Mrewa to CNC, 27.1.31.

NAZ S1923 NC General Outletters 1930)

The new agricultural techniques 'demonstrated' in the Reserves were intended to make continuous cultivation more ecologically sound, but were not adopted by most households. Arrighi and others have accepted one of the official explanations for this, which was the 'traditional' division of labour and responsibility in the household prevented the changes required. They suggest that traditionally only men were able to make 'management and capital formation decisions' (Arrighi, 1973a: 210), and in their absence no changes could be made. However, the evidence for this having always been the case is by no means unanimous, as some commentators have pointed out the important role older women often played in making decisions (see earlier section). Arrighi obscures the fact that it was in this *new* situation that men were able to exert control over new decisions and women were unable to assert their own decisions or take responsibility for the use of household assets. By the time some of the writers cited by Arrighi were writing, this new situation had become the norm and was being referred to as 'traditional' (Kuper, 1955: 21), even though it may well have represented a change since the advent of colonialism. How men were able to assert themselves in this way is considered in the next section.

Other women - married and unmarried - travelled away from home to earn money. There are comments in the NCs' reports about the number of women and men offering their labour for sale. For example in 1930 the NC for Mrewa wrote,

No native girls are offering themselves for domestic service in this district. The number being trained at the various

missions is few and those who wish to go out and seek employment find their way to the towns.

(NC Annual Reports (Mrewa), 1930

NAZ S235/509)

Whilst this does not say much about the number of women from this area who did find employment, it does suggest that some managed to do so. The extent to which income from such employment was important in meeting the needs of other people in the countryside is also impossible to ascertain.

These social changes were not simply the sum of individual responses to constraints and opportunities, but were partly the results of cleavages and strains along gender, generational and class lines. These did not happen in a political vacuum, as state intervention also shaped them, sometimes intentionally, sometimes incidentally. I consider the ways in which this interaction occurred in the following sections.

### *The State, Chiefs and Women*

This and the next section are based largely on evidence from government reports held in the Zimbabwe National Archives. They reveal the central importance of the interaction between the state, chiefs and women in the restructuring of social relations. This interaction has received only passing comments from other writers to date.

From the earliest days of European government in Rhodesia, there was some desire on the part of Europeans to identify traditional and conservative customs in the form of social hierarchies and structures

which could be manipulated. Many of the settlers came from the British upper middle class, and were often younger sons, with no clear economic function in Britain (Hodder-Williams, 1983: 45, 86; Staudt, 1987: 196). Their education and upbringing inclined them towards the identification of sets of rules and procedures, which they assumed to be unchanging and age-old (Ranger, 1983b: 247). In the 1920s and 1930s, as they realised what some of the consequences of European prosperity were likely to be, they sought some ideological justification for their role, which was found in concern for the 'real' African. They were grossly mistaken in assuming that pre-colonial Shona society was static. In this light the complaints of chiefs and headmen throughout this period can be seen to have had more to do with seizing the opportunities presented to them than with expressing displeasure with changes from the situation in the past (Ranger, 1983b: 248).

The state affected the power of the chiefs and headmen in different ways. In sum, I have assumed the *motives* for the actions taken to be the same as those described in the previous section, ie the need for the maintenance of the authority of the chiefs and headmen over the rest of the population living in the reserves in order to contain challenges to the state from religious organisations and entrepreneurs. Through this it was hoped that the Reserves could remain communities into which men could fit when not actually employed by Europeans, but from which they could be expelled when necessary (Ranger, 1983b: 254-5). In other words, the chiefs and headmen were to be the policemen of the Reserves (Garbett, 1966: 116).



Several key discussions took place in this period about the status and behaviour of African *women*. In part these were the product of British patriarchal ideology, concerned with the morality of women and the spread of venereal disease. Seen in the light of the attitude towards chiefs and headmen described above, these can also be viewed as inquiries into *their* complaints and demands relating to women. Any threat to patriarchal control over young women threatened the base of male lineage authority and hence older men's control as a group over young men. As described, their authority was also being threatened directly by the funds and skills being accumulated by younger men (Ranger, 1983b: 255) and the need to exert control over *men* through the means available for controlling young *women* became urgent. This was of concern to the state which intended the chiefs and headmen to use their authority to its advantage. Reinforcing men's controls over wives was also a way of dispelling some of men's discontent with their lot (Ranger, 1983b: 257-8). Below I consider some of the evidence for this and the actions taken in response.

In 1927 the *Native Affairs Act* further defined the powers of chiefs, headmen and messengers (initial recognition having been given in 1910). They were all given the powers of arrest, and the chiefs and headmen had responsibility to collect the taxes due from their subjects (Holleman, 1969: 35-6; Kuper, 1955: 31-20). In the early 1930s the administration established district level *Native Boards* as safety valves for mounting African grievances. They were comprised of chiefs, headmen and other 'respectable' men. These served the function of giving these notables official status within the bureaucracy, and the opportunity to

give information about the extent of social tension. The 1923 constitution had set out the possibility for the creation of councils which incorporated these men, and the Boards were intended as precursors of them.

In 1937 the legal framework was established for such Councils which were to make all decisions concerning local affairs. They were to be established at the discretion of the NC and with the participation of the chiefs, for whom training courses were established (Kuper, 1955: 32) although they were not taken up by many chiefs. The Councils were to be composed of the chief, headmen and two elected councillors, and were to be chaired by the NC himself, who retained a veto on all decisions. The 1937 *Native Law and Courts Act* also gave the chiefs the power to try 'civil cases pertaining to customary law', which was simply formal recognition for what they had been doing in any case (Bourdillon, 1982: 132). They were also given a state subsidy and no longer had the right to levy tribute on their subjects, but were still able to maintain relatively high levels of hospitality. They were also paid for hearing cases (Holleman, 1951: 376) and were able to keep a proportion of the taxes they collected.

The issues aired through these fora were mostly about wayward women, the problems they created and suggestions for their control. Some of the suggestions included marriage certificates serving as pass documents for women (Schmidt, 1986: 17). The high level of involvement by the NCs in hearing these grievances during this period meant that their responses to several inquiries by the government were fairly detailed

and are informative about some of the changes that were taking place in the way marriage operated during the period.

The various inquiries and documented discussions by state officials most commonly refer to the problems caused by men's inability to control the sexuality of women and women's ability to earn and use income independently from their parents and husbands. In addition, those caused by young women who ran away to Missions and Native Commissioners were considered. These all involved discussion of the threats to men's controls over women's labour and fertility, although in the different contexts of women avoiding or changing the terms of marriage as unmarried women, wives, and mothers.

Partly in response to this concern, there was increasing state interference in the regulation of marriage, through legislation and judicial action. In addition, the Christian churches, Methodist, Anglican and Catholic Missions, were permitted to offer a different form of marriage. The Christian and 'traditional' institutions of marriage developed side by side. In choosing to bolster the 'traditional' authorities the state had encouraged a revival of spirit mediums and traditional spiritual practices and looked to the Christian churches for help in this (Ranger, 1984: 232). (Tension between the Christian churches and the state had a varied history throughout the colonial period, which I do not propose to examine in detail here.) The ways in which state action created Customary Law from common practice, and the effects of this, are discussed in the next section.

One of the most significant inquiries in this period was that into the Status of Native Women 1924-32. The Chief Native Commissioner asked

whether the state should control the amount of *lobola* or allow women the custody of their children. This reflected a concern that *lobola* payments were escalating, although the responses reveal far more than this. *Lobola* prices in cash and cattle are thought to have rapidly inflated from 1890 to the 1930s (Schmidt, 1986: 13), but the evidence for this is ambiguous because of the varying value of cattle at different times (such as as a result of coastal fever in 1906), and was disputed in this and subsequent reports by some NCs.

The root of the 'problem' with custody was probably the number of cases brought to the NCs in which the return of *lobola* and the custody of children were contested. The awarding of custody to the father's family, as had happened in the earlier period, was alien to the European administrators. They interpreted this as custody and childcare being given to the father alone, and as they saw childcare as the natural responsibility of women, this was repugnant to *their* sense of 'natural justice'. Hence an Inquiry was set up to ascertain whether or not this should continue (although in fact, in pre-colonial society, although the individual father had ultimate responsibilities for the care of the child, it was the women in his lineage who would undertake the childcare itself). One commentator expresses his repugnance with the state of affairs thus,

As for the woman, what interest can she have in life? Whether she be a clean-living woman or a mere compound prostitute, it makes no difference. She is denied the legal custody of her children ... The protection a woman is supposed to be afforded by him who benefitted by the *lobola* given for her is, I maintain, in many cases fictitious ... If the Christian woman divorces her husband by reason of his adultery, owing to intercourse with concubines, she is barred by the church from contracting another Christian marriage - at least from having

it solemnised by a Minister of religion. And of course she has no claim to her children.

(NC Marandellas, to the Superintendent of Natives, 3.12.23

NAZ S158/150, 1923-32)

The responses of the various Native Commissioners and their Assistants recorded a mixture of their own and the chiefs' and headmen's opinions about the status of African women generally.

We have, to a large extent undermined the fine moral code which the natives built up themselves and have substituted little ... I have noticed that women assume a very arrogant and indifferent attitude towards their husbands, and take exception to any genuine remonstrance which he may make and this is very often pounced upon as an excuse for deserting him.

(untitled in the file)

The laxity of native women and their defiance of control is already a matter of constant complaint by natives of all classes.

(CNC to premier, 30.8.31)

(A woman should have to have permission from her guardian if she enters a sisterhood.) Any other course will merely cause dissension in the families concerned, which is bound to be reflected in tribal irritation and unrest.

(CNC to Bishop Chichester, 5.1.31)

Women continued to run away to mines, towns, and Missions, but they were also attracted by the Watchtower and various other religious sects which grew up at this time. Some of these were expressly opposed to co-operation with the government, or trade with Europeans, and this may have made them more attractive to women (Ranger, 1983b: 256-7). It has been suggested that many of those who ran away did so for the same reasons as in the earlier period: because they were being forced to work harder than they thought appropriate, as wives or daughters; because they had been pledged to marry men in childhood; or because they were unhappy with their lot as junior wives (Schmidt, 1986: 15; England, 1982:

12, 96). The late 1920s and the 1930s were times of great hardship for many African people, particularly those who were removed from their land. This intensified the pressures on women to find alternative means of income, and Van Onselen suggests that most of the women who travelled to the mines were not married, or were married to men who had lost access to land (Van Onselen, 1976: 178-9). However, the evidence suggests that the other reasons cited above were equally <sup>p</sup>important at <sub>^</sub>this time.

When unmarried women ran away their labour was lost to their household, but so also was the cattle their lineage would have received as *lobola* on their marriage. Their own lineage was liable for the repayment of *lobola* if they deserted their husbands. By this time cattle had become valuable not simply as *lobola*, but for ploughing and as a form of capital. Hence men were concerned about the implications of this action in terms of the effects on property transfers, as well as for the loss of control over the labour and fertility of women. The fact that some women ran away probably also made it easier for others left behind to resist some of the 'irksome routines of kraal life' (ANC Shangani, 13.11.34, NAZ S1542/512)).

Men state that they are today afraid of reprimanding their women folk since they are met with the answer "I will leave you and your ways and earn my own living elsewhere" ... (the) difficulties experienced in recent years of obtaining a market for production ... (mean he) is unable to put any money in the hands of his daughter or wife.

(ANC Gwaai, 6.11.34

NAZ S1542/512)

When women went to the NCs and protested that they had been married against their will, they forced the state to become more

directly involved in the regulation of marriage. This was the cause of much concern to the NCs because of the challenge it presented to the authority of the parents. The report of the Inquiry is peppered with comments about this, which were summed up thus,

The payment of lobola is ultimately bound up with the matter, and as long as the Government recognises the right of a parent or guardian to claim and receive lobola, it cannot logically divest such a parent or guardian of his control over his unmarried female children or wards.

(Chief Native Commissioner to the Premier, 30.8.31

NAZ S158/150 1924-32

There was an Inquiry into Prostitution in 1934, provoked by the concerns of state officials and the chiefs and headmen about the morality, sexuality and loosening of controls over women. The report suggested that prostitution was more of a problem in Bulawayo, and Matabeleland generally, because of the greater number of mines there. However, the movement of women to the mines reached its peak during this period, and they came from many places (Van Onselen, 1976: 179).

Many complained that their wives shirked their traditional duties in kraal life and took advantage of the slightest excuse to run away in search of more congenial surroundings. On their first desertion, women, it is alleged, often proceed to seek a lover at no great distance from their homes and it is only later that with gathered confidence they go farther afield to the more populated centres - the final descent to prostitution from this latter stage is rapid.

(NC Nyamandhlovu, 16.11.34

NAZ S1542/512 1934-5)

Van Onselen describes how they worked at selling food, beer and sexual services (Van Onselen, 1976, 174-82). That women running away and using their sexuality to their advantage was also considered a problem within Shona areas was attested to by the ANC for Bindura,

The few parents who are able to maintain control over the movements of their daughters will not permit them to attend these functions (dances)...

There can be little doubt that prostitution is increasing to an almost alarming extent with the extension of European occupation ... the virtuous girl is condemned to the drab routine of kraal life, while her less virtuous sister leads a life of ease and comparative luxury, dances and pretty frocks without, so far as I can see, jeopardising her prospects of marriage to any great extent.

(20.9.30

NAZ 235/392, 1930)

Once these women were established in towns and mines, they created difficulties in the control over young men,

There is no incentive for the natives living near to towns to marry. These are women to be had for the asking, without the irksome duty of finding lobola. The old days of tribal control have, to a great extent, broken down, and with it, parental control.

(SN Bulawayo, 19.9.34

NAZ S1542/512, 1934-5)

Their fears were summed up,

The chiefs are greatly disturbed at the way their authority is flouted by their children both male and female and would welcome any means devised for checking the evil.

(Acting NC Gwelo, 21.11.34

NAZ S1542/512, 1934-5)

Thus some women were able to survive outside marriage, far from their homes and families, and some men could pay their own *lobola*, and thus marry without the consent or help of their elders. These facts clearly undermined the previous means of control over young people and all women which the elder men in Shona society once had, and which were the bases of their authority. It is no wonder that they complained bitterly about the new situation.

The conclusion of this report was that there was a need for the state to enforce control over women, but also to allow some to stay in the towns and mines to protect other African and European women. That



there were beneficial effects of this for the mine-owners and other employers was not mentioned. The benefits to the mine-owners in particular were that the presence of women attracted workers to the mines and encouraged them to stay for longer periods once there because of the services they provided. The health of the workers was also improved from the better quality food the women provided (for which the workers were willing to pay). In spite of the fact that the women at the mines were at the centre of most of the 'faction fights' and other disputes amongst workers,

no action was taken against them by the authorities and indeed the state and mining industry alike made it their business to protect their presence in the compounds.

(Van Onselen, 1976: 180)

There was always some tension in state responses to women at the mines, however, because despite their uses to the mine-owners, they also caused the discontent and unrest amongst their male relatives described above. In Southern Rhodesia, the mine-owners were never forced by the state to control the activities of women, although they voluntarily regularised and controlled their activities, and most had their own systems of compulsory medical examination of women by the 1930s. These examinations were not organised or implemented by the state, but were imposed by the mine owners as a measure intended to reduce the loss of labour due to syphilis amongst the workers (Van Onselen, 1976: 182). In order to meet some of the demands articulated by the chiefs and headmen, the police were ordered to eject those women who were known to have deserted husbands or parents (Van Onselen, 1976: 181), but the extent to which this was enforced, or the proportion of women who fell into this category is not clear.

This resolution of the conflict between the demands of the mine owners and African male authority over women contrasts to some degree with the resolution of the same problem in Northern Rhodesia at the same time. In the latter colony, the state resolved this tension at a greater cost to the mine owners. Greater action was taken to prevent women from staying at the mines, and to decrease the rate of divorce and remarriage of women. The state prohibited the private brewing and sale of beer, supplying municipal beer halls instead, so that the mine owners still had the benefit of the improved nutrition of workers who bought the beer, but without the presence of women (Parpart, 1986: 144-5). In Southern Rhodesia it was always tacitly accepted by the state that such brewing continued, and women who were regarded as 'unattached' were not removed.

The explanation for these differences lies in the complex balance between the relative political power of the mine owners in the economy; the ability of the state to satisfy the demands of the African male leaders; and the ability of the women to remain undetected as deserters of husbands and parents. However, ideological justification for the tighter control of women in the future was further provided in the report of 1934 which concluded that the native woman was not yet ready for the freedoms and rights of the civilised woman.

It is unlikely that the individual administrators and chiefs involved in this exchange of ideas entered into a conscious alliance, and I do not want to suggest a grand patriarchal conspiracy. Nonetheless, as in other British colonies, the rulers were quick to spot social groups onto whom the responsibility for social order could be pushed and, if

satisfying them meant a greater degree of control over the young women and men who made up the potential working class, this must have seemed hardly a high price to pay in order to ensure a flexible labour force. How, and to what degree, this was achieved requires further investigation. Nonetheless I propose a line of argument that the creation and codification of Customary Law must have been a principal means through which this was achieved.

#### *The Creation of Customary Law*

The process of altering legal meanings and structures has been documented in other African countries for this period (Snyder, 1981 on Senegal; Murray (1981) on Lesotho; Chanock (1982) and Wright (1982) on Northern Rhodesia; Robertson (1987)). This is referred to by others as the *creation* of Customary Law, in which the appearance of social institutions often remain the same, whilst actually being transformed. Such transformation took place in two ways. The determination of colonial administrators to find rules and order, as described above, often meant that they misinterpreted the pre-colonial and contemporary practices, whether accidentally, because of their own ideological persuasions, or intentionally with political motivation. In addition, the subordination of African societies within capitalist economies itself changed the meaning of many legal ideas and practices, as in those relating to land, for instance (Snyder, 1981).

Similar processes occurred in Rhodesia, and have been noted by other writers,

What were called customary law, customary land rights, customary political structure and so on, were in fact *all* invented by colonial codification.

(Ranger, 1983b: 250)

and

By defining and supporting "traditional" rulers, as, for example, in the Native Affairs Ordinance of 1927, and by modifying and codifying African customary law, the settler state tried to channel African hopes and grievances into "tribal" outlets very largely controlled by the state itself.

(Phimister, 1983: 272)

More specifically, May remarks,

In order to comply with the requirements of the Charter and later Parliamentary legislation, colonial administrators had to determine what the customary law of each group of the indigenous peoples was and to translate it into an instrument operable within a legal system based on Western judicial concepts.

Inevitably these measures ... were themselves instigators of changes in customary law.

... In cataloging custom by writing it down, officials, themselves trained in Western legal conceptualization, brought about considerable change once the system of authorized courts came into existence.

(May, 1983: 42-3)

The beginnings of interference in land tenure in Rhodesia were described above, and will be continued for later periods. Changes in the meaning of the marriage contract in Zimbabwe also occurred in this way at this time, and had considerable implications for later years. Neither Ranger nor Phimister trace the changes that occurred in marriage, or their implications for agricultural production and wage labour. May concludes that this codification of laws, combined with their retention throughout changes in society relating to migrant labour and urbanisation, worked to the disadvantage of women (May, 1983: 6, 40-3, throughout).

May does not trace the details of how this happened, but deduces that it did because she uses as a bench mark a conception of pre-colonial society in which women were not, on balance, disadvantaged *vis à vis* men (pp. 11-21). She bases this on an uncritical acceptance of some sources which ignore the complexity and variation discussed in the section on the nineteenth century. Thus, for May, any disadvantages noted in the colonial period, and since independence, are assumed to indicate a relative deterioration in the situation for women (and her conclusions have been accepted by others (eg. Batezat *et al*, 1988: 155)). This assessment requires further investigation, however, in order to take account of the rather different potential interpretations of pre-colonial society summarised earlier. I begin to do this by highlighting changes in the conditions of marriage below and in the following chapter.

The history of marriage is difficult to trace by relying on written accounts. Commentators on marriage relations at that time and since have often obscured changes by stating that something was the common practice, with no clear explanation of the grounds for thinking this. The real contemporary practices, officials' interpretations of them and people saying what a formal definition, or local practice, was or is are all amalgamated. The most interesting sources for the occurrence of disputes are court records, but caution is needed when viewing the evidence, as described by Megan Vaughan for Malawi in the 1940s,

The traditional leaders ... had their own reasons for claiming that their previous control was being undermined. Similarly, court cases, whilst useful for showing the strains in a system, are biased towards the problematical, and this does need to be constantly borne in mind.

(Vaughan, 1987: 143-4)

From the earliest colonial period, women and men asked the Native Commissioners to resolve disputes relating to marriage. These included those relating to the control of property and labour; the payment of *lobola*; and the terms of divorce. Before colonialism such disputes would have gone through the hierarchy of family elders, headmen, sub-chief and chief. It is not always clear from records whether those cases and complaints which were arbitrated informally by the colonial administrators had been through these procedures first, or whether the complainants preferred colonial administrators to hear their cases because they felt that they would have a better chance of resolution in their favour. It is apparent from the reports that they ruled with a mixture of concern to impose their own morality and ideology about gender relations along with what they understood to be 'traditional' practice. Sometimes women were able to obtain judgements from the NCs which were closer to those which they desired than those which they could have obtained by the traditional means. In a review of court rulings in 1944, a case was cited which had set a precedent for a woman to divorce a man in 1928. Also in 1936 a NC forced a husband to accept a payment of damages so that the genitor could claim custody of his children as the genitor and the woman in question had been living together for a number of years. The grounds for setting these precedents were that traditional practice was 'repugnant to a natural sense of justice and morality' (Unsworth, 1944: 50).

Chanock's study of Northern Rhodesia during this period identifies the ways in which the administrators selected only those aspects of the evidence presented by men about customary practices which fitted with

their preconceptions about the ways in which the law should be used. He shows how they ignored the extent of flexibility that existed in the evidence presented (which had already been sifted in the interests of the witnesses themselves). He concludes that the end result was that although women had on occasion been able to use the courts to their advantage in the earlier period, once codification had taken place, the administration ruled far more in favour of men's interests and this opportunity was in large part lost to women (Chanock, 1982: 56-7).

A similar process may have occurred in Southern Rhodesia, but I have not found such detailed evidence of the process of interpretation of evidence by administrators. There was official recognition of, and concern about, the role played by the NCs in making law in Southern Rhodesia, but it was expressed as a problem of insufficient legal training. In other words, the government's view was based on a belief in the existence of a set of fixed, timeless, 'traditional' rules, and the problem was simply in discovering them and training the NCs so that they would administer them with impartiality. These beliefs and concerns sprung from the British government itself, which was placing similar pressures on the administrators of other colonies at the time (Howman, 1949: 18-20). The NCs themselves were caught between knowing some of the extent of flexibility in Shona laws better than any others in the administration, yet also being under pressure from the government to appear to be implementing 'neutral' laws in a dispassionate way. Under these pressures, they *made* laws, taking what they thought to be the most common practices at that time and freezing them into inflexible regulations.

The desire to bolster the social control held by the chiefs and headmen interacted in the passing and enforcing of legislation with the ideological conceptions of the NCs themselves as they came to play an increasingly important part in the resolution of conflicts over labour and fertility as manifested in disputes about the terms of marriage and its dissolution. Nonetheless, these things interacted in a complex way, and it would be over-simplistic and deterministic to assume that all the changes which took place were entirely due to the conscious manipulations of state officials. The interaction of the two systems of legal jurisdiction during this period caused many problems, and left a complicated legacy at independence. Below I describe how the legal powers of the chiefs were made more explicit (although still ambiguous) and some of the ways in which NCs changed and made Customary Law.

The chiefs and headmen had had no legal power to try what the state defined as criminal cases since the early colonial days, but the exact extent of their authority remained ambiguous. It was tacitly accepted that chiefs and headmen continued to resolve disputes over which they had no technical jurisdiction under colonial law. The definition of criminal was determined by the state, and embodied entirely different sets of values about the nature of different offences from pre-colonial Shona society, if criminal is taken to mean 'against society', and civil to mean 'against a person'. There were some acts which were considered criminal in this sense in pre-colonial society, for example, witchcraft and acts which were considered offensive to the spirits of the founders (such as incest, the despoiling of shrines, working on rest *chisi* days). There were also less serious crimes, such as



the felling of fruit trees which were for the use of the community. Other acts which the colonial state defined as criminal had previously been resolved in terms of compensation to the complainant, rather than punishment on behalf of the community, for example, stealing or damaging property. Others had not been considered crimes in any sense, such as migration or desertion of employment.

Adultery was also made a criminal offence under colonial rule, as described, but as this related to marriage and its dissolution, in some ways it was still the moral 'domain' of the headmen and chiefs. The ambiguity of this situation is reflected in a circular from the Chief Native Commissioner to all Native Commissioners in 1930,

(The chiefs and headmen) have no authority to try criminal cases under any circumstances whatsoever, nor have they any jurisdiction in Civil Cases, except in so far as the parties ... may agree to accept the arbitration.

(CNC circular no. C600, 24.1.31

NAZ file S1923 Native Commissioners General Outletters (Mrewa) 1930)

This comment about civil cases suggests that the state administration was selected for arbitration by people who, for whatever reason, did not expect to get satisfaction from the 'traditional' methods of resolving disputes, which is similar to the situation described for Northern Rhodesia by Chanock (op cit). The pre-colonial methods of resolution described earlier also included stages prior to hearing by the headmen and chiefs, but there is no evidence as to their decline or persistence.

During this period the number of cases that were brought to the administration for arbitration increased a great deal. It is not possible to say whether or not this reflected a commensurate increase in marital

strife, or whether the outlet was found to be increasingly effective. In any case the administrators did not provide the intervention apparently sought by some women, as seen by the following comment,

Harassed officials could testify to the crop we are reaping of petty domestic cases which are almost without exception due to the capriciousness of native wives and daughters ... mild expostulations at the too free indulgence in beer in either wife or daughter is sufficient to bring the injured woman to the office to lay a complaint. If the expected complete satisfaction for the injury is not obtained the next step is to leave him and live on the proceeds of prostitution.

(ANC Fort Nixon, 6.11.34

NAZ S1542/512)

The tensions which were growing within communities and households increased the chances that previous social constraints could be avoided or ignored where there were other options. May suggests that this was an important factor in the worsening position of women (May, 1983: 6). The European officials provided a new outlet for these tensions and conflicts which seemed worth trying. In situations where husbands were absent for long periods, the ability of relatives to influence their behaviour diminished. Where people knew they would get a more sympathetic hearing from the NC, people may well have disregarded the opinions even of chiefs. Without information about the frequency and nature of disputes which were settled in the 'traditional' fashion, it is difficult to assess the significance of this.

In spite of the scanty evidence, I have inferred that several key precedents were established during this period through the use of the law in this way. That these occurred at some point and were important for later periods is indicated by May (op cit). It was established that in the eyes of the law the 'native' woman was to be considered a minor.

Clearly this was a new legal situation (May, 1979 and 1983). As the court procedures became more formal, women's minority status came to mean that they could not bring cases in their own right (Kuper, 1955: 30). They required the support of a male representative, and in the case of divorce this meant having the support of members of their own lineage, who stood to lose cattle and money on returning *lobola*. This represented a loss of potential support for women, compared with the pre-colonial situation in which the woman was able to involve members of both families in arbitration.

Women were never to be awarded the permanent custody of their children. In cases of divorce where they were blameless, or widowhood where they were not inherited, they were allowed to keep young children until a specified age and then return them to their fathers. This resembles the pre-colonial situation, but is not the same, as this was made an inflexible rule and came in later periods to be defended as Customary Law. The evidence available for the pre-colonial period suggests that the discussion and arbitration that took place after divorce and widowhood may have created possibilities for flexibility, particularly in the case of the blameless woman in a divorce, where it seems that it was possible for the woman's own father to get custody on her behalf. Whether or not this was the case remains somewhat ambiguous, but it is clear that women were clearly disadvantaged in the new rigidified situation.

Other precedents no doubt took place at this time, but require a comprehensive analysis of court records in order to be proven. By imposing their own impressions of what they thought were appropriate

judgements, NCs were *creating* Customary Law. The fact that so many cases were brought to the NCs' courts probably reflects many things, but not least in significance amongst these is the fact that they offered a better chance of favourable arbitration for some. In the face of the attitudes and judgements about women described above, they were clearly opportunities from which men stood to gain in relation to women.

Similar situations were found all over the British colonies (Staudt, 1987: 201) and their effects are summarised by Christine Obbo,

At the ideological level, the dynamic tension between formal patrilineal domination and both formal and informal female power has been snapped, and patrilineal domination has united with Victorian and Christian notions of male domination.

(Obbo 1980 37-9)'

In effect, an entrenchment of potentially fluid processes managing rights in marriage and on its termination into a codified system of law gradually lessened the scope women had to exercise control over the behaviour of men.

#### *Summary of the period 1923 to the end of the 1930s*

Changes in the means of material reproduction took place in this period, such as the type and source of food, clothes, and payment of tax. The form of production also changed, in terms of agricultural production and livestock. These changes took place in response to the creation and curtailment of different opportunities by the settler community through the state in a developing capitalist economy. They were achieved through adjustments in and transformations of the social relations of production and reproduction along gender and generational lines. These interacted

with the development of classes amongst the Shona. At the same time, there was from the state deliberate intervention, and other action with similar effects, to support the changes that were in favour of men against women, and to counteract some of the challenges made by young men to elders.

The effect of the former was to begin to reconstruct the meaning of marriage. In the latter case, the effect was to reconstruct the social meaning of chief, headman and other notables' positions in society. They were incorporated as part of the state bureaucracy, but had decreasing autonomy in the regulation of land use and marriage. Nonetheless, they were able to satisfy the state in heading off challenges to their own and the state's authority by labour and religious organisations opposed to co-operation with Europeans. On the other hand, the preponderance of complaints from them about women and young men may reflect the fact that they did not successfully deliver what the administrators wanted them to.

#### CONCLUSION

Ranger characterises the early colonial period (up to the end of the 1930s) as one in which there was a shift in Shona peasant consciousness from seeing the European farmers as the main enemy, to perceiving the main oppressor to be the state (Ranger, 1985a: 88-91). The political strategy of the government to bolster the authority of the traditional leaders in order to control the population did not prevent this shift in peasant consciousness. Nonetheless it was a period which witnessed the foundation of the settler economy and the re-structuring

of social relations in the countryside which made this possible. The social relations of production and reproduction which evolved were the product of *interactions* between state actions and social tensions along gender, generational and class lines. State policies and survival strategies which were tested or begun in this period are echoed and further developed in later periods in response to the stresses of Southern Rhodesian capitalist development, as traced in the following chapters. They have also had important ramifications for the contemporary situation in the Communal Areas since Zimbabwe's independence, as will be examined in Part III of the thesis.

## CHAPTER SIX

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNAL AREAS: THE INTERACTION  
BETWEEN PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION, GENDER AND CLASS

## Part Three: 1940s to the end of the 1950s

## THE 1940s AND 1950s: THE POLITICS OF REFORM

Far more has been written about this period of Rhodesian history than earlier ones. The focus of this literature is frequently on the problems related to the implementation of the *Land Apportionment Act* and the *Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA)*. Some of it adopts a technicist analysis, whilst other writers focus on the political implications of the resistance to their implementation. Relatively little has been written about the details of what happened within the Reserves. Two important sources are Terence Ranger's work on Makoni District, in Manicaland, and J.F.Holleman's case study of Chief Mangwende in Mrewa District, in Mashonaland, during this period. Some serious ethnographic research on the Shona also began during this time, but the general dearth was still felt by other writers (Holleman, 1951: 354; Rigby, 1959: 78-9). Archival material relating to periods after the 1940s is not yet available to the public.

Legislation which expressed government policy clearly revealed official misunderstanding about the ways in which many African people met the needs of material reproduction. Likewise, changes in the patterns and relations of human reproduction came as a shock to the Administration when a more realistic estimate of the size of the African population was made.

During the second world war secondary industry developed in Rhodesia to a much greater extent than previously, largely through the investment of foreign capital<sup>1</sup>. This development accelerated throughout the 1940s and was recognised as being vital for the economy by settler classes. Arrighi has argued that industrialists gained greater influence over state policy than previously in favour of a better-skilled, and therefore settled, workforce (Arrighi, 1973a: 216-7; and 1973b: 353-4). They also wanted an improvement in conditions in the Reserves to create an expanded market. These changes were not those most desired by settler groups, and there remains contention as to the extent of the dominance of foreign capital over these settler interests, as well as the degree to which they did in fact differ (Cliffe, 1981: 14-20).

The period is most clearly understood as a 'conflict between capital and labour' in which it is important to consider

how the long association of international capital with settler colonialism changed in the course of struggle to secure the conditions in which capitalism could flourish.

(Phimister, 1988: 251).

In this context, Phimister proposes seeing the state as containing

...within it the economic, political and ideological interests of capital in general... [seeking] to contain and channel the antagonistic relations and contradictions engendered by the increasing struggle to secure the many different conditions necessary for the creation and appropriation of surplus value.

(Phimister, op cit)

As the site of conflicting capitals, the state articulated the demands of foreign industrialists, settler farmers and other settler interests. This is not to say that there was a simplistic identification of policy with the interests of the most dominant group. Rather policy was the outcome of alliances and compromises between different interests. Moreover, the



enactment of legislation as a reflection of official policy, was often quite a different matter from its implementation.

Investment companies had bought up large tracts of the alienated land from the earliest days of the Colony, but also after the *Land Apportionment Act* of 1930. A tobacco boom in the 1940s (caused by the limitations on dollar expenditure by the UK government after the second world war (Arrighi, 1973b: 351)) made it desirable to realise the profits of their investment and parcel-up and sell the land to Europeans keen to become farmers. To the latter, this was the period of prosperity for which they had been waiting. Until this time, the Act had not been fully enforced and much of the land had been rented and sharecropped by Africans. This was partly as it was advantageous to keep them there as a source of revenue and pool of labour, and partly to prevent unrest during the second world war (Birmingham and Ranger, 1983: 365). Thus the effects of the alienation of this land had been postponed, so long as the people who found themselves to be tenants could afford to pay.

With the tobacco boom, however settler opinion pushed for its enforcement (Ranger, 1985a: 104). The evictions which followed caused great hardship as the tenants were forced into the already crowded reserves and were often forced to de-stock before doing so (Ranger, 1985a: 105-6)<sup>2</sup>. The settler farmers needed the continued provision of cheap labour to maintain viability. In this they shared the aspirations of the white workers and petty bourgeoisie, who wanted the prevention of competition from Africans and a supply of workers for cheap domestic labour (Arrighi, 1973b: 342; Ranger, 1983b: 223).

The hardship caused to Africans by the increased pressures in the Reserves, the evictions from 'White' land, and the absence of major concessions to Black labour resulted in labour organisation in the towns. This was because workers realised that they had no old age insurance and the decreasing productivity of the peasantry was at the root of their impoverishment (Arrighi, 1973b: 352-3)<sup>3</sup>. This culminated in a railway strike in 1945, followed by massive unionisation, further strikes, a national strike in 1948, and considerable unrest in some rural areas (Arrighi, 1973b: 353). In turn, this added further strength to the demands of industrialists for more concessions to be given to labour, so as to obtain a more stable and reliable workforce.

As a result, in spite of the potential opposition from other settler classes, from the late 1940s various pieces of legislation were passed which were in keeping with the demands conditional to expanded investment from foreign capital. These related to the conditions of employment and to what was to happen in the countryside. The former included some relaxation in the laws governing African residence and job reservation (Cliffe, 1981: 18)<sup>4</sup>. In the Reserves, the reforms were related to efforts to conserve the environment, and culminated in the *Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA)*, which was directed at changing land tenure. These twin approaches were adopted with the stated objectives of creating a stable workforce and expanded rural market, as fitted with the desires of industrialists, but also extended state control over the countryside. The proposed reforms would take away power from the chiefs as the state planned to control the allocation and use of land to a much greater degree. In addition, by allocating leaseholds of *measured* amounts

of land to individual men, the further development of a capitalist class of farmers was to be curtailed (Duggan, 1980: 230; Ranger, 1985a: 75). Moreover, by implementing some redistribution of land within the Reserves, the government hoped to avoid further political crisis (Duggan, 1980: 228). This backfired dramatically, as I describe below.

By the mid-late 1950s, much of this legislation remained unimplemented: it remained official policy, but was either impossible to enforce, or it was not considered politically expedient by the government to do so. In the case of the partial liberalisation of labour legislation, there was growing White unemployment which increased the pressure against its implementation. Some concessions were made by the government to the industrialists, without undercutting further the infrastructure of cheap migrant labour on which the farmers and other settler classes depended for their standard of living<sup>5</sup>. Thus there was on the whole no real improvement in the conditions of work or living for those Africans in urban areas (Arrighi, 1973b: 362; Phimister, 1983: 286).

The fate and effects of the legislation in the countryside were more complex and, as it is more pertinent to the main subject of this chapter, I will leave discussion of it until a later section. Suffice here to say that the landlessness resulting from planned and partial implementation caused widespread dissent, including opposition from the chiefs and headmen whose authority had been bolstered in the previous period in the hope of *preventing* such opposition. In some areas implementation of the legislation was never attempted.

Southern Rhodesia became part of the Central African Federation in 1953 (and remained so until its break up in 1963), and by the late 1950s

there were increasing numbers of strikes and spreading general unrest in demand of greater power by the African populations of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) (Birmingham and Ranger, 1983: 365)<sup>6</sup>. The ideology of 'Partnership' was more successful in Southern Rhodesia (Arrighi, 1973b: 359), and the *appearance* of reform was maintained. Measures were taken to foster and buy-off a growing African middle class, composed of chiefs and headmen, traders, bus owners and professionals (Arrighi, 1973b: 360-1; Cliffe, 1981: 19-20). In the countryside, the African Purchase Area farmers were given greater recognition (Arrighi, 1973b: 360; Cheater, 1984) and the 'reform' legislation remained official policy. Thus, in spite of opposition from large sectors of the settler classes, the *appearance* of reform was maintained through the 1950s because of the need to attract further foreign capital, but also to try to win approval, and hence independence, from Britain on the settlers' terms .

In the latter part of the decade, recession, unemployment and resistance in town and country brought the crisis to a head and the state once again sought collaboration with the chiefs and headmen. The failure of the government to satisfy Britain that the reforms had in fact taken place, whilst still maintaining that they were official policy, lost it the support of both international capital and settler classes. It eventually led to the formation and coming to power of the Rhodesian Front, which had support from all settler classes. After the election in 1958, Prime Minister Whitehead responded to increasing unrest by banning and arresting many members of the African National Congress, which was blamed for the failure of the reform measures in the Reserves'. In 1959

a State of Emergency was declared and draconian security measures to suppress political activity followed, as the break up of the Federation became inevitable (Birmingham and Ranger, 1983: 367). The following era was one of much more direct state expression of settler interests.

### *State Policies and Practices in the Countryside*

Here I switch focus to the Reserves and present an interpretation of various secondary sources which summarise state policies.

The policy of *Centralisation* of the Reserves which was first introduced in the 1930s had been largely resisted by the NCs, due to the problems they could foresee in its implementation, and their desire to foster good relations with the chiefs. In the 1940s there was increasing concern about the environment and more of the soil conservation measures proposed under *Centralisation* were enforced. The Native Trade and Production Commission of 1944 stated that the problem of ecological deterioration in the Reserves was one of the 'traditional sloth and destructiveness of the Natives'. It proposed a more radical re-organisation of rural society even than would have occurred had *Centralisation* been implemented, so that all production within the Reserves should be planned. This was a similar approach to that recommended in other colonies at the time.

Most of the proposals were taken up in the *Native Reserves Land Utilisation and Good Husbandry Bill* of 1948, which outlined a new land tenure system, resembling a hybrid of tribal-capitalist systems with

individual land holdings and communal grazing. Under this Act, *Centralisation* was actually enforced in most places so that land in the Reserves was separated into blocks of arable and grazing, ringed by houses. Compulsory marketing at fixed prices was intended to cover all African grown crops, and the NCs were given the power to order compulsory labour for conservation work, to 'de-pasture stock, give orders on methods of cultivation, prohibit the cultivation of land and control water' (Murray, 1970: 305; Phimister, 1986b: 272-3). Attempts to implement these measures were coupled with extension advice which was used by a few of the peasants who were in a position to do so.

Good husbandry was then to be enforced under threat of dispossession. In effect this restricted people's mobility and petrified the flexible nature of village membership. This was supposed to be done on a voluntary basis and in consultation with local people, but in general was not. By this time, the pressure on land within the Reserves had in many places curtailed the possibility of allocating new land to sons near to their parents as and when they needed it, in the traditional fashion. Rather, as pressure from the shortage was felt, it had become the practice to subdivide land between sons. Under *Centralisation* and this new system, land was no longer to be subdivided, and the implication was that families would have to be split up so that sons could get access to new land elsewhere. This wholesale reorganisation led to the widespread disruption of communities where it was implemented and fundamentally disturbed local power structures because different headmen and chiefs were forced to reside in each others' territories. Once re-organisation had taken place, they had no

legal jurisdiction over disputes over land and also felt powerless to assert their control because they had not been responsible for the land allocation as it stood (Holleman, 1969: 54-6 and 87; Phimister, 1983: 283-4).

These unforeseen difficulties and sporadic passive resistance in some areas reinforced caution on the part of some state officials. The mood of reform was too intense for any caution to be heeded by the government, which persistently saw the solution in greater state control over agricultural production in the Reserves, but with the cost being borne by the inhabitants of the Reserves themselves (Phimister, 1986b: 212, 272). The government passed the *Native Land Husbandry Act* of 1951 (*NLHA*). This outlined a more uniform transition in land tenure from tribal to leasehold, specifying minimum amounts of land that were to be allocated to household heads (in most cases assumed to be male) and maximum numbers of stock. These amounts were drawn up by the Department of Native Agriculture as 'economic units' sufficient to enable a 'family' of a man, his wife and three children to produce enough for their subsistence and some for sale.

The Act did not make clear exactly who should be given access to land, so in some cases it was decided that only those who had cultivated land in the previous season should be entitled, whilst in others it was those who were present in the Reserves at a certain time. Those who did not get access to arable land were not supposed to own cattle (Floyd, 1959: 26). By this time, many men were absent from the Reserves for much of the year. In 1946, for the Reserves as a whole it was estimated that 46% of the men and 3% of the women were usually absent, and so would

not have been taken into account in the land allocations (Kuper, 1955: 16). In Musami, in Mrewa District, an estimate in 1958 suggested that men who had returned from their first period of employment during the period 1940-1958 had spent less than twelve months in the village before leaving again. Of those returning from a second period, 64.4% spent less than three months in the village (Garbett, 1964: 193).

Hence there was often only one male for every <sup>two</sup> females present, and yet the allocation of land had a very strong gender bias. Widows with children were to receive one third of the standard amount, and men received extra land if they had more than wife, although this could not exceed the fixed upper limit for all men. Women, who were not widows with children to support, were not entitled to any land at all.

The Act could not be implemented successfully because there was insufficient land within the Reserves, even on the false assumptions of the technocrats who drew it up (Kay, 1970: 88; Brown, 1959: 15-16). If it had been it would simply have brought all the inhabitants to a standard of living well below subsistence (Duggan, 1980: 222-3). Nonetheless, implementation was speeded up in the latter part of the decade which, by all accounts, led to inaccuracies and further insensitivity where implementation was attempted at all (Floyd, 1959: 31).

Ostensibly, restructuring was intended to give greater security of tenure, but studies on the prevailing tribal tenure in the 1950s showed that the new regulations decreased this even for those who received the standard amounts (Hamilton, 1964: 212). In reality the government tried to remove what it saw as the autocratic, *inefficient* use of the power to allocate land by the chiefs and headmen, and replace it with state



authority. The minimum amounts of land proposed were considerably less (6-8 acres in most Shona areas) than those which had been acquired by the more 'successful' farmers. The Act did allow for the possibility that richer farmers might increase their acreage 'by negotiation' with, ie purchase from, other farmers, upto three times the standard amount (Floyd, 1959: 25), but where there was insufficient land clearly this was not possible. In many areas, access to land was extremely unequal within the reserves, with many people farming much less than the proposed amount, and a redistribution along the lines planned was simply not possible (Floyd, 1959: 117-9). This was a problem common in many of the Reserves, where the minimum amount was simply reduced (Duggan, 1980: 232). Thus the emphasis was on trying to ensure a minimum amount of land, rather than ensuring the development of the most 'advanced' farmers. Duggan describes this approach as an imposition of individual responsibility for soil conservation, as the regulations were to be adhered to on pain of confiscation, *for the collective benefit* (Duggan, 1980: 230).

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, there was considerable political tension within the state apparatus about the preferable form of policy towards the further development of a richer stratum of peasants and about what should happen generally in the Reserves. As described, the demands of foreign industrialists investing in Southern Rhodesia were for the development of richer peasant farmers to increase the size of their markets in the countryside. As this period is often seen to be one in which the interests of foreign capital dominated, it is also often assumed that the main intention embodied in the rural legislation was to

create a rural elite to complement an urban elite and to separate these strata (Duggan, 1980: 229). The 1944 Commission summed up the intention in the following way,

The ultimate aim, in our opinion, should be to stabilise the respective careers. A Native wishing to be a farmer must stay on his allotment and support his family and himself therefrom. The Native wishing to take employment must make his home with his family where his work is.

(cited in J.F.H., 1948: 83)

Palmer adopts this interpretation, ie that the intention of the government was to foster elites and end the migrant labour system, and it still retains some currency (Palmer, 1977a: 243-4). From this point of view the legislation's eventual abandonment is explicable by the inability of the economy to generate sufficient employment for men to survive with their families outside the Reserves.

However, the evidence also suggests that the government intended the legislation to *stop the further development* of the group of richer peasants, not to foster the development of the wealthiest (Ranger, 1985a: 75; Duggan, 1980: 227). Garfield Todd explained the intention,

We do not want native peasants. We want the bulk of them working in the mines and farms and in the European areas and we could absorb them and their families.

(quoted in Arrighi, 1967: 362)

The legislation was in fact a compromise between the separation of lifestyles and economic functions, on the one hand<sup>e</sup>, and on the other, the absence of any real commitment to overcome the primary constraints hindering the development of African agriculture by allowing greater access to land or increases in income. An important additional concern of the government was to facilitate the Reserves in marketing food<sup>e</sup>. This was to be done by 'transforming' them into more productive farming areas

through soil conservation and crop rotation techniques, without giving them any more resources. It was alleged that such measures had not already been adopted by Africans because of their backwardness and laziness, even though their yields per acre were only marginally less than European farmers working land of similar quality (Hamilton, 1964: 52)<sup>10</sup>. It was also thought that if this transformation in farming techniques could be accomplished it would also avoid a growing political crisis (Duggan, 1980: 228)

The persistence of different interpretations of the intentions of 'the state' come from regarding it as a monolithic entity. It is more useful to accept that there were different elements of the administration which made up the state which had different interests embodied in the *NLHA* itself, and in its implementation. These require further examination. The 'problems' in the Reserves were seen by the 1944 Commission and the technocrats in the Department of Native Agriculture to stem from inefficient farming because of insecurity of tenure and fragmentation of holdings. The Government was told that these problems had been caused by the farming systems chosen by Africans, rather than by adaptations to the constraints which had been placed on them by the settler capitalist economy. Technocrats then drew up proposals for the restructuring of the rural economy based on their estimates of what an appropriate economy would look like.

The ignorance of the technocrats might have been supplemented by the knowledge of the NCs, but was not. There are two explanations for this. Holleman suggests that changes in the nature of the NCs' work prevented them from having the same detailed knowledge of the Districts

which they are once thought to have had. They had more desk work and were able to make their 'rounds' much more quickly with modern vehicles.

He comments,

At no stage during the crucial period of planning did they produce a comprehensive statement of what this social system actually involved, or at least give a clear outline of the structure and territorial ramifications of the tribal communities into which these plans were to be integrated.

and,

it was only in the early 'sixties, as part of the new policy of "community development", that the Administration made a deliberate and extensive effort to examine the structure of the indigenous communities.

(Holleman, 1969: 38-9)

Nonetheless many of them knew that the full implementation of the *NLHA* was politically, if not physically, impossible, and made protests to the government (Ranger, 1985a: 104-6). They never made carefully researched reports of the likely implications, and had no independent ethnographic evidence to fall back on. The technocrats remained unconvinced and the government was unwilling to accept the validity of their remonstrations without more concrete evidence. Herein lies the second type of explanation. The NCs were administrators of government policy and although they were part of the state apparatus, they had little authority to control the direction of policy. In areas which were not of much direct concern to the government, they were able to legislate local policy, but they had little power in the face of pre-determined government policy.

As I explained above, this was a period of compromises and alliances and although the interests of capital in general were for the cheapest labour 'possible', the definitions of this were different for

foreign industrial capital, and settler agricultural capital. The settler proletariat, petty bourgeoisie and non-agricultural bourgeoisie were also important influences on what became government policy. The Native Commissioners had little weight in this alliance as members of the petty bourgeoisie. Their own class interests were allied with the interests of the settlers in general so they were never overtly opposed to, or organised against, the government, but in terms of their function within the state, they were often implementing policy under protest, or even not at all. In this way the proposed reforms of the countryside which were proposed can be seen as the demands of those in power who not only did not know what the chances of failure were but also were not forced to take heed when they were warned by the Native Administration.

This analysis of the politics of the reforms allows some insight into the rationales proposed by Ranger and Duggan for the motives for the legislation. The desires to: prevent soil erosion, to prevent extreme social differentiation, and to make agriculture more productive in the Reserves; and to create a settled workforce which no longer depended on the land, were all motives of the classes and groups which made up the state at this time. They were not always compatible, and decisions were made with very imperfect knowledge of the situation in the Reserves. The outcomes of the struggles between these different groups interacted with the actions of Africans themselves to produce the chaotic local outcomes of attempts to implement the Act and its associated legislation.

Many Africans in the countryside engaged in widespread passive and active resistance to the legislation, the extent of which forced the

state to reconsider its ambitions (Birmingham and Ranger, 1983: 366). By the end of the decade it was not possible even to enforce a watered-down version because the experience had radicalised much of the peasantry, which had become opposed to state interference in agriculture. Resistance occurred across different social strata, and the chiefs often organised it. By 1958 the government had set up a Select Committee to investigate the problem of landlessness, which resulted in 2.8 million acres being assigned to African land, and a further 5 million being made available for purchase by anyone (Roder, 1964: 43)''.

Even if the government had decided to take on the opposition presented by the African population, and to implement a straightforward expression of the majority of the settler demands, it would have utterly alienated the foreign interests it wished to cultivate. On the other hand no real reforms were implemented because of the intense settler opposition to those which had already been considered, which were seen as a direct challenge to the whole racist ideology which upheld their economy. The compromise was to keep up the appearance of carrying on, but in fact to do little and accept the impasse of the NCs.

As a last ditch attempt, at the end of the 1950s the government sought the assistance of the chiefs again. The removal of their power to allocate land which had been imposed during this period had caused much resentment and many of them had been heavily involved in resistance against the implementation of the legislation (Birmingham and Ranger, 1983: 366). These moves towards reconciliation, particularly through the *African Councils Act*, are considered in more detail below. They were to herald an increasing reliance by the state on the chiefs and headmen,

which over the next two decades was to become an attempt at a transition to indirect rule (Bratton, 1978: 16-7).

### *Implementation and Ramification*

The policy of *Centralisation* described earlier was implemented for the first time in many Reserves in the 1940s, and this was followed by further re-organisation under the *NLHA*. Thus in some places there were two major disruptions imposed by the state on communities within the Reserves. I analyse the implications of these for agricultural production and social organisation in more detail below. The removal of many people from European-designated land into the Reserves in the 1940s added to the pressure on land. The implementation of policy and reactions to it varied considerably throughout the colony, and the story is by no means complete. Nonetheless, the extent of resistance to the policies was eventually sufficient to stop their implementation. The case studies of Makoni and Mrewa Districts illustrate the nature of some of the problems encountered<sup>1,2</sup>.

Both Makoni and Mrewa were regarded almost as being model districts in the ways in which many of the initial reforms of the early 1940s were accepted. In spite of this and the relatively peaceful absorption of extra people into Mrewa in particular, these two Districts were amongst the most militant in the Shona areas in resisting the measures that were introduced in the late 1940s and 1950s. The key to understanding why the resistance was so widespread is in seeing that so

few people benefitted from them (Ranger, 1984: 322). Unlike in the 1920s and 1930s, when the administration was able to buy off the chiefs and headmen, and to some extent men in general, in this period they could not deliver the goods.

The realities of life with high levels of migrant labour were ignored on the assumption that the land would be worked by a nuclear family. Those who were not yet married were not taken into account and those who were not present at the moment when heads were counted were excluded. Floyd comments on Mrewa District that in the higher rainfall areas, the minimum amount of arable land was calculated at six acres. 1949 maps indicate that in the High and the south part of the Middle Velts one third of households had 25% of this or less. In the mid-north and the East some had large holdings obtained because the close relatives and special friends of the village head had been favoured. In Uzumba Reserve, 29% of those born there had no land. These were returned migrants, disabled people, or had simply been refused land by the head. Floyd comments, 'Thus insecurity of tenure was because of the vagaries of the kraal head' (Floyd, 1968: 155-6).

Even in the areas where land definition had favoured the majority there was considerable resistance to the redistribution of land because those who would have gained some land recognised that their sons and other relatives who were not there at the time would not get any at all and be made landless as land could not be subdivided under the new regulations. The form of inheritance intended under the *NLHA* is not clear, but it seems likely to have been primogeniture thus representing a change from Shona inheritance patterns described earlier. Even those



who had access to large amounts of land clearly stood to lose a great deal under the Act. They could not increase the standard plot size because of the overall shortage of land in the Reserves and only very small amounts of land in fact did change hands in this way (Weinrich, 1975; Bush and Cliffe, 1984: 81).

There were not only protests against the way in which land was allocated, but against the right of the state to have authority in this matter at all. Ranger stresses that an important part of the radicalisation of the peasantry in Makoni was to see that the authority of Europeans could be challenged (Ranger, 1985a: 146-54). In Mrewa the disaffection of chief Mangwende, whilst he was also an active member of the Council, caused great problems for the NC (Holleman, 1969: 201-5). In September 1958 the chief and council brought the NC's programme to a state of paralysis. The chief was forced into an alliance with the African National Council (formed in 1957), to which he had been previously opposed, as his authority was threatened by the administration. The struggle between the NC and the chief ended when the chief was committed on a charge of perjury said to have been committed two years previously. This was perceived by the people as revenge for the fact that he would not co-operate with the NC and so led to further unrest and caused considerable problems in finding a successor.

From 1958, land allocation in Mrewa took place without the presence of a chief (Holleman, 1968: 206). Public protest spread over a very wide area in 1959-60, although there was passive resistance in only a relatively small number of villages. The main agitators were those who stood to lose land altogether, ie the young, male migrants. More than

two fifths of those who had documentary proof of their membership of the village were not allocated rights in the plans. They threatened to use violence against others who co-operated. In 1959 a state of emergency was declared in the area (Floyd, 1968: 192). By mid September of 1960 there were press reports of a tense situation in Mangwende, and within a month the House of Assembly was debating a situation of unrest close to Rebellion (Holleman, 1968: 258).

A similar situation has been recorded for Makoni (Ranger, op cit). These two districts are relatively close to one another, to the north and east of Salisbury, on the highveld. This may have made the pattern of landholding different than in less well-watered areas, or those further from markets and roads, as these less well-endowed areas offered fewer advantages to richer farmers seeking to acquire larger amounts of land. The extent of resistance may have been more extreme here than in other Shona areas, as these two areas were noted for being 'troublesome' at this time, but without further local studies this is not possible to assess. Nonetheless, even here the picture was certainly not simply one of total resistance to all state policies. The movement of people from the 'White' areas into the Reserves in these Shona areas had taken place surprisingly peacefully. In Mrewa in particular resettlement had seemed less impossible than in other places' because of large Reserves, <sup>which</sup> had <sub>^</sub> been set aside under the Land Apportionment Act. Mrewa however also had to absorb people evicted from other areas (Ranger, 1985a: 141).

In the midst of the disruption arising from reorganisation in many parts of the countryside during the 1940s and 1950s a small number of Shona were able to take advantage of some of the policies proposed by

the government. The entrepreneurs of the 1920s and 1930s had lost out in their access to large acres of land. In the 1940s and 50s, a similar group of peasants was keen to attempt the transformation in agricultural methods which was being proposed. With the extension advice offered some were able to re-adjust their farming methods from strategies of extension of the acreage cultivated to more intensive farming methods (Phimister, 1983: 283), and they benefitted from the conservation measures introduced (Phimister, 1986b: 270; Duggan, 1980: 233). Those few who managed to retain or get access to sufficient land and labour continued to pursue the peasant option, where they did not run into opposition from government policy as the government recognised the need to encourage Africans to market food (Phimister, 1986b: 263, 266, 268)<sup>14</sup>. Nonetheless, their numbers were small and many of them perceived the ultimate threat embedded in government policy to undermine their ability to expand and to pass on land to their sons.

Ranger describes how people in Makoni adapted to most of the new regulations set out and still managed to market large amounts of grain in the 1940s (Ranger, 1985a: 139-40). As a whole the peasantry had apparently 'recovered' from the Depression by the end of the 1930s and increased marketed output through the 1940s (Mosely, 1983, cited by Ranger)<sup>15</sup>. However, the aggregate data obscure variations between households and regions.

#### *Changes in Agricultural Production in the Reserves*

The section on the Shona in the *Ethnographic Study of Africa* edited by Daryll Forde was published in 1955 (Kuper, 1955). This reviewed all

the available literature, including unpublished anthropological work, and also included a bibliography. It starkly reveals the lack of anthropological and ethnographic sources available on the Shona at the time. The section seems to confuse the periodisation of other writers, using sources from the 1920s and earlier as evidence of common practices in the 1950s. For this reason I have regarded the evidence presented with caution, in spite of it being such an apparently important source. In 1964, the Rhodes Livingstone Journal (*Human Problems in British Central Africa*) published an issue devoted to the Reserves in Rhodesia, and as much of the fieldwork for these articles was done during the mid-late 1950s, I have relied on them more heavily for the following sections (although they have been neglected by other writers).

#### Access to and Use of Land

Before *Centralisation* changed the organisation of villages, they consisted of clusters of huts near cultivated fields, with the rest of the land used for grazing. The re-organisation consolidated land into blocks of arable and grazing, and houses were located along lines next to tracks which bordered the fields. Gardens were fenced and various constructions were undertaken to prevent soil erosion. The re-organisation planned under the *NLHA* was essentially of the same pattern, but by the time this was implemented the population had increased considerably within some of the Reserves (from immigration, as well as from human reproduction) and often families were forced to move again. Where the *NLHA* was implemented, there was a greater degree of equality

in the size of land-holdings amongst those who did have land, but some were made homeless and landless.

Before the *NLHA* a man's name on the tax list of the village headman was sufficient to establish membership of a village and access to land, unless he was known to be absent for considerable time. New villages could be established by the NC granting a tax book to someone acceptable as its head, rather than through an existing tribal ward-head (Holleman, 1951: 364-5). This security was overridden by the *NLHA*. Many people who had depended on land in the Reserves, or who were moved into them during this period, had to find other ways to survive than through the peasant option. Yudelman estimated that in 1959 landlessness affected 30% of those who were traditionally eligible for land, whilst Duggan puts the figure at about 25% of families (Yudelman, 1964: 123; Duggan, 1980: 234). Most of those actually made landless were those where the male head of household was usually absent from the Reserves.

These estimates were calculated by using a working definition of 'landless' to mean families which had no land but which 'demanded land' (Holleman, 1969: 322). With land tenure in such a state of flux, there was little other option, but it meant that the definition was perhaps broader than in a more stable situation where people who would inherit land *one day* would have been excluded.

In areas where the *NLHA* was not enforced, some land holdings remained very large. In part the ability to get access to such holdings depended on the total acreage held by the branch of the family and how many men this had to be shared amongst (Hamilton, 1964: 45-6). On these holdings, as well as on smaller ones, many acres were left uncultivated.

In Chiweshe Reserve, north of Salisbury, uncultivated land constituted an average of two fifths of the total in all holdings (Hamilton, 1964: 47). In part this is explicable by the fact that the land was held by migrants who were absent. But often when men migrated, the women who were left behind still managed to cultivate, so this cannot fully explain the pattern (Hamilton, 1964: 49). Waterlogging in some places also made cultivation difficult. However, the major problem was decline in soil fertility, and subsequent abandonment of fields (Hamilton, 1964: 40).

This problem was caused by the continuous mono-cropping of maize with insufficient fertiliser and virtually no crop rotation to compensate (Hamilton, 1964: 47, 53, 55; Johnson, 1964: 4; Jordan, 1964: 64). Maize was still by far the preferred crop as the staple food and for sale (Johnson, 1964: 93,9). For this reason, as large an area as possible was planted to maize (Jordan, 1964: 76). Crop rotation meant foregoing this opportunity, which was a luxury few could afford. Chemical fertiliser was only afforded by a few and, after the de-stocking measures of the 1940s, there were insufficient animals to provide enough manure for the amount of land that people needed to plant for subsistence (Hamilton, 1964: 40). This shortage of animals also meant that many could not plough and clear land at the right time of the year, as they had to wait to borrow or hire animals until after their owners had used them (Jordan, 1964: 76-7). Where *NLHA* was implemented, all the land was cultivated, as the land pressure was so great, but this was still not accompanied by rotation or greater amounts of fertiliser, so average yields declined (Hamilton, 1964: 51; Floyd: 1964: 59). By the late 1950s, the state of soil fertility in many parts was thought to have decreased so much that

even if all the proposed measures had been implemented they would not have helped to improve yields (Hamilton, 1964; 56).

### Labour

Holleman describes agricultural production in Mrewa as being similar to that of the previous two decades, but with greater emphasis and reliance on the nuclear family as the unit of production (Holleman, 1951: 365; 1969: 85). This may have been a trend particular to the area, as it is not explicitly noted for other areas. However, he also indicates that by the beginning of the 1940s, the amount of movement and disruption undergone by most Shona communities had made tribe and patrilineage less important than locality, combined with some broad, tribal affiliation, as determinant of identity, reciprocal labour and other social relations (Holleman, 1951: 355-6). His observations suggest that people experienced a reduction in assistance from, and dependence on, wider kin, and an increase in the degree of reliance on new neighbours who were not necessarily related. It was particularly noted by others that work parties which had traditionally been based on kinship had become based on a mixture of kin and neighbour relations (Acquina, 1964: 29-31; Weinrich, 1975: 8).

Many households experienced a shortage of labour nonetheless because of the high rates of absentee men and the increasing numbers of children at school (Acquina, 1964: 21). Strategies of households experiencing shortages of labour included careful planning of the timing of absences by men within extended families so that they were not all away at the same time, and to some extent were able to 'cover' for each other (Acquina, 1964: 26-8). Animals were herded collectively within the

village all the time, with households taking it in turns to provide labour for a few days, rather than having to provide labour (usually boys) every day (Acquina, 1964: 31).

Holleman comments on the gender division of labour at this time, There is, in connection with agricultural work, no fixed division of labour based on sex, and people of both sexes, and all ages are often busy in the same field doing the same work. Ploughing with oxen is usually done by men, but especially during their absence women frequently handle the animals.... A diligent housewife often produces more than she needs for her domestic use, and sells or barter the surplus for extra clothes, small livestock, or simple luxuries. A husband will seldom interfere with these transactions.

(Holleman, 1951: 365-6)

This comment, and others of a similar nature, do not tell much of how flexible the division was once men returned from periods of migration. One comment states that men did more planting than weeding or harvesting, because they were often absent at these times of the year (Johnson, 1964: 97). What happened when they were not is not explored. There were no strong social restrictions on women or men doing any agricultural task, it would seem, but this fact does not give any clue as to how the division might have been changing in response to the social upheavals of the time.

Richer peasant households were often those in which the male head of household was a teacher, some other employee of the state, local storekeeper, or a headman. They were in better positions to call work parties as they could provide more beer and food. They were also able to employ labour from poorer households and possibly from those who found themselves landless. In this way, people in poorer households earned cash



through carting manure and making bricks, as well as other work in the fields.

Whatever the validity of these observations with regard to the changes involved in the turmoil of the 1950s, certain precedents were set at this time. Those who had been allocated land had acquired new rights over it. Thus some men had individual rights and to some degree this was accepted socially. It set the precedent for inalienable access rights, as the power to reclaim land on behalf of the community was removed from the chiefs and headmen. There was no requirement under individual tenure that any land had to be allocated to children or to wives. It is impossible to assess the degree to which these different rights were accepted by all members of the community at this time, let alone in later periods. Nonetheless, it was during this period that such rights were first adopted within Shona communities.

#### *Changes in Material Reproduction*

Tributes of labour and grain to chiefs had stopped or declined during the previous decades (Holleman, 1951: 372). Although this meant that peasants had more grain each season to dispose of in other ways, it also meant that they could not rely on the stores of the chief as security in times of hardship. People had also lost other pre-colonial forms of food security, such as wild food, as was evidenced by the effects of the 1947 drought. In spite of the fact that Kuper suggests that people did still rely on these sources (Kuper, 1955: 25, referring

to a source written in 1905) the evidence presented by Ranger and Iliffe suggests that the large numbers of people seeking employment as a strategy to overcome food shortage at this time reflected a loss of these other means of survival (Ranger, 1985a: 142; Iliffe, 1988: 117-134).

The increased dependence on maize as a staple had implications for agricultural production. But even with these desperate attempts to increase the production of food, the Reserves as a whole, and many of those in Shona areas, became *net importers of food* during this time. Some of these imports were sugar and bread, but a large proportion of the expenditure actually went on maize and maize meal (Johnson, 1964a: 5; 1964b: 107). Some of this expenditure was met by the income of migrant labourers, and some through the sale of other crops, which were usually sold locally, where prices were better than through state marketing boards (Acquina, 1964: 34). What proportion of this expenditure on food was met by which source of income is not clear from any of the studies (Arrighi, 1973a: 233).

Increased commodification generally meant that there was even more pressure to earn cash, simply to reach the socially accepted minimum. This now also included clothes and a variety of household goods, as well as the new types of food and the payment of taxes. During this time cash penetrated many aspects of Shona society. Wealthier households were paying for labour within the Reserves. Other means of earning cash included making and selling bricks, beer and mats, ploughing for other people and herbalism (Johnson, 1964: 103-5), most of which had been done

in previous periods on some communal or reciprocal basis. Cash had also become an important part of many *lobola* payments (Holleman, 1969: 57-8).

The pressure to earn income provoked a number of women to go to the towns 'in spite of every obstacle raised to prevent them' (NC Marandellas, 1946, cited by England, 1982; 73). By the end of the 1950s, one estimate suggested that 18% of the women were absent from their homes in the Reserves (Johnson, 1964b: 86). This seems surprisingly high, but as older women often travelled to visit relatives, many of these could still have been living within Reserves (Johnson, 1964b: 89). On the whole women found little employment in towns, even though they were willing to work for low wages. This was partly because, unlike the situation in South Africa, most domestic employees in Southern Rhodesia were men (Van Onselen, 1976: 178-9). The 1949 legislation for a minimum wage did not mention women (Folbre, 1987: 16-17). Women continued to be excluded from opportunities to earn income independently as they had been in previous periods.

### *'Traditional' Authority*

The 1944 Native Production and Trade Commission had proposed a complete re-organisation of chieftainships as it regarded them as a backward pull on agricultural development. The Shona collateral rules of succession meant that chiefs were usually old (Holleman, 1969: 96). The Commission proposed to restructure succession by limiting the number of *chizvarwa*, or houses, eligible, consolidating tribes and reducing the number of chiefs (J.F.H. 1948: 81). In fact the government did not try to

follow all these recommendations, but it did increase the pay and legal powers of the chiefs.

The chiefs were in a difficult position in their relationship to the state. They had become dependent on it for an income, in the form of allowances and court fees, although they also charged villagers a levy if they set up businesses or undertook any other unusual means of earning an income. The confusion about their legal jurisdiction continued,

In every area of Mashonaland in which I conducted fieldwork during 1945-53, the tribal court took cognisance of whatever complaint was submitted to them, whether this involved 'civil' issues such as marital troubles, or 'criminal' such as theft, assault or even arson. If the issue was clear the court would pronounce judgement and award such compensation to the aggrieved party as was considered reasonable. In doing so these courts did not deliberately flout statutory law, but acted according to customary concepts which do not recognise the same rigid division between 'civil' and 'criminal' law as does the Common Law of the Territory.

(Holleman, 1969: 92)

They also sometimes came into conflict with other 'traditional' leaders recognised by the state. Sub-chiefs were also recognised, and there was often confusion about the 'correct' successors. 'Headman' was a post which covered a variety of different statuses, but was particularly useful to the NC as the incumbent could be appointed, with no claim in terms of birth. Where there was no sub-chief recognised by the state, a headman would take over his unofficial duties, including trying court cases and imposing fines, even though they had no formal legal jurisdiction to do so (Acquina, 1964: 11).

These people were also made responsible for the registration of adult men in the area and the collection of taxes (Jordan, 1964: 67-8; Bratton, 1978: 14). The 1957 *African Councils Act* was intended to

increase the number of African Councils, and further involve the chiefs in administration on behalf of the government. Only twelve had been created between 1952-9 (Bratton, 1978: 16-17), and the government was keen to increase their numbers. However, the main concern of the chiefs at this time were how to react against the removal of their control over land which had been undermined by the reforms of this period. In this they had more in common with their 'subjects' than the government and often allied with them in their resistance to the reforms. For this reason the records that are available do not highlight the ways in which chiefs might have guided or asserted control over marriage contracts. The most important changes at this time arose in spite of the actions of the chiefs and headmen.

### *The Changing Structure of Marriage*

From 1950 the Native Marriage Act ruled that all marriages had to be registered (Acquina, 1969: 76). However, it has never been clear how many of the marriages contracted by 'traditional' means were actually registered. This represented a continuation of the policies of the 1930s in that the state intervened to try to 'regularise' marriage on the terms it saw as preferable for men and traditional authority, whilst fitting with European ideology.

Christian marriage was available, but those opting for it had to satisfy both parents with regard to *lobola* beforehand, when an 'enabling certificate' would be issued by the NC. Presumably this was made a condition of Christian marriage in order to strengthen parents' control over their children and to lessen the conflict with the Church on this

matter. Men had been increasingly responsible for paying their own *lobola*, and so women and men had been less under the control of their parents. Evidence suggests that the enabling certificate was sometimes issued in the 1960s without the payment of *lobola* having been checked, so it is possible that it was never enforced (Acquina, 1969: 71). The NC and the Church could therefore override the wishes of the parents as to the marriage itself as long as *lobola* was paid (Acquina, 1969: 73). The *lobola* had to be paid within six months, usually out of low wages and without the help of family. This was generally impossible and men often went into debt to the Missions and paid this off through labour service over a period of years (Acquina, 1969: 73-4).

Christian marriages on these terms increased during this period, although they were still a relatively small proportion of the total marriages<sup>16</sup>. Acquina suggests that those who chose Christian marriages were younger brothers who could not succeed to positions of status, or other people seeking to get out of oppressive situations (Acquina, 1969: 78). In different places various Missions had different influences. However there are no data available for the number of converts or Christian marriages (Kuper, 1955: 36).

This precedent froze the timing of *lobola* payment and made the responsibility formally that of the husband. At the same time it seems that the bride's father had greater rights over the *lobola* than he had before, as reflected in the specification of him as the recipient on the enabling certificate. In the event of a pre-marital pregnancy, these changes facilitated a father suing for damages, as well as *lobola*, even if a marriage had already been agreed (Kuper, 1955: 22). In pre-colonial

times the timing of *lobola* payments had been more flexible and once an agreement had been made regarding the marriage, there was no damage suit in the event of pregnancy.

A man could divorce a woman for any reason, but if her father thought the reason was too flimsy, he would contest the return of *lobola* (Kuper, 1955). The usual reason for the divorce of a woman was barrenness. Adultery by the woman was not usually cited as grounds as the husband could claim damages and keep his wife in such a situation. She could divorce him if he were impotent and refused to allow her to conceive by another man in his lineage, or if he committed a serious crime (Kuper, 1955: 23).

Comments about the increasing importance of the nuclear family unit during this time also imply that the relationship of marriage became more central in production and reproduction. In communities where relatives were spatially separated and neighbours were strangers, the traditional pressures and supports from wider kin and in-laws were undermined. Greater state interference in the definition of legal marriage, and the individualisation of *lobola* were both strong pressures on marriage, which probably had implications for changes in the gender relations of production and reproduction, but sadly there is little evidence available to reveal the ways which these changes occurred.

### *Human Reproduction*

I have not paid much attention to human reproduction for the previous periods because it does not receive attention in the sources.

During this period, there was a growing awareness on the part of the state that Southern Rhodesia had a 'population problem'. The high levels of population pressure felt in the Reserves were not simply due to the removal and resettlement of people imposed by the state, as there was also a very high fertility rate, although the effects of the two are difficult to disentangle (Jordan, 1964: 71; Acquina, 1964: 22).

Before the 1940s, population statistics had been based upon NCs' estimates of the number of tax payers, multiplied by an arbitrarily selected figure (Kuper, 1955: 15-16), so there was plenty of room for error. Moreover, when a clearer picture of the numbers of people in the Reserves was obtained, it suited the purposes of the government much better to suggest that this was due to the lack of controls on the fertility of the African population than to admit the true extent of the removal of people which it had imposed. 1940 was the first year in which a high fertility rate was recognised by the government. Between 1913 and 1953 the African population is thought to have tripled (Holleman, 1969: 57). The estimated size of the population increased at the following rate:

*TABLE 2*

*Growth Rate of the African Population*

1901-1920	2.3%
1920-1940	2.7%
1940-1970	3.3%

(Source: 1969 Census of Population, Monthly Digest of Statistics, March 1983).



Folbre suggests that this increase was because of strong patriarchal power in the rural areas, which contributed to a high birth rate. She suggests that this occurred at the same time as an increase in life expectancy, in spite of low rural standard of living (1987: 20). In 1959 Southern Rhodesia had the lowest overall mortality of all the Southern African countries, and life expectancy continued to improve from 1950-1980 (Folbre, 1987: 21; UN: 1981). The most obvious reasons for fertility staying very high were that children were still important (Folbre, 1987: 22).

This period also marks a point at which several things combine which may have also increased the fertility rate, or reduced the constraints on fertility. The controls described for pre-colonial society were exercised because of the need to be able to move around easily, which was not possible with many young children; for the mother to be able to work; and to increase the chances of survival of mothers and children. This was achieved by spacing pregnancies several years apart. Conception was avoided through abstention, *coitus interruptus* and other methods, for up to several years after the birth of a child. Infanticide was practiced on twins and children with particular features. Strong social pressure was exerted on a husband and wife to stick to these practices.

Colonialism made infanticide illegal. The separation of families lessened the social controls elder people had over their relatives, so if men no longer saw the need to restrict conceptions, there was little that women could do about it. Children represented labour and insurance for old age to men and women. Folbre suggests that men would have had a

greater desire for more children than women, because she analyses the society as one in which men appropriated the product of the labour of women and children (Folbre, 1987: 6-9). However, this does not mean that women did not also find children extremely useful in relieving their labour burden.

### *Summary of the 1940s and 1950s*

The reforms proposed in the countryside by the government could not have been achieved because they were based on incomplete knowledge of what had happened within African communities. Moreover, they were the result of compromises between different classes and groups which were ultimately incompatible. They were met with widespread resistance which, combined with the growing reluctance of NCs to implement them, and the revulsion of the settler community to the ideology on which they were founded, eventually led to their abandonment.

The period brought about various social changes. The social mechanisms which previously allowed women to ensure that their pregnancies were spaced by several years and those which kept down the fertility rate generally were weakened with the break-up of related communities. At the same time, I suggest, the pressures put on peasants in the Reserves through the policies of the state and the spread of commodification increased the need for labour for agricultural and other work. These pressures particularly fell on the institution of marriage. A solution to the shortage of labour was seen to lie in increasing the number of children. The extent to which this was a gender-preference is not clear, but if women did not want to conceive as often as their

husbands wanted them to, the re-structuring of marriage with formal rules did not support them in trying to reassert traditional values about child-spacing (Mutambirwa, 1979), and they risked divorce in refusing sex or trying to avoid pregnancy in other ways.

In this way there are clear links between production and reproduction which have only been revealed by focussing on the ways in which they have changed over time and as a result of the interaction between different classes.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNAL AREAS: THE INTERACTION  
BETWEEN PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION, GENDER AND CLASS

## Part Four: 1960s to the 1980s

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter is in two parts. The first covers a period which to date has focused on the development of nationalist organisations, and the politics of the war for independence, or Second *Chimurenga*. I summarise the main events covered in such accounts and subsequently return to the focus of *this* historiography and shed some light on the changing gender and class relations of production and reproduction. In this way I present a more dynamic picture of the history which was the outcome of the interaction between different European classes and the Shona population.

In spite of the restrictions of inadequate data for this first part of the chapter, the picture sketched below is nonetheless necessary in order to suggest antecedents for some issues and developments since independence. In this picture I first indicate some of the changes in land tenure and control over its use. Second I present hypotheses about this and other aspects of gender relations through changes in the law and practice of marriage. Third I analyse the implications of these for changing aspects of the relations of production and reproduction in the TTLs.

In the second part of the chapter the focus changes in order to summarise some of the major political questions relating to the CAs. It

also contextualises the preceding historiography and provides an introduction to the analysis of the village case study which follows in Part III of the thesis.

#### 1. UDI, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE NATIONALIST STRUGGLE, 1962-1979

Much of the literature for this period is concerned with the interaction between actions taken by the Rhodesian and British governments on the one hand, and the resistance and development of nationalist organisations amongst the African population on the other. I do not deal with these in detail here, but rather, after a brief summary of the key events during the period, I focus on government policies for restructuring the countryside. Subsequently I consider some of the implications of these actions for social change amongst the Shona population, in order to draw out their implications for the situation at independence in the following section.

The political crisis described in the previous section led to a State of Emergency in 1959, followed by the banning of Congress and the detention of 300 members. In 1960 the National Democratic Party (NDP) was formed. In 1961 the *Tribal Trust Land Act* thus renamed the Reserves (TTLs), the NDP was banned, which provoked the formation of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). In 1962 ZAPU was banned, the Rhodesian Front (RF) won a general election, formed the government and began a policy of Community Development. In 1963 the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was formed, which resulted in competition and violence between the two nationalist parties. In 1964 they were both banned, but operated in exile in Zambia. In this year also the

Federation broke up and led to Malawian and Zambian independence. In 1965 the government made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), which was promptly followed by international sanctions.

In 1966 the first big armed attack on government forces took place (this was undertaken by ZANU, although ZAPU was involved in other smaller attacks at about the same time). The government was meanwhile heavily involved in restructuring the rural areas. In 1971 Ian Smith and Lord Home agreed on constitutional proposals to be put to Africans. The African National Council (ANC) was formed, headed by Muzorewa. In 1972 it organised a 'no' verdict and became a political party. In the same year, fighting began in the north east of the country, which is the moment often referred to as the beginning, or turning point, of the war. It continued for seven years, and

Refugees fled across borders. Young men were signed up in two nationalist armies and one colonial one for long period of service. Cultivators were uprooted and camped in wire hamlets under insanitary conditions. Fear percolated though the country to the very borders of the cities. However, the rural population, once mobilised, held onto its demands for land, for change, for freedom of opportunity ... The new parties contained young men who believed that independence meant change.

(Birmingham and Ranger, 1983: 339-10)

In 1974 the ANC became committed to majority rule. Unity talks took place with the leaders of the other parties in Lusaka. In 1975 ZANU leaders were arrested in Zambia because of the Zambian government's suspicion about the manner of the death of one of their leaders, Herbert Chitepo. The Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) was formed to bring together the forces of ZANU and ZAPU in Mozambique in 1976, but only ZANU forces became active there and it collapsed. ZAPU and ZANU became active on separate battlefields (with their respective

armies ZIPRA and ZANLA) and formed the Patriotic Front (PF). In 1977 the ANC was renamed the United African Congress (UANC). Sithole claimed leadership of ZANU from within the country and both sought an internal settlement. In 1978 African 'militias' were set up by the government in the TTLs, composed of auxiliaries, most of whom came to support the UANC. An internal settlement was agreed and a transitional government established. The war intensified. In 1979 a new constitution for Zimbabwe Rhodesia was brought in. In elections the UANC won 51 of 72 African seats and Muzorewa became Prime Minister. Later that year the Lancaster House conference was held in London, with all parties involved. In 1980 Mugabe announced that ZANU would not stand for the elections as part of the PF, but separately, and won an overwhelming victory. (Arrighi, 1973b; Cliffe, 1981: 22-33; Birmingham and Ranger, 1983: 369-379; Cliffe *et al*, 1980)

### *Rural Policy*

Some adjustments to the *Land Husbandry Act* and other rural policies were made in the early 1960s to try to ease the political tension caused by attempts to implement the Act. These included changing the term 'Native' to 'African' in all official references, and incorporating the Ministry of Native Affairs into other Ministries. There was also an inquiry into the land situation, which resulted in more land being given to the Reserves. The newly <sup>named</sup> *African Land Husbandry Act* was amended to allow chiefs to allocate land in grazing areas to be cultivated by those without land (Johnson, 1964b: 211). This led to some 92,000 acres of land which had been set aside for grazing being

allocated to 20,000 people for arable use (Weinrich, 1975: 35). The government tried to co-opt the chiefs and headmen through the creation of the National Council of Chiefs and Provincial Assemblies in 1962, which gave them symbolic power, but this did not compensate for the undercutting of their real power: the ability to allocate land, which remained officially in state control.

Once the RF was in government the solution to the crisis in the countryside was seen as being to force the responsibility for its resolution onto Africans. This included all responsibility for the management of agricultural production and the subsistence of the African population. The policy has been summarised as follows,

Since 1962 the Rhodesian Government has made "community development" and "provincialisation" the basis of the administration of African affairs. Under these rubrics certain rural development tasks have been devolved to semi-autonomous, semi-selected bodies which are supposed to operate according to the formula of local economic self-reliance. On the surface these administrative arrangements cohere to the widely accepted preference in international development circles for institutional decentralization and popular participation.... [However] Community Development in Rhodesia vests state power in the rural areas in the hands of white administrative officials and traditional chiefs whereas neither group enjoys support among peasants. Furthermore the policies of community development and provincialisation are super-imposed on an apartheid-like economy in which overpopulated and unproductive African reserves serve as dependent appendages of capitalist agriculture and industry ... In this context administrative decentralisation has deepened underdevelopment by consigning, from central government to local government, the economic costs of maintaining the rural periphery and reproducing its migrant labour force. ... As the impoverishment of the reserves was intensified so the settler state announced an intention to make peasants increasingly responsible for their own development. It was against this background that the policy of community development was unveiled.

(Bratton, 1978: 6, 18).



The philosophy of Community Development was developed by USA sociologists, and was implemented as official policy from 1962 (with technical assistance<sup>s</sup> from USAID from 1964 onwards). The Ministry of Internal Affairs took overall responsibility for this, and the colonial authority was represented locally through District Commissioners (DCs), who replaced the Native Commissioners. The African representatives of the state were chiefs and headmen, and there were also generalist community advisers and specialist extension staff. African Councils were reorganised under the 1957 *African Councils Act*. They were set up along similar lines to those established previously, but were promoted in order to encourage local self-reliance. The state increasingly relied on chiefs for the administration of African affairs, for which they were rewarded with salary increases and greater involvement, in a symbolic way, in national affairs (Garbett, 1966: 116).

The RF government's analysis of the failure of previous policies to placate the chiefs and headmen, and thereby ensure peace and submission of the rest of the population, was that they had not been given enough power and responsibility. Therefore, under Community Development, they were given responsibility for the administration of schools, clinics, roads and water. At first this meant the administration of state grants, but subsequently it required that they raise funds locally. In 1966 the area allocated to each chiefdom was mapped. Community boards were also established at the level of the headmen's wards. In this way the state apparatus was extended much closer to the peasantry than ever before (Bratton, 1978: 20).

In the past the chiefs had resisted co-operation with councils as they were perceived as a threat to their authority. In 1962, 55 councils had been formed, which was only 20% of the total possible (Bratton, 1978: 16-17). The chiefs were in effect bought off with the 1967 *Tribal Territory Land Authorities Act*, under which they were given more powers, specifically to allocate land and supervise cultivation, and they were also able to nominate council members. These rights were further codified in the Land Tenure Act of 1969 (Folbre, 1987: 23). Having been given back the source of their authority, the willingness of chiefs to co-operate meant that the councils grew in number, but there was still some resistance and if necessary they were formed compulsorily.

The RF summarised purposes of 'devolution' as

- (1) Make the African aware that he must look primarily to the African area to provide him with his living and occupation, skilled and unskilled;
- (2) Ameliorate the problem of the influx of Africans into the European area;
- (3) Remove pressure on the European taxpayer to supply unlimited finance to provide ever increasing services in the African areas;
- (4) Take the heat out of domestic politics in the National Parliament'

(Rhodesian Front, 1974, cited in Bratton, 1978: 34)

Bratton comments on this policy,

Given the ideological inspiration that the Rhodesian Front drew from the Nationalist Party of South Africa, the idea that rural Africans should be left to develop themselves was seen by white liberals and black nationalists to bear a close resemblance to "separate development".

(Bratton, 1978: 21)

Although the policies which were pursued in the 1960s appeared to be becoming more like the tighter controls of South African apartheid,

Cliffe suggests that 'the RF regime's aims were more to turn the clock back rather than pursue radical new departures' (Cliffe, 1981: 20). However, I suggest that in proposing this view Cliffe obscured the fact that the clock could not simply be turned back, because so much transformation of the social fabric of Shona society, as well as its economic and ecological bases, had occurred. This was not so much a turning back as a *continuation* of the policy of creating neo-tradition on terms preferable to the government. The point is important here as the tendency to regard social restructuring as a possible return to a previous 'traditional' situation is one which recurs in discussions of contemporary policies.

Ranger has documented how this was done in Makoni District (Ranger, 1982). There it was manifested in 'desperate attempts by District Commissioners to define what 'custom' and 'tradition' meant, and even more desperate attempts to carry them out in practice' (p.20). To this end the African Affairs Amendment Act of 1966 aimed 'to give more dignity and power to the chiefs', and stressed that the mistakes of past governments in making hasty and arbitrary appointments of chiefs and headmen should in future be avoided by discovering their 'true customary principles of succession'. In addition, the chiefs were expected to play the dual role of implementing government policy and combatting nationalists on the one hand, and of gaining and maintaining the support of the people on the other. The government believed that the chiefs could achieve the latter through the administration of 'customary' justice through their courts. Thus the DCs were concerned (as were the NCs in the 1920s and 30s) to discover the 'true'

traditional rules and penalties for 'customary' offences. Finally the chiefs were expected to propitiate the tribal spirits which the government assumed would still be thought to ensure good crops, in an attempt to re-create the basis on which they had once had legitimacy, ie through their relationship to the spiritual forces governing the environment (p.23-4).

In line with these ambitions, in 1969 the *African Law and Tribal Courts Act* gave the chiefs legal power to judge civil and certain criminal cases. Their salaries were raised to a level far above the average wage and they were provided with bodyguards and weapons. The new constitution of the same year incorporated the chiefs into the Senate, and gave them the ability to elect eight members of parliament, jointly with the headmen and councillors. In 1973 the *African Councils Act* was amended to give effect to the administrative and executive powers of the chiefs over the District Councils. Also in 1973 the *Regional Authorities Act* was an attempt to create regional authorities composed of chiefs and headmen which would gradually take over the administration of African areas completely. Throughout this period, tribal representatives outnumbered those elected on councils and regional authorities by 2:1. Weinrich comments,

if during the the federal period African chiefs rose to power, during the post-Federal period they were propelled into prominence.

(Weinrich, 1971: 20)

However, the government was not able to meet its ambitions in the way it intended. The files of the DCs in Makoni suggest that they believed they were actually resurrecting the 'true' traditions of the Shona people and their chiefs. Yet peasants did not recognise them as

such, and regarded them as playing very different roles from those of pre-colonial chiefs. This was because of the chiefs' participation with the government in their membership of the councils; the collection of taxes; the fact that they implemented some of its laws; and that they received a salary. Thus in <sup>n</sup> many places even the most co-operative chief could not be relied upon to deliver the well-behaved population sought by the government. Not all the chiefs were easily manipulable, in any case, and some used the state powers granted them by the government in ways which were not in keeping with the grand design of Community Development. These are considered in more detail below along with other social changes which took place.

Particularly in the 1960s, the government also tried to win over other members of the black middle class which, as described earlier, included businessmen and Master Farmers. This was done by extending the electoral 'B' roll'. Increasing numbers became alienated as they were caught in the cross-fire, collective punishments, or had their shops, businesses and bus services closed down. In the late 1970s further concessions were given to them at same time as overtures were made to the nationalists and a deal was struck with Muzorewa. These concessions offered access to land and urban property in white areas, and more job openings, but only to a few (Cliffe, 1981: 21).

Many of the middle class, like most rural Africans, were involved in resistance before, during and after the nationalist parties were formed and became active. Often such resistance was directed against the state regulation of land allocation and soil conservation works, thus continuing the rebellions against the reform policies of the 1950s

(Ranger, 1985a: 160-2). They were met with violent responses from the state from 1965 onwards.

### *The Second Chimurenga War*

Violent resistance to the state began in the late 1960s, but the government was initially able to contain this. 1972 saw the start of a campaign of persistent guerilla activity, met by escalating military responses from the government (so that it was allocating more than half the national budget to the cost of the war and related economic programmes for the ailing economy by 1978). Community Development was in effect dropped in favour of simply getting control of the rural areas, although it continued to be official policy and ideology.

The 1960 *Emergency Powers Act* and the *Law and Order (Maintenance) Act* were amended and renewed many times and became in effect an alternative constitution (Bratton, 1978: 37). Widespread and common tactics by the government in the 1970s included the resettlement of communities and the creation of 'protected villages', to try to cut off the support given by the people to the guerillas; the confiscation of food and cattle; and the murder of individuals and whole village populations. In some places this was nothing less than the destruction of peasant production. People were left dependent on the state for food when forced into the 'keeps', as the protected villages were called, as here they only had small plots of land, and if they were far away these were not farmed at all because of curfews which restricted movement.

Over half a million peasants, which was one seventh of the African rural population at that time, were consolidated into defensive settlements of 'strategic hamlets'. The total number of displaced people has been estimated at around one and a half million (Bratton, 1978: 39). I shall not attempt to summarise here the developments of the war, with its many local variations. Others have begun to do this (Cliffe *et al*, 1980; Frederikse, 1982; Martin and Johnson, 1981; Ranger, 1985a).

Below I switch focus from these political accounts<sup>to</sup> consider some of the implications for the means and relations of primary reproduction. I also show how this approach is useful for understanding the successes and failures of government policy and of the guerilla war. Much of the data which would be useful to such an analysis is not available, as relatively little has been written on this period with these concerns in mind. Ranger's work which explores the development of peasant consciousness does not specifically consider the relations of production or reproduction, although his analysis of the roles played by chiefs is invaluable. Nonetheless there are two writers who do give additional information about these concerns. Weinrich (1979 and 1982) has written about African women and African marriage, and did field work in several areas of the country in the late 1970s. Bourdillon describes many aspects of Shona life, having undertaken fieldwork in one part of the country in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They were both writing with few other sources to use as benchmarks (the main one being Holleman, 1951). Perhaps for this reason it is often difficult to assess the chronology of changes they describe, or the degree to which the

'traditional' practices they describe were still adhered to during this period, but below I offer a possible interpretation.

From these sources I summarise several trends. First, I consider the changing relationships involved in the control over land, along with some of the implications for household differentiation. Gender relations were of concern to the government only in the sense that their pact with the chiefs necessitated that 'traditional' authority be upheld. So there was no *direct* action by the state to change these, but other policies did have effects on them. Subsequently I consider the implications for the way marriage operated. Finally I summarise the effects of changes in land use and marriage on the relations of agricultural production and primary reproduction.

### *Men and the Land*

In this section I draw out the implications of changing relations between men for the control over and use of land. Land was viewed as the most important means of production by most people. Control over its use became the focal point for resistance during the war. It had been 'given back' to the chiefs by the government in exchange for an undertaking to police the population in the TTLs on its behalf. During this period the struggles between races and classes were specifically expressed through the struggles over land. Through this struggle, patriarchal authority within Shona society was also challenged.

The proportion of Africans living in the TTLs has been estimated to have risen from 56% in 1956 to 63% in 1978 and the actual number to



have doubled between 1960 and 1978 (Bratton, 1978: 8), or to have increased by 88% between 1961 and 1977 (Shopo, 1985: 42, cited by Moyo, 1986: 170). This contributed to what are thought to have been major problems of overstocking and soil erosion, as the area cultivated increased by 91% in the same period, at the expense of grazing land (Shumba, 1984: 235). It is extremely difficult to assess the significance of government reports on these matters because of the assumptions made by administrators about African farmers, and their reluctance to give weight to explanations which lie at the heart of government policy. Government reports suggested that the TTLs were on the verge of ecological disaster (Bratton, 1979: 118), but they had been saying this for several decades. Moreover, there is no conclusive evidence that the worst soil erosion had occurred as the result of human action (Stocking, 1978: 145). Most of the commentaries take one of two diametrically opposed positions: either that peasants in the TTLs were inherently inefficient and backward, or that colonial prejudice obscured the self-evident fact that *all* the problems in the TTLs were caused by colonialism. The truth is probably some combination of the two, but has yet to be uncovered in any comprehensive way.

I have already described some of the effects of colonial policies which increased the numbers within the Reserves. There is also evidence of an excessive sub-division of land-holdings in many places, and in 1974 a report suggested that between two thirds and three quarters of families in the TTLs could not produce all their own food, that one third had no cattle, and a high proportion lacked adequate agricultural implements (Bratton, 1979: 118). Other indicators of a decline in

productivity during 1962-1977 are that maize production per capita declined by 36%, and the proportion of domestic food staples which was produced outside the TTLs rose from 30% to 70% (*ibid*). Many TTLs had to 'regularly import maize and maize meal from other parts of the country' (Tickner, 1979: 51; Sanders, 1982: 190). This was clearly due to a combination of the accumulated pressures on the TTLs as described, combined with a severe labour shortage in many areas. Up to 60% of the men were absent as migrant labourers during the most productive time of their lives before the period when many went to train in the armies, and once the war began, more than one third of households had husbands away most of the time, or women farming alone.

Land tenure became very complex and has been side-stepped by most commentators. As described above, the 1967 *Tribal Trust Land Act* (*TTL Act*) replaced the *African Land Husbandry Act* and handed over responsibility for land allocation to Africans, thus abandoning state regulations on the size of holdings. Those who had been allocated land under the *Native* or *African Land Husbandry Act* seem to have been retained these rights. This meant that there were two systems of land tenure in existence at the same time (Holleman, 1969: 334): those which had been allocated under the *Husbandry Act* and those which were in existence beforehand, or which were to be allocated in the future, under 'communal', or 'tribal' tenure. Under the *TTL Act*, chiefs were made solely responsible for land allocation. I suggest that this was because of an assumption that this represented African 'tradition', although in fact headmen had been involved in land allocation to a considerable degree in the past. In some places payment to chiefs and previous owners of land

had become common on the transfer of land rights to new owners who could afford to pay (Holleman, 1969; Floyd, 1959b).

I stress here that the power of the chiefs over the use of land was intensified by their being made responsible for conservation practices and for finding land for those who had been made landless by the *Husbandry Act*. This was backed up by their legal entitlement to impose fines and arrest people. Hence they were given powers over the allocation and use of the land which were greater than in the past, and which were imposed and defined by the state, rather than having in any sense developed organically from within communities. At the same time the chiefs also had a responsibility to the government to control the use of land in ways it approved of in order to maintain their income and legal standing.

Chiefs did not all react to this situation in the same way. They were not all of equal social standing, ambition, or political persuasion. Ranger describes some of the variation within Makoni District, and for the Shona areas as a whole I suggest it must have been even greater. Some chiefs used their powers to remove rivals and increase their wealth and power. In situations where they did not act as the state thought appropriate (such as allocating land not designated as part of the TTLs) they were sometimes officially deposed (Holleman, 1969), but in the absence of men who would play the chiefly role desired, there was no other way of ruling the local population open to the government other than violent repression (Ranger, 1985a).

The government remained committed to the ideal of finding the 'true' traditional leaders of the people, which limited its ability to use

other men who were willing to play this role, as were some of the wealthier men in the TTLs, who were members of the middle class (Ranger, 1985a). There are very few data available about the extent of differentiation during this period (Ranger, 1985a: 254), but the proportion of landless is estimated to have grown from about 30% in the late 1950s, to just under 50% by 1978, and the size of landholdings and number of cattle per households became more unequal as richer households were able to benefit from poorer ones which sold up (Phimister, 1988: 9). Ranger explores the possibility that class was related to political positions taken during this time and suggests that although richer peasants also formed part of the African middle class, not all of them sought collaboration with the government. Many were resentful of the way they were treated by the government but also by the chiefs, to whom they had to pay levies on their businesses. Many also helped to organise meetings for the nationalist parties. Purchase Area farmers, teachers and students were also in different social and economic positions from peasants but did not have a uniform position (Ranger, 1985a: 242-251). They could not automatically command the support of the peasantry, but neither could the chiefs which the government installed (p.253). For this reason they were not sought after by the government who believed its only hope for successful indirect rule lay in finding the traditional leaders.

This desire for indirect rule was counterbalanced by checks against the power of community leaders. The DC retained a final say in all matters considered by the chiefs and Councils so that they could, if necessary, override any decisions made, and the 'traditional' rules of

succession and intervene to select a more co-operative chief (Bratton, 1978: 30). In the 1970s, in cases where chiefs sided with the nationalists, or where they were killed by guerillas and no appropriate replacement could be found, the government resorted to counter-terrorism through the use of recruited auxiliaries and irregulars.

Relations of authority between men which also had implications for the control over the use of land became complex during the war. Spirit mediums were important in backing up the authority both of the guerillas and of the government during the war. (Spirit mediums were not all men, but there are no data available for the whole country about the proportion who were women.) They had remained important throughout the colonial period in many places, but it is difficult to assess the extent of this importance in the writings of anthropologists who were concerned to discover the Shona past (Ranger, 1985a). In precolonial society they passed on the wishes of the founders of lineages to the chiefs about how the land should be used. This connection to the land was emphasised by the guerillas, as the ideological basis for resistance in many Shona areas was regaining the land. The mediums acted as important links between the young guerillas and the elders, and were used by both (Ranger, 1985a: 188-9; Lan, 1985). They stood against administrative coercion and symbolised the peasant right to recover the land (Ranger 1985a: 200).

Meanwhile the government needed spirit mediums to give legitimacy to chiefs of which they approved and the government tried to structure their role as the sanctifiers of chiefly power. They offered official recognition and subsidy to those who co-operated and were prepared to

inform them of the presence of strangers. Some did this but were often subsequently rejected by peasants. Others undertook ritual avoidance of anything to do with Europeans and were seen as being separate from the bogus traditionalism (Ranger, 1985a: 201).

These attempts at re-asserting traditionalism in Shona society never really won over all the men in authority. There have been few studies of this period, but Ranger suggests that many of the men over 40 were amongst those most opposed to the government (Ranger, 1985a: 162-3). Also there was much pressure from peasants put upon chiefs and headmen to show at least nominal sympathy with peasant nationalism (Ranger, 1985a: 169). It was still older men who had the most real authority in communities, especially those who had stayed at home (i.e. those who had not sought work or joined the resistance) because they had to 'look after a chain of daughter-in-laws' (quoted in Ranger, 1985a: 163).

Establishing themselves within communities as representatives of the nationalist parties was often a problem for the young guerillas for this reason. This was eased by the fact that ZANU placed guerillas in different places from their homes, so that elders could not establish kin relations and make demands on them for shelter, food and other forms of assistance. Coming to terms with the power of the young, unrelated men with guns who came to the villages as guerillas was often difficult for these elders. Spirit mediums also played an important role here. Traditionally they welcomed incoming fighting men to the service of the chief, and this role was further developed. They had access to hidden, secret, religious places which they showed to the fighters, as well as

giving them legitimacy by accepting them (p.208-9). The guerillas' respect for their importance also meant the mediums could dictate some standards of moral behaviour, which became of greater concern as the discipline amongst some of the guerillas declined, particularly in 1978-9 (Ranger, 1985a: 210; Phimister, 1988: 11).

Thus I suggest the operation of land tenure was largely dependent on the local chief's decisions, as long as these were within a range of options acceptable to the government. Where there was no appropriate chief, or where he chose not to exercise a great deal of control over the use of land, other people intervened and there were many different outcomes of local struggles, which have not been documented. When guerillas came into areas they too intervened in disputes over, and requests for, land. The state had handed over responsibility and subsequently relinquished control over land tenure. Hence it did not impose uniform patterns until, through the use of force, it either moved whole communities<sup>2</sup> or prevented them from using the land at all. What it did do was create the space for the expression of local politics over land by handing over the rights of allocation.

The detailed effects of these on women's rights to land have not been examined. Surveys done shortly after independence revealed that many women did not have rights which they claimed were traditional, such as their own fields and gardens as wives, and small fields as widows or divorcees (Muchena, 1982; Zimbabwe Women's Bureau, 1981). It seems likely that this trend started with the introduction of individual male land tenure during the implementation of the *Land Husbandry Act*, coupled with increased pressure on land in the 1940s and 50s. During this later

period it was the local expression of political power which determined what rights women, and indeed everyone, were able to gain and maintain. There was so much disruption of communities, that in the event of 'losing out' women could not have appealed to relatives as they once would have been able to do. The government had removed the possibility of arbitration in land cases by the state apparatus that still functioned. The guerillas, and whoever else dominated local decision making, may have intervened on women's behalf, but little evidence of this has appeared since independence. This is a highly significant gap in the history of access to land, as it has been a source of much discontent on the part of women since independence.

Women's perception of what has occurred in their rights to land cannot be substantiated owing to the lack of general, or indeed detailed, surveys of changes in land tenure practices within and between households over this period. However, an account of changes in the law and practices relating to marriage and divorce provides the basis for the following hypotheses regarding the transformation of gender relations. These changes have been somewhat confused by other writers, as is typical of the periodisation of other changes. Changes in marriage and divorce also inform the discussion of the contemporary political issues which have arisen since independence which concludes this chapter. The hypotheses presented are examined further in the village case study which follows in Part III.



*Changes in Marriage**The Legal Structures*

The entrenchment of the chiefs and their strengthened legal powers meant that they could once again increase their control over the establishment and terms of dissolution of marriage. I suggest that this related not simply to the payments and recompenses which were payable, but also whether or not disputes within marriage constituted grounds for divorce, and hence the chiefs could be said to have taken an active part in the *regulation* of marriage. The particular way in which marriage operated did not become of major concern to the government at this time, making it likely that the chiefs were even freer to govern as they saw fit. The question of the extent of their ability to determine the law has been of concern to other writers. Bourdillon identified three interpretations of customary law in 1975.

- (1) rules governing behaviour which have been passed on from a previous age;
- (2) decisions of tribal courts which are the contemporary developments of pre-colonial courts;
- (3) rules and regulations accepted by European courts as constituting customary law.

An extract from the African Law and Tribal Courts Act 1969 intended to clarify the jurisdiction of customary law reads as follows,

"Customary Law", in relation to a particular African tribe, means the legal principles and judicial practices of such a tribe except in so far as such principles or practices are not repugnant to - (a) natural justice or morality; or (b) the provisions of any enactment: provided that nothing in any enactment relating to the age of majority, the status of women, the effect of marriage on the property of the spouses, the guardianship of children or the administration of the deceased's estates, shall affect the application of Customary Law, except in so far as such enactment has been specifically

applied to Africans by that or any other enactment  
 (from s.2 (1))

Apart from the fact that this does not seem to clarify so much as obscure, I suggest that the extract is interesting because it makes it clear that the government had made issues at the heart of gender relations the exclusive domain of customary law. Whatever legislation might be passed in order to reflect or transform the gender relations between European women and men, these were not to apply to Africans. As I have indicated, the state had in the past drastically intervened in the other important sphere of customary law (in the first sense described): that of land allocation. This had a gender aspect to it, but discrimination against women is unlikely to have been deliberate, and rather arose from ignorance of and lack of interest in the implications of the reforms of the 1950s. The clarification cited above represents a decision to hand over all responsibility for gender relations to the workings of customary law, whatever that might be in practice. This was reflected in the granting of legal powers to chiefs to dissolve marriages which had been legally solemnised. (They had been hearing such cases and deciding the compensation payable anyway (Bourdillon, 1982: 126).)

Bourdillon and Holleman are at pains to stress the advantages of this system over the rigid interpretations of the law practiced by the DCs (Bourdillon, 1982: 127-132; Holleman, 1952: 281-2). What is not clear from their analyses is the extent to which the ways in which the chiefs' courts practiced in the 1970s were different from those of the nineteenth century. I suggest that although the hearings of the chiefs'

courts involved other people in the community, as before, a crucial difference at this time was that the chief formally and legally had the last word, whether or not there was consensus amongst the community about the decisions taken. If there were objections by either party involved in the case, they could then go to the DC, but the DCs were also under pressure from the government not to interfere to any great extent with the workings of 'tradition'. Thus I suggest that the chiefs had considerable power here. It might have been difficult for chiefs to impose rules which were opposed by senior men in the community, but not, I argue, to uphold their wishes against those of women. There are several ways in which this seems to have begun to happen, or to have continued.

Many marriages remained unregistered, because there were no incentives to register them. The 'illegality' of unregistered marriages was ignored by everyone (Weinrich, 1979: 125). There were many local variations of this type of unregistered 'traditional' marriage in Shona communities, and the grounds for divorce seem to have varied. Chiefs still intervened in such marriages to arbitrate in disputes and preside over their dissolution, although it is not clear whether people generally evaded authority in not registering, or whether the chiefs were used as an alternative to state procedures. Given the different strategies of chiefs, I suggest that it is likely that this too varied locally. The only advantages in registering were if the husband wished to obtain married living quarters in town (Weinrich, 1979: 125-6) and that he could claim in a court for damages, or return of *lobola* if he divorced her.

Unregistered marriages were thus still regarded as marriages by the community and would be treated as such in the chiefs' courts.

At the same time, the government had been coming under increasing pressure from the Christian churches to change the law so that Africans could have a Christian, civil marriage without first having to have a 'traditional' one. This was facilitated in the 1964 *Marriage Act*, which was mostly used by those who were wealthier and had higher levels of education. Although there was no regulation that such a marriage had to be followed by a Christian solemnisation, all of them contracted by Africans were. This reflected a high correlation between education and Christianity (Weinrich, 1979: 126; 1982: 4-17).

The government had no direct concern with the pattern of gender relations, except in so far as these did not develop in ways which were contrary to the wishes of the chiefs, or if they were seen to be undermining 'tribal authority'. The pressure exerted by the Christian churches presented such a threat, as it had done in the early colonial days and, I argue that the state's role was one of mediation between these interests. What happened was that the DCs remained committed to the intention of the government to foster the chiefs' power and control over the local community, whilst not contravening the new *Marriage Act*. This they did by discouraging Africans from adopting the new form of marriage by insisting that the marriage take place in the woman's home area; that the chief or sub-chief be present (for which he would have to be paid); that the father's consent be given (and he could withhold it for any reason); and that the full bridewealth be paid. (There was a ceiling

placed on this, but this was ignored and consent was withheld until the agreed amount had been paid (Weinrich, 1969).)

When cases were brought concerning disputes between wives and husbands or the terms of a dissolution of marriage, the DCs implemented a form of customary law, which they regarded as the true tradition.

Bourdillon comments,

...district commissioners' courts are more rigid than traditional courts: since a district commissioner is not fully in touch with the changing norms of the communities for whom he must arbitrate, he must rely for his judgement on written accounts of customary law often based on research performed many years previously. A district commissioner can easily be years behind local chiefs in raising payments for damages in accordance with rising standards and costs of living, and it is noticeable that many district commissioners go on insisting that according to customary law women are legally minors long after tribal courts have been accepting their emancipation.<sup>3</sup>

(Bourdillon, 1982: 237-8)

It was possible where a chief were lenient to a woman for a man to take the case on to the DC's court where he would be sure of a verdict in his favour.

The *African Law and Tribal Courts Act* also contains a further comment on the use of customary law which reads,

notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this section, in any case relating to the custody of the children, the interests of the children concerned should be the paramount consideration irrespective of which law or principle is applied.

(quoted in May, 1983: 55)

and that customary law should be applied in this way,  
unless the justice of the case demands otherwise.  
(op cit: 56)

This clearly gave the DC the ability to overrule customary law, however that was defined, in favour of the welfare of children, as they perceived

this. They hardly ever used this ability, however, which had particular consequences for widows and divorcees.

Bourdillon indicates that by this time all household income earned in cash came to be regarded <sup>as</sup> men's. This was because historically men had been involved in cash transactions to a greater degree than women, although in precolonial society any income which the woman earned by her hands was hers. He does not state whether he observed any differences between how this was regarded in the DCs' or chiefs' courts. The phenomenon was of sufficient concern for the position of African women to be included in the brief of a select committee of the Senate appointed to investigate the position of women in the early 1970s. It consisted of two European men and two African chiefs and reported in 1976, mostly on recommendations for European women.

It also recommended that customary law be adhered to as it stood and that no legislative changes should be made to the legal position of African women. The justification for this was that changes in the transfer of property which would result if laws on divorce or widowhood were changed to ensure that women retained that earned by their own hands would be offensive to many. The grounds for this offence were allegedly that the existing patterns of control over property were the bases of African ancestral religions, although in Weinrich's study, only 22% people still claimed to follow their tribal religion (Weinrich, 1979: 130).

This decision reflects the continuing alliance between the state and the chiefs over the control of women. The main concern was with property built up during marriage, and the 'problem' was those women who

earned an income whilst married, but who were unable, according to custom, to keep their savings or property in the event of divorce or widowhood. . The reluctance to change the practices relating to *lobola*, which would have concerned relations between older and younger men, was considered to be so great by the government that it was not even considered in the report. This may, or may not have been a reflection of the true extent of men's feelings about it.

#### Changes in Practice

Many people continued to resolve marriage disputes without resorting to either the courts of the chiefs or DCs, whether or not they had a registered marriage. Extended families might become involved, and then possibly a headman, or even sub-chief. The extent to which divorce was prevented, or its conditions were determined in this way, or the local patterns which emerged, remain largely undocumented. However, Weinrich found that women did not openly challenge the authority of their husbands (Weinrich, 1979: 54) and enormous social pressures were placed on Shona wives to stay with their spouses. These pressures included lack of support from their own fathers in the case of seeking divorce on any grounds, and fear of what would happen to their children. She concluded that this was because of the importance of lineage in Shona society, which prizes highly the control over women and their fertility. Such pressures on women were certainly upheld by chiefs in some places (Weinrich, 1979: 60-1; 1982: 38; Bourdillon, 1982: 127). Thus Bourdillon's view that chiefs were comparatively lenient to the interests

of women needs to be counterposed against the role that they played in the overall social context.

The commercialisation of *lobola* continued during this period, and cattle were a decreasingly important component, compared with cash and in absolute terms (Weinrich 1979: 96-7). Most of the *lobola* was paid by the husband himself, and if any help was given it was by his father. Thus a smaller number of people were involved in marriages than before, continuing the trend noted for the earlier period. Marriage came to be seen solely as a contract between a husband, wife and their parents - principally their fathers. Consequently the *chipanda* brother and sister relationship declined in importance (p.100). Weinrich's analysis of the amount paid suggests that the average has stayed fairly constant, but there was an increase in the *range* of payments, commensurate with the extent of economic differentiation between men. Fathers demanded a higher payment from wealthier young men and for daughters who had been educated (p.100). She suggests that the fact that some men charge very high prices for their daughters explains the common belief that all prices have risen. It remained customary not to pay all *lobola* at one go: government regulations about having to complete payment in order to get an enabling certificate for a Christian marriage were largely ignored (107).

Weinrich has argued that these changes were responsible for the more oppressed position of most wives in the 1970s than in earlier periods. She suggested that the transition to a marriage where wider kin had no or little involvement in the contract itself and in the resolution of conflict within marriage made Shona women much more vulnerable to,



and incapable of resisting, the demands of their husbands. She noted a loss of economic and social independence, with husbands censuring their wives' contact with all other people and appropriating their wives' income (109). However, the women who experienced this in the most extreme form were urban educated women, and the extent to which these kinds of restrictions were common in the TTLs is not clear.

The demands for *lobola* in the TTLs certainly followed the pattern described and she suggests that this was because fathers often had few means to earn income, and so were eager to obtain as much for their daughters as possible. This was not then used to enable sons to marry, as in the past, because they usually had to pay their own *lobola*. The goods and money were used to invest in the education of other young female relatives or in farm implements, cattle, or houses. The poorest spent it on food and clothes (p.110-111). This obliged women to marry, or at least to insist on the payment of *lobola*, even when they objected to other aspects of it, such as the idea of being 'paid for' (Weinrich, 1979: 115-6; 1982: 35).

Christian marriages were selected most commonly by those who had been educated at Missions and richer people who also lived in towns. Christianity certainly became more widespread in this period, but most people in the TTLs did not marry in church<sup>4</sup>. For this reason I shall not consider the implications of this type of marriage here.

Changes in Divorce

Extra burdens placed on marriages during this period included the prolonged separation of partners; isolation from other kin; and the general hardships of living in the TTLs and of war. All of these, other than the last, had been increasing throughout under colonial rule, but all intensified particularly during this period. It seems, from the comments of Holleman, Weinrich and Bourdillon, that the pressures exerted by chiefs and elders upon women to stay married and sexually faithful were not successful in preventing an increase in the rate of divorce, although the figures are not clear<sup>5</sup>. In fact men, rather than women, appear to have been most responsible for the ending of marriage through adultery and desertion (Weinrich, 1982; 178).

I have suggested that the codification of customary law described for the 1930s curtailed opportunities for women to divorce men, or to be seen as the innocent party. This codification was regarded by NCs at the time as 'overriding' customary law in favour of 'natural justice'. I suggest that this adaptation seems to have continued with decreasing frequency in the gradual attempts to implement the elusive 'real' traditions of the Shona. During the 1960s and 1970s there was increased government pressure on the DCs to implement the colonial interpretation of customary law developed during the 1930s and beforehand.

This codified set of laws contrasted with the *practice* of customary law outside the DCs' courts, both in the past, and, Bourdillon suggests (op cit), during this period also. The latter allowed for a consideration of the long term causes of the breakdown in the marriage, and for the fault to be found with the opposite partner guilty of the particular

behaviour which brought matters to a head. This facilitated recognition of a woman as blameless whilst seeking divorce through provoking behaviour.

I suggest that this possibility seems to have been lessened during this period. A husband could resort to the DC's court if he did not receive a satisfactory ruling from a chief, where he could be more likely to receive a favourable hearing, according to Bourdillon (op cit). The chiefs themselves had different motives depending on the circumstances of the case. Ruling in the favour of a woman in a divorce case also means ruling in favour of her father, who stood to be liable for repayment of *lobola* if she were found culpable.

Arbitration in marital disputes which were not intended by either party to result in divorce was something different, however. A chief could rule that all property, and certainly cash, belonged to the husband, without threatening the position of any men. Such rulings would have made women more reluctant to use this form of arbitration or choose to leave marriages, and thus chiefs would achieve another of their aims. This is speculation, however, in the absence of adequate data. It is likely that most marriages were dissolved without intervention from any court (and so were technically illegal) in any case (Weinrich, 1982: 182), but the important point here is that men had the opportunity to use the European administration to their advantage against women in the regulation and dissolution of marriage.

Another strong pressure on women to stay within marriages was the fact that they would not be able to keep their children if they were divorced. This represents some departure from the pre-colonial period,

but the legal framework explicitly permitted DCs to make alternative custody awards to whomever they saw fit during this period. The fact that they did not do this (May, 1981: 55) reflects their desire to rule in accordance with the wishes of men, or at least to uphold the bogus traditionalism they had developed. I do not suggest that the pre-colonial situation was one in which it was easy for women to escape from marriages and to retain access to their children, but the constancy with which it is thought that the DCs ignored the possibility of awarding women custody in this period reflects their broader political concerns at this time.

Weinrich also found that it was harder for divorced women to re-marry than for divorced men, and the preponderance of women in the TTLs made it relatively easy for men to find new wives. Those who did not find new husbands often eventually left the TTLs as they had no means of earning an income and had very low social status (Weinrich, 1982: 174). They went to the European farms, mines and towns in search of work, but frequently ended up as prostitutes or survived through forming temporary liaisons with men (Weinrich, 1982: 174). I argue that the circumstances leading women to leave the rural areas were different from those in the 1930s. Critically, they had been rejected by their husbands and they had no access to land. Their earlier predecessors had been *seeking escape* from the controls of fathers and husbands. Men had become able to exercise greater control over women within marriage, whilst at the same time, men as a gender were far better able to escape responsibility for women who were rejected. Women who had lost the

prime quality of fertility or who had committed adultery were frequently rejected.

Changes in Widowhood

It seems that pre-colonial practices ensured that although a man's sons inherited his estate, and his brother his social position, his wife was cared for materially, even if she did not actually become the wife of one of his brothers. The extent of commodification and the prevalence of inalienable<sup>n</sup> property rights largely worked to the benefit of husbands within marriage. Men controlled cash and were regarded as owning the property of the household. By the 1960s and 1970s it is evident that this was being interpreted as all property. Wealth belonging to, and income earned by, the wife was legally the property of her husband. Upon his death, it belonged to his lineage and was appropriated by his brothers, or other male relatives. Widows sometimes were not even given the option to marry one of these brothers and were left completely destitute (Bourdillon, 1982: 207).

This is a problem which most dramatically occurred for women in towns, where a house, furniture, and even a business might be at stake. However, it was also important for relatively poor women in the TTLs, as property included rights to land and farming equipment, leaving her without access to the means of production. It included any goods which she had purchased with income she had been able to earn herself, which would always have remained hers (as *mavoko* property) under pre-colonial practices. Much of the explanation for the lack of obligation felt by a man's brothers for his widow might be explained by the splitting up of

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communities and the little contact that often occurred between kin (May, 1983: 90). In this situation, widows came to look to their sons for support, as by this time most of them were economically independent of their fathers (Bourdillon, 1982: 206). However, in many cases support was not forthcoming. This had become a problem for many widows, who were left in the same situation as divorcees.

#### Changes As a Result of the War

Women who ran away to the training camps outside the country (mostly to Mozambique) were able to demand and experience a completely different lifestyle, without many of the shackles of the life in the TTLs, as administrators, teachers, guerillas' assistants and fighters themselves. I do not intend to describe the extent of this freedom, but mention it here as a stark contrast to the life many women still faced in the villages (Weinrich, 1979: 44-5, 135-6; Batezat et al, 1988: 156). The demands of these young women on the ZANU leadership in particular were to be highly significant in the new independent Zimbabwe.

Countervailing the increasing subordination of women in the TTLs, to some extent, were possibly the opportunities opened up by the guerilla war itself. Young women in the TTLs were important to the guerillas during the war, and were recognised as being so. They acted as *chimbwidos* (the female counterparts of the male helpers *mujibas*) and helped the guerillas as cooks, informants and messengers. This undermined the control held over them by elder men. Through these roles, some young women were able to exercise power within the community for the first time. Their word was trusted in identifying informants and

they were given respect for the work that they did in transporting messages and food.

For much of the war, it was the women in the villages who were more heavily involved in giving support to the guerillas, in the absence of so many of the men. In some cases men living in towns took longer to accept the feasibility of waging war against the government as they believed the official propaganda to which they were exposed in the towns. It was only through their visits home that they learned more of the true situation and of the roles their wives and daughters were playing. However, it is difficult to assess the extent of the challenge to previous gender relations which this presented within the TTLs.

In the later stages of the war, some Shona areas were almost liberated zones. In these the ZANLA guerillas intervened in local courts and set up alternative committees. They made decisions about land as well as marriage and other problems. Chiefs' courts ceased to function and very few cases were brought to the DCs (Seidman, 1983: 59). It is not clear, however, how they might have challenged ideas about marriage (Cliffe et al, 1980: 50-1; Bourdillon, 1982: 138; Phimister, 1988: 12). Nonetheless I mention it here as it adds to the complexity of changes in marriage that forms part of the social mosaic at independence.

#### *Gender Relations of Production and Reproduction in the TTLs*

In this section I deduce aspects of change in the gender relations of production and reproduction from accounts written from different



perspectives, viewed in the light of the foregoing accounts of changes in land tenure, agriculture and marriage. These occurred largely outside the control of the state and capitalist classes.

The prevalent attitude of state officials to the gender relations of production was reflected by commentators. In the 1963 *Native Affairs Development Annual*, one writer commented on the large proportions of land that were being worked by women and suggested that this was the main problem behind the failure to transform African agriculture,

The women are either elderly and infirm or are burdened with the care of children. They have not the time or energy to improve their standard of farming.

... Further, the 32% (landholders who are absent in permanent employment) ... contribute in cash to the support of their families in the reserves. As a result, the land is not regarded, as it should be, as the main support of the family and a powerful incentive to improve farming methods is absent. ... The NLHA is intended, amongst other things, to treble native crop production ... The incentive to improve is just not there, nor in many cases is the necessity. The primitive agricultural methods which are all that the predominantly female cultivators have the time or need to use will not give the desired result ... There is no need for them to keep up with the Joneses - they are the Joneses.

(*'Age and Land in a Native Reserve'*, 1963: 108)

This is echoed by Yudelman in 1964,

The women who remain in the African areas are conservative. They have not been exposed to the influences of the European economy. They are far less responsive than are males to the suggestions for technological changes from the extension services, for they tend to view their task as one of providing subsistence for the family rather than producing a cash surplus. So the absence often makes technological change all the more difficult.

(Yudelman, 1964: 133)

It is important to consider women's reluctance to take up different methods of farming, if these reports were true, within the context of their extra labour burden in the absence of men. Yudelman ascribed their

reluctance to some innate conservatism, a view also held by Arrighi, who claimed that it was because of a socially defined inability to make decisions about agricultural production stemming from pre-colonial gender relations. The evidence for this assumption is certainly shaky, as older women in particular had considerable ability to influence such decisions.

By this time, however, men who were present in the Reserves generally had fewer demands than their wives on their labour, even within agriculture. The definition of male tasks within agriculture had been limited to the sum of clearing land and ploughing, combined with *supplementing* women's labour in other tasks, which they no longer regarded as theirs, such as weeding (Weinrich, 1975: 88). Women's labour still included the tasks associated with childcare and the production of food from crops. It is this lighter burden of men which would make them more receptive than women to ideas about intensifying labour inputs into farming, whether or not the men actually did the labour themselves. Unfortunately there is scarcely any data available to assess how widespread such intensification had become.

The extent of differentiation within communities has not been assessed, but in some places it was evidently considerable, and often was along gender lines. Weinrich estimates that almost a third of peasant households possessed no cattle in the 1970s, many of which were those of 'widows'. (It is not clear whether this term also refers to abandoned wives and divorcees.) Those households which had cattle only lent or hired them for ploughing when they were not using them themselves, which meant that other people had to plant late, which

lowered yields, or had to cultivate by hand. Given that these households were those with the least labour available in any case, they were further impoverished by this. In addition, where land was allocated under the Land Husbandry Act, more successful farmers had been encouraged to try to acquire some of the land of those not so successful, or those who became permanently employed elsewhere, and this seems to have happened in some areas (Weinrich, 1975: 83-4). This may have led some widows to sell some of their land, and also that wives who were abandoned or divorced found that they no longer had rights to land as wives.

Obtaining even sufficient food became a severe problem for many during the war. Even before 1972, however, more households had come to rely on the income from migrant labour to meet their basic needs<sup>e</sup>. It was not clear during this time how much this reliance on off-farm income could be explained as the erosion and destruction of ecological resources in the TTLs, or the insufficiency of other factors of production, such as labour, cattle, and cash for seeds, fertiliser etc. This remained a problem to be explored after independence.

#### *Relations of Human Reproduction*

The relations of human reproduction in the Shona TTLs likewise remained somewhat of a mystery to observers and the state in this period. The first national census took place in 1969 in response to the realisation that the size of the African population had previously been grossly underestimated. The government believed the rate of population growth to be over 3% per annum in the TTLs (Harris, 1981: 90-1). The fact that it was high is not disputed. Weinrich suggests that the high

rate amongst the Shona was not simply a desire for greater amounts of labour, but was connected to the great social importance attached to children and the great awareness of genealogies amongst the Shona (with kinship terms for six generations) (Weinrich, 1982: 38). However, she also describes how for many people these family ties had declined drastically in importance, so at least part of the answer must lie elsewhere.

I suggest that there was a continuation in this period of the factors which I identified in the previous chapter as being important for patterns of fertility in the 1950s. Thus the need for labour remained important, if it did not actually increase. The extent to which there was a gender preference in having many children as a solution to this is not clear, but a gender difference in the ability to control fertility was entrenched. The disruption of communities lessened lineage controls over men's sexuality and thus women who did not want to conceive as often as their husbands wanted them to could not obtain support from relatives in trying to reassert traditional values about child spacing. They also risked divorce in refusing sex or trying to avoid pregnancy in other ways.

#### *Summary of the 1960s and 1970s*

This period was one in which many people had come to expect the state to intervene when disputes could not be solved and for there to be a set of rules to which one could appeal. Hence, the chiefs' courts may have been used more frequently than in the past. The DCs' courts ruled according to the rules that had been noted in the 1930s and before, and remained resistant to readjustments to any new social norms

amongst the Shona. This was because of the belief of the government in the ability of 'tradition' to pacify and control the population generally and in the desire of the DCs to placate men by preventing the economic independence of women in particular. Nonetheless a challenge to male authority was offered during the war by young women working to help the guerillas, which was to be taken up after independence.

In this period the re-shaping of marriage, divorce and widowhood had continued in the directions they had been in previous decades. This was in response to: changes in the economy; conditions in the TTLs; and the nature of nationalist politics. It was also a precondition of them. The government had to be able to grant the control of women to men in general and ultimately to the chiefs in particular, in order to undertake its bargain of indirect rule, through Community Development. The failure of the chiefs to meet their half of the bargain as nationalist resistance grew was partly manifested in the challenges to the elders' control by the women who helped the guerillas.

## 2. INDEPENDENCE AND THE 1980s

### *Introduction*

This second part of the chapter (and concluding section of Part II of the thesis) does two things. First, it places conclusions from the foregoing historical analysis in the context of contemporary political issues relating to social relations in the countryside. Second, it presents aspects of the politics of gender and class in Zimbabwean

society which are pertinent as background to the examination of the relations of production and reproduction in the village case study which follows in Part III.

The ending of the war brought many changes to peoples' lives. ZANU and Mugabe's leadership have continued to enjoy considerable popularity in the Shona Communal Areas (CAs), as the TTLs were renamed, which has been expressed through local and national elections<sup>7</sup>. This has certainly been helped by the

"mushrooming of roads, clinics and wells" around the country; and the institution of minimum wage laws that created a favourable contrast with conditions which prevailed during the colonial days.

(Mandaza. 1986: 16).

Much attention has been paid to the policy of Resettlement. Some 35,000 families were resettled on previously 'White' land in the first five years after independence<sup>8</sup>. No clear policy has developed with regard to the future of the CAs, in spite of the fact that the majority of the population (57%) still live there (Bush and Cliffe, 1984; Moyo, 1986: 187), and that they continue to face the most acute problems of the peasantry. In addition, close to half of CA households have been estimated to have female heads of households, and they also have high dependency ratios (Moyo, 1986: 187). Lionel Cliffe summarises the situation as follows,

Improved support has contributed to dramatic increases in the marketed surplus, but these have been very unevenly spread between regions and limited to a minority of better-off peasant households. The limited pace of resettlement plus the declining employment rate in the overall economy have not reduced land pressures. Environmental deterioration, even though it is often emotively exaggerated, in the absence of hard evidence about actual trends over time, is still clearly a problem. Immediate starvation is no longer a threat with the end of the 1982-4 drought, but long-term, grinding poverty still faces a significant proportion of rural households, those

that are denied sufficient land to cultivate, their own oxen to plough, even (in some cases) enough labour to tend crops (other than that of the already overworked women on their own), and/or access to some family members' off-farm earnings to compensate for, or to improve, inadequate farm production.

(Cliffe, 1988: 309-10).

In this situation Mandaza concludes that,

the new state had gradually become an apparent mediator between capital and labour, between the aspirations of the people for the "fruits of independence" and the role of international capital in its quest for more profit.

(Mandaza, 1986: 16),

This, he points out, has been reflected in the *continuation* of many aspects of agricultural policy.

Whilst policy direction toward the CAs is unclear, they are the principal sites of interaction between three important areas of policy-making. First, state bureaucracy and the implementation of law in the countryside, which has led to some confusion over the status of chiefs, the implications of which are generally ignored. Second, national agricultural policy and the role of the peasantry in the economy has been an important area. Third, the position of women in Zimbabwean society has been a hot issue and prompted considerable legislation. This last was raised as a political issue because of the role which many women played during the war, and because of the dramatic plight of many women living in towns. However, the policies also have implications for women living in the CAs.

At the same time as the enactment of policies relating to these new concerns, some processes of social change continued with the same dynamics established before independence. In particular, attention has been focused on peasant differentiation along regional and household

lines, and to a lesser extent that along gender lines. These concerns have now generated considerable data and analysis in attempts to breakdown two stereotypes of the peasantry in the CAs: that of the 'backward' peasant, as reflected in the colonial bureaucratic attitudes; and that of the successful 'model' peasant presented by the government and taken up by international organisations. Differentiation in terms of gender has not been studied with the same rigour as that between regions and households, and they have not in general been considered together. This is in spite of the fact that they represent the interaction between gender and class in the relations of production and reproduction.

In seeking to respond to these political questions, writers have often omitted analysis of land tenure, the operation of the law in the CAs and the way in which marriage operates in the CAs, all of which are crucial, I suggest, for understanding the relations of production and reproduction in the CAs. I explore these in the following sections on state structures in the countryside; agricultural policy; and policies relating to women.

### *State Structures in the Countryside*

The existing state bureaucracy in the CAs represents a combination of structures and political assumptions inherited from the colonial period and introduced since independence. In the first year of independence in some Shona areas the effective centres of administration were the Village and Branch ZANU/PF Committees (Seidman, 1983: 59; Ranger, 1985a: 291). They continued to hear disputes and allocated land.



Most of those elected to the Committees were the resident elders whose influence had been important before the advent of guerillas. Older people apparently saw the elections as an opportunity to put youth in its place and few guerillas, *mujibas* or *chimbwidos* were elected (Ranger, 1985a: 291-2). Resistance to state conservation measures and other regulations continued, with ZANU as an alternative administrative network (Ranger, 1985a: 294). The new government introduced District Administrative Councils which were invested with local administrative and economic development powers, in spite of the prevalent suspicion from rural people arising from their experiences of councils in the past. These appear to have been slowly accepted as legitimate authorities by the peasantry. Below these are Ward Development Committees and Village Development Committees (the latter consisting of one representative for about every 20 families), both of which are elected.

In 1981, the *Customary Law and Primary Courts Act* replaced the *African Law and Tribal Courts Act*. This abolished the judicial authority of the chiefs and headmen, and that of the District Commissioners, although not without considerable opposition from within the cabinet. The new framework consisted of Primary Courts at Village and Community (old District) level, with Chairmen as presiding officers who have only judicial authority. These Chairmen are government appointees, and when first selecting them, the government generally appointed to Village Courts those who had been nominated by the local councils (Seidman, 1983: 68). Village Courts do not have the same powers to enforce their decisions as did the old Chiefs' Courts, and these can only be ensured by registering judgements at a Community or Magistrate Court, which is the

responsibility of the litigant (Seidman, 1983: 61-3). ( Magistrate and District Courts are 'higher' courts and act as courts of appeal, along with the High and Supreme Courts.)

It is unclear how these courts work in detail but in May 1987, there were press reports of chaos in the Primary Courts (cited in Ranger, *Review of the Zimbabwean Press*). In some places they had never been established and in others they never operated successfully. The reasons for their collapse were said to include corruption and a lack of training and inspectors. It was proposed that the Primary Courts be merged with the Magistrate Courts in order for the state to have greater control over the administration of law, but this does not seem to have happened.

Thus the authority of the DCs, the chiefs and headmen was formally replaced, but so was that of the ZANU committees (Ranger, 1985a: 5-6; Yates, 1980: 76-7). District Administrators (DAs) were appointed to replace the DCs, but they do not have formal authority over the councils, and their decisions can be overruled. The chiefs were stripped of their formal powers to allocate land, try cases or collect taxes, but have remained in an ambiguous position. The government stated that it has no intention to 'recognise' (and so pay) unpopular chiefs, or to appoint new ones (Yates, 1980: 71).

Yet press reports suggest that they are still influential, especially where the Primary Courts have collapsed. Also they have not disappeared from the political scene, as they have in many places been elected to official positions (Lionel Cliffe, personal communication, August, 1988). Those not identified as being 'unpopular' by the

government have continued to receive pay (in keeping with the requirements of the Lancaster House agreement not to dismiss civil servants). Cliffe describes the situation thus,

the influence of chiefs and headmen over the allocation of land, which was undermined in many areas touched by the war, is often being reasserted, even through elected positions in local bodies and ZANU. Such elements may well put their support behind a statist, rather than democratic land reform, which they may feel they can manipulate, and rather than individualisation which they opposed in the 1950s.

(Cliffe, 1988: 321)

Thus land tenure is now in a state of flux and confusion. The Minister of Local Government (*The Herald*, 9th March, 1987) stated that the control of land rested only with District Councils which were directly responsible to his Ministry. He was responding to reports that Village Development Committees had been allocating land in some places, and headmen and chiefs had been taking bribes to do so. He emphasised that none of them had a legal right to do this. The extent of these practices remains unknown, although they are thought to be widespread (Cliffe, personal communication, August, 1988) and there have been no concerted efforts to curb them. Moreover, the District Councils often contain people who were previously elders, if not actually chiefs and headmen who survived the war retaining local credibility. The government is considering privatising land 'to increase investment incentive' in the CAs (Weiner, 1988: 74), which would undermine this control. The chiefs have also been consulted and placated by the government, particularly with regard to legislation relating to women, as I indicate below.

This confusion between the *persons* of chiefs and the institution itself makes an analysis of the degree of continuation of their role problematic, and the political implications remain somewhat unclear in

the absence of more detailed research. Those who, as individuals, continue to receive the support of local people, as reflected in local elections, could exercise considerable 'traditional' powers of arbitration about land and property.

The relation of the government to CA peasants is different from that of colonial governments in many ways, but is articulated through several of the state structures that existed before independence. There have been several reorganisations of ministerial responsibility for agriculture in the CAs since independence, and this now rests with the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development and with the Ministry of Agriculture. Within the latter, the state extension service (AGRITEX) operates with many of the same personnel who were employed before independence. Much progress has been made with regard to altering their orientation. AGRITEX now operates to educate peasants and to monitor and assist them in agricultural production. In contrast to the previous period, women are also able to get access to these services (Batezat *et al*, 1988: 165). It stopped trying to enforce any conservation measures shortly after independence because of the continued resistance from peasants which has such political historical precedents (Ranger, 1985a: 7-9).

The state marketing structures established during the 1960s for the benefit of European farmers have on the whole remained in force. They operated differently from marketing boards in other African countries because they absorbed losses, rather than being a means to tax farmers (Mumbengegwi, 1986: 205). The Grain Marketing Board (GMB) now offers non-discriminatory pre-planting prices to all farmers for grain of

different qualities (Moyo, 1986: 187). The other main attempt to make this structure better-adapted to the needs of peasant farmers has been to increase the number of marketing depots, thus reducing marketing costs (Mumbengegwi, 1986: 214-5). Many peasants still have to sell locally in order not to pay the high transport costs to the nearest depots, however, and consequently receive lower producer prices (op cit 215). Middle men undermine this price even further, so that some peasants receive below 66% of the government price (Moyo, 1986: 188).

In 1978/9 credit was almost non-existent to the CAs. This has been made available to 8% CA farmers, which constitutes 16% of the total amount of credit from the main agricultural source (the Agricultural Farming Corporation) (Mumbengegwi, 1986: 217; Davies, 1988: 27). This tends to favour richer peasants as credit is tied to the ability to market surplus and purchase inputs (*ibid*). Women are now recognised as legitimate producers by these state structures, for the purposes of credit and sale (Batezat *et al*, 1988: 165).

The actions which have been taken since independence thus reflect a variety of concerns, but as yet the government has formed no clear policy for the CAs (Moyo, 1986: 165; Shopo and Moyo, n.d.: 48-9). This is reflected in the *laissez-faire* attitude of the government to land tenure in the CAs. I suggest that land tenure is a direct expression of local politics, as expressed through the decisions of the Village Committees, chiefs and headmen. Many different practices and rules have developed nationally and these are not surveyed or recorded. The government has stated no approval of any particular set.

*Agricultural Production in the CAs*

The CA peasantry has come to be regarded as one of the most successful in Africa because of the high levels of marketed grain which have increased dramatically in the non-drought years since independence. This has largely come about because of the overall transformation of the relationship between the state and the peasantry with independence which has provided CA farmers with the greatly improved access to marketing boards, research and extension services, and credit, as described above (Weiner, 1988: 69). However, differentiation has occurred along the three lines of region, household and gender. It is important to interpret the data available for these in the context of the interactive history summarised in the foregoing chapters.

Differentiation in terms of income has occurred at a regional level because of ecological conditions. Zimbabwe has been classified into different agro-ecological regions, called Natural Regions (NRs), which are largely determined by the amount of rainfall, decreasing from I to V. Two thirds of the CAs' population are in NR IV and V (55-60% national population live in CAs) (Weiner, 1988: 67 and 69). In 1983-4, 63.1% of marketed maize came from NR I and II, where only 15% of the CA population live. In NR IV and V, where two thirds live, marketed surpluses were limited. Weiner suggests that there is also a strong regional component to the use of inputs, and to hunger (as seen in the distribution of drought relief). He summarises this thus,

The agricultural changes presently taking place have been facilitated by access to agricultural institutions and technical packages developed historically and specifically for highveldt use. The government and international agencies helping to fund agricultural development appear to be aware of this reality, as a disproportionate amount of investment

has gone to the CAs with the greatest agricultural potential.

(Weiner, 1988: 74).

He adds that,

The majority of the communal area population ... remains in areas with limited agricultural potential; non-farm income continues to be needed for basic needs. Vulnerability to both drought and economic recessions is dangerously high. ... *The current pattern of agricultural change suggests that in the absence of significant land transfer, there will be a marked increase in communal area agrarian differentiation at the natural regional level.*

(Weiner, 1988: 82, original italics) (See also Moyo, 1986: 187-8)

There is also differentiation between households *within* regions. For instance, half the rural households had no cattle in 1982 (CSO survey cited by Davies, 1988: 27), and in 1984, this figure was estimated at 33.3%, whilst 4.8% had over 10. This is important as the main form of tillage is ploughing with cattle and those households without animals have to borrow or hire from others (Shumba, 1984: 235). Even where this does not incur a direct cost, it usually means that ploughing takes place later than the ideal time, in a situation where timing is crucial to yield. There is a large yield variation linked to the use of fertilisers, draught animal power and participation in farmers' organisations (Weiner, 1988: 68). It was estimated at independence that there was a twenty-fold difference in the size of plots cultivated (Jacobs, 1983: 37), and all regional studies since have shown a small group which has considerably more land available than the average (Weiner, 1988: 71). Weiner summarises the situation of differentiation between households thus,

An evaluation of CA research conducted since independence suggests that there are also marked inequalities unrelated to agro-ecological potential. *Differential access to draught animal power, land, labour, credit and off-farm income is*

*creating an uneven diffusion of agricultural inputs and productive potential.*

(Weiner, 1988: 82-3, original italics) (See also Moyo, 1986: 188).

Thus the actions taken by the government to alter the functioning of state structures have interacted with social relations in the countryside to reinforce the regional and household differentiation within communities that existed before independence.

The state has also been an intermediary between women and men, between the demands for state support for changes in gender relations in production and reproduction on the one hand, and on the other the need to maintain their present pattern, if not recoup the 'losses' incurred by men through the liberating experiences of many women during the war. Cliffe ponders on the future developments in the CAs, and acknowledges that state action could be taken directly to restructure the 'networks of kinship and family, which have been the premise for the extraction of surplus labour from the peasantry, but have also served to make tolerable some of the intense deprivations and social tensions equated with that system'. He comments on these,

Will the emphasis be on strengthening such institutions like inheritance, bridewealth, land rights devolving upon male household heads, and the sexual division of labour, all of which contribute to the "double exploitation" of women? Or will these several social forms that somehow survive but are under severe threat, be swept aside as part of the removal or relocation policies or by new property relations - either completely individual or state collective?

(Cliffe, 1988: 311).

Thus he highlights the link between the social relations of reproduction and the gender relations of production, both agricultural and off-farm. Nonetheless his main analysis is of the implications of proposals for



(and the chances of success of) various options for agriculture and does not focus on this link.

In some sense I argue that there is also continuity in the alliance between the state and patriarchy, which has not (yet) been undermined by the government. The extent to which the further development of peasant production in the CAs depends upon the existing gender relations embodied in the social relations of production and reproduction is examined in detail in the case study in the following two chapters. Below I summarise some of the main forms of inequality and differentiation that have been highlighted in these relations in the CAs, and subsequently review some of the government action which has been directed against women.

Women in all parts of the country complain about their loss of rights in land (Muchena, 1982; ZWB, 1981). Widows and divorcees in particular often cannot get access to much land at all (Kazembe, 1986; May, 1983; Mpofu, 1983, ZANU, 1986). At independence one writer observed that,

women had become agricultural producers, but under conditions where men still controlled and allocated land, and directed women's labour.

(Gaidzanwa, 1982, cited in Batezat, 1988: 165)

and the situation does not seem to have changed a great deal for many women. In two national reports completed shortly after independence, women complained about men's control of what crops should be grown (men tend to choose maize at the expense of other, more nutritious, food crops); the reduction in the amount of land available for women's gardens; and feeling that they were powerless to contravene men's

decisions (Muchena, 1982; ZWB, 1981). The reports portray situations similar to those described in the 1960s and 1970s.

Land is still being allocated to men 'on behalf of their families', even though women have expressed a desire to have control over their own land, labour and products (Batezat *et al*, 1988: 166). Official policy still refers to farmers as 'he', and the family is presumed to be the unit of production (Batezat *et al*, 1988: 166)

However, change in the terminology used by academics and civil servants to describe households in the CAs reflects some growing awareness of the role of women. This has changed from the 'migrant labourer' or 'semi-proletariat' 'worker-peasant', to 'split families' (Bush and Cliffe, 1984: 77) and 'farmer-housewife' (ZWB, cited in *op cit*: 92). This growing awareness parallels the high profile given to women's liberation in the rhetoric of the government and ZANU, some of which is reflected in the legislative measures summarised below.

Much of the concern behind the research which has generated these data and analyses is with the development of classes within, or the dynamics of, the peasantry. There remains much indecision within the government as to an assessment of this, but also of the political implications. These are explored in the case study in Part III. Research and policies related to women have highlighted issues of gender, but these are rarely fully integrated in analyses of the peasantry, being relegated to 'Women's Issues'. I consider these separately below, but

integrate them in the analysis of the peasantry in the case study in Part III.

### *Legislation Aimed at Women*

The perception of women developed in the rhetoric of the liberation movements proclaiming a socialist ideology (Batezat *et al*, 1988: 155-6) has provided a complex political context for the passing of legislation relating to women<sup>9</sup>. Such legislation is more effective in urban situations, and was in fact largely developed out of concern for the situation of women living in towns. However, it is important to analyse why some aspects of the legislation aimed at women in general do not affect rural women; and second, to uncover some of the effects of state action which was not aimed at rural women but which nonetheless has had effects for them.

### *The Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA)*

Ostensibly, this Act was intended to confer adult, majority status on African women once they reached the age of 18. Its passing (eventually in 1982) was a direct result of the involvement of many women in 'non-traditional' roles in the war. It provoked heated debates in Parliament, the newspapers and on street corners about the status of women, *lobola*, adultery, relations between parents and children and about 'African culture' and 'tradition' (Batezat *et al*, 1988: 159). The government had a commitment to pass such legislation to amend the legal minority status which had been conferred on women by the colonial

state. In doing so, however, it struck at the heart of gender relations in society, which led to an outcry. The compromise was a legally ambiguous Act which put the government on the defensive.

In an effort to clarify some of the legal ambiguity embodied in the Act, the Minister of Justice at the time, Cde. Mubako, stated the implications as he saw them,

An African woman over 18 will be able to enter a lawful marriage without her guardian's consent, notwithstanding the provision of any other enactment.

... As a government firmly committed to Socialist principles, and to the equality of all our people, we could not simply ignore a system which perpetuated sexual discrimination by putting women as a class in a disadvantageous position compared to men ... The new age of majority shall apply for the purpose of any law including Customary Law. Thus the Act overrides anything in any other Act, or in the Common law, or Customary law

(Press Statement, 2.8.82.)

He gave the example that a guardian does not have to be present at the marriage of a woman who is 18 or over. Further effects of the legislation meant that a woman can now;

- (a) enter contracts of any nature, including the purchase of a house, without assistance;
- (b) sue and defend any action in a court of law;
- (c) marry without consent

He added that a woman could become a guardian herself, and sue for seduction damages of an illegitimate daughter. The minister said that the Act aimed to put *lobola* in its proper place as an agreement between families, ie that,

It should not be a prerequisite for a valid marriage, but once an agreement had been entered into, this is enforceable in court, the same as any other contract ... Customary Law, like any other law, must adapt to changing circumstances, and when the law does not adapt quickly enough, it is necessary for the legislature to intervene.

He added subsequently that the payment of *lobola*,

is now at the discretion of the man and the woman ... the woman's father or guardian, or mother, cannot insist in payment of *roora* or a specific sum (except where the woman is under 18).

(Press Statement 2.9.81)

Women who had been lobbying for the Act, and their supporters, carefully analysed its provisions and found flaws with regard to what they considered to be the government's intentions. For instance, the Act came into direct conflict with the way in which the *African* (now *Customary*) *Marriages Act* (under which customary marriages were supposed to be registered) had been functioning. This still required a guardian's consent, and *lobola* to be paid, all of which are recorded on the marriage certificate (May, 1983; 70-1). The minister said that the *LAMA* should overrule all other legislation, but this was not in the letter of the Act. In fact the legal provision for overriding Customary Law with regard to marriage had been made when the *Customary Law and Primary Courts Act* of 1981 replaced the *African Law and Tribal Courts Act* of 1969, but on such a contentious issue clarity was needed in order to dispel the doubt and confusion, and this was not forthcoming.

Even more complex was the fact that regulations regarding the *Marriages Act* (which enables Africans to marry under Civil Law, as described) were not changed. According to this law, an 'enabling certificate' was still required, which shows all the details which are on a customary marriage certificate; the marriage had to take place in the bride's home area; and it had to be in the presence of a chief or sub-chief. None of these was revoked. A spokesperson from the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs (CD and WA) indicated that

sections 4, 7 and 12 of the Marriage Act needed changing if the effects of LAMA were to be felt in marriage (*The Herald*, 18.6.82; *May, Sunday Mail*, 1.12.82 and *The Herald*, 21.8.83; Makamure, 1984; Jacobs and Howard, 1987: 31-2).

Were women with sufficient education and funds to choose to marry under the Customary Marriage Act and to insist on doing so without their guardian's consent, they would be able to set a legal precedent. To date this has not happened, and 'despite government vacillations, and hints of repeal', the law stands in the form in which it was passed (Batezat *et al*, 1988: 159).

### The Backlash

The passing of LAMA inflamed the tempers of many male politicians who were outspoken in and out of Parliament about the bad effects they thought this would have on an African culture which they had to preserve, some alleging that the Act would produce a 'nation of prostitutes'. The Act was passed, amongst much dissent, but there were scarcely any further attempts to ensure that it was implemented. In the following year, the groundswell against women's rights came to the fore again, in the most overt combination of state action and male public opinion that had been seen since the 1930s. This state action against women continued into 1984, and reappeared in 1985.

After media campaigns against squatting and 'baby-dumping', many women in towns all over the country were (apparently randomly) arrested and imprisoned in 1983. Men were also arrested as beggars, but

over several months there were far more women arrested and for additional reasons. A total of 6,316 women was acknowledged by the government (Jacobs and Howard, 1987: 42). Most of those who were not subsequently claimed and collected by husbands were removed from the cities and taken to remote prison camps and resettlement schemes. The initial reasons given by the government for the arrests were the need to remove beggars, prostitutes and squatters from the cities to work instead on resettlement schemes; to punish them for engaging in immoral and illegal activities; and to create 'clean' cities. Many women were arrested who in no way conformed to the local stereotyped appearance and behaviour of prostitutes and it was particularly the activities in which women engaged (food vending, for instance) which were identified as targets. (These had been made illegal under the colonial state.) Both of these facts added strength to the interpretation that the action was taken largely against women collectively, rather than beggars, prostitutes and vagrants. In 1984 and 1985 there were other 'campaigns', although these were less overtly directed at women (Jacobs and Howard, 1987: 39-44).

The government seemed to back down over the arrests in 1984, as Mugabe publicly apologised to the "innocent" women who had been arrested, and a statement was made affirming the legal right of women to walk the streets unaccompanied (*The Herald*, 16th, 19th and 30th November, 1983). Nonetheless, this did little to allay the fears of many women, or bring comfort to those who had 'lost their jobs, homes, salaries or had their marriages broken' (*Sunday Mail*, 11th December, 1983). The government *increased* state powers of arrest and detention

inherited from the Smith regime during this time, ostensibly to deal with problems in Matabeleland, and did not hesitate to use them during these campaigns. There is some evidence to suggest that the government did not have absolute control over the police, who engaged in local vendettas against particular individuals as well as women in general (Moto, 1984: 9). However, the fact that they were able to do this, and were not prevented by the government, reveals its condonement of the use of women as scapegoats for some of the many problems it faced (Jacobs and Howard, 1987: 43-4).

In the period leading up to the general election in 1985, debate about the effects of the *LAMA* flared up again. Bishop Muzorewa published criticism of it, declaring that it

allows children to disobey their parents on attaining the age of eighteen.

(*The Herald*, 9th April, 1985)

The reply from a government Minister was indicative of the backtracking which was felt to be necessary,

the Legal Age of Majority Act was intended to give the right to vote, not to disobey parents - legal misunderstandings are soon to be clarified.

(Nathan Shamuyarira, Minister for Information, Posts and Telecommunications, *ibid*)

A few days' later, Mugabe himself supported this view when he declared, at a meeting to reassure Chiefs, that the Act had been passed in order to enable women to vote and that the interpretation of the courts had not been foreseen, adding that the government was, reviewing the law to see if it can be amended.

(*The Herald*, 12th April, 1985).



No such amendment has been passed, however. Makamure suggests that the right to vote was the only intention of the government in the first place because it was thought that ZANU had more potential electoral support from women (because of the role they played in the countryside in the war) (Makamure, 1984). The absence of the promised amendment may be because the government is caught between different pressures within the state apparatus, with radical MPs and the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs (CD and WA) pulling against conservative men in most other areas. On the other hand, the public statements by prominent members of the government and the unrestrained attacks on women during the roundups by the police, and consistently by the national press, suggest that the government was willing to succumb to the more conservative pressures.

The *Customary Law and Primary Courts Act, 1981* abolished the judicial authority of 'traditional' leaders, as described above. This provided for a 'neutral' judiciary which could be used in relation to marriage disputes, thus improving on the old system. In addition an amendment to the Maintenance Act in 1982 meant that deserted, divorced or unmarried women can legally claim maintenance from the fathers of their children in Community Courts (Batezat *et al*, 1988: 158; Kazembe, 1986: 387). The government did not need to repeal aspects of the *LAMA*, or this other legislation in order to appease protesting men, as other factors to make them relatively ineffective for most rural women, at least as I discuss below.

The Aftermath

The repressive actions taken against women in towns made the women who were residing in CAs extremely cautious about travelling to town. Men migrating frequently between town and country ensured that women heard many stories about what happened, and about the opinions of the police and government ministers. The government's concern for clean cities, free of unsightly poor people, was also one of the motives cited for proposing further legislation intended to *benefit* women.

The *Matrimonial Causes Act* of 1985 was presented to the public as a new Act, and has been commented on as one, but in fact was not. The government reformed the existing Matrimonial Causes Act to extend its jurisdiction over divorce in the case of civil ('Christian') marriage to cover certain aspects of divorce from officially registered Customary marriages (under the *Customary Marriages Act*, which replaced the *African Marriages Act*). At the time of its passing, the Minister of Justice, Legal Reform and Parliamentary Affairs, Cde E. Zvobgo, outlined the problems faced by divorced women, as I described them for the 1970s:

In the past the perception was that whatever a woman earned, it was the man earning it, and however hard a woman sweated for her family and home it was the man's sweat ... In the vast majority of divorces a woman left the home she had helped build up with barely the clothes she had on her back, her kitchen utensils, and in many instances without her children.

(*Zimbabwe News*, April 1986).

The changes made in the Act refer to the grounds for divorce, property rights and the custody of children. The grounds for divorce have been 'rationalised' and 'simplified' (from the grounds of civil marriage before, which were malicious desertion, adultery, cruelty, insanity and imprisonment) to irretrievable breakdown and illness, or continuous

unconsciousness. Hence this should become a 'no fault' divorce and should no longer require either party to prove guilt.

The most important change, however, relates to property rights. The principle of equal division of assets at divorce has been extended to all Customary (registered) and Civil marriages. Primary courts are to decide on the division of the assets based on the principle of equality and alimony payments may be awarded to either partner. The guidelines for the courts overrule the misapprehension that the wife has no right to property during marriage, and that they should in principle award her half, no matter what proportion she brought in. However, the reason for the divorce is important in taking the decision. If the woman is assessed as being more at fault under Customary regulations, her rights to property are undermined.

These regulations make it easier for women to divorce men, as well as being easier for them to be divorced but also, in effect, makes divorce more *costly* in material terms for men. In this sense they may offer more justice and security for women, but they still in total only apply to civil marriages, ie those contracted under the *Marriage Act*, and where relevant to Customary marriage at all, only to those marriages which are *registered*. The laws thus exclude most of the women who live in CAs. The government's intention seems to have been to make men stay married, rather than to provide for women out of marriage. As a minister commented,

People will no longer regard marriage as a frivolous pastime, because that has been the situation, particularly in the case of young people.

(Minister of Justice, *Zimbabwe News*, 1986)

He also commented on the high divorce rate (more than one in three marriages, 1.12.80, Dept of Information) and hoped the Act would remove the spectacle of the destitute woman in town who has been abandoned by her husband.

(*ibid*).

Under the new regulations, the Act also changed the procedure whereby children 'automatically' went to a father on divorce, as it is now at the discretion of the courts to decide according to the best interests of the children (Batezat *et al*, 1988: 158). For this reason, there were very strong reactions against it from many men (Kazembe, 1986; 390). The specific way the Act was passed stirred up some of these reactions further. Similar to the way in which the *LAMA* was passed, it was accompanied by the overt courting of women's groups by the government; and the disregarding of dissent within ZANU. The Minister of Justice declared that he had consulted the Ministry of CD and WA, ZANU's Women's League and other women's groups, all of whom were alleged to have approved the Act. He had not consulted chiefs or community leaders nor was there any open public debate, as the Act was rushed through Parliament, causing several members to complain. The justification offered was that the Minister thought it of no concern to groups which did not represent women's interests. Moreover the government declared that 'public opinion' was not consulted because *it* was to decide what is progressive and revolutionary, and the minister denied requests for a free vote on the Act, insisting that all ZANU MPs should vote with the government.

The discussion in Parliament revealed eagerness on the government's part to pass the legislation before any dissension or examination of it

could be organised. This resulted in confusion about its effects, as revealed in *Zimbabwe News* (ZANU's party paper), which carried stories saying it would increase the presence of 'Sugar Daddies' and 'prostitutes'. Newspaper reports at the time revealed an almost hysterical fear on the part of many men about the effects this <sup>legislation</sup> would have on the legal position of women.

A *Succession Bill* was drawn up to offer widows parallel benefits to those granted to divorcees under the amendments to the Matrimonial Causes Act. One writer has commented that it aims to standardise the equal rights of women and men to inheritance. Widows will no longer be deprived of the husband's estate by his unscrupulous relatives.

(Batezat *et al*, 1988: 158).

The proposed regulations exclude property which has been inherited, so that this does not affect the pattern of inheritance within lineages. (This is bound to mean that there will be confusion about the origin of property, particularly cattle.) It also proposes that widows may be awarded the custody of children. The possibilities for these conditions already exist in other laws and the legislation would simply be clarifying the possibility. Nonetheless, it has still not been passed at the time of writing, although it was tabled for the end of 1986.

### *Some Effects of the Legislation*

There are many criticisms to be made of the laws which have been passed relating to marriage, divorce and widowhood, some of which are described above. In addition, discrimination on grounds of sex is notably absent from the list of other grounds in the constitution. Women have

no legal guarantees of joint ownership with their husbands in marriage, or control over their own earnings. Abortion remains illegal, even when the mother's life is endangered (Seidman, 1984: 435). Nonetheless, the collection of laws which have been passed are more sensitive to the needs of women than those in most other countries in Southern Africa, and are certainly an improvement on the situation before independence. A brief examination of what has happened since their passing, however, suggests that even with tighter legislation on women's behalf the problems would remain.

Kazembe's assessment, particularly of the effects of the changes in the *Matrimonial Causes Act*, is optimistic (Kazembe, 1986: 389). This is perhaps because she focuses on the plight of urban women, more of whom have registered Customary marriages or marry by civil rites. She also concentrates on the higher level Community Courts which include rural cases, but even here, as she indicates, only 52 out of 906 marriages registered at Harare Court in 1985 were registered without noting *roora* payments (Kazembe, 1986: 392), which she takes as evidence of the lack of impact of the LAMA.

The problems are not so much the letter of the law, as the existence of impediments to their implementation. This is reflected in the fact that there were legal possibilities for awarding custody and property to women on divorce or widowhood before independence, but the Chiefs and DCs did not use them. May pointed out that since independence Chairmen and Magistrates do not always rule as they should and there is an absence of effective enforcement of the laws (May, 1983: 85). She describes this as a problem of a 'deeply engrained traditional dispute

mechanism' (May, 1983: 113). This may, I suggest, be a reflection of the fact that many men who were chiefs and headmen through the war have now become elected to positions of authority at the village level (Cliffe, personal communication), and may even be Presiding Officers at the courts. Even where they are not, so many divorces and decisions about inheritance take place outside courts that local village and lineage politics are of far more importance in determining the fate of women in these situations than legislation.

For women to use the laws in their defence, they have to initiate court proceedings and the state does not automatically take responsibility for enforcement of decisions taken by the Primary Courts. A common belief amongst rural women is that women who take cases to court about property or custody of children are generally unsuccessful and are also open to ridicule (May, 1983; Bourdillon, 1982). It also costs them money (May, 1983: 90, 95) and in many cases the small amount which they are seeking may not seem worth the cost.

Similarly in cases where women are due maintenance from the father of their children, there is little point in taking the men to court if they are unemployed or very low paid. Women have to take the case to the court nearest the defendant's home, which is often in town (Kazembe, 1986: 388). For this reason there are far more claims for maintenance in urban areas than rural<sup>10</sup>. On balance the lack of change felt by rural women as a result of these laws is due to a combination of the following: their ignorance about the degree to which the state could be used to support them; the deeply ingrained beliefs and practices (however recently they may have come into being) relating to marriage,

divorce and inheritance amongst men; and many women's material and educational poverty which ill-equips them to use these channels to their advantage.

### *Summary of the 1980s*

In a broad sense, the information which is available suggests that the social relations of production and reproduction in the CAs since independence represent more of a *continuation* of those of the 1960s and 1970s than a break with them, with regard to relations between and within households. This is in spite of the ruptures caused by the disruption and radical politics of the war, and some use by the government of the state apparatus in the interests of peasants and women. This, I suggest, is because of the strength of such deeply embedded relations on the one hand, and the reluctance, and even inability, of the government to challenge them openly on the other. These are considered in more detail in the case study presented in the next two chapters.

### CONCLUSION

Several questions of gender and class differentiation have been raised in the political context of Zimbabwe since independence. I have shown that these have to be examined in the light of the historical development of the relations of production and reproduction. These include those which determine access to land, labour and livestock; and those which control and reinforce the present division of assets, ability



to accumulate, and the ideology which upholds them. In doing this I have traced the importance of the changing nature of the office of chief; the relations between older and younger men; and the use made by men of opportunities to exert control over women.

A theme running through all these changes has been the role played by the colonial state as arbiter between different settler and foreign interests and as instrument in articulating their demands for labour from the African population. But a more profound and hidden theme which I have highlighted has been the nature of the social relations of the Shona which have been important in structuring the terms on which these demands were met which were rarely, if ever, those considered ideal by foreign and settler interests.

In independent Zimbabwe, the nature of these relations becomes of great political importance if the state is to intervene in a different way and *effectively* to engineer and assist social change for the benefit of sections of the African population. It is in this light that the following village case study explores the relations of production and reproduction in Part III.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## THE VILLAGE

Part One: The Social Context and the Organisation of Production  
and Reproduction

## INTRODUCTION

This Part III of the thesis uncovers the finer workings and political complexity of the social mosaic by presenting an analysis of the social relations of production and reproduction in Murasi village'. This chapter in particular sets out the details of the way in which production and reproduction are organised and the extent of economic differentiation between strata of households in Murasi. The following chapter examines in more detail the nature of social relations in terms of class and gender, and the processes underlying their development.

The development of villages has been traced from the pre-colonial *musha*, with a core of agnatically related men with their wives, children and widows who married into the lineage, to the modern day physical settlement of people in a location at a specific time. The former has been stereotyped to underestimate the degree to which unrelated people became members of villages, as indicated, but it is a useful starting point in the conception of a village. The latter can lead to a blurring of the definition of membership, unless some notion of the village being a *set of relationships* is also incorporated. I have combined elements of these two in a definition of the village as a set of relationships between people somehow connected to a settlement at a

specific time. This facilitates the inclusion of people who do not live in the village all the time, and also allows for the recognition of it as an administrative unit.

The village is located near Musami, approximately 70km from Harare. Musami itself is a small township composed of a collection of small shops and two beer halls which serves the surrounding area. There is often more than one bus to and from Harare per day, as well as others to land from the surrounding rural areas<sup>2</sup>. Adjacent to the township is Saint Paul's Catholic Mission (initially established in 1927), which contains separate secondary schools for girls and boys and a clinic.

### *The Environment*

The ecological conditions of the village are typical of those described for the region by Floyd (1959). It lies on the Middle Velt (which is at 3-4,000 feet) and has its fair share of the local landscape features (Floyd, 1959a: 31; Whitlow, 1980: 8-9). Granitic boulders balance precariously on each other, with rocks lying at the feet of a nearby steep, smooth-sided hill (*ruwari* or *inselburg*) rising sheerly from the the surrounding level surface.

There are small, gently sloping depressions in the surrounding granite platform, known in southern Africa as *vleis*. These are damp, low-lying areas usually occupied by a small surface stream and further distinguished by rich, dark soils and a rich mat of grasses. They occur near the small river which runs along one of the boundaries of Murasi

and are used for vegetable gardens. Elsewhere the soils are light-coloured granite sands, which are of low inherent fertility and practically devoid of humus.

The climate is generally dry (about 915mm), with the passage of seasons marked by variations in rainfall. There is a short, wet summer (November to March) and a long, dry winter (April to October). Rainfall is by far the single most important environmental factor influencing the growth of crops and animal husbandry. The outstanding feature is the seasonality of its precipitation and its unreliability, which makes the area moisture deficient for six months of the year (Floyd, 1959a). Mid-season dry spells can be devastating for the development of crops. There is a close association between altitude and rainfall in Zimbabwe, which makes this area comparatively wet for a Communal Area (CA) (Bratton, 1987: 217-8). It is in Natural Region IIb.

As water is the major limiting factor in agricultural production, the timing of operations is crucial (Norman, Baker and Siebert, 1984: 211). The 1981/2 season was the first of three years' drought (for details see Bratton, 1987: 219), and as the research was undertaken during the last of these, ie. 1984, figures relating to agricultural production cannot easily be analysed as part of trends.

### *Settlement*

The village was not established until 1959, prior to which the land where it is located had only been deemed suitable for grazing. In spite of the attempts at land reform in the 1950s, it was until then

apparently still used exclusively by the sub-chief of Mangwende. This contravened regulations intended to equalise land holdings under the *Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA)*, but implementation of the *NLHA* was not very successful in this area (as described in Chapter Six). The allocation of land on establishment of the village also contravened the *NLHA* regulations, as from 1951 land allocation was legally in the hands of the state, specifically under the jurisdiction of the District Commissioners. In 1967, it was returned to the chiefs under the *Tribal Trust Land Act (TTLA)* (as described in Chapter Seven). I discuss this in more detail below.

Villagers explain that the formation of the village began when a local wealthy man bribed the sub-chief (to whom he was unrelated) to allow him to control the use of the land and to allocate it to others. He did this according to his own personal inclination, in each case determining the amount of land given and the sum of money to be paid, although neither seem to have varied a great deal. The first settlers were people known to him, but gradually people from other Tribal Trust Lands from within Mrewa District (now spelt Murewa) came to buy. (He also kept land for himself, but this fell into disuse when he left during the war and he has not returned.) The fee was payable in a lump sum and is not thought to have been excessive, although the amount varied according to his assessment of people's wealth. The earlier settlers (and, it is said, friends of the sub-chief) received larger plots of land and all of the 234 acres of land for arable use at that time was allocated by the mid-1970s. At the same time he allocated plots on the *vlei* in the same way, which were used for gardens. Some

households were too late to obtain any. I consider land tenure in more detail below.

During the early period of the liberation struggle the villagers were not affected directly by the war: they were too close to Harare to be involved in providing the direct support for guerillas which was undertaken in other areas, but unlike others in the District neither were they put into 'keeps' so that the government could ensure that they did not try. In 1977, guerillas from ZANLA sent word to the village that they needed money and food. Two men were chosen to meet them and this began a relationship in which they continued to offer as many resources as they could. As the fighting in the surrounding hills increased, those who could fled to the towns, and stayed there until the Independence settlement was reached. They left at varying times in the late 1970s, and came back separately, with some not returning at all.

On their return, villagers faced the new situation, created since independence, of changed administrative structures and market opportunities (as described in Chapter Seven). They also received free seed and fertiliser packs, which were financed through a one-off aid scheme at independence (Riddell, 1984: 465). There is a Village Development Committee (see Chapter Seven for administrative structures) which has an ambiguous degree of authority. Its elected members are also the local representatives of ZANU and there is considerable blurring in the local perception of differences between the party and the Village Development Committee. I discuss its role in relation to land below.

The Committee organises visits from extension workers, and any other meetings which require large gatherings of people. These are preferred on week-days, in spite of the fact that this means that many men do not participate. This is because 'the husbands get drunk and do not make decisions properly', according to the headman. They have also decided to establish a committee to teach 'African Culture' to children. This is because of the physical separation of relatives who traditionally undertake the education of children, particularly about sexuality and marriage.

#### THE VILLAGE

The term 'household' here specifically refers to a landowner and her/his immediate dependants, who may or may not include people who are not normally resident in the village. (As will be shown, there is generally only one landowner per household.) Thus the household is not simply a physical homestead (or 'cooking pot'), but a set of relations.

Household structures vary considerably. None fit the archetypal household of a man with his wife/wives and children and his sons' wives and children all living together. Table 3 gives some indication of the ways in which migrant labour distorts this pattern, but social change has also increased the prevalence of households which have the conjugal unit as the core. There are two households with two generations of adults in which sons have brought their wives to live with their parents. In others the second generation of adults live permanently elsewhere. This second generation can only be considered part of the same households at all in that the sons stand to inherit land *one day*,

although this is by no means certain, settled or established. They have no access to land now as their parents are still using it, and they are referred to in Zimbabwe as landless. I discuss this further below.

TABLE 3  
ADULT GENDER COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS

	No. of Households	% of Households
Woman and Man:		
Both Usually Resident	14	42.4
Man Visiting	13	39.4
Women Only:		
One Woman	3	9
More than One Woman	2	6.1
Man Only:		
One Man	1	3

'usually resident' means resident for at least two weeks of the month for more than half the year, 'visiting' means at least once every six months (although many men visit far more frequently)

NB, Of the 14 households which have both an adult man and an adult woman, 3 of them have more than one woman usually resident. In one case unmarried daughters live there, and in the other two, wives and husbands live with the husbands' parents.

TABLE 4  
SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS

Size of Household (No. of Adults & Children)	Usually Resident		Total (inc. those not usually resident)	
	No. of Households	%	No. of Households	%
1-2	10	30.3	6	18
3-4	11	30.3	5	15
5-6	7	21.2	8	24
7-8	4	12.1	5	15
9-10	1	3	7	21
11-12	2	6	0	0

NB, The mean size of households is 6.4 in total and 4.1 usually resident.

Table 4 gives a picture of the size of households, most of which are small. There are other links between generations which have been



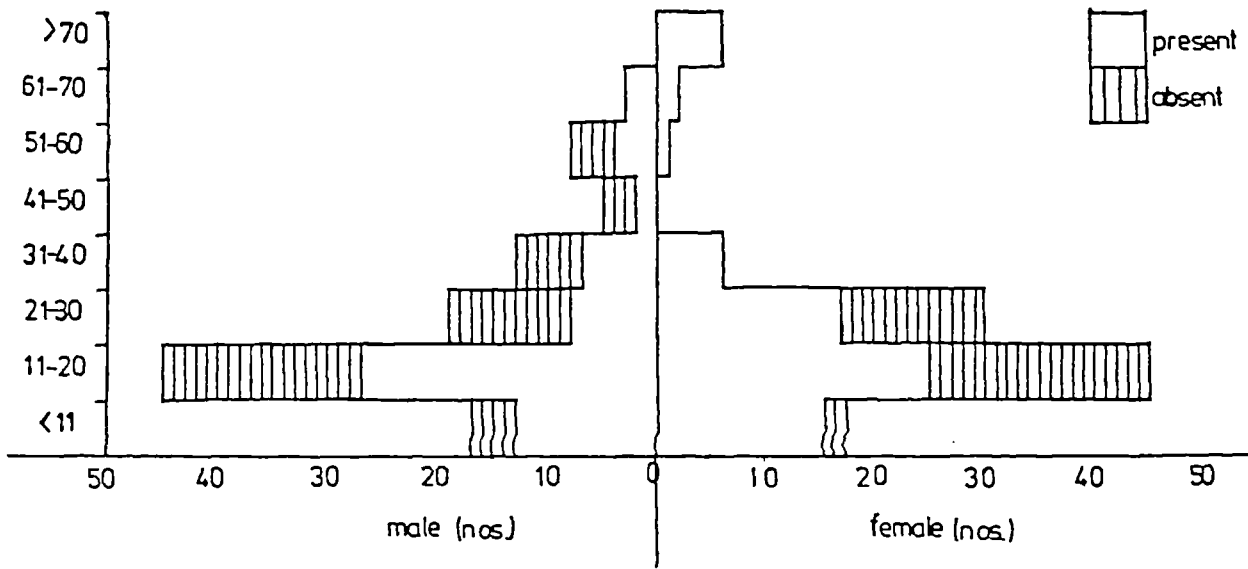
lessened or curtailed besides that of access to land. The flows of resources from young to old that occurred in the past have slowed, ended and in some cases reversed, so that there are some widows who live alone, or with their co-wives, or with grandchildren whom they support with little or no assistance from the children's parents. There is one widower living alone.

The majority of the households do contain a wife and husband, and are strongly centred on this relationship. They consist of two types: those where a man is 'usually resident' (which I define as more than two weeks per month for at least six months of the year) and those where he is a 'migrant labourer' and makes visits to the village. (The frequency of visits varies, but is often every other weekend and therefore more common than in other parts of the country.)

The data presented in the two tables above are based on the 33 households which form the core of the village and usually have somebody present. There are also 14 *households in town* which remain part of the village, as they have retained their rights to land, but their members have not visited for years. Some did not come back after independence. Others have no immediate relatives residing in the village. Informants explained that although many were known of by name (and in a few cases well - by husbands who work in town) very little was known of how they were living. Nonetheless, because *households in town* do retain land rights, and by implication other rights too, and because they are known by those who do live in the village, they are in some sense still members. Only those who do not use their land at all have been categorised as *households in town*.

FIGURE 1

## AGE-SEX PYRAMID OF MURASI VILLAGE, 1984



The population pyramid above shows data relating to the 33 households. With a total population of 212 people, there are 112 children under 15 and, of the adults who are at least 21 years old, 54 men and 46 women. The division between 'present' and 'absent' on the pyramid represents that between those who visit at least once a month, or live there permanently (present) and those who maintain contact less frequently (absent, but not to be confused with the afore-mentioned households in town). The former category includes those who work in town, or elsewhere, but visit frequently, and the latter includes those who are married, or at school and who normally live elsewhere. This

criterion was chosen as once a month was thought by many women to be the minimum frequency of visits necessary for a man to have an impact on decisions relating to the farm and for children to contribute a *regular* amount of labour (although they provide significant amounts during the long, albeit infrequent, holidays from school). The average number of physically active adults usually present is 1.25 per household.

With such a small sample, the significance of patterns in the population pyramid should not be over-emphasised, but some observations can be made. The number of children under 11 years of age appears much smaller than might be expected, for several reasons. There are few children under 5 in the village as recently-married couples prefer to be in town, whether or not they have the means to earn income, rather than face rural life with no access to land. Second, the imbalance between the sexes in the number of people away from the village (for more than a month at a time) is not as great as might be expected in an area of much migrant labour. The explanations for this lie in the frequent visits made by men to the village, due to a combination of factors related to the village's proximity to Harare and relatively good ecological conditions.

The main activity in the village is agricultural production, undertaken largely through the labour of women. It yields a great range of incomes. This is combined with households' differential ability to generate resources off-farm. These are, in turn, combined with different types of relationships within households which determine how resources are to be used and thus the range of households types in Murasi is

considerable. Some live in houses which have been built on a 'Western, urbanised' model, possess relatively expensive clothes and a variety of household goods, such as crockery and furniture, and regularly consume purchased foods such as bread, tea, sugar, soft drinks and meat. These are households with off-farm income, often with migrant husbands. Others are extremely poor, with signs of under-nutrition amongst children, virtually no material possessions and poor quality housing. They include households where the husband usually lives in the village and there is no off-farm income, and those where widows live alone. The differences are related to a combination of factors including: age; income; access to others' labour and control over one's own labour-product within the household; and the relations between household members and between different households.

The village is organised along lines which resemble that imposed under the policy of *Centralisation* and under the *Native Land Husbandry Act* at different times in different places between the 1930s and 1960s. Fields are consolidated in large areas, with houses largely grouped in lines, although there are also several isolated homesteads. Gardens are grouped together near the river and the grazing areas are used communally. A main track runs through the village, with many of the houses located on or near it. All the fields and houses are fitted in a pattern which is structured by the location of large rock outcrops.

#### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Resident villagers all cultivate. Maize is now both the staple food and the main cash crop. Like most farmers in the CAs (Calleary, 1985:

218), they use hybrid maize (*R201*) which was developed within the country to suit the relatively wet conditions of the Highveld (Weiner, 1986: 164; 1988: 70). This has been in use since the 1940s and is produced nationally (a legacy of the importance of agriculture in the settler economy). It does not produce good quality seed, however, and farmers purchase seed stock every year. Whenever possible households also use inorganic fertiliser. This is common in this ecological zone (DRSS, 1984: 20; Weiner, 1986: 164) as there are insufficient livestock to rely on organic fertilisers (DRSS, 184: 31). Inorganic fertilisers are also produced within the country.

Households attempt to meet their own food needs from domestic production, even if this means not having any crops for sale. Those which cannot meet all their food needs or earn cash through the sale of crops have to earn cash and/or food in various other ways. Those households which can afford to purchase food do not do so because of a taste preference for homegrown and ground maize (compared with the roller-ground maize meal available for purchase) and because supplies of food to rural areas are by no means secure, as well as being more expensive than in town<sup>23</sup>.

In addition to maize, people eat green leaf vegetables (such as rape), tomatoes, onions. These are produced by some households, purchased by others, and consumed only rarely by others. Meat is occasionally purchased by a few households, but generally livestock are killed for consumption only on rare festive occasions.

Agriculture is also the main form of earning a cash income from within the village, whether this be from crop sales directly, or from

working for wages on others' fields. Production is organised on a household basis, ie each landholder farms her/his land separately, through the use of household labour, sometimes supplemented with employed labour and, to a very limited extent for some tasks, with group labour. Ploughing is done with the use of cattle, either directly by a male household member, or by paying someone else to come with the whole team and do the job. Regulations set down by the extension service of the Ministry of Agriculture (AGRITEX) in relation to ploughing are known of and in large part followed, including winter ploughing. Others are ignored, as I indicate below. Fertilisers are commonly used, and herbicides adopted by a few households. Maize is sown after the first rains in October/November, and then requires two or three weedings, being harvested between April and May.

Crops which are sold go to the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), which offers pre-planting guaranteed prices. Its centres are quite widely distributed (the nearest being about 20km miles away at Murewa) and people have to find their own methods of transporting their crops. The cost of this transport makes significant inroads into the returns. The GMB only accepts a minimum amount of each crop and so some small producers put their crops together to do this. All crops are graded and priced accordingly.

The GMB also gives credit to some farmers which is deductible from returns to sales. For this reason some, who do not feel they can afford to repay their loans, sell part of the crop at a lower price to private traders to ensure that they have some cash income from the season's sales and deceive the GMB about the size of their harvest. There is a

co-operative of such traders which pays a set price, no matter how much is sold to them, although this is considerably lower than the GMB price. This can make the return less than selling to the GMB even where transport costs are considered, but as the latter can vary, this is not a straightforward calculation. Some households sell to both the GMB and others so that they can deceive the GMB about what their harvest was without removing the possibility of credit for next season. (As yet this source of credit has not been curtailed for bad debtors, but as the repayment rate is persistently low, this may happen in the future.)

*Land*

TABLE 5  
ACRES OF LAND OWNED PER HOUSEHOLD

Acres of Land	Households	
	Number	%
0-3	15	46
4-6	9	27
7-9	5	15
10-12	4	12

NB, the mean amount held is 4.8 acres per household

The variation in the amount of land owned is largely explained by the timing of arrival in the village, when land was purchased on a 'first come, first served' basis. Access to greater amounts of land in this situation of overall land shortage increases the ability of a household to accumulate and ensure security. The amount of arable land allocated to households in Resettlement Schemes in similar ecological areas is 12 acres, compared with the mean here of 4.8. Differences between households are often quantitatively small, but are nonetheless

significant. Land *quality* within the village varies, but that which is presently defined as suitable for cultivation is thought to be of fairly uniform quality. An important difference between fields is the proximity to houses, which minimises the time spent walking to and from the fields and the difficulties in moving inputs to them or bringing in the harvest.

Yet it is not generally the case that wealth has enabled households to gain more access to land. This is because the rights developed through custom and practice with regard to land dictate that land cannot be sold. It is lent by some, as considered below, but neither rented nor sold nor may it be requisitioned by any locally-recognised authority in the event of disuse. Thus the pattern of land holding resembles that allocated on the foundation of the village and no further payments other than the initial one have been made.

At the time of the village's formation, the *NLHA* was in force, and in some ways land ownership reflects the intentions of the Act, although it was not successfully implemented here. Where it was implemented, 8 acres per household were allocated, although in practice widows received only 5 and divorcees only 3. After the 1967 *TTLA* there were no longer state controls on the amount held, as this became the responsibility of the chiefs. The rights to requisition and reallocate land that was not being used do not seem to have 'returned' to the chief or any other authority in Murasi, though. Land holdings remain 'frozen' and there is great reluctance to subdivide arable plots between children, or to give up any while the landholder is still alive. This was an intention of the *NLHA*.



Much of the second generation can get no access to land at this time and are in this sense landless. Married women do not have access to land in their own right and only work land belonging to their husbands<sup>4</sup>. Their landlessness remains hidden in government statistics, as does that of divorced women who may have to return to their (perhaps elderly) parents in order to survive. The elected Village Development Committee is not able to allocate land in an absolute sense, but has intervened after the deaths of several men in the village to ensure that widows are not made landless.

Thus although land was not allocated by officials implementing the *NLHA*, tenure *resembles* that set out under the Act. The Village Development Committee's intervention is, strictly speaking, illegal under national law, as the Ministry of Local Government is responsible for the allocation of land and only delegates this to the District Committees. This is a common situation, in which local power structures and customs effectively control land (see Chapter Seven).

Access to the garden areas is also important in differentiating households. The small amount of lending which occurs usually takes place between relatives, with no payment. It also occasionally takes place between unrelated people, however, and as much land is lent to people outside the village as to those living in it. Those households with members living in town who may meet and socialise with those holding, but not using, land are in a much better position to negotiate for the use of such land than those who remain in the village permanently. In two cases this is a way in which women managed to get land for themselves.

FIGURE 2

## DATA FOR HOUSEHOLDS IN TOWN

14 households absent	= 30% total households
75.5 acres held	= 32.3% total acreage
average land per household	= 5.4 acres
total amount lent	= 16.5 acres (of which 8.5 is to villagers)
total amount unused	= 59 acres (= 25.2% total land)

The 14 households which have no contact with the village (and form 30% of all land-holders) own between them 75.5 acres (the mean is 5.4, making 32.3% of the total acreage). The total amount lent to villagers by this group of 14 absent households is 8.5 acres. Excluding a further 8 acres which is lent to relatives outside the village, that leaves 59 acres unused, which is 25.2% of all the arable fields in the village. Considering the small amounts of land available to some, and indeed the total lack of it to others, this idle land is the object of much envy.

Despite a strong sense of injustice about this, the villagers have not forced those in town to give up their rights to land, or even to lend or rent it to someone else. This is a reflection of how control over land within the Communal Areas has changed from that where access was dependent upon the use of the resource, and those no longer requiring or using it might be persuaded, or even forced by the headman or chief, to give it to someone else (see Chapter Four). 25.5 acres owned by those usually in the village are not used (10.9% total arable area).

This is a symptom of a variety of different problems considered below, but which relate to a scarcity of other inputs, including labour.

### *Agricultural Labour*

To obtain good yields with this form of production (ie cattle plough - hand cultivate) a great deal of hard work is necessary. This includes ploughing, planting and applying seed dressing, weeding and applying fertiliser, harvesting, transporting crops from the fields, shelling, threshing, winnowing and ploughing at the end of the season. Most of these tasks have to be done in hot weather and through the 'hungriest' time of the year.

Communal labour has been almost completely replaced by commodified labour in all agricultural activities. One small group of (poor) related households uses communal labour for shelling maize, but no one uses it for other agricultural tasks. This means that those who cannot afford to employ labour are solely dependent upon that of close relatives. Many households, therefore, suffer an extreme shortage of labour and this is seen as the major constraint to production, even where only a small amount of land is available. This has also been noted in other studies (Callear, 1985).

In some households the woman is the only adult who is resident full-time. She may have help from elder children and both women and men have 'rights' to use the labour of children. However, if the family can afford it, children's secondary education is often a high priority of

expenditure and many households have no adolescents present. Similarly, as primary school education is now almost completely free, young children, including girls, are likely to be away at least for half of the day<sup>s</sup>.

Men in every household contribute less time in the fields, even in households where they are resident full-time. I observed this during all my visits, and both men and women report it to be the case. This is consistent with a national survey of the CAs (Johnson, 1984) where it was found that three-quarters of the farm-work was done by women and children (also see Weiner, 1986: 167; Weinrich, 1979; Muchena, 1979). According to the women in Murasi, men also expend less energy whilst they work in the fields (although they complain a great deal). In households where the man is present for much of the time, reluctance on his part to perform agricultural tasks reflects a change in the gender division of labour since pre-colonial times, as traced in Part II. Ploughing is still generally considered to be a man's job, and this is ostensibly the reason a man will make a rare visit to the rural home from elsewhere. 'Women cannot do it' assert the men, 'It's much easier than weeding', say the women. Indeed, ploughing is usually the main contribution, in terms of his own labour, that a man will make to the farm, whether he is usually resident in the village or not.

There is little detailed analysis of the relative energy inputs into different agricultural tasks, but it is generally agreed that weeding, which is done by hoe, is extremely arduous (DRSS, 1984: 20). A study of a similar farming system in Lesotho suggested that ploughing is overrated and that it is one of the least arduous tasks of the agricultural season

(Robertson 1987: 145). It is, however, accorded great social importance, as seen in the fact that (as in the Lesotho example) people refer to 'farming' as 'ploughing', and thus women and men say 'we plough together' when asked if they have separate fields. This is not simply explicable by the fact that it is considered men's work. The timing of land preparation for sowing is crucial in these ecological conditions and has a direct effect on yields, and thus it is an important operation.

In order to meet the gap in their demands for labour, people ideally choose to employ others. In households where there is sufficient disposable income (usually where the husband has a job in town) at least one person will be employed full time in the home. There are 8 such workers in Murasi, nationally known as 'helpers' (Shopo and Moyo, n.d.: 44), and all are men. They are paid well below the minimum wage (\$Z30 per month instead of \$Z65) and live within the household full-time, usually sleeping in a storage hut or kitchen. They are expected to work five and a half days a week but also with some duties on the seventh day, such as caring for livestock. They have no local voting rights within the village, such as for ZANU elections, or for the Village Development Committee. These men usually left their own home after some personal disagreement and are unable or unwilling to seek work in the towns, and may also not be Zimbabwean by birth. They do not usually work for the same people for more than a few months at a time, typically leaving after a dispute over wages or conditions, usually finding that other employees offer only the same conditions, or worse.

Where the cost of employing someone full-time is prohibitive, casual labour is employed. This usually comes from within the village,

and may be of either sex, but is more often female. People from 6 households work for others. These 'selling' households do not receive substantial or regular remittances (generally receiving none at all) and fall into one of two types: either that where the male head of household is unable to obtain anything but the most temporary, poorly paid employment (eg unloading sacks at the local grain depot) and so remain permanently resident in the village; or the second type where the adult members are all women over 40, either divorced or widowed. Once again the type of work they may be required to do is likely to be the heaviest tasks, such as weeding, although at harvest extra labour may also be employed for light tasks, such as shelling maize cobs. Payment is fixed at \$Z1 per day for light work and \$Z2 per day for heavy work, compared with the minimum wage equivalent of \$Z4.48 per day, if the average daily hours worked are assumed to be eight<sup>6</sup>. Food is often given in addition to payment, and sometimes payment may be requested in kind, particularly by women (eg. food, groundnut seeds, clothes for adults and/or children, eggs).

The cost of employing casual labor may be met by an absent husband, but in this case the resident woman is likely to enjoy less control over what the worker should do as the worker will usually be hired by the husband for a specific purpose. Sometimes wives themselves may pay for the cost of hiring, with no reference to the husband. In this case the reason is usually an acute shortage of labour, rather than a desire to use the time for other activities. It is almost always extremely difficult for women to find the resources to pay such a worker, but it is the eldest (ie usually the poorest), or the sick, or

women who have recently lost labour (eg through migration or children going to school) who have to do this. Most of the elderly and infirm have to employ labour, if they have no immediate family ties to call upon, in order to produce even subsistence crops. Elderly women also often have the responsibility of providing food for young children in their care, making the imperative to produce such a crop even greater. These form an extreme case, and are considered in more detail in the next chapter. It is significant that no household with the male head present employs labour in this way, either because he will meet the shortfall in labour himself, or because he refuses to see this as a priority for expenditure.

People are hired to plough by households which have no cattle. They come with a team and plough, and charge an average of \$Z12 per day (compared to \$Z15-30 per acre found elsewhere in the same CA (DRSS, 1984: 34)). This is similar to the relationship noted in the USSR in the 1920s by Kritzman, as described in Chapter Three (and suggested by Cox, 1984b), where it was calculated that those hiring out themselves and their teams were in the more exploitative position, came from richer households and were 'employed' by poorer households. This concurs with Weiner's analysis (1986: 105) and is considered in more detail in the next chapter.

### *Crops*

Maize (*chibagwe*) is the most important crop by far, as found for other places in Zimbabwe (Callear, 1985: 220 and 224-5; Bratton, 1987: 216; DRSS, 1984: 19). This is for a variety of reasons. In Natural Regions

II and III, hybrid maize seed, combined with chemical fertilisers, produce higher yields for maize than can be obtained for small grains (Weiner, 1988: 70). At the same time it has become the preferred staple food, and is grown at the expense of a variety of other foods which used to be grown, taking up more than 80% of the cropped area in the village as a whole and often more for individual households. Furthermore it is easier to weed than many small grains, as well as being easier to grind. It is usually mono-cropped, or sparsely intercropped with melons and pumpkins, and is often grown continuously on the same land. This continues the pattern of cultivation which developed particularly during the 1960s (see Chapter Seven) where land pressure forced people in large part to abandon fallow and crop rotation practices.

Much smaller quantities (less than a quarter of an acre) of other crops are grown, some for food, (groundnuts, roundnuts (or bambara nuts, Latin, *voandzeia subterranea*), water melons and curcubits (pumpkins)); some for cash (sunflower, groundnuts), some for beer (sorghum (*mapfunde*, or finger millet (*rapoko*, Latin, *eleusine coracana*)). This is a similar range of crops grown to those described by Callear and Bratton for CAs in different parts of the country. The decision to plant any other crops relates not only to the availability of labour and cash, but also to the control which women and men have within the household over agricultural planning. Ideally all villagers would like to grow some of these crops, but the extent of the preference varies with each crop. *Rapoko* is generally only grown for beer-making, although a little may be eaten on special occasions. There is a guaranteed producer price through the Grain Marketing Board (GMB). The presence or absence of men, who place a



higher priority on having home brewed beer than the women, is an important determinant of whether or not *rapoko* is grown. Some poor women brew beer for sale, but have to buy the *rapoko* from other people as they do not have the resources to grow it themselves.

Groundnuts are traditionally seen as women's crop and are still often referred to as such. They require a lot more weeding than maize and planting is also regarded as harder work. Nonetheless they may now be sold through the GMB at a relatively lucrative price, provided they are of a high quality, and particularly if sold shelled. If they are sold at the same time as maize, only one payment cheque is given to cover the whole sale. The origin of the tag 'women's crop' is that it was grown specifically for consumption - it is a highly nutritious, oily food which is an important supplement to maize. Older women see it as a crop which is very hard to do without. Often margarine is used as an alternative source of oily food for children, but when cash is short there is no cheaper alternative. Other people sometimes refer to it as an old-fashioned type of food, which takes a lot of work to produce. It is also seen as a 'luxury from home' by people working in town, especially by school children and men away for long periods. For this reason the crop is sometimes planted because it is valued by men.

Sunflower is grown purely as a commercial crop in very small amounts. Round nuts are also never grown on a large scale but are not usually sold, except perhaps on a piecemeal basis locally. They are similar to groundnuts in that they are very labour-intensive to cultivate and are grown as a nutritious accompaniment to maize *sadza* (stiff porridge).

In addition those who have gardens grow the vegetables mentioned above, sometimes combined with sweet potatoes. These are near to the stream, and although it is strictly against all AGRITEX conservation measures, many cultivated the stream-banks during the drought in order to get any produce at all.

### *Cattle*

Cattle have a triple value in the village: as gifts and a component of marriage payments; as commodities; and as part of the means of production. The number held by each household varies considerably in the village, as it does everywhere in Zimbabwe. Within households, cattle are owned individually by women and men, although men always have more than the women in any one household because they have more ways in which to acquire them. Men almost always have greater access to cash and are more likely to be given cattle as payments or gifts, for *lobola*, and as compensation, or to inherit them. The traditional payment of a cow to the mother of a woman having recently given birth is often now ignored; several women who are eligible to receive them complained that they never have, and are not now likely to. Women may lose control over any beasts they do own as they are kept with the household herd, ie that of the husband and possibly his relatives. As with other assets women may acquire, husbands often manage to appropriate the cattle directly.

Those households with no cattle (see Table 6) are not only poor because of this fact in itself, but also because they are unable <sup>to</sup> plough <sub>^</sub> their own fields without assistance from relatives or paying someone else to plough for them. Cattle are essential for production as no one

TABLE 6  
NUMBERS OF CATTLE PER HOUSEHOLD

Number of Cattle	Households	
	Number	%
None	15	46
1-3	6	18
4-6	4	12
7-9	4	12
10-12	2	6
13-15	0	0
16-19	0	0
20-22	2	6

NB, the mean number of cattle per household is 4.1

now attempts to prepare fields by hand. The poorest households are in any case often short of labour and so would find preparation by hoe far too arduous. This dependence on others for ploughing causes grave problems. The timing of operations is crucial in such a dry and unreliable climate, so the owners will always complete their own fields first. Most of those who do not have teams themselves cannot rely on relatives and have to pay for someone else to do this. Bratton cites this as the most important constraint to food production after rain and good quality land, and suggests that 58% of all households nationally are short of draft power or are effectively draftless.

Elsewhere in Zimbabwe the drought is thought to have intensified differentiation in cattle ownership, in that drought affects those owning fewer animals more severely than those with more (Bush and Cliffe, 1984). The drought was comparatively mild in this area, however, and no animals died directly from its effects. The ownership of cattle *per se*

does not ensure a greater ability to produce unless there is also sufficient labour and a plough. Some of the households in the village who own relatively large numbers of cattle are also in the poorest group for this reason, as is highlighted below.

In the summer, the cattle are herded collectively by one person from each household in turn, as is common in the area (DRSS, 1984: 24). Decisions about who this should be are made from within the household and <sup>it</sup> may be done by women or men (typically a worker or young male, but sometimes by women). Gardens are fenced and so in the winter the animals are allowed to wander on the arable lands (contravening conservation practices). Since independence, dipping is free and people usually comply with the requirements to dip animals, no longer seeing this as an inconvenience imposed on them by the state.

#### *Possession of Capital Goods*

Those households without cattle generally have no plough either and so pay for someone to undertake the whole job. Indeed there is often not much advantage in owning a plough with no cattle, as those selling the service are unlikely to let anyone else handle their beasts, or use another's plough. This is partly through concern about how the cattle will be treated, but also because of the desire to generate more cash, which is possible if the whole service is provided.

Other goods are not used for agricultural tasks alone, but make them easier. A scotchcart is the local name for a simple cart pulled by one or two cattle. Again those without cattle are unlikely to own one,

but may rent the service. Those with cattle and a cart use them to transport produce from fields, wood or grass collected from afar, or even water. Although in the village none of the fields used are so distant that it is considered a problem by women to walk to them, they value highly the use of cart to transport seeds and crops. A scotchcart makes the work of gathering wood much easier. Poorer households also feel the absence of such a cart when trying to obtain grass for roofing. Richer households are more likely to invest in permanent materials in any case. Poorer ones have to make do with patching, rather than a new roof, sometimes repairing with pieces of plastic and metal from discarded seed or fertiliser bags, or scrap metal obtained from town. The carts are only used to collect water where women are able to make most of the decisions about what work should be done. In these few cases, water is collected in a disused oil-drum and may be <sup>used</sup> for washing clothes or for brewing beer.

## NON-AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

### *Migrant Labour*

The term migrant labour has been applied to that which was forced from peasant agricultural production into the centres of capitalist production (of mining, industry and agriculture). In Zimbabwe, 'migrant labour' has now come to include any man who visits a rural home, where at least some of his relatives reside (typically his wife) at a minimum of once every few years, and who retains some rights to land there (see

Bush and Cliffe, 1984). This is without regard to his economic status and even class position, so long as he retains some security of land in the rural home. Thus those men who never use their land in the village and who reside permanently in town may be referred to as 'migrant labourers'. Of these, some work directly for local or trans-national capital in town, or in agriculture. There are also two primary school teachers, and others have a range of occupations, including two vegetable and fruit traders (using produce other than that from the village), two small shop-keepers and a self-employed welder.

#### *Other Means of Income Generation*

Women and men earn money through employment within the village in the ways described above. In addition, women seek to supplement household resources through a variety of different activities. They engage in these according to how much time they have available, and the amount of disposable income they have available to start up an enterprise. Their activities include: keeping poultry; sewing; growing and selling vegetables; brewing and selling beer; and (sometimes with men) making and selling bricks.

Making beer takes about two weeks. The process includes the threshing of grain, fetching water and wood, and brewing the beer twice. Then it has to be decanted and served to the buyers. Finally this creates a considerable amount of work in clearing up. Making bricks involves extremely arduous work, even without the portorage of water. It requires the hire of a cart (and perhaps oxen) in order to transport the bricks from the site of manufacture (near the source of water or ant-hill clay) to a place for firing and then again to sell/use them once

they are made. The work has to be done in a team, and five people working together for six days can make about 1000 bricks. Sometimes they are paid by someone else to produce a certain number of bricks and sometimes the group makes the bricks 'on spec' and sells them as they can, sharing the profit.

Most of these sources generate only small amounts of cash, but these are significant in poor households, particularly for women who do not have control over any other resources. Wives who provide the labour for such projects do not necessarily control the income generated, however - a problem which is examined in more detail in the next chapter. Their lack of access to resources drives some women to desperate measures in order to earn income. Some offer sexual services to men passing through the township, for which they may earn between \$Z5 and \$Z10 if it is to a man from the towns, perhaps visiting at the weekend. This is an extremely hazardous occupation which, in the event of discovery, can lead to violence from the husband and divorce.

#### REPRODUCTION OF LABOUR

Women are responsible for most of the labour involved in material reproduction (see Figure 3). Clearly the work described under agricultural production is also important for this as it is the main source of food. In addition there are other tasks related to preparing food and cleaning the home. Women sometimes have some assistance from young children, although these often now attend school. If the woman is sick then she may receive some help from the husband, or even a

neighbour if the circumstances are sufficiently extreme, but in general this is regarded as 'women's work'.

Maize has to be ground before it can be cooked. There are several grinding mills near to the village but the cost is too high for some women (25c to finely grind one sack) who have to pound and grind the maize by hand. There are no wild vegetables available, so all must be either purchased, or grown and picked from the fields (eg pumpkin leaves intercropped with maize, or beans) or gardens (eg various types of cabbage, tomato, onions).

Cooking is done in a separate hut over a fireplace in the centre of the floor. All but the very poorest have made or purchased some kind of grate on which pots are placed (in spite of the fact that the height of the grate over the fire often means that a great deal of wood has to be used). Wood is the main fuel for cooking, although this is supplemented with crop residues at the end of the season. Supplies of wood have become a problem. As the village population grew in size, the local resources of wood (and grass) diminished. It has been illegal to cut trees from the immediate area for many years now, as part of state conservation measures. Many people still do so and are unlikely to be prosecuted, unless caught by a visiting extension worker, because all the resident officials are culpable too. Even when collecting from a forbidden area one has to travel a distance of at least 5-6km to reach sufficiently dense supplies to select particular types of wood (eg the right size and shape for roofs, fences etc, or firewood which causes less smoke).



**FIGURE 3**  
**WOMAN'S DAILY SCHEDULE**

**WINTER** (June - Sept/Oct)

6.00-6.30am	Work in garden, or some other agricultural work
8.00am	Sweep house and yard, collect water, sometimes collect wood, cook breakfast.
9.00am	Work in garden, or make bricks, or prepare <i>rapoko</i> for beer, make beer, make hoes etc.
12.00	Clean pots, collect water (and wood), cook lunch
1.30pm	Any of 9.00-12.00 tasks, or also washing clothes, collecting grass for thatching
4.30pm	Collect water (and wood), wash pots, bathe small children, cook
7.30pm	Bathe, shell groundnuts (mend clothes)

**SUMMER** (Oct - May)

4.30-5.00am	Work in garden and/or seasonal agricultural tasks (ploughing, sowing, weeding, reaping, shelling)
8.00am	Sweep house and yard, collect water (and wood), clean pots, cook
9.00am	Return to fields
12.30pm	Collect water (and wood), clean pots, cook
1.30pm	Return to fields (wash clothes)
5.30pm	Work in garden, collect water (and wood), clean pots, cook, bathe children
8.30pm	Bathe (mend clothes, ploughing equipment, hoes etc)

The collection of water for cooking, drinking and cleaning remains an arduous task but remained possible during the drought, in contrast to many other areas in Zimbabwe. It requires walks of up to 2km per day, depending on the proximity to the open wells. Water is collected in tins and buckets, which are carried on the head.

Very high standards of cleanliness are kept in most households, of clothes, bodies and the insides of buildings. Kitchens, for instance, may be swept (and washed if there is a cemented or polished floor) several

times a day. Washing clothes and children is done at the river. In addition to these and all the usual housework chores, women spend considerable time and energy trying to generate income in the little time they have left after working in the fields. The main contributions men make to the material reproduction of household members are in building and mending fences and houses (in addition to any labour contributions to agricultural production which yields food). Houses are still men's responsibility, although brick houses do not require as much regular labour as do mud ones. In order to have a brick house some labour other than that of the husband and wife has to be involved. This may mean that some people will be paid for making bricks, or that they will be able to call on children and other relatives, including women, to help. In any case it is very difficult for women to obtain the labour and/or cash in the absence of a man.

Men may also have other local income-generating activities, such as working for other households, or possibly making bricks for others, and some of the income from this work may be contributed to the reproduction costs of the household, particularly for the improvement and upkeep of houses. Alternatively, income earned locally by a man is often consumed solely by himself (eg on beer and tobacco), although he may give a little to the woman for food, or may even buy some meat which others will also have a share of. This is a cause of much tension within households and is considered in more detail in the next chapter. Husbands who work elsewhere provide cash or goods for the improvement or maintenance of houses, but rarely provide labour directly for any other reproductive tasks.

The reproduction of labour at the ideological level is more complex. As in many societies, women are important 'instructors' of children in appropriate behaviour and expectations. The ways in which this occurs are considered in the next chapter. The gender division of labour is not enforced upon children until they reach adolescence, and so most young boys will learn how to cook and clean, and have to fetch water. The division gradually changes so that they withdraw from these tasks as long as there are sufficient girls in the household to ensure the work is done. In the past boys learned men's work such as tending for animals and hunting. Now these tasks are not so demanding or are redundant, as some households have only a few animals (which are herded on a collective basis in any case) and there are no wild animals to hunt. Men's work is to find a job and there is not much training which can be offered by the family for this except education. Children also learn through observation and thus the division of labour which has developed is perpetuated.

#### HUMAN REPRODUCTION

Human reproduction involves conflicts between wives and husbands. Marriages can take place at any age once adolescence is reached, so there are no controls over fertility by delaying the age at marriage. Marriages can be polygynous, although the vast majority are not, and women in such marriages say that they are unhappy about it. Within marriage, there are often very different perceptions between women and men about what is desirable in terms of fertility. The number which women have already varies from 0-10, as can be seen from table 7

TABLE 7  
NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN PER WOMAN\*

No. of children	Women under thirty years		Women over thirty years	
	No.	%	No.	%
0-2	2	10	2	10.5
3-4	9	45	1	5.3
5-6	4	20	3	15.8
7-8	4	20	10	52.6
9-1	1	5	3	15.8
Mean	2.9		6.6	

\* There is some unreliability with this data as many women refer to miscarriages as children born.

NB, The mean for the whole female population is 4.7 children per woman

Women usually state the preferred number of children at around four or five. Some women state that they would like 'as many as possible', but all approve of traditional methods of birth-spacing. 'Traditional methods' are thought to have spaced births by at least three years and this was ensured in a variety of ways which required the co-operation of the husband, including *coitus interruptus*. There has been a decline in the social controls exerted on the sexuality of men, as traced in Part II, largely caused by the separation of communities and the economic independence of young men. This has meant that men are not under the same social pressure to abstain from sex or to practice other methods which would avoid the frequent impregnation of their wives.

Those women who say that they would like to limit the final number indicate the cost of providing education and clothes for children as their reasons. They do not identify the benefits of extra labour as outweighing these. Men on the other hand, particularly young men, say that their wives should have as many children as possible. They often

state publicly that any woman who uses contraception must be unfaithful to her husband *because she can do so* without the 'punishment' of becoming pregnant. This desire for control over women's fertility is one possible explanation for wanting their wives to be pregnant with their own children as frequently as possible. It extends into their control over the travel of wives, which they restrict for the same stated reason, ie that travelling is an opportunity for wives to be unfaithful, and so should be prevented.

This conflict of interest drives some women to take secret measures, including using modern forms of contraception without the husband's knowledge. Also, although it is never acknowledged in Murasi, women from rural areas in Zimbabwe do attempt to induce abortions. Two doctors described to me how they have witnessed many instances of women coming to hospital with miscarriages which showed several signs of having being induced. In some areas they obtain 'treatment' from *n'angas* (traditional healers), and in others travel to town for other types of 'back street' methods<sup>7</sup>.

Women are responsible for all major childcare tasks, which they have to make compatible with their other work, although these may not all be performed by the mother of the child if there are other female relatives nearby. If possible, women prefer to travel to the home of their own mothers for the birth of their first children. There is still sometimes enormous psychological pressure put upon women to 'confess' to infidelities if there is any problem in giving birth, which means that

even the proximity to the clinic at Saint Paul's does not always save women from very long and dangerous labours.

These general aspects of the reproduction of labour are experienced in different ways for women in the village according to age, economic status and the presence or absence of their husbands. The extent of these differences is considered in the next section and the effects they have are considered in the following chapter.

#### CATEGORISATION OF HOUSEHOLDS IN THE VILLAGE

Villagers identify differences between households in terms of wealth. The most important factor in determining this is the ability to earn off-farm income. This increases the economic status of households when it is remitted to the village. The combination of other factors which also contribute to the economic differences between households, and how these are maintained or transformed over time, are considered in more detail in the next chapter.

On investigation of the 'types' of households identified by villagers, I found that these distinctions were of two types simultaneously. First, there were the differences in economic status identified by villagers in terms of what assets the household had and whether or not there were remittances from off-farm income. Second, there were differences in terms of the types of relations within the household and with other households. I consider the second type of difference in the following chapter and I discuss the first below.

I have separated households into those which receive regular, significant remittances from off-farm incomes and those which do not. (Households which receive only tiny amounts are counted as not receiving significant amounts.) The significant factor is the amount which reaches the household, rather than the amount earned. In addition I have identified the following indicators which further divide those receiving remittances into two:

- 1    **arable land acreage** - this cannot be increased by virtue of greater cash income alone, but the presence of a member in town increases the chances of being able to borrow from someone not using theirs. People say that four acres is the minimum needed if one is not to be poor.
- 2    **cattle head** - this is more often an expression of the amount of income spent on cattle, rather than the number inherited.
- 3    **possession of garden** - for similar reasons to arable land.
- 4    **possession of a scotchcart and plough** - these are almost always purchased goods and are useful in the ways described above.
- 5    **employment of non-household labour.**

These indicators are more important than the poor quality data which I collected in attempting to define the extent of remittances. This is because the off-farm income which is invested in the farm is not given as a regular amount but is often been used to purchase key pieces of capital equipment, or significant amounts of labour. Over time, such investments increase the productivity of the farm and quality of the home, but cannot be counted as regular remittances. Such calculations would require extreme candour and accurate recall over several years, both of which were not much in evidence amongst male informants. I have divided the households which have all of these from those which have at

least one, but not all, because having the 'full set' puts a household in a qualitatively different position from simply having some of them.

Of those households which have none of these indicators, and hence no investment of off-farm income in the farm, I have distinguished between those which have an adult male present and those which do not (thus making four groups in all). This is for two reasons: the first is that the presence of a man means a greater potential availability of labour. The residual category is in fact made up of divorcees and widows, who experience an extreme labour shortage. The second reason is that, from the point of view of the women within these households, the scope for economic autonomy is very different. Thus we arrive at:

#### *THE GROUPS*

- 1 Those with all the following: significant remittances; more than four acres of arable land; some cattle; a garden; a plough; a scotchcart; employment of non-household labour.  
(7 households)
- 2 Those with remittances and at least one other of above.  
(12 households)
- 3 Those with no remittances, but with one adult male present.  
(9 households)
- 4 Those with no remittances and no adult male present.  
(5 households)

These groups have particular types of gender *relations*, as I discuss in more detail in the following chapter, but they also have different gender compositions. Group one is composed of households where the husband is employed outside the village, and often not present.



Nonetheless visits are usually at least twice a month for most of the year. Group two has varied gender composition, with some of the men living in the village all the time. The husbands in group three live in the village and the households in group four are entirely composed of women. The implications of these patterns are considered in more detail in the following chapter.

The groups are similar to strata identified by Leys (1986: 263-264) in Southern Zimbabwe. Riddell (1984) estimates that about 20% of all rural households in Zimbabwe are assured of a steady income from the land. This compares favourably with the 21% of the case study households in group one. According to Riddell, those receiving some remittance from urban workers make up approximately 40% of rural households, which is close to the 36% in the case study, and 39% in Callear's study in Wedza District (Callear, 1985). This categorisation is subsequently used as a medium through which to view more specific features of production and reproduction in the village.

The average amount of arable land held per household is 4.8 acres, but table 8 illustrates the distribution of land across the groups. (This compares with an average of 4 acres in Callear's study.) Group 1 has the highest average acreage per household owned and used; and they are the sole lenders of land from the 33 households; and they borrow as much land as is lent (see also table 2). In this situation of land scarcity, such small differentials in the amount of land in question are significant. Group 2 households have an average of less than 4 acres of land. Some of those which have more than the threshold of 4 acres are in group 4, which is made up of widows. This is because at one time their

status was more like that of those in group 1, ie they had a husband who worked in town and was therefore in a good position to know of the opportunities in the village when it was established and so were able to enjoy the benefits of being amongst the early settlers, such as larger plots of land.

TABLE 3  
LAND AND CROPS

GROUP	average no. of acres of land per household		total no. of acres of land in group		% of households growing crops other than maize				% of households with a garden (actual no.)
	owned	used	lent	borrowed	rapoko	g.nuts	sun fl.	r.nuts	
GROUP 1	7.6	5.9	3	3	71.4	85.7	28.6	14.3	100 (7)
GROUP 2	2.3	2.5	0	2.0	16.7	50.0	16.7	8.3	16.7 (2)
GROUP 3	4.4	4.7	0	2.0	55.6	66.7	33.3	11.1	44.4 (4)
GROUP 4	6.0	3.0	0	0.5	0	20.0	0	0	0

(g.nuts = groundnuts  
sun fl. = sunflower  
r.nuts = roundnuts)

Maize is grown by every household. The poorer households in groups 3 and 4 do not produce sufficient maize to meet their foodstocks and so they have to find alternative sources for their requirements. Group 4 is unable to produce either sunflower or roundnuts, due to shortages of both capital (for seeds) and labour. Relatively few households in group 2 grow them compared with groups 1 and 3, which is also a reflection of insufficient labour. Group 4 are further disadvantaged with regard to gardens.

The decisions over which crops to plant do not only relate to the availability of different factors of production to the households, but also the different control that women and men have within the households over agricultural planning. Ideally all villagers would like to grow some of the other crops indicated in table 8, but the extent of the preference varies with each crop. As explained above, *rapoko* is generally only grown for beer-making, although a little may be eaten on special occasions. The difference between groups 2 and 3 is a reflection of the presence or absence of men who place a higher priority on having home brewed beer than the women. Some of the women in group 4 brew beer for sale, but have to buy the *rapoko* from other people as they do not have the resources to grow it themselves.

TABLE 9  
OWNERSHIP AND USE OF LAND  
(HELD BY 33 'PRESENT' HOUSEHOLDS)

	total acreage	less amount lent, plus amount borrowed	amount not used (acres)	% not used
GROUP 1	53	53	12	22.6
GROUP 2	35.5	37.5	7	18.7
GROUP 3	40	42	0	0
GROUP 4	30.5	30.5	6.5	21.3

Table 9 shows that whilst group 3 supplements its total acreage by borrowing 2 acres (and has sufficient inputs to farm these), group 2 is more complex. Although 2 acres are borrowed, 18.7% of the land is not used. This is because the borrowed land <sup>is</sup> at a nearer location than that owned, and is therefore given preference.

TABLE 10  
HOUSE-TYPE AND OWNERSHIP OF CAPITAL GOODS

GROUP	average no. of cattle per household	households owning a plough		households owning a cart		% of households owning a house of different types*			
		%	no.	%	no.	1	2	3	4
GROUP 1	9.4	100	7	100	7	0	0	0	100
GROUP 2	3.6	33.3	4	25.0	3	0	0	66.7	33.3
GROUP 3	1.7	33.3	3	33.3	3	0	77.7	0	22.3
GROUP 4	4.2	60.0	3	20.0	1	40.0	60.0	0	0

\*House types:

1 mud floor, mud walls, grass roof

2 mud floor, brick walls, grass roof

3 cement floor, brick walls, grass roof

4 cement floor, brick walls, tin/asbestos roof

Ownership of cattle is a useful indicator of wealth, as livestock are still seen as a good investment. The much higher average in group 1 reflects these households' greater ability to purchase cattle. However the fact that inheritance is another way of obtaining them is important for group 4 who have a higher average than 2 or 3. This is a function of the fact that they are generally older than the adult members in other households and so have a greater chance of having inherited some cattle. Moreover, there are more cattle owners in households in this group than might be expected given their poverty in other ways. This is because several households have more than one woman, where widows were married to the same man. For some of these women, even owning cattle does not remove the problems of ploughing as they do not own ploughs and/or do not feel strong enough to plough themselves.

I have included data on housing because it is a very clear indicator of wealth available to the rural home. Improving the house in the village is considered at least as important as investing in production, by women and men, particularly if the man intends one day to live there permanently. Thus building materials brought from town are frequently to be seen balanced precariously on the top of Friday-night buses to the countryside. I have classified housing into 4 types although no two homesteads are exactly alike. Almost all homesteads are made of more than one structure, with a kitchen almost always being built separately from the other/s (although in the poorest households this is the only building). Each household is categorised according to the highest order building found in the homestead. The traditional hut made solely with natural materials is only found in the poorest households, ie group 4. These huts are also old because the difficulties their owners have in paying someone to build another, in the absence of male relatives to do it. Also it relates to the shortage of the particular types of wood necessary for the frame of the structure. For this reason, some have changed to a structure made of clay bricks. The high labour input required for making bricks and high cost in purchasing them makes such a switch impossible for the poorest.

Cementing the floor, in order to make the structure more permanent (and easier to clean), is a high priority for expenditure in the house from women's point of view. This is very common in group 2. Those with even more disposable income invest in a tin or asbestos roof. This category also includes the larger, westernised, 'town' houses, as well as buildings constructed on a much more 'traditional' basis, frequently not

much bigger than a kitchen in terms of floor space and often retaining the round shape as well. Simply adding odd pieces of metal to the roof over the years creates a different result from the ostentatious houses in group 1 but are in the same category. The hierarchy of types presented here is again not only a reflection of my own observations but comes from what people, particularly women informants, state as their preferred types and 'which things can show you someone is poor'.

TABLE 11  
VILLAGE AND NON-VILLAGE EMPLOYMENT

GROUP	households employing non-family labour		households whose members work for others		type of income generation (off farm) engaged in by male head of household						households receiving remittances from teacher, not male head	
	%	no.	%	no.	employment		own business		teacher		%	no.
GROUP 1	100	7	0	0	28.6	2	14.3	2	28.6	2	42.9	3
GROUP 2	25.0	3	0	0	58.3	7	25.0	3	0	0	0	0
GROUP 3	0	0	44.4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GROUP 4	20.0	1	40.0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

All group 1 households employ non-household labour, and between them employ 8 people, 5 of whom are full-time workers. The remainder are employed by group 2 households, who also employ casual labour. Casual labour comes from groups 3 and 4. Table 11 shows the number of active adult family members, which is more pertinent to understanding labour availability than totals. The low average in group 2 is related to

the age of the adults (young) and so there is only a small number of children.

TABLE 12  
AVERAGE SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS

people per household

GROUP	average no. usually resident(1)			average no. visiting(2)			average size in total(3)			usually resident active adults	
	<15yrs	>15yrs	total	<15yrs	>15yrs	total	<15yrs	>15yrs	total	average no.	
1	1.1	1.6	2.7	3.1	2.6	5.7	3.7	4.3	7.9	1.1	8
2	1	2	3	1	0.8	1.8	2	2.9	4.8	0.9	11
3	2	3.8	5.8	2.1	0.6	2.7	4.1	3.3	7.3	1.8	16
4	1.8	2.8	4.6	1.6	1.4	3	2.6	4.4	6.8	1.2	6
TOTAL	1.5	2.6	4.6	2	1.4	3	3.5	6.8		<u>1.25</u>	

- (1) 'usually resident' = present for at least two weeks per month  
 (2) 'visiting' = present for between two weeks and a day per month  
 (3) 'total' = includes people who have not visited for years

The peculiarities of Murasi have been spelled out, yet the similarities found in other places in the country are striking, as has been indicated in the text. This summary description of the importance of various activities in the village has indicated the significance of various endowments (whether randomly given, or acquired) to the differential ability of households to reproduce and accumulate. There is a correlation in Murasi between the clusters of households with particular patterns of endowment, and gender relations within the households. This is considered in the next chapter by focussing on the *social relations* of production and reproduction.

## CHAPTER NINE

## THE VILLAGE

## Part Two: The Social Relations of Production and Reproduction:

## A Site of Interaction Between Gender and Class.

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the social relations of production and how these interact with the relations of primary reproduction. To achieve this it is necessary to uncover the links between production and primary reproduction *per se*, along with all the social relations that are embodied in them. As will become apparent, a central feature of this examination is the interaction between gender and class dynamics.

Some of the links between production and reproduction are viewed by focussing on households and the social relations in which they engage with other households, capital and the state. This focus allows some insights into the development and boundaries of class. However, the bases of these relationships and the ways in which they are maintained also need to be viewed from within the household in this case, as will be shown. It is only here that the intricacies of the intersections and interactions between class and gender, or between gender and economic differentiation, may be unravelled.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first I introduce relations of production and reproduction of households within the village to other households, capital and the state, by describing the range of forms which they take and summarising their locations within the



national context. Likewise, the relations of production and reproduction *within* households are characterised and related to this context. From these follows a description of the relations of production and reproduction *as found in the different groups in the village*. I intend this third section to give the reader a picture of the differences between households, as differentiated by the groups. I present this data in a fairly raw form in order to give the reader a description of how the relations of production and reproduction occur. They contain elements of class and gender relations in the village, but I present them in this section with as little analysis as possible, in order to separate this presentation of the overall picture from the analysis. In the second, analytical, part of the chapter I first analyse separately the relations of production and reproduction. These sections set the stage for further analysis and expose the essential mechanisms of how these relations are maintained and the ways in which they are open to challenge. I then turn in the final sections to a more general analysis first to identify the links between production and reproduction, and then to explore the ways in which class and gender interact.

## PART ONE: RELATIONS IN THE VILLAGE

### *Types of Household Relations*

In this section I outline the relations of production and reproduction which households in the village have with other households, capital and the state, and their location within the national economy. Households as entities engage in relations of production which are usually articulated through markets, be they of labour or commodities. In

the case study, some households provide labour for capital directly, usually away from the village itself, whilst others sell labour to other households. In no sense is this a reflection of their having a surplus of labour, which is perceived as being scarce in most households. Those who sell labour directly to capital are in some cases able to compensate for this loss through the purchase of labour from other village households, but this is not a uniform pattern. Those households which sell labour locally often do so when they themselves are very short, and the remuneration in no way replaces the lost labour. This variety is explored below.

All households engage in commodity markets, with even those who are unable to sell having to buy. They sell directly to the state-owned Grain Marketing Board (GMB), to local traders and to each other. They are able to engage on different terms, depending on their different economic status, and hence regard market opportunities differentially. Crops are sold in minimum amounts to the depots of the GMB, which gives the best price. Those who have only small amounts to sell or who cannot afford to transport their crops have to accept the lower prices offered by local traders. In general those households which appear as relatively strong actors in the grain market also sell labour directly to capital (or, in the case of the one teacher, the state), or have members who are petty capitalists operating in sectors other than agriculture. These activities of themselves do not necessarily ensure any investment in agriculture. Households purchase commodities both for production (for instance, seeds, fertilisers) and primary reproduction (for instance, food, clothes,

cooking utensils etc), but households have different patterns of expenditure which are also related to different relations in the market.

### *Intra-Household Relations*

The social relations of production and reproduction are more fully understood as relations which are defined from within the household than the relations of households to each other, the state and capital described above, and in this section I describe some of their variety. They take the form of contracts and other relations between individuals who are not autonomous actors, but remain socially defined in relation to the household of which they are members. Moreover, these relations are often those of production and reproduction *simultaneously*. Thus the basic relation of production in the formation of the 'family estate' is that between wife and husband, but this is also the basic relation of the material reproduction of household members, and of human reproduction. I identify below the important constituent elements of these by way of introduction to the detailed description of how these are manifested in the different groups of the village.

The relations of production and reproduction are in essence those of contracts between individuals. These are by no means formal, accepted and beyond dispute, however. On the contrary, they are most clearly revealed through the resolution of conflict and negotiation, as will be shown. The contracts are composed of a variety of elements. The use to which household and employed labour will be put and the use of its product are the key features. Most strikingly the conflicts arise between wives and husbands. There are also contracts between employers of both genders and their employees, who are involved in the labour of

production and reproduction. Moreover I stress here that the wider relations of reproduction are not totally encompassed in a description of gender relations alone, because of the role played by male employees in material reproduction, nor do gender relations entirely account for the nature of production relations, because of those embodied in households' relations with capital and the state. Nonetheless, they are a central feature in the following accounts.

Some elements of the central wife-husband relation resemble those of a sharecropping agreement. It embodies a set of agreed conditions which are well-known and socially defined; it acts to bring into use resources which would not otherwise be used; it remains outwardly the same, but the content changes over time; and it has different implications from the point of view of the different partners. Robertson's definition of sharecrop contracts along these lines was described in Chapter Three. The particular applicability of his conception of such a contract lies in two aspects of its *flexibility*, which are necessary for most contracts within agrarian social relations. First, rights and agreements are based on shares of the crop, whatever the harvest, rather than pre-determined rates. Second, the contract is also flexible over long periods of time, such as the lifetime of a household (or marriage), or shifts and cycles in the national economy.

This is certainly not to suggest that this is the only content of the wife-husband relationship, or even the most overt one, nor is it usually spoken of in this way. Nonetheless conceptualising one element of it in this way helps to focus on the relations of production which are embodied within marriage. The conditions of the agreement are

certainly well-known and socially defined in general terms: women cannot get land in their own right and, as wives, are expected to provide labour according to the wishes of their husbands, in return for a variety of 'rights' as wives.

These rights and expectations also include elements other than those of agricultural production. Whitehead's conception of a 'conjugal contract' perhaps best captures the essence of this.

... the conjugal contract includes the exchange of labour in production as well as the exchanges in which personal and collective consumption needs, including the feeding and maintenance of children, are met. Here the arrangements within the conjugal contract are not separate from the way in which labour is rewarded, or from the distribution of the products of work ...

... (it is) the terms on which products and income, produced by the labour of both husband and wife, are divided to meet their personal and collective needs

(Whitehead, 1981: 95, 113).

The details of this contract in Zimbabwean Shona communities apparently changed over time, and have apparently always changed over the course of a marriage. The complexities in unravelling changes in the institution of marriage were traced in Part II, along with the conflicting pressures of social change on married women. For these reasons it is difficult to assess a pattern of how these contracts may now change over the course of a marriage, separate from other changes which take place over this time. Some insights are gained from old women's perceptions of how their situations are different from those of older women when they themselves were young, and from comparing the situations they faced as young women to those of young women in the village now. Some examples are given below. Nonetheless such comparisons

should be made only with a great deal of caution as so much else has changed in the meantime.

The details of agreements about labour between wives and husbands are fought over in many instances, in varying forms. Men have available to them various tools of patriarchy, including law and socially condoned levels of violence, and women's decisions to act are within the context of inherent material insecurity within marriage (as described in the concluding section of Part II). The contract thus covers issues relating to the use of land, labour and cash income for production and reproduction. However, the specific nature of this contract is different in the different groups, as described below.

Aside from agricultural production, the labour for other aspects of the reproduction of labour is provided largely by women. Many reproductive goods have become commodified over time, such as some basic foodstuffs, clothes, education and healthcare, and the source of cash for these is a cause of much conflict between wives and husbands. In general, the former believe that these costs should be met by both before any other expenditure, and will use what disposable income they have in this way. Men on the other hand consider that they have certain rights to personal disposable income (usually for beer), regardless of whether or not these needs are met. In general men with a greater amount of income do meet a higher proportion of these costs, but this is a contested area.

Men provide less labour for reproduction and production in the village but women do not openly use tactics to try to increase the amount, or even complain openly about this. This may be a reflection of

the fact that it has become the accepted gender division of labour, coupled with the definition that men's responsibility is to provide cash. At the same time amongst villagers there is often a public denial that couples do anything but work and decide together, implying that this a perception of what 'should' be. Even where women in fact do provide most of the needs, they often still say that generally the husband provides more. This is also reflected in a widespread desire amongst women for the men to earn, and give them, more money rather than for men to work harder on the farm. This may also be because they know that if they are to control its use, income from the farm must stay hidden in many cases, unless it is presumed by the husband to be only tiny amounts, and absent husbands are an advantage in this respect.

In some African countries there is an overt struggle between women and men over which crops should be grown. At times when securing even basic subsistence needs is a precarious activity, women will more often prefer to secure food crops first and the struggle may become one over food versus cash crops (Cutrufelli, 1983: 118-20). There are many women in Zimbabwe who feel resentful about their inability to insist that the family farm produces more nutritious food crops (Zimbabwe Women's Bureau, 1981). Nonetheless, this is not the usual manifestation of the conflict over securing subsistence, as the main staple, maize, is also the main cash crop in many parts of Zimbabwe, and especially in this region (because of the climate and soils). In the village poor households cannot afford the labour and land to grow the same variety of crops as richer ones. This means in effect that their diet is much more restricted. 'Development education' efforts to explain nutrition to women

do not enable them to purchase the nutritious vegetables and groundnuts which they are too poor to grow, even for the small proportion who have had the help of government-sponsored income generation projects (Batezat *et al*, 1988: 162-64). In part this inability to grow groundnuts in particular is because they compete directly with maize for land and labour. Runs of drought years make the need for maize more important as a surplus can always be sold with good profit, whereas the quality of groundnuts has to be very high in order to get a good price.

Where household resources (of land, animals and labour) are too small to secure all the household needs from farming and pastoralism, the extra will be sought in local wage income. In this situation the struggle will be over the control of the product of that employment and the sale or retention of the maize crop, but not usually over the type of crops to be planted.

All married women in the village are restricted by their husbands in their right and ability to travel, whether locally, to Harare, or further afield. This is also reinforced by the prevailing ideology which categorises women who travel and trade without the permission or accompaniment of their husbands as not fulfilling their wifely contract. This means that their ability to trade in their own right is restricted, but it also means that they cannot easily go to their own kin and, in practice, do not travel to meet their husbands very often. This has implications for production and reproduction, and the ways in which the relations governing these are maintained and challenged, as will be shown. In the relations of human reproduction, considerable control over women's fertility and rights over children is enforced by their husbands



*Types of Relations of Production and Reproduction Within the Groups  
in the Village*

I have examined the relations of production and reproduction in the village in a variety of ways. A consideration of the conflicts which arose during the course of fieldwork, or which were discussed during this time, revealed tensions within, and expectations about, these relations. I also paid particular attention to women's histories, as they were told to me, which in turn offered greater insights to these relations (See Appendix One for more detail). They are described in rather raw form in the following section, so as to give the reader a description of how they occur.

The theme of these observations is frequently the unity of production and reproduction within agricultural production. The most important social relation which determines these and other aspects of reproduction is that of marriage. The main material components of this contract (as of other sub-contracts which employ local labour) are: the supply of labour for agricultural and livestock production, for other aspects of the material reproduction of labour, and (in the case of marriage) for human reproduction; and the supply and use of cash (obtained by household members from a range of sources) for these purposes, and for leisure.

The details of these contracts and the nature of the conflicts which arise over them, as well as the patterns of their resolution, are strikingly different amongst different types of household, along the lines of economic differentiation outlined in the previous chapter. It is largely the considerable coincidence of this combination of factors

which determined my definition of the different groups. What follows is then a characterisation of the different types of relations of production and reproduction along the lines of the groups in the village.

Group One

This group contains some households which are typical of those which are praised by international agencies for marketing comparatively large amounts of grain (Weiner, 1986; 1988; Moyo, 1986; Cliffe, 1988). However the households in the case study have far fewer assets than the farmers on the Small Scale Commercial Farms (SSCF), which were referred to as the Master Farmers in the African Purchase Areas (APA) before independence, and should not be equated with them. The households in this group do not have such large areas of land, nor are they likely to own much larger areas in the future, because of the shortage within the Communal Area. (There is a possibility that the government could introduce legislation permitting the commoditisation of land, as described in the concluding section of Part II. Alternatively, a market in land could develop spontaneously. If this were to happen, the households in this group would be best placed to take advantage of such a possibility and accumulate larger acreages.) Their land requires considerable amounts of fertiliser to maintain levels of production (although this is also partly because they, like all the villagers, use hybrid seed). Perhaps most significant of the differences from the SSCFs is that they function by employing non-household labour in addition to related members of the family unit,

rather than using assets to recruit more labour through marriage, as is common amongst male farmers in the SSCFs (Cheater, 1984).

*The Employment of Non-Household Labour*

Although this involves contracts outside marriage, these are in fact conditioned and shaped both by the marriage of the employing household and that of the employee. Whilst the husband provides the cash to pay for such employees, who are usually men, it is often the resident wife who makes all the decisions regarding what work the labourer should do, although this may be superceded during the husband's visits. The husbands in all the households but one in this group are absent for much of the time and are those who provide the income for this employment. (In the one exceptional case, it is the daughter (who is a teacher) who provides the income, and the husband is present living in the village.) The women never leave the workers to do all the work in the fields, nor do they leave them unsupervised for long periods of time, and they usually work alongside them. Nonetheless, in having control over this additional labour, they are sometimes able to free themselves to engage in income-generating projects of their own, such as sewing, or even leisure activities. The workers may be asked to do anything at all. This usually means that they take care of all the livestock and do all the heaviest tasks on the farm, but on occasion they may have to fetch water, collect firewood, or even wash the cooking pots.

Within such a small community, the workers are vulnerable to abuse by the employers as the former find it embarrassing and it is considered anti-social to try to wrangle over the remuneration. However,

this atmosphere of 'good manners' also helps to prevent the employer paying below the local rate, and they generally do not. Women are satisfied that they get paid the same as men for this work - both complain that it is too little. The following is an example of one of the workers who was employed full-time in this way.

Stephen is forty-four, has a son at home in central Zimbabwe, and is divorced. He is very aware of his responsibility to support his divorced sister and his child, but does not manage to save much. He goes away from the house to drink beer (at a beerhall or party) when he can but does not have much time off. He is supposed to have Sunday free, but this became a contentious issue as his employers expected him to tend to the livestock's needs every morning, including Sundays. Things came to a head when it was their turn on the village rota to look after all the cattle, as it fell on a Sunday. After much argument he did the job. Arguments persisted between him and the wife, although he would be deferential during the husband's visits. As a result of the arguments he started to go missing and often returned drunk.

Eventually he was dismissed for refusing to load sacks onto a truck because it was a Sunday. The general consensus from other household members was that he should have done the work and deserved to be dismissed. He was subsequently employed to look after the cattle of a man who does not normally live in the village. In the event, he was not paid, and so roamed the village, working casually for others who would at least give him food, if not money.

Employment is also undertaken on a more casual basis. This is done by women and men, although more frequently by the former. Generally people are not employed on this casual basis to perform work around the house, but only for farm work. Most of the people who are employed on this basis are in group three and their cases are considered along with the others in that group below.

An important question to consider here is whether the labour employed simply *replaces* that of the person who is sending remittances, or whether this is in fact a greater amount than would otherwise be

available to the household. I suggest that where it is the husband who is absent and paying for the employment, the purchased labour of a full-time worker is greater than the amount he would provide if present. This is because of the way in which the gender division of labour has developed, whereby husbands who usually live in the village all the time now often contribute comparatively small amounts of labour to the farm, as exemplified in households in group three. In addition, such labour can be used for domestic tasks which husbands would not normally undertake, such as cleaning and fetching water. This situation gives some of these women the opportunity to earn income in other ways because they have more freedom in organising their time and have control over the use of someone else's labour. Typical projects include growing and selling vegetables, poultry-rearing and sewing.

#### *Remittances*

Whether a household will function in this way is not solely determined by whether the husband (or another member of the family) *has employment or any economic activity* elsewhere, but whether or not *sufficient remittances reach the rural homestead*. There are many factors intervening between, say, a man earning money elsewhere and his wife receiving some money at the village. These are not all related to the geographical distance between the two, however, as it is possible to overcome apparently major difficulties of distance in the absence of a well-developed rural postal system. This has been demonstrated over many years by men sending money to very remote areas, although it is more difficult if the employment itself is in a remote area.

The amount of remittances received in the village partly depends on the level of income of the absent person, say husband, but crucially also on the ability of the wife to command those resources, and the perception of the husband that it is 'worth' the investment. The former is partly determined by her ability to convince him of the latter, which may necessitate her making a commitment to forego overt control over the product of the enterprise. It may also depend on her proximity to his place of employment. The tactics she may use are more likely to include deference, as a form of persuasion, than more open means such as making clear demands or requests backed up by threats of, or actual, defiance. Such behaviour often includes elaborate shows of 'traditional', deferential courtesy, in terms of dress, speech, and the presentation of food and sex, along with a generally submissive attitude. In addition they draw attention to the efforts they make in working hard on the farm and in being open with how they use any amounts of money which they receive from husbands, or which they earn themselves.

Most of the women in this group do not consider themselves to be comfortable in material or financial terms. In part they blame this on their husbands, and say that they are unfair or unreasonable either in the share of earnings they spend on the household members (to meet material reproduction needs directly, or to invest in the farm), or in the degree of control the men exert over the product of their wives' labour. This is in spite of the fact that in this group are to be found the women who have the most autonomy, and access to the greatest amount of resources, in the village. They also see this as a wider problem of their position in society, where they have access to only

small amounts of land and only relatively poorly paid jobs. This perception of poverty is measured in terms of the quality of kitchenware, the types of food they are able to obtain, the standard of housing and clothes, the ability to buy presents for some of their natal kin, and the education of their children. They try to overcome this through hard work on the farm, through trying to obtain greater resources from their husbands, and from other forms of income generation. Where they feel that their husbands do not share their ambitions for the destiny of the product of such actions, they endeavour to be secretive and/or deceptive about how they use it.

*Use of the Agro-Pastoral Product*

In general the husbands' interference is less likely to be at the level of production, than over the use of the product. In other words the wives in this group usually have considerable autonomy in organising production itself, including the use of other people's labour, or any other investment that the man chooses to make. This autonomy sometimes extends into its product (with several of the women having their own bank account into which the payment cheque from the GMB is paid), *but the boundaries of this autonomy are set by the husband.* During visits to the village, the husband witnesses the evidence of her activities during the week and talks to neighbours. If he disapproves of her plans or activities, he can override or censure them. Also, a woman's autonomy is conditional upon her fulfilling her duties as a wife and on her husband's approval of what she does. In cases where the husband's visits are frequent, this does not leave much room for evasion or deception.

The use of livestock remains much more tightly controlled by men, even when they are absent for much of the time. Herding is done on a collective basis, but labour for other aspects of tending animals is provided by the household, in some combination of employee, wife and children. Ploughing is still regarded as a man's job (although it is not unheard of for a woman to do this in the absence of her husband). However, the animals are far more frequently owned by the husband than by the wife and even those which she does own can be appropriated by him once they are established in his herd. Thus women cannot easily sell the animals, should they wish to do so.

Households in this group may sell the service of ploughing to others. They generally sell to those in poorer households in the other groups, who are short of labour or stock. This work is usually done by men, whether the employee or the husband, and the wife has no control over this product.

Much of the struggle which results from this situation remains socially hidden, and rarely results in open conflict. Open conflict is considered to be shameful for the wife, who will go to great lengths to avoid it. Often this means that they have to make compromises and appear totally submissive. This is also reflected in the fact that these women are unable to travel freely, sometimes even being prevented from visiting their parents in nearby rural areas, but also from making purchases or investments in Harare, or even the local township. An example below describes a woman who has more autonomy than any of the other women, but shows the nature of its conditions.

Clara decided to invest the bulk of income from the year's



sale of crops in a knitting machine (after deducting her planned 'necessary costs' for the following season), so that she would be able to make garments for sale in her 'spare' time. This would have entailed a visit to Botswana or South Africa, to which her husband at first objected. After a series of arguments and attempts to persuade him, she won his 'permission' (which is not formally required) to obtain a passport. However, as the time of her impending journey approached, along with the cold winter weather, the husband repeatedly suggested that she should buy a leather coat for herself. She felt that, as she had argued a lot lately, she did not want to insist that a woollen coat would have been more practical, and was more worried that she could not afford both the coat and the trip for the knitting machine. When the cheque came from the GMB, I went with her to Harare, where we were to meet her husband and buy the coat together. He guided us to an expensive tourist shop, chose the coat he had in mind, and her income was suddenly spent. At the time he said he would make up the difference she needed to buy the machine, but she had to wait until she had the following season's cheque before she could make the trip, for which he never gave her any money.

This anecdote reveals several things. The husband wishes publicly to be able to exert his power over his wife's decisions and considers that ultimately he has a right to decide how she should spend her money. Second, when the woman is faced with such opposition she considers her best tactic to be deference, which in this case is a reflection of her own stated perception of her ultimate powerlessness.

The anecdote above also reveals the possibility that the husband's desire to exercise a veto on this particular venture may have stemmed not only from the fact that she would be exercising far more independence than before in travelling alone such a distance, but also that ultimately the knitting machine might provide her with material security. It also concerns fidelity, as the control of women's movement and ability to travel are connected to the desire to control their fertility and sexuality.

Ultimately, women's vulnerability to their husbands' decisions is maintained by the fact that *all* women may become destitute upon divorce or widowhood, and find themselves in a situation similar to that of the women in group four. Common strategies to lessen this

threat are to 'bank' money or goods, in the name, or at the home, of children or members of their natal families.

### Group Two

To some extent this is a younger version of group one, but it is by no means inevitable that all will become members of group one. The importance of 'chance' factors in gaining access to village resources such as land, eg timing of the initial advent to the village, was outlined in the previous chapter. The significance of these is analysed in a section below. The members of this group are generally poorer as, by definition, they do not have access to so many resources, and this is often because of the insecure nature of the employment away from the village. They also include some households where the man is in a relatively well-paid, secure job but does not, or has not yet, remitted as many resources as those in group one.

Women in these households use various strategies to earn income for themselves; wherever possible in the same ways as those in group one. However, they have fewer resources to start with, including access to labour and time free from agricultural and domestic labour, and so opportunities are not so great. They also more frequently attempt to increase the amount of money they get from their husbands, and are more frequently deceptive about earning income themselves.

Most of the conflicts here are also about the product, rather than the production process itself, but as the household resources are smaller than in group one, this autonomy is even less significant: being

able to choose what to do with tiny amounts of resources, when there is only limited scope for their investment, is not highly valued.

### Group Three

Some of the households in this group contain the most violent clashes of interests, and frequent incidences of overt conflict, between wives and husbands. They are extremely poor and providing the material reproduction of the household is by no means guaranteed from their own agricultural and livestock production, especially during a drought. They are poor in endowments (acquired and natural) but also are exploited through relationships within the village into which they are forced to enter in order to survive. Thus women and men sell their labour cheaply, on a casual basis, to households in groups one and two.

### *Employment outside the household*

These women will work for others in the village at below the rate of pay offered to other labourers if other terms can be fulfilled. For instance, if payment can be made in food or clothes, or with guaranteed secrecy from a woman's husband, the remuneration has a higher value to her than the standard rate of pay. The work may be in production or reproduction. In taking such action women risk a lot, as this usually entails the simultaneous neglect of the work on the household farm or home. Open defiance of the husband's wishes could form grounds for divorce, with the implications mentioned above.

The men in this group work for other households on different terms from their wives, as they do not have to struggle to keep control over

the income and have little social responsibility to contribute to the reproductive needs of members of the household. Some do use it for this purpose, but if they choose not to there is very little wives can do. It is in this area that the differences between the desires of women and men diverge so dramatically.

These are livestock-short households and so often have to employ others to plough for them. It is not possible to hire the animals and/or equipment separately, as the owners (in group one) can command a higher price by offering the whole service, as described.

*The Marriage Contract*

In production and reproduction, gender relations further intensify the exploitation of women, both in terms of direct appropriation by husbands of the product of their labour, and through the actions which some women are forced to take because of the violent and exploitative nature of their relationships with their husbands. These extreme situations do not apply to all the couples in group 3 (older ones in particular do seem to have different sorts of relationships), but it is only in this group that such extreme situations arise. Moreover they are extreme versions of similar predicaments faced by women in the other groups. Most of these are illustrated in the following summary of a case study.

Florence is 37 and has 2 children. She has a 'customary, unregistered' marriage. Her husband has been unable to find permanent employment throughout the duration of their marriage and has lived in the village the whole time. She says, 'The biggest problem is with the husband. He does no work and wants all the money I get ... If I refuse anything, especially in the blankets, he beats me.' She can often find casual employment from other households, but her husband usually finds out and then either demands that she buy meat for him to eat, or that she hands it over to him to buy beer for his own consumption. She has run away from him twice and on one occasion stayed away for three months. This prompted an apology from him and an undertaking to reform, so she

returned. Despite the fact that his behaviour reverted to its former pattern, she plans to stay with him as she would lose the children if she were to leave. If he discovers that she has been visiting friends, he blames them for the misdemeanors of which he accuses her, and he has forbidden her to talk to other people about their private affairs.

This woman is one of several who have tried to increase their access to resources by offering sexual favours to men passing through the small township nearby. Her husband discovered this through a neighbour, assaulted her violently and sued the 'adulterer' for damages. In such situations, intervention from anyone else to lessen the effect of violence is very rare, as this is seen as a husband's right. On another occasion, she was so badly beaten that she went to the local police and they took it upon themselves to beat him very badly. She says she would not do this again, however, and this was a very unusual response from the police.

After his assault on her and the claim for damages, the husband threatened her with divorce, which would have meant that she would lose access to her children. But he did not divorce her. She observed that he did not do so because he needed her labour, but she did not feel sufficiently confident of that, and was too frightened of a repeat of the physical attack, to risk such action again. The fact that their marriage is unregistered (and therefore technically illegal) does not make her feel any less vulnerable to the effects of divorce. She described how such a divorce would inevitably take place outside a court and would in this case occur without the intervention of the families. Any decision he took would be difficult for her to challenge alone. She would be unlikely to receive any assistance from other villagers, who do not wish to challenge the accepted terms of divorce, even when they

recognise the injustice. In fact her husband has paid no *lobola*, but people in the village agreed that if he were to make some token payment to her family, even after the 'divorce', he would be within his 'rights' to retain custody of the children.

This woman's predicament is exceptional in that her husband's brutality and his keenness to drink beer rather than work on the farm are sufficiently extreme to be locally notorious. However, she is not the only woman in this group to suffer in this way, or to resort to such strategies, and the tensions between them are also to be found between many wives and husbands living together. Her husband resembles a stereotype of men which is often the target of verbal abuse by women'. Given an exploitative, particularly oppressive husband, a woman has less space to maintain or increase her areas of control in her life when he is present than when he is absent. This has implications for production and reproduction.

It is acknowledged by both women and men that women do more work: with the help from children they provide almost all the labour for agriculture. Men's work is seen as being to find employment and anything else a man does in agriculture is as a favour to his wife. The amount of work they do in reproduction, eg in the repair of buildings and fences, is not regarded as a great deal, and certainly does not involve as much time or effort. There are some men who work alongside their wives in the fields (including the headman of the village), but they do less work than their wives overall.

Men cannot work in the fields for very long - they finish at 3.00 and want to come home. They are lazy

was a comment from one wife. The women regard it as more important if their husbands share decisions about expenditure. Publicly wife and husband usually declare that they make such decisions together, but privately it is a great source of women's consternation that they are often not able to decide the ways in which income should be used. Where the husband is not so extreme as the example above, and is usually an older man, he may allow his wife to make these decisions, in the knowledge that she will probably use them for aspects of material reproduction, such as food, clothes and the house. The implications of this are explored in a later section.

Women are not passive in these situations but feel intensely constrained. There is no tradition of helping each other in any case, but the way the ideology and material conditions of marriage have developed has fostered isolation amongst women. First, it is socially unacceptable to complain publicly about one's husband, and even women who have suffered in the most extreme ways do not do this. Second, it is unacceptable to offer overt support to a woman engaged in opposition to her husband, and it appears that not much covert support is offered within the same village. Apart from the private strategies of deference and persuasion, there are few possibilities open to women to resolve such conflicts. These include running away, which does have historical precedents, or open rebellion.

Running away to one's own relatives was a strategy that at one time would involve other people in the dispute, particularly older relatives on both sides. Involving other people in this way was desirable as they could arbitrate in, and resolve, the conflict or negotiate a

divorce. This was in fact an extreme measure and before this stage was reached, women could request intervention from husbands' relatives. As explained in Part II, this became less effective once older relatives had a lesser hold over young men due to the latter's greater economic independence. Its effectivity was also lessened by the spatial disruption of communities. In spite of the fact that this form of arbitration and negotiation was a situation loaded against the woman 'stranger' who married into the husband's lineage, its loss is still something spoken of with regret by wives.

Group Four

This group is composed of female-headed households which receive no remittances, and is the poorest in the village. Not all the widows in the village are in this group, as a few reside with other relatives and get access to more resources this way. The older women in the group complain about the loss of the 'privileges' which women of their age are traditionally thought to have had. In particular these include access to the labour of younger women and men and a degree of respect within the community which would ensure that they were not left destitute. (The fact that younger women do not themselves feel in any sense liberated, compared with what they know of the lives of their grandmothers, suggests that there has not been a comensurate gain in *their* freedoms.)

The majority of widows in the village are now in this group although they experienced diverse economic situations earlier in their lives. Their present poverty is either a reflection of the poverty of their deceased husbands or of their own inability to retain access to resources built up during the marriage (or both) once he died. In the



latter situation, the widows were left with few material goods from the marriage because other members of the husband's family decided what should be done with them. The elected village committee decided to intervene in such cases to ensure that if the widow desired she should retain access to the land and that even if the dead man's brothers or sons should wish to use it they would ensure that she had the final decision and this seems to have occurred. Thus it was still part of the contract of marriage, ie their past status as wives, which gave them access to land.

#### *Buying and Selling Labour*

The most overwhelming problem for these women is not access to land, however, but access to labour. Strategies for increasing this include making demands on kin, selling livestock and small-scale income-generation in order to employ labour. However, they have only limited opportunities to earn income. None of them have gardens, so they cannot grow vegetables for sale, and have to purchase any for food. They brew beer more frequently than other women, which may earn them \$Z4-\$Z9 a session, whilst it costs \$Z2 a day to employ a labourer, or \$Z4 for heavy labour. The *rapoko* costs about \$Z1 and preparation may be over a period of two weeks, as described in the previous chapter.

In order to meet their reproduction needs, they also sell their own labour whenever possible, although age and physical infirmity greatly limits the opportunities for this. In two cases this occasionally extends to sexual favours in exchange for money, food or labour, like some of the women in group three, although their problem in this case is not generally the threat of physical violence or divorce, but finding custom

(for the older women) and ensuring payment. Any income is often used immediately for purchasing labour for tasks which they cannot complete alone, such as the heavy tasks of preparing the land and weeding. In spite of having livestock, they also usually employ labour for ploughing on the same basis as households in group three.

Most of them also have responsibilities for the reproduction of others besides themselves, especially young children (often grandchildren) who have been left in their care. They do occasionally receive help in this, in the form of food or wood from neighbours, but this is often only in times of sickness and is piecemeal and irregular in any case.

There is also an elderly divorcee in this group, who is referred to with the same courtesy as the widow (as *ambuya*). She was divorced because of her age and is one of two who were once employed elsewhere. She was employed on a farm and saved money after she was divorced to come to the village seeking refuge in her old age. She bought half an acre of land and has been there since 1967. The other woman worked as a domestic for a White family for most of her adult life, travelling to other countries with them. Her husband died whilst they were still employed, and she continued to work for them. She wished to continue her job for years to come, but her son demanded that she live in the village to care for his children after he had divorced their mother. She is only able to use 1.5 acres of her son's 5 acres of land because she has insufficient labour. Both women now are bitter about their present condition, and that their years of employment did not bring them more in their old age.

*Polygynous Widows*

Some of the widows were wives of the same man, and have stayed together in the same village. They do not work together, and have kept the fields separate. They stay living close to each other and maintain an outwardly polite relationship, but there is a great deal of tension and bad feeling between them. They can have very different experiences on the death of the husband, depending on whether they were senior or junior wives. In one case the senior wife had a registered marriage and was regarded by the relatives as the wife who should be accorded more respect. This materialised in some goods and a little money, whilst the junior wife received next to nothing. However, the man's brothers appropriated most of the goods and the house which he had in town, so neither received what they considered appropriate.

For some of the women this situation may only be temporary, as several of them are young enough to remarry, which is something they would in principle like to do. In some parts of Zimbabwe, sons may assist their widowed mothers, but this is not much in evidence here. It is difficult to see how the situation of the older women could improve. The shortage of labour for production and reproduction is perceived as an insurmountable problem which can only get worse with age. In this case, their gender has determined their economic position.

*Summary of the Types of Relations of Production and Reproduction in the Village Groups*

Thus the relations of production and reproduction may be seen as a set of contracts determined by marriage, one aspect of which resembles the details of a share-crop arrangement. The contracts also include other aspects of the material reproduction of labour, human reproduction and sexuality. They operate with a good deal of conflict and negotiation, the nature of which varies dramatically for the different groups, ie with different types of economic circumstance. The household contracts also shape some relations outside the household and hence relations between the groups in the village.

In the foregoing sections I have described these relations largely as I viewed them in the village context, and as a such they represent a

(contd...)

snapshot picture taken over several months, with supplementary information given about the history of the community and since my visit. In the second part of this chapter, I undertake further analysis in order to characterise the nature of social change.

## PART TWO: THE NATURE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

In this section I first summarise the household relations of agricultural production and also those of production outside the village in which some village members are engaged. The latter is an important, yet often neglected, aspect of the relations of production for villages and CAs as a whole, as I shall show. Subsequently I summarise the relations of the material reproduction of labour which are included in this, as well as the other aspects which are not, along with the relations of human reproduction. The relations of production and reproduction often overlap, are part of the same contract, and in many ways are parts of a unity. In the section which follows, the links between production and reproduction are clearly delineated. Finally, through an examination of the interaction between the dynamics of class and gender, I develop a picture of the nature of social change.

### *The Character of the Relations of Production*

In this section I summarise the relations of agricultural production and those of production engaged in by some villagers outside the location of the village itself. It is a tautology that the relations of production are maintained by relations of reproduction: *some* relations

which ensure the supply and maintenance of labour in the present and future are clearly essential. Whether the particular form that these take is also essential is another matter entirely, and is considered below. The terms on which villagers produce and sell crops, and sell labour outside the village, are shaped by capital and the state. In general, villagers strive to meet the demands of capital and the state, as expressed in the market, rather than to challenge them. They seek employment and strive to sell as many crops as possible. However, there are other relations which intervene to determine their particular characters.

#### *Non-Agricultural Production Outside the Village*

A comment on this form of production is necessary here as it intervenes in some ways in the production relations of households in the village: some members are absent and provide remittances. Those who find employment outside the village may engage in struggles against capital directly as workers. In recent history these struggles in urban areas have often developed into struggles against the state, which intervenes on the behalf of capital (Mandaza, 1986b; Sachikonye, 1986). The case study does not yield much information about the ways in which decisions are taken by workers to organise against aspects of capitalist production, or the ways in which labour is controlled. This focus lies outside the primary one here of uncovering the details of the situations which are not those of the direct control of labour by capital. Some who earn income outside the village are not exploited as proletarian labour, but find work as petty capitalists. Likewise it was the significance of these ventures to the activities in the village which was the focus of

this inquiry, rather than the details of the ventures *per se*. I return to these in the analysis of class later in the chapter.

*Production Relations of Households*

I consider first the relations of households with other entities. In the situations where poor families choose to sell to local traders, rather than to the GMB, they are not challenging production relations themselves, as these households remain at the mercy of opportunities offered them in the market. Through the gradual erosion of their ability to provide subsistence from the village resource base, some households also fulfill the function of a reserve army of labour in the national economy (Harris and Young, 1981: 124-5). Thus they are prepared to sell their labour at very low prices, but on the whole do not find much employment in any case, and so function as a threat used by employers against those workers seeking higher wages.

Relations of production within the village are typical of those in other Zimbabwean Communal Areas (CAs) in that they appear to be less under the direct control of capital and the state than the relations of production located outside the CAs. Relations between households are certainly connected with wider economic relations in that those households which gain remittances from other sectors are able to obtain cheap labour in the village. However, the *appearance* of agricultural production is certainly different from the organisation of capitalist production in the wider national economy and does not resemble that of agriculture where capital plays a much more direct role, as on the large commercial farms or the SSCFs. The ways in which this organisation of production provides relatively cheap crops and labour has been shown,

but the maintenance of these relations is not in the hands of the market, or capital, or, in effect, the state. It is not the market or capital which make access to land dependent upon marriage for women, or dependent upon local power structures for men, or which determines the differential positions in which men enter the national labour market. Yet it is these things which shape the general pattern of production in the village and structure local relations of production. This 'distance' from capital and the state is a situation described by Bernstein as typical of many African peasantries (Bernstein, 1979; 1981).

The links with production outside the village community clearly contribute to differentiation between households, as the cost of financing local employment is met through earnings from off-farm income. This situation is common in many African countries (Bujra, 1987: 128). The question which arises from the preoccupation with the nature of such relations of production is whether such processes of economic differentiation indicate that a process of fundamental transformation of society is underway, or that they merely reflect cyclical processes of differentiation. The latter have been identified in other African societies as being part of household development cycles. This question is derived from the theoretical debates reviewed in Part I of the thesis about the significance of household differentiation, and stem back to the classic debates of Lenin and Chayanov.

The case study village, along with communities in many of Zimbabwe's CAs, have experienced so much disruption and interference from the state, the economy and war, that the construction of household development cycles cannot have the same relevance here as for more



stable societies. Certainly, in projecting into the future the fate of past generations, one would be distorting reality to a considerable degree. This is apparent in the facts that most of the second generation have spent much of their lives away from the village, and at present few have any intention of attempting to obtain a share of the very scarce land resources before they inherit any. Callear (1981) makes an attempt to develop an idealised version of a development cycle and apply this to the communities she studied. However, this does not account for the many households and individuals who drop out of this 'cycle', or who never manage to reach most of the 'higher' stages of development, a fact which is much in evidence from her otherwise careful study.

The inappropriateness of household development cycles to understanding the significance of non-economic factors to differentiation does not mean that such factors have no relevance, however. Age is the classic determinant of access to resources in many patriarchal African societies. It is significant to some degree in the case study, but not in a simplistic way. Those who are in the poorest group (group four) are also amongst the oldest, although gender has more explanatory value for their poverty. Although these women may have been in any group in the past, and women from any group could find themselves in situations similar to those in group four in the future, this is not inevitable. Those households in group one are unlikely to move to another with age, as remittances may well continue to come from children. Even without these, on retirement they would not resemble any of the other existing groups. (Group two is characterised by a male head of household with little or no education or skills and therefore unable to find employment.

The capital goods accumulated by those in group one would also be an important distinguishing characteristic.)

The factors which determine the differential access to national labour markets between households are complex and in part lie outside the economic sphere. They were also outside the main focus of the research, but two general comments are of relevance here. Education is of some significance, in that the household heads who have difficulty finding employment have very little, if any, education, but some of those in the wealthiest group also have very little. Chance factors, such as learning of employment opportunities elsewhere early on in life, seem also to have been important. Economic factors are also important, as those from slightly wealthier backgrounds often had connections in town and so were better placed to learn of opportunities.

Nonetheless, access of a household member, or head, to off-farm income in itself does not guarantee that any of the income will be used in production in the village. This in part depends on the amount which is actually remitted. This is in turn dependent upon the absolute level of income and living costs of the worker, but also on the assessment of the earner as to the worthiness of investing in the village. Where there are fewer resources available to the household, this decision is more to do with improving the quality of material reproduction of household members in the village. In other words, where people are hungry or particularly ill-clad, off-farm income is less likely to be used for the employment of labour than for food and clothes.

Not all aspects of household differentiation are determined by access to off-farm income. Access to better quality and larger

quantities of land was largely determined by the timing of arrival in the village and, to some extent, the nature of the relationship with its founder. This can mean the difference between having land suitable for growing vegetables or not, having land near the house or at a distance, of good or poor quality, large or small amount. These in turn shape the possibilities for the production of a surplus and for economic accumulation.

Livestock are also important means of production and although most in the village are obtained through purchase, and hence there is a direct relation to the the amount of income earned, there are other ways of acquiring animals. Inheritance and the various social payments described in earlier chapters have been important as means of acquiring animals for some members of the village. In general the older members stand more chance of having received them, but *entitlement* to such animals does not guarantee *payment*. The actual receipt of animals in this way, like the transformation of off-farm income into remittances, is in part dependent on the ability of the potential giver to pay, and in part on the receiver to demand. Many women feel intimidated by the prospect of taking someone to court in order to obtain these entitlements, particularly if it is a relative, and some in the village simply accept that they will not receive the animals which are due to them.

The differences between household endowments are self-reinforcing as greater amounts facilitate further accumulation. Moreover they also interact with the demographic situation of the household. The relative proportions of physically active and inactive children and adults

determines the amount of labour available. Gender also shapes the possibilities for off farm income and the amount of agricultural labour. These are the aspects of differentiation which Chayanov regarded as being of overwhelming importance in the Russian peasantry.

The interaction between households is also important in perpetuating and intensifying differentiation. The provision of cheap labour from poor households clearly benefits richer ones and so intensifies differentiation in this way. In addition, the loss of labour from selling households at crucial times of the farming year can only undermine their productive base and inhibit the production of an economic surplus. On the other hand, the terms of such employment are sometimes such that there is an increased chance of ensuring the reproduction of most members of the labour-selling household, as this occurs in the situation where the woman removes her labour secretly from her husband's farm. Explanation for the selling of labour on these terms has to be sought in internal household relations.

Where wives and husbands openly sell their labour to others in preference to working on their own land (which they are likely to do for some of the time, albeit as part of an extended working day) they appear to be caught in the *simple reproduction squeeze* identified by Bernstein (1977; 1979; 1981). The dynamics of this 'crisis' are thought to be that increasing commoditisation, and the adoption of relatively expensive means of production used on land of declining quality, together demand a greater input of labour to maintain the level of material reproduction. All of these are arguably true for these households, as described in the previous chapter. In many ways they resemble the category described by

Bernstein as 'poor peasants'. Much of the activities of these households are determined by the relations of reproduction, considered below.

*Production Relations Within Households*

Conflict over the organisation of production is not always a direct resistance to the relations of households to capital. Women in the village do not generally do much to increase the labour input of their husbands, preferring instead to concentrate their energies on the control of the product. However, when pushed far enough, they make direct attempts to remove their labour from the control of their husbands if it means that they will have more control over its product in the new situation. However, a woman withdrawing her labour from her husband's farm in order to work for a neighbour does not challenge the overall pattern of production relations.

Despite the material basis of these struggles, they are not usually accounted for in this way. Rather, women say that these problems are about the behaviour of men. A parallel can be made with the way in which male migrant workers in Africa have been viewed in the past as being 'target workers' (Lewis, 1954; Barber, 1961), who did not take increased returns to labour as an incentive to work for longer. Thus they are assumed to seek employment according to criteria other than economic returns. An alternative view considers the conditions of the preferred employment and shows that there was often little to be gained from undertaking any more employment but also that had wages been higher and/or conditions any better, workers would have done so (Arrighi, 1973a). Similarly, when women do not work as they 'should', it is not simply because of quarrels and personal disagreements with no material

basis, but also because they recognise that they can sometimes get a better return for their labour elsewhere. In Zimbabwe this is difficult to do in the presence of a husband because of the nature of socialised gender relations and scarce opportunities, and so only happens on a very small, discrete scale.

Household resources often become the object of dispute between different household members, particularly wife and husband, but ultimately the decision about their use rests with the husband. The fact is that if he decides to spend income earned off-farm on personal consumption, rather than production, or not to remit much of his income at all, then there is often very little that the wife can do about it. This is a predicament often experienced by wives. It is at the very heart of production relations in the sense of affecting the returns from production, the reinvestment of the product, and the other uses to which the product might be put. However, these can only be fully explained when they are considered alongside the particular features of the relations of reproduction.

*The Character of The Relations of The Reproduction of Labour and of Human Reproduction*

The relations of the reproduction of labour are clearly connected to those of production, not least because of the central importance of agricultural production. However, I consider other aspects of them here, along with those of human reproduction. They are maintained through the patriarchal ideology which has developed through pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras, and are backed up by the institutions of society

which reflect and incorporate this. Ultimately these are enforced through the use of violence. They developed in the ways described in Part II, through marriage, divorce and in the economy. As they have changed, women have lost some rights, and a very small number have gained some. In general this means that social rules about women's behaviour are enforced by men and accepted, and even perpetuated, by women, in a society which places far more emphasis on the conjugal unit than it once did.

Women have two kinds of reasons for perpetuating these restrictions on other women and themselves. Where they are able to obtain a position in society which enables them to benefit from the labour of other women, such as after having achieved a certain age, their own interests change. A second way in which women perpetuate these rules and restrictions about what they should do, is when they choose to use *deference* in attempting to influence men's decisions, as described in the section on group one above.

As in many societies, women are also important 'teachers' of the locally perceived appropriate socialisation of children, ie according to the dominant ideology (Staudt, 1986: 203)<sup>2</sup>. In the past in Shona society this has not been the sole undertaking of mothers, but also aunts and uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers. With the dividing of many families, more of the burden falls onto mothers, in the frequent absence of many fathers. With regard to teaching children the skills of agricultural and domestic labour this is not regarded as a problem. However, with regard to the relations of human reproduction, sexuality and gender relations more generally, this is considered too difficult for

parents. It was to replace this gap that the village committee proposed organising a committee of older villagers to teach 'African Culture' to young children and adolescents.

In undertaking this to the extent that they do, women enact the functions of a household connected with the giving of identity and place in society (Guyer and Peters, 1987: 209; Martin and Beittel, 1987: 219). This is the part of the reproduction of labour referred to as *allocation*, here transmitted through ideology (Harris and Young, 1981: 125-80). Although this is often locally discussed as being in a state of crisis, women in their roles as mothers and aunts are not solely responsible for such socialisation which is also inculcated through many aspects of society, and this does not signify the approaching end to such values. They are also reinforced to some extent by the local churches<sup>3</sup>.

Nonetheless, women themselves also find ways to circumvent some of the 'rules', procuring more resources from husbands, and gaining control over more resources than they could had they been merely passive. In part these are exactly the opposite of tactics such as deference, ie they are *deceptive* about monies which they do have control over, and over the ways in which they use their labour. These are however sometimes combined with the other types of deference. Any resources which are gained through these methods are often used for meeting the reproductive needs of children and members of the households in general, and occasionally for themselves. Alternatively they may take measures against the inherent material insecurity which they experience in marriage by secretly sending the money elsewhere (such as to friends,



natal relatives or older children) to be saved for an emergency, such as divorce or widowhood.

The relations of human reproduction - those of fertility, parturition and the nurture of children - are maintained through the same mechanisms which maintain the relations of the reproduction of labour. The *patterns* of human reproduction seem to have changed over time, as women have less ability to determine the timing of pregnancies through legitimate means whilst men are still often able to enforce their choice. Access to modern forms of contraception has enabled some women to resist this control, however, with 13% of the married women in the village doing so secretly, or having done so in the past. They do this at some risk to their health, and some have suffered severe side-effects believed to be from injections of *depo-provera* and certain types of contraceptive pill. They also risk violence and divorce in the event of discovery by their husbands, and as these drugs cost money, they are not available to the poorest women. The control of women's sexuality is central to the relations of human reproduction, and some women defy this when they offer, and seek remuneration for, sexual services to men other than their husbands.

Parpart suggests that women in the Zambian Copperbelt were sometimes able to do this with the connivance of their husbands so that the men could then claim 'damages' from the 'adulterer' (Parpart, 1987: 152). In the case study village, the control of fertility and women's sexuality is still too important to men for them to sanction this. Wives who have sought income in this way and then been discovered have

suffered extreme physical violence from their husbands and, in some cases, divorce.

### *Links Between Reproduction and Production*

As stated above, clearly some relations of reproduction (of labour and human reproduction) are necessary for the continuation of production in any form and for the continuation of the system of production, or mode of production (ie for extended reproduction, or social reproduction). People have to be born, socialised, fed and cared for throughout their lives for the continuation of society. However, the particular way in which this is ensured is not necessarily *determined* by the way production is organised. The two clearly have to be compatible over time, but they also interact. This was traced over time in Part II.

Considering the role it seems to have once played, *lobola* might be thought to be the link *par excellence* between production and reproduction. For several reasons its significance should not be overrated, however. Firstly it is perceived in contradictory ways, with a mixture of idealised traditional roles and contemporary perceptions which often do not match the reality. In the village, men often claim that *lobola* retains traditional importance, but in practice do not make or demand payments in the ways they describe. Women do not recognise *lobola* as an oppressive institution and state that it is important to them, but are not greatly concerned if it is not paid, or even contracted.

This discrepancy between the function accorded to *lobola* and the function which it seems to play may in part be explained by the perspective outlined in Part II, which suggested that the colonial state misunderstood the institution of *lobola*, like so many indigenous institutions, and imbued it with less dynamism, greater rigidity, and perhaps greater importance than was the reality. It is not an overwhelming priority for men to accumulate sufficient wealth in order to obtain wives, nor are they dependent on the sanction of elder men to do so. It is possible for a man to obtain a 'wife' without fulfilling any of these obligations, although many do fulfill them to some degree, and women do not in any way identify *lobola* as a source of protection when they do have problems, a value with which it is invested by the 'traditional' view. It now does not effectively involve other people in the resolution of disputes within marriage, whether or not it ever did fulfill this function. ( Thus it seems to play a different function from that described for other patrilineal societies in Southern Africa (Zulu and Swazi), as described by Ngubane. She suggests that *lobolo* provides women with economic assets, and generates kinship categories, which are a source of some security to women and children (1987).)

The most vivid link between reproduction and production is that of agricultural production, which is the main activity in both spheres in the village. As outlined in Chapter Three, it is often the case that observers of agricultural societies assume that the work done by women is only that relating to <sup>re-</sup>production and so do not take account of the direct contribution which they make to production. Conversely, in discussions about the peasantry in Zimbabwe, the fact is sometimes

obscured that the same processes which produce marketed crops also produce food which, in a good season, provide the main supply of staple for the whole year. Thus in many cases it is impossible to say whether the processes involved in the creation of most household resources are those of production or reproduction. Here production can only be distinguished after the event as the amount over and above that kept for food stores.

As stated above, production in the village seems to be organised along lines which relate directly to the relations of reproduction, where the husband is able to enforce his decisions, whilst the wife is assumed to take most of the responsibility and provide most of the labour. However, there is a danger in investing this link with a greater explanatory value than is appropriate. The importance of reproductive relations in ensuring production and in shaping production relations themselves in the village, *does not mean that that is their only function*, or that in turn it is production itself, or capital, which somehow determines what they should be. The ways in which the relations of reproduction, and particularly gender relations within households, have developed, have been of benefit to capital, but developed from several additional pressures, as traced in previous chapters. The implications of this are also that they are not necessarily the *ideal* type of relations for capital - either of reproduction or production. It is surely more likely that there are a range of possible options which are compatible with the demands of capital, and of these, one will develop, or be maintained, which most closely fits the other dominant social pressures, eg those of patriarchy. Therefore there is no necessary

reason, from the point of view of production, why they should have to always stay the same, if other dominant pressures change.

The interconnections between reproduction and production in agriculture enable the state, capital and men to benefit from women's labour. The state and capital benefit from women's labour which produces cheap commodities and provides a hidden subsidy to men's wages. The latter is produced through the labour of women employed in the provision of material reproduction of migrant workers on short visits to the village, in periods of sickness and in retirement. This subsidy is not the same as that provided by wives in the West as it is not provided on a daily basis. In this case much of the cost of the workers' daily material reproduction is met through women other than wives and in some cases by capital directly (eg where cooked food is provided as part of payment). Where the migrant male is a petty capitalist, her labour is beneficial to capitalism directly.

Through the historical development of patriarchal institutions, and in particular the way in which divorce operates, men are able to determine the use to which resources generated by women in agriculture are put. This often means that resources are channelled into the material reproduction of labour as they are appropriated directly by men for their own consumption. Alternatively, this happens because of the prevailing ideology that women's first responsibility should be for the welfare of her husband and children. In this situation the woman may choose to spend any income she has in this way. In the village sometimes the women choose to reinvest income in further means of earning income, only to find that they are prevented from doing so by

their husbands who disapprove of women spending income on anything but reproduction. Such men may even deduct the amount of resources they make available for this purpose on the assumption that the difference will be made up by their wives.

This suggests a very harsh image of women trying to meet not only all the reproductive needs of a household, but also trying to engage directly in production themselves whilst being thwarted by men. It has been suggested that in many African societies there was in the past a gender division of responsibility for women to meet the short-term and men to meet the long-term reproductive needs of the family. In times of stress and crisis, this appears as women struggling to retain control over resources from husbands, in order to feed and clothe children<sup>4</sup>. This may have been the case at one time in Zimbabwe, but such a division clearly no longer exists and cannot explain men's reluctance to allow their wives to control the product of their own labour when they wish to use it for anything but material reproduction.

The significance of some of the links between reproduction and production outlined above are drawn out by focussing on the specific interaction of class and gender dynamics.

*Class and Gender: how they intersect and interact*

The analysis of class is important in identifying social dynamics and hence the potential for social change and is derived directly from the foregoing analysis of the relations of production and reproduction. The debates about African rural producers reviewed in Part I are

relevant in this discussion. From the perspective on these debates presented there, I assess below the appropriateness of seeing the households in the case study as members of classes of peasants, petty commodity producers, agricultural capitalists (ie agricultural bourgeoisie), or proletarians. From the analysis of this chapter so far I also assess the extent of nascent classes. This approach first takes the household as the unit of analysis, following the framework set by the African peasantry debates. Subsequently I consider the possibility of different members of the same household belonging to separate classes. Through a perspective developed from the review of the literature on conceptions of the household, gender and class in the African context in Part I, I indicate the intersection and interaction of gender and class in the case study.

A Marxist concept of class is used here which is 'relational', rather than 'gradational'. In other words it is not simply access to means of production, occupation, or the level of social status, for instance, which is the defining characteristic. Classes are instead seen in terms of 'oppositions of a systematic kind' (Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985: 190). None of the groups in the village fit the concept of petty commodity producers as outlined by Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985), as they are unable to ensure their own reproduction with no employment of others' labour, or selling of their own. The agricultural basis of production also allows for the direct provision of considerable proportions of food needs by most households, thus differentiating them from petty commodity producers engaged exclusively in other sectors outside the village, such as watch-repairing, or market-trading. Those

who engage in what I have called petty commodity activities outside the village also do not fit the definition offered by Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985) on these grounds. Certainly none of these groups has sufficient capital or level of production to be considered members of the agricultural bourgeoisie.

Instead, *within the village* can be found the class bases and functions of peasants and proletarians, *ie.* there are present: subsistence production; peasant production for market; wage employment locally; employment of non-household labour; and those who function as a reserve army of labour in the national economy. No households included in the case study may be said to be proletarian if the definition includes complete alienation from the means of production. Those households which formed without any rights to land (many of the second generation upon marriage) did not stay in the village and were excluded from the investigation. Those who work full-time as labourers for other households have no land of their own but do not constitute separate households in any sense. On the other hand they do function as proletarians outside the village, which is also the locus of petty commodity activity. The combination of peasant, proletarian and petty commodity activities may change over the lifetimes of households, as suggested above, and the specifics of similar combinations in other parts of the country have provoked observers to characterise households in a variety of terms, such as semi-proletarian, migrant-farmer, farmer-housewife, wage-labour equivalents (Bush and Cliffe; <sup>1984</sup> Zimbabwe Women's Bureau, 1981).



Appreciation of these complicated combinations, and the variations within them, are important for understanding the nature of social change, but I stress at this point that within the conception of class referred to above there are only three possibilities: those of proletarian, peasant and some kind of petty commodity producer (petit bourgeoisie). For the poorest households (groups three and four), where obtaining even the most basic subsistence needs from the agricultural base is uncertain, there is increasing pressure towards proletarianisation. As yet, the absence of a market in land has prevented complete proletarianisation, although it is possible that this may happen in the future. Where new households will be formed in the event of widowhood, this could also result in proletarianisation, if the woman is unable to obtain any land. (As described above, the village committee in the case study attempts to ensure that widows retain access to land, but this is unusual within Shona Communal Areas and may not always continue.) Moreover, those who are at present proletarians outside the village may one day return, essentially as peasants, when they inherit land.

Within the households referred to as peasants there are members of rich, middle and poor strata, as defined by Bernstein (1977: 67). There are several households within group one which resemble rich peasant households, in that they are able to invest in superior means of production (oxen and ploughs) and/or labour. Bernstein (*op cit*) identifies households with these qualities as being essentially capitalist. However, it is essentially the ability of the household to *combine* peasant, proletarian and petty commodity functions and

activities which enables it to obtain a relatively high economic status, so it is misleading to label them simply as capitalist farmers. This is not simply a combination of these classes over time, but of the activities of different members of the household simultaneously. In this sense it could be argued that separate members belong to different classes, and that, in some cases, individuals may belong to different classes at the same time. However, even the most careful assignation of people to class positions in this way does not assist with understanding the *complexities* of how they interact and, through this, what is the likely pattern of social change (see Murray's criticism of his own former work on Lesotho, 1987: 239). Rather, it is necessary to uncover in greater detail the ways in which people and households do not fit neatly into these two classes, and the ways in which their situations are maintained or transformed.

In principle, differences within households could be between any members. In the past in Shona society there were highly significant improvements in the status and power of people as they aged, although these differences have reversed to some degree. Also the labourers employed full-time by richer households, are clearly in very different situations from other members of the households in which they live. Nonetheless, in the case study the most significant differences within households are unambiguously between women and men, and primarily between wives and husbands. Thus the concern here is the relationship between gender and class.

Studies of gender and class in Africa, as reviewed in Chapter Three, have sometimes proposed a re-definition of class itself, which is

different from the marxist one proposed above. The main objection with simply using a marxist concept of class is that it does not facilitate an analysis of the different situations for different members of the same household and, in particular, tends *automatically* to assign the situation of wives as being the same as that of their husbands. Weberian-derived definitions invest the evidence of different occupations and status with the significance of different classes, and hence allow for the existence of different classes within the same household. Further refinements which have been made in investigating the class position of women include access to important household resources and control over their use, which were described in more detail in Chapter Three. These concepts of class are useful in uncovering the differences within households, but are limited in the same way that are Weberian-derived definitions. In other words they present static pictures of access to resources, status *etc*, which do not illuminate the relations which underlie them. Rather than seeking explanation for all social differences in class, and changing the definition to fit the nature of the differences, it is more revealing to analyse them in terms of the intersection and interaction of gender and class, as factors of equal conceptual value, but without presuming equal explanatory weight.

In the case study, women who are married to men in more secure material positions experience less day-to-day hardship and conflict than the other women. Moreover the range of possible economic activities for wives is shaped by those of the husband. For instance, those whose husbands have only poor and small amounts of land could

not consider growing vegetables for sale. Those women whose husbands have fewer resources generally are less able to invest all their labour directly into production and reproduction for the household members, but may have to sell their labour to other households. Thus the range of possible class positions and economic activities for women are shaped by the class positions and economic activities of their husbands: a point at which gender and class intersect.

Nonetheless, gender is highly significant in explaining social differentiation amongst individuals in the case study. This is not to say that all women are in the same position; rather that deep fault lines follow gender divisions, through all the groups in the village. Women face the same *potential* destitution in the event of divorce or widowhood, and hence share the same *ultimate* material insecurity in marriage. This sharing of the possibility of destitution cuts across the divisions between women, undermining the identification of women's class position with that of their husbands. It is manifested in the struggles which occur during marriage, where women often find it extremely difficult to control resources where they meet opposition from their husbands, and also upon widowhood or divorce, where they face the possibility of losing access to all resources built up during the marriage, as well as access to their children.

The chapters which outlined the history of Shona Communal Areas in Part II showed the ways in which peasant and proletarian classes developed. In these it was also shown that integral to their development was the development of a different gender division of labour from that which had existed in pre-colonial times. In other

words, the nature of the development of gender relations facilitated the provision of labour and commodities for capital but also *shaped the terms on which these were provided*. Similarly, the maintenance and development of the differences between households in the village case study is closely connected with the ways in which gender relations operate.

The fact that men's employment outside the village does not necessarily mean that there is a transfer of resources to the village has several implications in this light. As explained above, the proportion of earnings remitted is affected at least to some degree, and in some cases to a considerable degree, by the nature of gender relations. This illustrates that there need not be an identification, or even a direct connection, between the class position of wife and husband: her situation could remain totally unchanged in the event of his changing from proletarian to petty capitalist, for instance. On the other hand, where the husband considers it worth investing in the farm on the terms described in the case study, has direct implications for the situation of the wife, who may become the manager of the peasant farm which may become relatively lucrative.

The situation in which the wife feels compelled to withdraw her labour and resources from the rural home occurs as a direct result of the operation of gender relations. The implications of this are that the poorer households lose labour at important times of the year, and may also lose resources for good (where they are sent to the wife's natal family for safe-keeping in case the household is broken up through divorce or the death of the husband). This in some way

impoverishes the household, and even though the resources sent elsewhere may be very small in absolute value, the social dynamics which underlie this occurrence are significant. They show another way in which the relations between household members have to be investigated in order to understand the use of household resources, and ultimately the behaviour and interests of a particular class. The loss of labour from poorer households occurs as part of the process of richer households gaining access to cheap labour, thus intensifying differentiation between them. The implication here is not that these are different classes at present, or that they will inevitably become so, but that the process of differentiation is part of the social dynamics of the peasantry as it exists, and that *this is being reinforced through the nature of gender relations.*

The final point about the ways in which gender affect class here is an implication of the fact that the operation of gender relations and patriarchy in general in Zimbabwe severely restrict women's options outside marriage, as well as within it. This means that once married, it is difficult for women to change their class position, except through a strategy which involves another marriage. The difficulties for women in soliciting divorce, and for older women to engage in hypergamy have also been described elsewhere. The case study suggests that it is more likely that women may become peasants later in life, even if they have held other class positions at other times, and poor peasants at that.

It is difficult to see many ways in which class affects gender. It may be assumed that women in a petty bourgeoisie or bourgeoisie class will have a different type of relationship to their husbands than those

of the peasantry or proletariat. This may well be the case, but the fundamental insecurity felt by women in all strata of the peasantry in the case study, including those whose husbands engage in petty commodity activities, still exists for other classes, as has been shown by studies on the plight of women who live in town. Even having a job and owning property in her own right does not guarantee <sup>a woman</sup> continued control and possession of such property (May, 1983).

It is also sometimes assumed that the absence of the husband will change the operation of social relations of production, particularly in the way they are mediated by gender. This is reinforced within Zimbabwe when women whose husbands are physically absent at the time of a survey, or said to be normally absent, are referred to in reports as being heads of households (Zimbabwe Women's Bureau, 1981; Muchena, 1982). The absence of husbands can make day-to-day life less stressful for women who know that their spouse will bring badly needed money and/or goods with him on his next visit, but it does not guarantee the powers which are associated with being the head of household and does not necessarily change gender relations, for the reasons outlined above. These include the ability of the husband to impose his will from a distance and with only short, infrequent visits.

It is possible in the future that there may be increased proletarianisation within the village, if the government were to bring in legislation for the commoditisation of land (or if this happens spontaneously). This would probably mean the concentration of land into fewer hands, and thus increasing numbers of men would no longer be able to gain access to any at all. If at the same time the government

restricted movement to the towns, many men would become desperately impoverished and dependent upon employment within the countryside. In this event the essential material basis for women to marry, ie to gain access to land as wives, would be removed. With this gone it is possible, even likely, that women living within rural areas would choose not to be married, in spite of the social stigma, as there would be little to gain, thus bringing about a radical change in gender relations. However this does not now seem to be being considered for imminent implementation by any of the relevant ministries.

#### CONCLUSION

Production and reproduction are often components of one process and social contract. Thus the relations of production and reproduction are deeply inter-meshed, and are expressed in the interaction between the dynamics of class and gender. The proletarian, peasant and petty capitalist classes do not exist in a detached way, or even in a straightforward set of oppositional relations, but combine within households, and through the lives of individuals. The future survival of a peasant class, or its transformation to petty commodity, capitalist and proletarian classes in turn depends on the nature of the relations of production and reproduction - in all their complex interactions.



## CHAPTER TEN

## CONCLUSION

Over the last decade many analyses of African rural societies have on the whole been at the level of concrete analysis and have reflected a 'flight from theory'. Several of the most distinguished authors do 'take a position' on debates about more abstract theoretical analyses, at the level of a mode of production but, as I have shown, these have nonetheless in large part not been *used* by those writers providing the greatest insights. This is for two reasons additional to those usually given.

First, the project of understanding social relations in the countryside is located at a concrete level. In spite of this, attempts to use the articulation of modes of production approach persist, and lead to problems when trying to make the switch between the two levels of abstraction. An example of this is the conception of a *patriarchal mode of production* proposed by Henn (1988) and Folbre (1986).

Second, there is a problem in using the abstract level at all because of confusion over the different types of *reproduction* and their locations within a mode of production. I have clarified this somewhat by stressing that within the *simple reproduction*, as identified by Marx there is *reproduction of capital* (and the means of production), and the *reproduction of labour* (both material and human). Marx's conception of *extended reproduction*, or the laws of motion of a mode of production, have largely been conceived to date in terms of what is necessary for

capital in the capitalist mode of production. Some have tried to identify these for other modes of production. However, I have identified an unresolved theoretical problem here. A way of conceiving the significance of the reproduction of labour to extended reproduction of the mode of production has yet to be developed. The absence of such an innovation inhibits a switch between the concrete analysis of the reproduction of labour to a more abstract one of modes of production.

More concrete analyses have recently placed *reproduction* centre-stage again and I have argued, along with other writers, that production and reproduction (of the means of production and of labour) are often part of the same process and social contract. Thus whilst they are conceptually separate, they often exist in reality as a unity.

I have used this approach to consider the history of Zimbabwe's Shona Communal Areas (CAs). The summary presented takes on the task identified by Martin and Beittel (1987) to reassess Southern African history as the result of *interaction* between the demands of capital and the terms on which these were met. The former often had little control over the latter and simply reduced the range of options available. Such a historiography stands in its own right as a reassessment of the *agency* of the Shona population in Zimbabwean history, but also uncovers the roots of several key institutions which figure prominently in the contemporary situation.

The periodisation of this historiography facilitated the consideration of the actions of settler and foreign capitalist classes and the state alongside the actions of the Shona population. The focus on the nineteenth century identified some of the confusion in the

sources, and variation in reality, which were later to be glossed over and abused by the colonial state and other commentators. The implications of this for popular conceptions of 'tradition' in contemporary Zimbabwean society are considered later.

In Chapter Five I adopted the approach described to reassess some secondary sources and archival material relating to the early colonial period. Through this I traced the formation of the Reserves and key political and social changes, including the relationship between the state and chiefs. This partially ensured the control of the population within the Reserves, but also created a situation in which men exerted greater control over women than they had before. This was facilitated by the creation of customary law which seems to have worked to the disadvantage of women. Its creation was evidently the product of interaction between British patriarchal authority and the determination of Shona elders to exert greater control over women, partly as a means to do so over young men. This is clearly of great significance to contemporary gender relations, and needs further research than the hypotheses and evidence which I have presented.

The 1940s and 1950s, considered in Chapter Six, are still sometimes misconstrued as a period during which the main concern of state policies in the countryside, especially the *Native Land Husbandry Act*, were to foster the development of successful farmers in the Reserves. In fact, as I have stressed, such policy was more concerned with the inhibition of an entrepreneur class, which might have further appropriated land from others. The legislation could not have worked on its own terms because of the inaccurate assumptions on which the calculations were

based. However, the widespread resistance to it clearly affected the decision to abandon it (rather than to reform it and try to get the sums right) and was perhaps the major determinant of the shape of policy towards the Reserves for the next ten years.

The legislation had important ramifications where it was never implemented as well as those where it was before being abandoned. I identify this as the first time the concept of the inalienability of access to land, *regardless of use*, was introduced into Shona areas. The case study shows that this aspect of land tenure was adopted even in areas where the Act was never implemented.

From the 1960s, most commentaries take drastically different approaches from that which I have adopted and focus instead on the growing resistance against the state which developed into national liberation movements. Few focus on the relations of production and reproduction at the village level. I have tried to extract information about these from secondary sources, however. The impoverishment and disruptions caused by the war had immediate implications at independence, although there were dramatic changes with the lifting of many racial constraints on the economy. Access to markets and agricultural inputs enabled peasants to increase agricultural productivity which has been monitored and studied to a considerable extent. Scant research on marriage in the 1970s reveals practices which reinforced disadvantages to women. These formed a legacy for women in the CAs which has lasted since independence. This has hardly been challenged by the considerable relevant legislation since then.

The important changes in the relations of production and reproduction in the CAs were traced in this historical section (Part II) through the themes of marriage, chiefs, land tenure, and the farming system. Each provided specific insights, summarised below. Marriage was revealed as the site of various changes, reflected in shifts in the nature of the contract itself. The most obvious were changes in the gender division of labour. This has recently been taken by some writers either to be the same as that in pre-colonial times, or to have changed *automatically* against the interests of women. I have *investigated* these changes, using secondary sources and archival material, and have arrived at some different conclusions about the shifts which took place.

Marriage also structured the relations of human reproduction. I have identified some clues as to the explanation for the ways in which women appear to have less ability to influence control over their fertility than they once did, and for the different perceptions about the frequency of conception between women and men. In this I reach different conclusions from writers who assume that this is simply the result of men's ability to exert their choice over their wives.

Tracing the history of marriage and divorce has provided some hypotheses for the situation at present in which the practice in CAs is quite different from that set out in state legislation. Much research is needed to examine these in more detail. The overwhelmingly disadvantageous terms on which women are divorced and widowed are especially important in explaining why women are restricted in their ability to act and shape decisions within many rural households, both in terms of production and reproduction. As a whole the theme of changes

in marriage has uncovered some of the history of dynamics of gender relations, which help in analysing them in the contemporary situation.

Chiefs have received piecemeal attention in other Zimbabwean historiographies. By reviewing the secondary sources through the whole period, I have been able to build up a picture of how the institution of chiefdom changed. The implications of these changes have not been drawn by other writers. I have indicated that the changes in the institution of chief and the actions of those who accepted the office had important implications for the operation of marriage and land tenure. The institution as it developed by the 1970s, held by some of the same individuals, persists in independent Zimbabwe. Many of the chiefs have been elected to locally powerful positions in ZANU and state structures. This could have considerable implications for marriage and land tenure, but no research has been done on this to date.

Land tenure in the CAs is complex and has largely been ignored by other commentators. Some assume that it is the same as that thought to exist in nineteenth century Shona society, and others refer to it as 'communal' (with the proviso that arable holdings are worked by individual households, although there are communal rights to it, and only grazing land is *used* communally). In fact land tenure has a complex history, as well as being complex and varied in the contemporary situation. I conclude that the present situation is largely a reflection of local political structures and has not been effectively controlled by the state. This is also the case with access to land within households, which I have traced as far as possible. Legally land allocation is in the hands of the Ministry for Local Government, but it is hesitant to impose

any kind of change or order. Further village case studies are needed to examine the implications of the following: political parties, local customs; high rates of absenteeism; rich farmers; and those with many cattle.

The final important theme of Part II was that of changes in the farming system. This has received considerable attention since independence, but clear understanding of why peasants farm in the ways that they do cannot be understood without understanding their history. This has also had implications for diet and nutrition, ie for the reproduction of labour.

I have described some of the conclusions of Part III of the thesis above. It reveals the significance of historical changes in the examination of social relations. The operation of marriage, land tenure, the office of chief, and constraints in the farming system are all important factors in the relations of production and reproduction. The relations of households to capital, the state and each other are examined in addition to intra-household relations. Through this some of the dynamics of class and gender are revealed. Other studies of villages in Zimbabwe do not look at the interaction between class and gender, but rather consider them separately. I have shown how gender relations vary with different economic situations, but also that there is a common thread through them all as women share the same insecurity within marriage.

In addition, the case study shows that gender at times reinforces economic differentiation within the peasantry, and thus the internal dynamics of this class. The class bases and functions of petty commodity

producers (petty bourgeoisie) and proletarians also combine with those of the peasantry within households and over the lifetimes of individuals. Shifts to either of these classes, or the survival of a peasant class, will depend in part on the interaction of these class dynamics with those of gender at the sites of production and reproduction.

Thus I have identified conceptual problems at an abstract level of analysis and have focussed at a more concrete level. I have adopted a specific analytical approach which has been developed from current proposals. Through this perspective of considering the dynamics of gender and class at the site of production and reproduction, I have reassessed evidence for the history of the CAs. This has revealed significant gaps in the historiography, but has also provided some explanation for the legacy at independence. Through the case-study village I have shown some of the implications of this legacy and revealed aspects of the dynamics of gender and class in the relations of production and reproduction.



## APPENDIX

## METHODOLOGY FOR VILLAGE FIELDWORK

I spent a year in Zimbabwe, from September 1983 to September 1984. Between October 1983 and March 1984 I visited several Shona Communal Area villages in an informal capacity and was able to observe much of the progress of the agricultural season, although this was a drought year for much of the country.

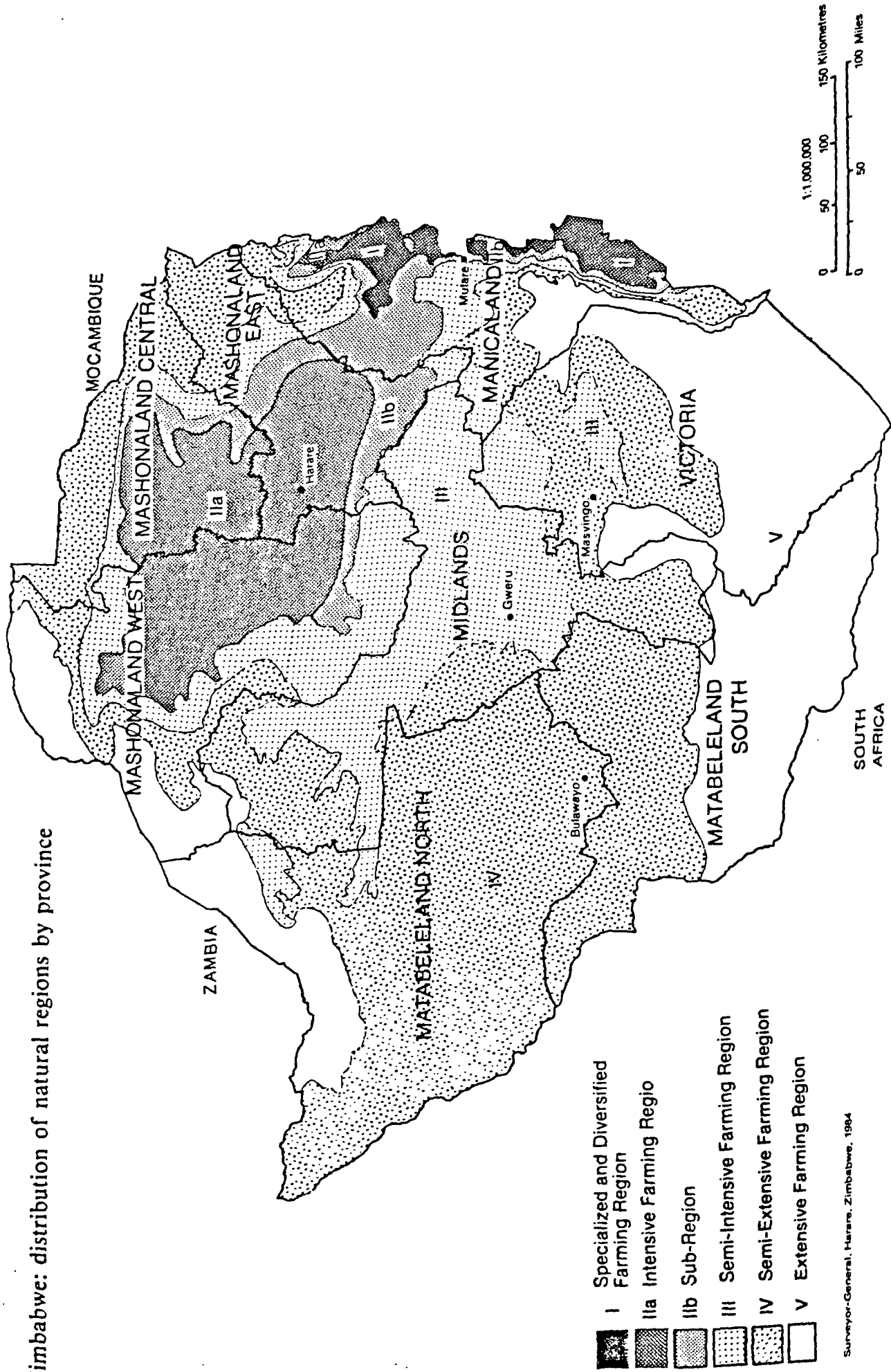
Between April and August of 1984, I lived in the case study village and made visits to Harare to meet villagers' family members who were working there. The factors which determined the timing of this fieldwork were beyond my control and prevented me from witnessing many of the major labour processes of the agricultural season which took place in this village, although I had witnessed them elsewhere in Zimbabwe. The advantage of the timing of my stay in the village was that people had more time (and energy) to talk to me.

I stayed in the home of one of the villagers and she also acted as my interpreter. This occasionally caused problems as some people were reluctant to reveal information to her. However, her sophisticated understanding of what I wanted to learn and her sympathy for and interest in the project of an outsider forming a view of her own society meant that she used her immense social skills to reassure people and encourage them to talk honestly to me. Inevitably she also became an invaluable informant herself.

I used a variety of investigatory techniques during my visits. These included participant observation, group discussions, informal but

structured interviews and formal interviews. My intention was to combine the sensitivity and responsiveness of the social anthropologist with the adaptations to constraints in time and language of other social scientists (Chambers, 1983).

Zimbabwe: distribution of natural regions by province



Surveyor-General, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1984

NOTESChapter One

1. The country names *Southern Rhodesia*, *Rhodesia* and *Zimbabwe* are used for the relevant periods under discussion.
2. See Appendix for Map
3. See Appendix for details of the village study.

Chapter Two

1. South Africa received particular attention in the mode of production debate, because of the political significance of being able to calculate the power of resilience of rural social relations against capital. If they were in fact being determined by things other than the development of capitalism then this had implications for possible class alliances in any struggle for change (Wolpe, 1980c). Elsewhere in many places the question of revolution was only rarely the most pressing issue. The analysis was still important in the long term to establish what might be possible in this regard, and also simply to understand what might be possible in terms of the development of the level of the productive forces and/or of some strategy which would in the meantime equip more of the population with secure entitlements to the means of subsistence.
2. 'Social reproduction is the need of any social formation to reproduce its own conditions of production' (Barrett, 1980: 20).
3. This a complicated debate, as there are many influences at work on the general level of wages.

Chapter Three

1. Gibbon and Neocosmos say very little about the rest of the peasantry which do not fit into this category (Cliffe, 1987: 632). They do mention that there are also peasants and 'semi-proletarians' but they suggest that petty commodity producers will ultimately become proletarians or capitalists, not peasants or 'semi-proletarians'. It is these last two which are of central concern in Bernstein's analysis. Moreover, the way the analysis is presented obscures the means of social change whereby households themselves move in and out of petty commodity production, except other than to suggest that on the whole they are destined to be proletarians. The fact that so many still have not is what has puzzled so many marxists.

Chapter Four

1. European farmers presented this as a major problem to governments even when many more labourers were kept on the payrolls than were actually employed to work. Perceived and actual shortages of labour

varied considerably over time and in different locations (Hodder-Williams, 1983: 110, 113, 164-5).

2. See Appendix.
3. CAs were initially called the Native Reserves, then in the early 1960s African Reserves, in 1967 Tribal Trust Lands, and were renamed Communal Areas after independence.
4. Also see, Cobbing, 1974; Hughes and Van Velson, 1955; Ranger, 1968a and 1968c; Weinrich, 1982; Beach, 1983; Folbre, 1987.
5. There were different Shona titles for offices in different regions and sometimes the same Shona name took on different meanings in different locations. Commentators rarely use Shona names in any case, and so I have kept them to a minimum here, only using them where there is a high degree of consensus in the literature, and only in the singular form of the Shona language.
6. Kuper, 1955; Mutambirwa, 1979; Beach, 1977; 1983; Ranger, 1968a; 1985a.
7. *Lobola* was originally a Zulu term which has come to be used to denote bridewealth widely in Southern Africa. *Roora* is the modern spelling of the standard Shona equivalent.
8. A European official in court early at the beginning of the century said that a woman could not divorce a man but he could always divorce her (Folbre, 1988: 8).
9. Old women in the case study village discussed in later chapters vigorously claimed that a woman who was exceptionally badly treated would have been able to initiate and be granted divorce by a chief in pre-colonial Shona society.

#### Chapter Five

1. The principle sources for this section are; Palmer and Parsons, 1977. Phimister, 1983; 1986; Ranger, 1967; 1968b; 1985a; Van Onselen, 1976.
2. Other taxes were subsequently added: in 1909 rent was imposed on Africans living on 'European' land; the *Private Locations Ordinance* of 1908 and the *Kaffir Beer Act* of 1912 prohibited the sale of beer on pain of fines; there was a Dog Tax in 1912 and cattle dipping with compulsory fees was introduced in 1914) (Palmer, 1977: 230; Arrighi, 1973a: 194.
3. By 1903/4, white farmers cultivated only 5% of total acreage under cultivation, producing less than 10% total marketed output.
4. See Map in Appendix.
5. 'Wiri' Edwards was the Native Commissioner from 1895-1931. He was followed by Oliver for 10 years, then in next 20 years there were four more.
6. This was done through the 1934 *Industrial Conciliation Act* and the 1936 *Sedition Act*. The 1936 *Native Registration Act* also contributed to a wage structure where farmers paid unskilled

labour lower wage rates than other employers (Arrighi, 1973b: 346 and 348; Phimister, 1983: 279-80; Palmer, 1977).

7. Although the first successful hybrid maize was developed in the 1930s, it was not commercially available until 1947 (Phimister, 1986b: 269).

### Chapter Six

1. This needed an alternative outlet after the seizure of power in South Africa by an alliance between the national bourgeoisie and workers in 1948 (Arrighi, 1973b: 351).
2. Between 1953-63, 113,000 Africans were removed to Reserves to make way for the influx of white settlers (Bratton, 1978: 39). The Reserves were generally in areas of poor quality soil and rainfall, whilst the best land was reserved for White farmers. Although land was officially classified in later years in these terms, I do not describe their location within this classification here, as the boundaries were re-drawn several times. I summarise the legacy of this distribution of land at independence in Chapter Seven.
3. The Native Welfare Societies were given increasing support from settlers and the state during the 1940s in the hope that this would stave off the worst effects of poor conditions experienced by African living in urban areas (Ibbotson, 1944).
4. This was done principally through an amendment to the *Industrial Conciliation Act* in 1953, which was aimed at buying off semi-skilled workers and which had some spin-offs for unskilled workers (Birmingham and Ranger, 1983: 364).
5. This was done by passing a further amendment to the *Industrial Conciliation Act* in 1959, which distinguished between labour employed in the different sectors, with agricultural and domestic employment being excluded from the new, more liberal conditions.
6. In order to halt the spread of such radical ideas, the movement of labourers was controlled through the Foreign Migratory Labour Act of 1958.
7. In 1957 the African National Congress of Southern Rhodesia (ANC) was formed and successfully recruited members from workers facing falling wages, and from peasants in the Reserves (Birmingham and Ranger, 1983: 367).
8. For instance, through the *Natives (Urban Areas) Accommodation and Registration Act* 1946, making it possible for some to live in urban areas.
9. The country had lost its self-sufficiency in food after the second world war, with the European farmers' switch to tobacco.
10. By the end of the 1950s the assumptions that such a transformation was possible through these means was being challenged on technical grounds, as research suggested that grass leys were far better for the soil than legumes (Hamilton, 1964: 57).

11. The government also turned to a greater extent to the Native Purchase Areas as a source of marketed food. Here the development of a class of capitalist farmers was more of a reality, especially with the increased prices which they received for their crops in the 1940s (Cheater, 1984). Although their numbers were small, they acted as an important political safety valve for the wealthiest farmers in the Reserves who channelled their efforts into getting out of them (Phimister, 1986b: 274; Duggan, 1980: 234-5).
12. See Map in the Appendix.
13. This was particularly the case in Matabeleland, where there was far more opposition (Ranger, 1985a: 99-136).
14. The extent of the loss of self-sufficiency in food was such that there was maize rationing in 1942 and 1947-8.
15. In 1953, African farmers contributed 50% of the total marketed maize, 97% small grains, 96% groundnuts, 55% wheat, 65% beef (Floyd, 1968: 278).
16. Figures from Wedza, around Mount Mary's Catholic Mission, show that civil marriages (ie traditional and registered) declined from 96.9% of all legal marriages in 1950 to 71.8% in 1959. Catholic marriages increased from 0.5.5% and Protestant and others combined went from 3.1 to 22.7 (Acquina, 1969: 76).

### Chapter Seven

1. This allowed the election of a small number of MPs, but almost all of them eventually went into opposition to the regime.
2. This was done at an increasing rate once the *Land Tenure Act* was passed in 1969. It replaced the *Land Apportionment Act*, defined more clearly the racial boundaries of land, and provided for the removals of African communities on the 'wrong' land (Mumbengegwi, 1988: 204-5).
3. As explained earlier, legal minority meant that a woman could not take cases to court without support from their husband, father, or other male relative, or undertake registered marriage or any other legal contract without the permission of father or male 'guardian'.
4. This was the cause of great concern to the Christian Churches (Weinrich, 1982: ix; Hastings, 1973: 147).
5. It is possible that as people lived longer this was a reflection of a change in the most common means of termination of a marriage from the death of a spouse to divorce.
6. Education was also greatly sought after, and parents made enormous sacrifices, even in their own level of subsistence, to pay to send their children to school.
7. As with the rest of this thesis, the description in this chapter refers only to the Shona areas. The experiences of peasants in the CAs of Matabeleland since independence have been dramatically different.

8. I do not review the state of the resettlement programmes, as these are dealt with elsewhere (Ranger, 1985a: 299-309; Moyo, 1986; Jacobs, 1988a and b).
9. I do not propose to examine the origins and development of this rhetoric here (see Ong, 1985; Roberts, 1983; Jacobs and Howard, 1987).
10. Of the Community Court cases in towns in 1985, 21.6% were for seduction and 24.1% were for maintenance, although there have probably been fewer seduction cases since a Supreme Court ruling on the *LAMA* that seduction claims could not be made for daughters over 18 (*The Herald*, 8th September, 1984; Kazembe, 1986: 388).

### Chapter Eight

1. This is a pseudonym intended to protect the identity of villagers.
2. Some who live there have land in other nearby villages.
3. There have been national and regional shortages of maize, sugar and other basic commodities at various times since independence (Cheater, 1985: 192), which I witnessed particularly during the Christmas period of 1983/4. The removal of food subsidies in 1983 and inflation since independence have brought two-fold increases in the price of basic foods since independence (Bratton, 1987: 223 and 236).
4. There is one exception of a woman who claims that her husband has given her some land, but that she chooses to farm it along with his.
5. Primary schools nonetheless try to raise money from parents for buildings by levying fees, which at Saint Paul's cost \$Z30 per term, whilst secondary school fees were \$Z160-\$Z200 per term.
6. This is the same as the amount offered in government-sponsored food-for-work schemes 1983/4.
7. There were many reports in *The Herald* between October, 1983 and January 1984 about 'baby dumping', which includes abortions. These mostly referred to cases in towns, but some were women who had travelled from rural areas.

### Chapter Nine

1. The history of changes in the social expectations of men's responsibilities, as well as what they could get away with, was traced as far as possible in previous chapters and it is only through these historical developments, I suggest, that this situation can be understood.
2. Staudt gives the example of the women's brigade of UNIP which projects an image of the idealised town mother and castigates misfits. This is a similar role to that played at times by the Women's League of ZANU, but the most immediate effects are felt by women living in town.



3. The village population is 18·2% Apostolic, 30·3% Catholic, and 51·6% claim to have no religion.
4. This was suggested to me by Shula Marks in a post-graduate seminar at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, in the *Women, Colonialism and Commonwealth Series*, 23.10.86.

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