Chapter 7
Political Economy of Chisa Livelihoods in Rural Zimbabwe

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Abstract This chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the livelihoods of the 'Shangane' nation (and specifically the Chisa of Gotosa) in south-eastern Zimbabwe. The Chisa people have a complex and convoluted history because of multiple forced displacements including from their ancestral lands which now form part of the Gonarezhou National Park. It traces the origins and livelihoods of the Chisa people from precolonial times, through the colonial period, and into the post-independence period including in the context of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). The history of the Chisa people is not only a story of incessant land displacements but it is also one of the resistances against top-down colonial projects. Though they may have benefited from the FTLRP through access to redistributed land, this falls far short of calls for restitution, that is, regaining access to their ancestral lands in Gonarezhou and the sense of identity and nationhood which would come with this. Hence, using the Chisa of Gotosa as a case study, the chapter demonstrates how Chisa livelihoods were distorted with each displacement (since the 1950s), with the FTLRP, in fact, actually pushing them further away from their ancestral lands.

Keywords Colonial regime · Chisa of Gotosa · Gonarezhou · Livelihoods · Shangane

7.1 Introduction

The people commonly referred to as the 'Shangane' in Zimbabwe represent minority groups that fought and won a liberation war, but still lost a nation—defined as the land and the culture, identity, and livelihood strategies embedded in the land. Ever since the Shangane were first displaced from Gonarezhou National Park (GNP) in the mid-1950s following a 1934 declaration of their land as a game reserve and then as a national park in 1975, they have always been people on the move. The GNP, which

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is now the second-largest national park in the country after the Hwange National Park, is located in south-eastern Zimbabwe along the border with Mozambique. It covers a surface area of 5,053 km^2 incorporating a vast expanse of open grasslands and dense woodlands (Gandiwa 2011: 305).

The area historically belongs to the Shangane who, as of today, are scattered outside of the GNP where they continue to see their ancestral lands as a remote object of veneration. As a result, unlike other ethnic groups, the Shangane people have not been able to reclaim their nation (in the Gonarezhou). With their initial forced removals from the GNP between 1957 and 1959, they became incorporated into nearby Reserves (now communal areas), including Marhumbini to the south and Sangwe and Chizvirizvi to the north. The Ndali communal area was later formed from a severed piece of the Gonarezhou in the far northern tip along the Save River to ease overpopulation in the Sangwe communal area. Some Shangane also crossed the Save River to settle in the adjacent communal areas of Vheneka, Chitepo, Mtandahwe, Maparadze, Chipote, and Mahenye in the Chipinge District, while others crossed the border to settle in Zambareja and Masenjeni, in Mozambique. Currently, the Shangane inhabits the communal areas of Sangwe, Ndowoyo, and Chizvirizvi to the north; Matibi No. 2 to the west; and Chikombedzi, Malipati, and Sengwe to the south.

In the year 2000, Zimbabwe initiated the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) to correct the racially skewed landownership pattern designed by the colonial regime and which had been inherited at independence in 1980. Less than 6,000 white farmers owned about 51% of all the farming land, while blacks, who made up 72% of the national population, eked out a living in agro-ecologically dry areas (Mugandani et al. 2012). While the Shangane participated in the radicalised land reforms of the 2000s, the FTLRP did not provide for any land restitution. Instead, those who managed to acquire land under the programme were placed further away from their ancestral lands (the Gonarezhou) to 'foreign nations' such as Fair Range, Mhandababwe, and Nyangambe—areas that originally belong to Karanga-speaking people. All of these displacements and relocations have had huge implications not only for citizenship, identity, and culture but also for the Shangane capacity to construct resilient livelihoods—central to this has been their relationship with wildlife.

In this context, the chapter examines in particular the livelihood trajectories of the Chisa people of Gotora, since their colonial displacement from the Gonarezhou ancestral lands and with regard to their ongoing placement in 'foreign nations'. After noting the research methodology, the chapter sets out the context by discussing the question of wildlife conservation and human displacements, as well as the origins of the Shangane nation and the repression and resistance story of the Chisa people of Gotosa. The chapter focuses specifically on the Chisa community by identifying and analysing the trajectory of their livelihoods since the first displacement from Gotosa and their relocation to Chingoji; and then to the Seven Jack area, to Ndali, into the Protected Villages during the 1970s' liberation war, back to Ndali and nearby communal areas, and lastly to the nearby farms acquired under the FTLRP.

7.2 Research Methods

Based on a qualitative research methodology, this chapter makes use of archival sources, including colonial government documents and reports by colonial officials such as Allan Wright who, during the Shangane colonial displacements, served as the Commissioner of the Nuanetsi District. It also draws heavily from secondary sources on the colonial empire, forced displacements, and national parks. Most importantly, the chapter incorporates informal day-to-day oral testimonies, which the author continuously gathers from Shangane elders who either experienced and witnessed, or have in-depth knowledge about, the Shangane evictions from the Gonarezhou. It also benefits from the author's lived experiences as a 'Shangane'.

7.3 Wildlife Conservation and Human Displacements

Protected areas are considered to offer the best protection for conserving biodiversity and ecosystems worldwide (Brockington and Schmidt-Soltau 2004; Rai 2019). As a result, whole communities worldwide have experienced displacements to accommodate wildlife. The Yellowstone National Park, established in 1872 in the United States, was the world's first protected area which thus became the model for park planning globally (Brandon and Wells 1992). The park was created for tourism, and the 'natives [living there] were seen as an unfortunate blight' (Poirier and Ostengren 2002: 333). Accordingly, the park was cleared of native inhabitants who then were confined to native Indian reserves. This top-down approach of order and discipline was executed through a policy of expulsion, fences, and fines (Brandon and Wells 1992). The same strategy was used in the creation of game reserves elsewhere, including in Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, South Africa, Tanganyika, Kenya, and Uganda (Adams 2005; Borgerhoff and Coppolillo 2005).

Since the creation of the Yellowstone National Park, more than sixty million people have been displaced by conservation projects worldwide, often handicapping livelihoods (Brockington and Igoe 2006; Ndhlovu 2020). In Africa alone, just over a decade ago, an estimated 14 million people had been displaced in the creation of parks and protected areas (DeGeorges and Reilly 2008). Where such projects were colonially motivated, such as in Zimbabwe (Tavuyanago 2017), the disregard of the social and economic lives and objectives of local people have had huge consequences for indigenous or native livelihoods. In fact, Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau (2003) posit that evictions during park creations result in at least eight impoverishment risks, namely: landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property, and social disarticulation.

Tavuyanago (2017) views these evictions in Africa as permeated by racial notions whereby natives were (and are) regarded as unrepentant poachers who fail to appreciate nature and, therefore, had to be moved away from it. This view motivated

the massive and callous eviction of natives during the establishment of the Kruger National Park in South Africa. In Rhodesia, the creation of the Wankie and Matopos game reserves was characterised by determined efforts by colonial administers to evict natives from their lands (Gandiwa 2011). Likewise, the declaration of the Gonarezhou land area as a game reserve in 1934 would be accompanied by eviction of the Shangane natives who inhabited the area and were viewed as 'of a most undesirable type … not properly looked after, being apparently too far away from a Native Commissioner to be visited in person. Also they are in, or claim to be in, a perpetual state of semi-starvation as the country has too little rainfall to support crops'[1] The land was considered to be arid, scorched, boring, disease-ridden, impractical for cropping, and unhealthy for human occupancy (Bulpin 1967).

The Gonarezhou land could only assume a value after being converted to a game reserve. This conversion of the land into a Game Reserve was viewed not only as having the potential for revenue generation through tourism but also the capacity to create jobs, alleviate poverty, and consequently improve the livelihoods of the Shangane nation (Mombeshora and Le Bel 2009). It was also considered largely intolerable to have a game sanctuary and an insubordinate Shangane nation within it, particularly as the Shangane were viewed by the colonial regime as having wasteful and destructive conservation practices (Tavuyanago 2017). Furthermore, colonial authorities claimed that most of the land designated for the park had been unoccupied in 1890 when they took over (Gandiwa 2011), without the presence of indigenous people including the Shangane.

The description of the Gonarezhou as inhabitable is unfortunate as the Shangane had always lived and fared well in their nation, located in the Gonarezhou area. They also did not welcome the proposed 'assistance' arising in the context of the establishment of this wildlife sanctuary. In protest to the evictions of the mid-1950s, headman Ngwenyeni Maguwu of Marhumbini openly told officials from the Wildlife Department that:

> We cannot leave the area where we have lived all our lives. Our fathers and grandfathers were born here. They lived and died here without harming anybody. The spirits of our ancestors are here. The area is said to be a game reserve—but how can this be? We have lived here since before the Europeans came to this country … When we were told we would have to leave, we asked the District Commissioner [Wright] if we could remain in our ancestral area. The District Commissioner consulted with the Department of National Parks and Wild Life Management, and later informed us we could remain … now we were again being told we cannot remain here forever, and that we should move.[2]

The quiet diplomacy of resistance to eviction by the Marhumbini and the open defiance by the Chisa communities demonstrated a clear case of the Shangane's self-assertion and a rebuttal to being taken for granted by the colonial regime. It was also a declaration and confirmation of the Shangane nation's rootedness in the Gonarezhou area, and an affirmation of the value they placed on a heritage which they would defend. Their satisfaction with the Gonarezhou environment exposes the barbarity of the self-imposed duty by colonial imperialists to improve the lives of natives by removing them from their land. If anything, for the regime, the conversion of the Gonarezhou into a game reserve was part of its continued commitment to place the

Shangane nation within the jurisdiction of colonial administrative power (such as the Native Commissioner's office) so as to control and use them to advance the colonial project. However, the likely eviction of the Shangane from their land stirred mixed views in government departments. While the Department of Commerce required an immediate eviction, the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands disapproved of the displacement due to its large scale and possible implications for livelihoods (Wolmer 2007). The Chief Native Commissioner was particularly wary of the resettlement of the people in Matibi No. 2 which was very small and unlikely to support a larger population due to its poor agro-ecological conditions (Tavuyanago 2017).

In the end, Shangane displacements did not start immediately in 1934 due to tsetse fly control priorities (Mavhunga 2008). Evictions only commenced in earnest in the mid-1950s with the Chisa, Ngwenyeni, and Xilotlela communities being the first targets for eviction. Communities located around the Sabi-Lundi junction were temporarily spared, although labelled and earmarked as illegal occupancies, and hence they would have to vacate the area sooner or later. The Chisa of Gotosa, Ngwenyeni of Marhumbini, and Xilotlela of Vila Salazar communities put up fierce resistance to eviction from their ancestral home which did not only harbour their culture and identity but also formed the basis of their livelihood strategies.

7.4 Origins of the Shangane Nation and the Chisa People

The Gaza-Nguni Kingdom, which at its full strength stretched from southern Mozambique up to the Zambezi River in the north, was founded by Soshangane Manukosi Nxumalo (1780–1858). Soshangane was one of King Shaka's greatest generals who, tired of the Zulu king's dictatorship, migrated from South Africa during the Nguni wars and settled at Biyeni on the lower Limpopo River in 1821, far away from Shaka's harm (Mavhunga 2008). Through military prowess, Soshangane conquered and assimilated the various clans in the area, namely: the Tsonga, Hlengwe, Rhonga, Chopi, Ndau, and Tswa, to establish the Gaza-Nguni kingdom (Ndhlovu 2020). Soshangane ruled over the Gaza-Nguni state from 1825 until his demise in 1858. It is, therefore, untrue to claim that all the people who are labelled as 'Shangane' migrated from South Africa.

To highlight, Soshangane arrived with a small group of military men with their households and then conquered local clans. These clans, in their diversity are now commonly known as 'Shangane'—a label derived from Soshangane's name. But Soshangane did not only assimilate through conquest but also by consent. In this respect, various families from different clans accepted intermarriages with Soshangane's group possibly as a strategy to escape the status of being minorities or in exchange for protection during battles. This enabled the establishment of a strong kingdom which would remain intact and undisputed until the occupation by white settlers in 1896 (MacGonagle 2007).

In south-eastern Zimbabwe, the Hlengwe clan conquered by Soshangane traces its origin to Zari who migrated from Mozambique to Zimbabwe around 1600

(Bannerman 1980). Zari had several sons, the eldest of whom were Mihingo and Tshovani (with the latter founding the Tshovani dynasty). Mihingo had two sons, namely Chisa (who founded the Chisa dynasty) and Banga (who founded the Mahenye dynasty). The other Hlengwe chief in the Chiredzi District is Sengwe who is descended from Mantsena the grandfather of Zari and is located south of Runde River. There are disagreements on which of these chiefly dynasties is more senior. Chisa, whose chieftainship was downgraded by colonial settlers to headman, contends that Mihingo was senior to Tshovani and that, therefore, Chisa should be the senior figure in the current royal hierarchy. Chisa considers his current status as headman to be an anomaly that must be corrected. While he acknowledges common descent, Chief Tshovani requires the current status hierarchy to be maintained. Importantly, in the past, all of these dynasties, in harmony and cooperation, once inhabited the Gonarezhou and pursued their lives in the face of shared challenges.

7.5 Repression and Resistance

Of the Shangane dynasties, the Chisa of Gotosa community quickly gained a label as a disobedient people due to its vocal and open rejection of colonial encroachment in the Gonarezhou. On several occasions, the community mounted open confrontation with the colonial government which its members viewed as a direct threat to its age-old livelihood sources and strategies in their ancestral lands. The conflict first started in the 1890s when the community's land was identified by colonial officials as a Controlled Hunting Area prior to 1933 and it became more pronounced when the Chisa lands were quarantined as a tsetse fly selective animal elimination zone in 1962 (Mombeshora and Le Bel 2009). Both these developments prohibited the development of household livelihood strategies, including hunting, fishing, gathering, and cropping. The protests of the Chisa manifested in various forms, including open resistance to the game reserve scheme, disregard of imposed laws, poaching, grazing livestock in prohibited areas, and insulting wildlife officials. Defiance to colonial impositions was accompanied by threats of eviction during the post-1934 period (Tavuyanago 2017).

The revision of game boundaries in 1957 deliberately saw the downgrading of the Chisa chieftainship to a headmanship. The demotion was meant to punish Chief Chisa for opposing the Game Reserve project and for his general insubordination (Mombeshora and Le Bel 2009). It was also meant to disempower the entire community since a people without land of its own has no right to claim equality with others. Contrary to colonial expectations, the demotion further transformed the Chisa people into a tough, restless, and uncooperative nation for the rest of the colonial period. The people of Chisa were finally forcibly ejected from their Gotosa ancestral land and resettled in Chingoji in 1957, after they were given a 15-day notice to vacate Gotosa. The open refusal by the people of Chisa to move was to have major consequences in terms of household livelihoods, as discussed later in the chapter.

In 1960, overpopulation saw the colonial regime moving the people of Chisa back into the GNP, albeit to the Seven Jack area, just inside the park periphery. Two years later, in 1962, and in response to the tsetse fly outbreak, the people of Chisa were moved again from the Seven Jack area to the Ndali locale in the adjacent Sangwe Tribal Trust Land. A tsetse-control fence was erected along the Chivonja Hills, barring entry into the game park by the people of Chisa, who now struggled for pastures, could no longer hunt and were unable to have gatherings for their traditional practices (in their Gotosa lands). They were promised that they would return to the Seven Jack area after the elimination of tsetse flies—a promise that was never honoured as the area was afterwards leased to Ray Sparrow of the Lone Star Ranch who, ironically, converted it into a cattle-grazing area (Tavuyanago 2017). The loss of the Gonarezhou land and the livelihoods it offered was cemented in 1975 when the Game Reserve status was changed to a National Park, with all the Gonarezhou lands being incorporated into it.

In protest, some of the Chisa people crossed the border into Mozambique, and others joined the Karanga-speaking people in the neighbouring Ndanga District, or Chief Tshovani, while still others joined Chief Sengwe. Further, some people crossed the Save River into the now Checheche District.[3] For the Chisa people who chose to resettle in the Ndanga District, tribal animosities arose with the Karanga who accused the Shangane of overpopulation and stealing their lands, and for being backward and unhygienic. This animosity further complicated the Chisa people's capacity to integrate and forge alliances for livelihoods development. A significant number of people moved into nearby sugarcane and citrus plantations in Triangle, Hippo Valley, and Mkwasine, thus totally abandoning the notion of *emuti* (homestead) which is so revered in Shangane cosmology as the basis for household livelihood development.[4] The defiance of the people of Chisa, therefore, should be placed within the context of the broader liberation efforts across the country at the time (Tavuyanago 2017), with eviction from Gonarezhou virtually leaving the people of Chisa with no land on which to base livelihood activities. Indeed, every displacement to which the people were subjected resulted in property and livestock losses due to its hurried and violent nature as people resisted the move (Ndhlovu 2020).

At the height of Zimbabwe's national liberation struggle against colonial rule (1975–1979), the people of Chisa were moved into Protected Villages (called 'keeps') along the Save River, stretching from Ndali to Muteo via Rupangwana near the Jack Quinton Bridge. These 'keeps' were strategically meant to thwart the people's participation in the national liberation struggle. Survival in the 'keeps' was dependent upon the hand-outs distributed by the state and donor agencies. Households from Tshovani and Sangwe Tribal Trust areas, although also residing in the 'keeps', had the opportunity to continue cropping activities in their Tribal Trust areas to supplement the meagre donations received. On the contrary, the people of Chisa had no communal area to which to return. Thus, while in the 'keeps', they constantly offered their labour to the people of Chief Tshovani and Sangwe in exchange for wages or for pieces of land to cultivate for livelihoods. Some also created gardens in which they grew vegetables along the Save River, and the Machoka and Mkwasine streams, for personal consumption and for sale. The Save River offered fish as a supplementary

source of food although the catch dwindled each day due to overpopulation. The use of fishing nets and funnel traps were also prohibited, thus limiting the size of the catch. This placed further strain on the people of Chisa whose livelihoods assets continued to be exhausted—both by the ongoing liberation struggle and by personal sale to meet basic household needs such as food, clothing, and medication. In this context, the next section focuses on the changing livelihoods of the Chisa community over a long duration.

7.6 Shangane Livelihoods

The changing of Chisa livelihoods over a long duration can best be observed by paying particular attention to four periods in the nation's history: before colonialism; during colonialism; after independence in 1980; and after the infamous FTLRP in the 2000s.

7.6.1 Livelihoods Prior to Colonialism

The GNP area experiences harsh climatological conditions. It experiences two seasons: a wet season of an annual average rainfall of about 466 mm typically between October and March and a dry season normally between April and September (Gandiwa and Kativu 2009). It also has an average monthly maximum temperature of about 25.9 °C in July and 36 °C in January while average monthly minimum temperatures range between 9 °C in June and 24 °C in January (Gandiwa et al. 2011). Due to the harsh climate as well as traditional skills possessed by various assimilated clans, the Shangane developed pastoralist livelihoods and a subsistence mixed economy consistent with the conditions. This economy involved small-scale cropping, raising of livestock and flocks, fishing, hunting, and gathering of fruits and plants (Carruthers 1995; Gandiwa 2011; Ndhlovu 2020; Tavuyanago 2017). The Shangane became strategic crop producers specialising mainly in drought-resistant crops, such as sorghum (*mabele*), millet varieties (such as *mahuvu* and *mpowo*), and cassava. They, however, also excelled in maize (*xifake*), sweet potatoes (*muhlate*), and groundnuts (*timanga*) production which they adapted to the extremely hot weather and low annual precipitation characterising the Gonarezhou. Adaption included practicing crop rotation on dry lands, growing small grains that required little moisture, and pursuing irrigated riverbed farming (Tavuyanago 2017). Although persistent droughts and diseases compromised production efforts, the adaptation practices by the Shangane allowed them to excel in crop production, thereby forging a food security status at the communal level (Ndhlovu 2020). This evidence contradicts European narratives on the laziness of the Shangane as the major cause of poor agricultural activities (Alvord 1929).

The Shangane were also renowned *vahloti* (hunters), whose stalking and tracking skills were equivalent to those of modern soldiers (Parker 2006). There is a wide

variety of large herbivore species in the area, including African buffalo, giraffe, roan antelope, waterbuck, sable, zebra, blue wildebeest, elephant, and hippopotamus (Zisadza et al. 2010). The presence of bows and arrows (*vurha ne paxa*) in almost every Shangane home underlined the importance of hunting as a livelihood strategy for the Shangane (Tavuyanago 2017). Other instruments used for hunting included the assegai, sling shots (*xipelupelu*), and traps (*thaka*). Poison was also smeared on arrows for an instant kill. Hunters killed only enough game at a time to meet their immediate needs (Mavhunga 2008).

The Gonarezhou forest offered wildlife upon which they relied for food, medicine, and clothing. Hunting was a mobile task which entailed tracking the spoor, and it was a skill the training of which began in early boyhood. Before teenage years, every boy would be able to identify and interpret the implications of most game footprints. Starting off early in the morning, Shangane hunters relied on the spoor to lead them to game, hence the importance of starting off before the dew had dried (Junod 1927). The status of the spoor determined whether the animal should be tracked or not. Where there was no spoor to track, other means existed. The Shangane developed a symbiotic relationship with flora and fauna and would take cues from animals. When the hunter or any person got into the forest, he became part of it and was even able to communicate with animals through signs (Mavhunga 2008). Since the tsetse frustrated livestock rearing, wild animals were the major sources of meat and skins.

Fishing was also an important source of food. A number of rivers which are home to different varieties of fish run through the Gonarezhou—the Save, Runde, Mwenezi, Mutirikwi, Guluweni, and Chileji. Pools such as Tembohata, Chasuku, Chipinda, and Chivhileni, provided fish as well as a supplementary food source (Ndhlovu 2020). Various methods, such as the use of *vutavala* (fishing nets), *xivasa* (funnel traps), *xivejo* (fishing lines), and herbal poison (*Zombwe*) were used to catch fish. Women, in addition, used long nets (*masaka*) to drag fish to the shores (*ku kukuta*). Poison was used sparingly and subject to approval by chiefs who first needed to inform their ancestors prior to its use, which ensured that fish were not poisoned with abandon. It also protected the *zombwe* plant from overuse since it was fed to livestock during droughts, thus sustaining the physical capital of household livelihoods.

Further, the pastoralist Shangane were gatherers—an activity in which women excelled more than men. Women harvested *masonja* (mopane worms), baby birds, and ants, which they fried and dried in the sun. These would be eaten as a snack or with *vusva* (pap). Women also collected various edible tree roots and fruits. Marula (*mankanyi*) and palm fruits (*kwangwali*), in particular, were processed into wines used during get-togethers and ceremonies while *mabuwu* (baobab fruits) were used to make sour porridge (Ndhlovu 2020).

The Shangane reared livestock, flocks, and poultry. In fact, despite the existence of tsetse flies and diseases such as rinderpest, foot and mouth, and theileriosis, Rennie (1973) observes that the Shangane economy was largely based on livestock rearing rather than crop production. This is because, historically, the Shangane were in large pastoralists but, over the years, they engaged in crop production to diversify their livelihoods in the face of rampant animal disease and frequent droughts. Hence, the

Shangane excelled in livestock rearing, even in tsetse fly belts such as Malipati, as is the case with the Chisa of Gotosa (Garlake 1978).

The Gonarezhou provided not only food but also trees and grasses used to meet the Shangane people's physical capital needs, including farm agricultural equipment and shelter for people and livestock. The Shangane also discovered many salt pans that supplied them with iodine, collecting the earth, dissolving it in water, and extracting salt using processes of evaporation. The Gonarezhou offered good locations for circumcision schools (*ngoma* for males) and initiation schools (*khomba* for females) in which young men received training in multiple skills, such as hunting, farming, and self-defence skills tips, while young women received training on how to run future households. Shared natural assets such as pastures, trees, and water bodies were collectively protected from contamination and abuse. As well, chiefs mobilised their subjects to construct infrastructure such as roads and also to dig wells. These activities enabled the people to cooperate for their collective good. This sustained the Shangane social capital which they drew upon to survive in the Gonarezhou.

Traditional healers obtained medicines from the forest, thereby sustaining the Shangane's human capital, including labour, skills related to farming knowledge, and quality of health. Chiefs ensured social protection through the regulation of traditional health services offered by *sangomas* (traditional healers). *Sangomas* who endangered others were expelled or stopped from practicing, while those who displayed ability received recommendation, promotion, and fame (Ndhlovu 2020). The Gonarezhou lands, therefore, offered a generously diversified natural capital which the Shangane 'exploited' for their livelihood needs: housing and farming equipment, food, fuelwood, medicines, graveyards, pastures, and space for traditional functions. The land also defined their nationhood and citizenship.

7.6.2 Livelihoods Under Colonialism

Under colonialism, the people of Chisa continued to practice a number of their livelihood strategies, particularly farming. They were, however, prohibited to hunt as a livelihood strategy. Livestock movements were also now controlled as a result of the tsetse disease. Further assessments of the suitability of the Gonarezhou for human habitation resulted in the total eviction of the people from the area. The consequences of their evictions were dire, as households lost their livelihood means.[5] With the callous and hurried evictions, households left behind diverse assets (natural, physical, and social assets) on which their livelihoods were based. These included fields in which they practiced farming, *svithlati* (granaries) in which they stored food and farming inputs (such as seeds); *svifuyo* (livestock and flocks); and farming equipment, such as ploughs, cattle yokes, and plough chains, as well as ancestral graves which were the main source of unity and cooperation. Men also left behind game traps (*thaka*), bows, and arrows, fishing nets and rods which, although prohibited by colonial authorities, provided families with meat and fish for own consumption or for exchange with other goods (Ndhlovu 2020). Households also lost medicines

and traditional schools which nourished their human capital.[6] Women left hoes, grinding stones, mortar and pestles, clay pots, winnowing baskets, blankets, and clothes, among others, by which they ensured household livelihoods (Tavuyanago 2017). They also left rivers and lakes (natural capital) where they caught fish as a livelihoods strategy.

Overall, in losing access to Gonarezhou, the people of Chisa left behind the land that had provided them with food, shelter, and medicines for decades, a land which was the basis for their livelihoods and in which their fathers and umbilical cords were buried (Mombeshora and Le Bel 2009). They left behind a land in which their livelihoods and identity had been crafted over the years. In the Shangane cosmology, the burial site of the ancestors, as well as the land where an individual's umbilical cord is buried give people the duty and obligation to protect and defend that land.[7] The Shangane evictions in the Gonarezhou were, therefore, not only insensitive and callous but also traumatic for people whose livelihood sources and assets (gathered over many years under adverse climatological conditions) were being destroyed in a single day by colonial forces. The evictions not only shattered the Shangane's capacity to produce but also disrupted social cohesion and cooperation which are basic assets required for resilient livelihoods.

7.6.3 Livelihoods After Independence

The 'keeps' were dissolved in 1980 when Zimbabwe gained independence. The dissolution of 'keeps' saw people returning to their respective Tribal Trust Lands (now named communal areas). The people of Chisa had no land of their own to which to return, since their agreement with the District Commissioner of the Nuanetsi District (Allan Wright) to be offered their land back had already been undercut by the upgrading of the Gonarezhou from being a Game Reserve to a National Park. The Chisa people simply sojourned in nearby communal areas. With no natural capital of their own (land, pastures, and water sources, among others), and with their physical capital (livestock, farming, and hunting equipment) virtually depleted, the people of Chisa became the most vulnerable. The human capital (young able-bodied men and women) that was most needed to invent new livelihood strategies in the Gonarezhou area migrated to towns, but most crossed the border to work on South African farms to send remittances back home. Others migrated permanently, thereby undermining the social capital (social networks, affiliations, or cooperatives) that local households could have used to forge new ways of survival.[8] Those who remained cooperated with other members of communal areas to establish irrigation schemes. The only known successful example today is the St Joseph Irrigation Scheme in Rupangwana, while others either failed or did not even take off, such as the Machoka Irrigation Scheme.

7.6.4 Shangane and the Fast Track Land Reform Programme

The main focus, after independence, is the post-2000 fast track period. The people of Chisa participated in the nationwide occupations from the year 2000 in which indigenous Zimbabweans moved onto white commercial farms, after which the FTLRP was implemented (from mid-2000). Affectionately named the Third *Chimurenga* (the ideological banner under which the programme was undertaken), the FTLRP emanated initially from grassroots initiatives which had, out of desperation and frustration, arisen to reclaim land dispossessed under colonialism. Led in part by the poverty-stricken *Svosve* community in Hwedza in Mashonaland East Province (Ndhlovu 2017), the occupations and then FTLRP were embraced by the people of Chisa as a cost-effective method of land acquisition. Teaming up with the inhabitants of Tshovani and Sangwe, the people of Chisa participated in the acquisition of the Sangwe and Fair Range farms. On the Sangwe, unlike in other nearby farms in the Chiredzi District (Fair Range, Chizvirizvi, Mhandamabwe, and Uswaushava) where the invasions or occupations were led by war veterans (Marongwe 2004), the invasion of the Sangwe farm was initiated by the inhabitants of the Sangwe communal area. They undertook this together with the people of Chisa on the basis of a long-standing dispute they had with Mr. Otterson, a white commercial farmer whose Wildlife Conservancy had fenced in the people's traditional sacred sites, a burial site for traditional leaders, and a sacred pool from which the people harvested fish as a supplementary source of food (Ndhlovu 2017).

At the national level, the FTLRP was meant to be undertaken in a short-circuited manner relying on domestic resources to acquire over 3,000 farms and redistribute them to indigenous blacks under the A1 small-sized model and A2 (commercial farming) fast track models (Utete 2003). At the district level in Chiredzi, a total of 7,598 people acquired land on a total area of 125,009 hectares under the FTLRP and benefiting about 6,009 males (71%) and 1,589 females (29%) (Marongwe 2004). There is no disaggregated data on the exact number of Shangane nationalities who acquired land under the FTLRP. However, there is evidence that some people of Chisa finally managed to acquire land as a physical asset which they could identify as their own. In this respect, Ndhlovu (2020) found that about 50% of the Shangane households on the Sangwe and Fair Range farms indicated that they were able to produce enough food for personal consumption on their plots. He thus argues that, although the FTLRP did not bring about redistributive justice in returning lost ancestral land to the Shangane in the GNP, it offered some relief in that households could now settle down, produce their own food, and enhance their livelihood status.

In terms of income generation, Ndhlovu (2017) notes that while sources of income had emerged, farming was not the major activity for the Shangane. Instead, only a total of 16.6% of Shangane households depended entirely on crop production on the Sangwe, while another 4.1% relied on livestock and poultry as a major source of income. The remaining participants in that study pursued the mixed economy

of Gotosa (Ndhlovu 2017). On the Fair Range farm, Chaumba (2006) discovered that, instead of farming, most households relied on off-farm activities for income, including: sales of fruit and vegetables, home-brewed beer, *marijuana* and firewood; war-veteran pensions; remittances; prostitution; poaching; traditional healing; and money changing. Muregerera (2009) also demonstrates that, at Sangwe, the sale of crafts, mats/baskets, and construction materials, as well as hunting were crucial income sources. While the production tendencies and levels of the Shangane do not translate into a meaningful contribution to the national economy, this should be seen in the context of a beleaguered community trying to forge and revive its lost mixed economy that flourished in the Gonarezhou prior to displacement. Chaumba (2006) also found that, while some farmers fared well at Fair Range, a significant number continued to sink steadily into poverty. While this evidence is disturbing, considering how agriculture was expected to transform livelihoods and boost the rural economy, it does expose the lack of context-specific solutions to the country's land challenges by the government which expected a pastoralist community to engage in full-time farming.

Another issue that highlights the government's lack of touch with the Shangane people is its disregard for social capital which, for minority ethnic groups such as the Shangane, is a livelihood asset more important than the acquired land itself. While multi-faceted, social cohesion is generally expressed under four main classes: social relations; task relations; perceived utility; and emotion. It is the degree to which people are co-operative, within and across group boundaries, without coercion, but with self-interested motivation (Burns et al. 2018). It involves 'understanding the social infrastructure, institutions, customs, and material and non-material relations that either constrain or enable the individual in whatever pursuit they are engaged' (Murisa 2007: 2). On the Sangwe and Fair Range farms, social cohesion in the form of networks (political and communal), cultural norms, and other social attributes were found to have played huge roles in livelihoods development through promoting knowledge sharing and cooperation among households, thereby increasing productivity. Households engaged in ploughing, planting, weeding, and harvesting cooperatives (Chaumba 2006; Ndhlovu 2017). However, overall, social cohesion under FTLRP beneficiaries in south-eastern Zimbabwe is generally problematic (Ndhlovu 2020).

The FTLRP did not regard the different backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs of people when resettling them. The local people had initially successfully cooperated on basic issues relating to the occupation of targeted white farmland, including intimidating the former farmers not to reoccupy the land and pushing for recognition as new owners. Despite this, ethnic tensions were quickly revived between the Shangane on the one hand, and the Karanga and Ndau speakers on the other, as the latter groups viewed the former as foreigners who needed to focus on fighting for the restitution of their Gonarezhou lands. When the Shangane were displaced initially from Gonarezhou, some joined the Ndau and Karanga, thereby igniting contests for space. Hostility arose between the Karanga and the Shangane over the ownership

of land stretching from Chiredzi town to Zaka Jerera, which is inhabited by both ethnicities, but which falls under Chief Hlaisi Tshovani of the Shangane nation. When people were resettled at Sangwe and Fair Range, these issues were not considered of significance, thereby sustaining age-old tensions which in turn compromise the realisation of collective livelihoods development.

Identity and nationhood in the Gonarezhou had enabled Shangane clans to stick together and to cooperate as they developed their livelihoods through farming, hunting, and other activities that enabled them to survive. The cohesion and cooperation challenges witnessed on the Sangwe and Fair Range farms are very different from other FTLRP farms where beneficiaries were not victims of repeated land displacements and where ethnic issues are not at play. For example, using the numbers of farm networks and network sizes to measure social cohesion, it was found that social cohesion had greatly increased with the FTLRP in areas such as Mazowe (Chiweshe 2014), Mhondoro Ngezi (Mkodzongi 2013), Goromonzi, and Zvimba (Murisa 2007). The displacement of the Shangane nation from the Gonarezhou, therefore, did not only disrupt livelihoods and compromise their identity, as it also gave birth to a huge spectrum of integration and cohesion challenges which now affect other nations, such as the Karanga and Ndau, thus creating a vicious cycle of livelihood-based development challenges in the entire south-eastern part of Zimbabwe.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the livelihoods of the Shangane people, with a particular focus on the people of Chisa, in south-eastern Zimbabwe prior to their displacement from the Gonarezhou and then through their various relocations since the 1950s until the FTLRP of the 2000s. It shows how Chisa livelihoods changed continuously over a long duration since their original displacement following the declaration of their land as a Game Reserve in 1934. The original displacements, including during the 1970s, were part of a broader colonial project meant to deprive indigenous people of the use of their lands to disarm them socio-economically and politically such that they succumb to colonial domination perpetually. In their ancestral lands of Gonarezhou, and despite adverse agro-ecological conditions, the Chisa people had developed a vigorous mixed economy, forging ‘alliances with nature’ in constructing their livelihoods. The Gonarezhou land provided them with land for cropping, pasture lands, meat, fruits, and vegetables, as well as medicines. Its conversion to a Game Reserve (and later National Park) by colonial administrators was based on a distorted ‘metaphysical obligation’ to redeem the Shangane from the harsh conditions of the land. However, this served to disfigure and shatter their livelihoods while compromising their notions of identity and nationhood. The FTLRP of the 2000s, instead of bringing

about land restitution, actually pushed the Shangane further away from their ancestral lands. The result of this has been, as Fanon (1963: 175) would have called it, 'individuals without an anchor, without a horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless—a race of angels.'

Notes

1. NAZ: S914/12/1B, Acting Secretary, Commerce and Transport to Col. the Hon. Deneys Reitz, Minister of Lands, Pretoria, 'Gona-re-Zhou Game Reserve, National Park and Game Reserve Scheme, Government Proclamation Gazetted', 28 September 1934.
2. MRC: MS 22, Delineation Report on Ngwenyenye or Marumbini Headmanship and Community, p 87.
3. Informal oral testimonies by Shangane elders.
4. Informal oral testimonies by Shangane elders.
5. Informal oral testimonies by Shangane elders.
6. Informal oral testimonies by Shangane elders.
7. Informal oral testimonies by Shangane elders.
8. Informal oral testimonies by Shangane elders.

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