

by

F.J. Mashasha

James Herbert Williams, popularly known in the Victoria Province of Mashonaland as 'Jakata', was the first Native Commissioner (Mudzviti) at Gutu.¹ Not much is known either about his life before he joined the service of the British South Africa Company as a trooper,² or after he left the Company's service in 1902, except that he was born at Wrexham and that when he left the Company's service he became a very successful cattle buyer and farmer.³ But his years in the B.S.A. Company's service are fairly well documented and remembered by many old men who knew him personally or who, like my father,⁴ once worked as farm hands on his estate, 'Newlands', a few miles north-east of Fort Victoria.

Jakata was well known in the Victoria Province firstly for his toughness in dealing with both Africans and Europeans, and secondly for his obesity. He is said to have been a man of proud bearing who addressed both Europeans and Africans as 'dogs'. To him the Europeans were 'mbwachena' (white dogs) and Africans were 'mbwanhema' (black dogs). Informants say that when policemen went to his estate on any business, e.g. to arrest some malefactor (usually tax-defaulters), Jakata made it a point that the police, whether Black or White, first stated the purpose of their visit to his cook or houseboy. The latter would then inform his master accordingly. If he was so disposed Jakata, say my informants, would then allow the police to enter his homestead and talk to him direct. If however he was otherwise disposed the callers would be told to go away and come back some other day when 'ishe' or 'nkosi' (the chief) would be better disposed. He is further said to have constantly and consistently disparaged the capabilities of what he called 'vana vadoko vanogara ikwevo dhoroba' (i.e. the young ones who stay there in town) to manage the affairs of the country. To him 'the young ones' were puffed up city slickers and petty bureaucrats who had neither the wisdom nor grit of their 'founding fathers' - namely the pioneers and in particular the stalwarts of the Native (Affairs) Department, men like J.S. Brabant ('Makuvire'), Peter Forrestall ('Ndambakuwa', N.C., Chibi), Alfred Drew ('Dururu', N.C., Victoria), William Edwards ('Wiri', N.C., Mrewa), and Jakata himself.

¹ Strictly speaking, however, Williams was Acting N.C., Gutu-Chilimanzi, under Alfred Drew, N.C., Victoria. He was also not 'the first' N.C. at Gutu - A. Drew having held that post first (q.v. DV2/2/3 - Fort Victoria, Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate, letter book, p.194) - but because of the profound impact he made on the district he has always been regarded as the 'first' N.C. of Gutu District.

² See DV2/2/3 - Fort Victoria, C. Comm. and R.M., letter book, p.698.

³ DV2/2/19 - Fort Victoria, C. Comm. and R.M., letter book - C.W. Carry, C. Commissioner, Victoria, to Assist. Director of Land Settlement, Salisbury, 23 September 1913.

⁴ According to the baptismal registers at Gokomere (Roman Catholic) Mission, my father is about seventy years old. He first paid tax in 1926 and worked for Mr Williams for about four years, c.1947/8-1952. (From recollections of my father).

Some old folk, especially those who once lived on his farm, even say that he used to go up to the Fort Victoria gaol and demand the immediate release of any of his employees who might have been arrested without his prior knowledge and/or consent. There is no documentary evidence to corroborate this highly improbable claim. Perhaps it is nothing more than a dramatic statement of the actions of a highly independent, proud, old settler-pioneer who would not brook any interference in the running of his own affairs (or what he conceived to be his own affairs) from the 'youngsters' in Fort Victoria. But the claims are good pointers to the character of the man and his attitude to authority. For instance, Jakata never seems to have in any way headed any of the Government's pronouncements on the implementation of the 1930 Land Apportionment Act and/or its subsequent amendments, for until the mid 1950's there was a large African population settled in several villages on his farm - a population far in excess of the number of families and dependants permitted to squat either under the Private Locations Ordinance of 1908 or the Land Apportionment Act and its amendments. In fact Africans say that the only difference between Jakata's farm and the adjoining Zimuto Reserve was that the farm was fenced in whereas the Reserve was not - otherwise life in the Reserve and on Jakata's estate were in no way different from each other. If anything, life on Newlands Estate was better in so far as tenants had large fields to cultivate and large herds of cattle and goats. Consequently, on average, the Africans on Williams' farm were wealthier than their brothers in Zimuto Reserve, e.g. one man called Chihwembani is reputed to have owned well over one hundred head of cattle - something unheard of on the nearby Reserve.

Williams seems to have lived in a world of his own. On his farm he was supreme chief and his African tenants regarded him as such. Moreover, he had, in their view, the added advantage of being 'boss' in Victoria as well because when he chose to exercise his influence he (reputedly) always got what he wanted.

From all I have been able to gather so far Africans both liked and feared him because he was something of a complex father - figure to them - proud, stern and absolutely fair and just - (his tenants particularly like the contempt with which he, allegedly, treated the troublesome and hated Police, who were forever on patrol to track down tax defaulters). According to my informants, one further reason why Jakata was particularly liked as a landlord is that in his serene years he became, to all intents and purposes (outwardly at least), a true Shona chief inasmuch as he was willing not only to allow, but also to assist in, in a manner befitting to a chief, the celebration of 'mukworera', a Karanga religious ceremony to ask Mwari (God) for rain in times of drought. Old men say that he would himself, in such times, give grain and meal to the local svikiro (medium) - in this case one VaChitende, an old woman resident on his farm and was reputed to be a 'nyusa'¹ - for brewing the beer necessary for the ceremony. This endeared him to his tenants for here, indeed, was one white man who had become one of them.

¹ - 'Nyusa' - the 'manvusa' were very privileged people in the Mwari priestly hierarchy. It was they who acted both as Mwari's envoys and oracles and carried the people's grievances to Mwari's shrine at Matonjeni (or Mabweadziva) or offered special prayer under sacred 'mihacha' trees - (known as) 'mitoro'

There is no documentary evidence to test the truth or otherwise of these statements, but the above is a faithful digest of what I have heard over the years both from members of my own family and from others in Eimuto Reserve and also from the people I interviewed in 1971 when I went out to Gutu to conduct field work into Gutu tribal history.

From all that I have gathered, J.H. Williams seems to have been comparatively speaking a fairly honest man, self-respecting and overly conscious of his honour and dignity as a White man. He was never accused of any misdemeanours where African women are concerned, quite unlike Native Commissioners J.S. Brabant (Makuvire), who married a daughter of one of the Manwa chiefs;¹ Weale, who married two daughters of Chief Chirumhanzu Chinyama;² or Wiri Edwards who married into the Mangwende family. Although he was accused by Chief Gutu Makuvaza of having acquired a large number of cattle by dubious means when he was N.C. at Gutu (a charge which could not be substantiated) he does not seem to have indulged in sharp business practice. Williams did not deny the fact that he had accumulated cattle contrary to the British South Africa Company's regulations governing the conduct of its Civil Servants. But he flatly denied - and it seems quite effectively - Makuvaza's allegation of sharp practice:

'I [have] never concealed the fact from anyone that I possessed cattle', he stated frankly, 'everybody in the whole of the Victoria District knows it. And the cattle were all honestly bought and my position as Acting Native Commissioner was not used in any way to acquire cattle'.³

Most of the cattle, he continued, had been bought in the early days when they were ^{very} cheap, 'the natives coming from all parts of the Victoria District and begging me to buy from them; in all cases top prices were paid, a beast never left the Native's herds unless he was satisfied with the price paid'.⁴ Moreover, said Williams in his defence, the fact that the White people of Victoria had never protested over this issue was good evidence to clear his name. He could not possibly have 'squared' them all. If he had indulged in any such practices the White

¹ D.N. Beach, Shona Dynastic Histories [First Draft] Chapter 6, p.71 of paper footnote 19, quoting U.N.H.D. Text 25 Cbi.

² N1/1/2, N.C. Charter to Chief Native Commissioner, 27 and 30 March, 5 and 19 April 1897; see also DV2/2/3, C. Commissioner Captain Vizard, Victoria, to Administrator, 2 March 1897.

³ N3/1/6, J.H. Williams to Chief Native Commissioner, 1 September 1902. The use of political office for economic self-advancement seems to have been fairly well established amongst some of the B.S.A. Company's poorly paid Civil Servants - q.v. Aborigines Rights Protection Society [A.P.S.] Papers - Mss Brit. Emp. S.22 G.159. (File No.1), J.H. Harris, Secretary of the A.P.S. (writing from Bulawayo) to Sir T.F. Buxton, President of the A.P.S. Confidential, 14 January 1915. The A.P.S. Papers are in Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

⁴ N3/1/6, Williams to C.N.C., 1 September 1902.

farmers and settlers would surely have protested as they did against one of Williams' successors, Native Commissioner E.T. Kenny in 1920.¹

The result is that although Williams has been remembered as a harsh and sjambok-happy Native Commissioner of the 1890s and early 1900's,² in his later years Africans tended to see him less as the burly young N.C. ready to flog anybody who, in his view, misbehaved himself. Rather they tended to see him more as a stern father-figure, quite likeable and very understanding, but still remote and hard to approach informally. He still remained 'ishe' (chief) to his African tenants (and non-tenants) whom, as already stated, he persistently addressed both affectionately as well as contemptuously as 'mbwa nhema' (black dogs)

Williams earned himself the (nick-) name 'Jakata' when he was Native Commissioner at Gutu, 1897-1902. Old men I interviewed (during my field work) in Gutu in July and August, 1971) about the origin of the name, including Chief Gutu Manguwo Machingura, suggested that Williams got this name either because he built his station close to a chump of huge 'michakata' trees (still to be seen at Gutu District Commissioner's office) and held court under these trees or under one of them (a single big muchakata tree is referred to in Karanga as zimuchakata, which in normal everyday speech is contracted to jakata); or because he used to tie up offenders to one of these big trees and then flog them while they were thus tied up. Most likely Williams got his name from a combination of the two, and the name stuck. It was a fitting name because, by all accounts, Williams was a man of large stature and was thus seen by the Karanga as a big muchakata-jakata.

The object of this paper is to see Williams, the Native Commissioner, at work in Gutu until he resigned his office and quit the B.S.A. Company's service in 1902. His writings, viz. his official diary, reports, and letters give fascinating vignettes of life in Gutu before and immediately after the defeat of the Shona and Ndebele in the uprisings of 1896-97.

Although Gutu and the surrounding Karanga chiefdoms - Zimuto, Chirumhanzu,

¹ A3/18/27 - Felixburg-Gutu Farmers' Association's complaint regarding the private interests of E.T. Kenny, N.C., Gutu. Kenny (alias 'Kini') was appointed N.C., Gutu, in 1907. His conduct of native affairs in that district was also the subject of an inquiry held at Gutu by the C.N.C., H.J. Taylor, in January 1918 - q.v. correspondence and report in A3/18/27 - C.N.C.'s Office to Administrator's Office, 28 January 1918.

² It is for his liberal use of the sjambok that Williams is mostly remembered in Gutu. On hearing his name mentioned, old men shake their heads and say: 'Jakata! Don't tell us about that man! That man was 'chikarema chaicho' (a real schelm)'. To this day, says (the late) Chief Gutu Manguwo, there are men who bear the marks of the thrashing they got from him. See F.J. Mashasha, interview with Chief Gutu, 5 August 1971. In this respect Williams reputation was very much similar to that of Abel Erasmus Dubuladuze Habela, the Transvaal's Native Commissioner for the Lydenburg district in the 1880s the mention of whose name made Africans 'jump'. For A. Erasmus see D.H. Wilson, Behind the Scenes in the Transvaal (London, 1901), p.202; and A.C. Nyburgh, The Tribes of Barberton District (Pretoria, 1949), p.79.

Chibi and the Duma chiefdoms ~ did not rise in rebellion in 1896-7,¹ Gutu was then regarded as a turbulent and wild country inhabited by proud and independent Karanga the main body of whom were the Rufura of the totem gumbo/madvirapazhe, under the rule of paramount Chief Gutu Makuvaza, the ninth ruler of this important Karanga chiefdom. I shall not deal with Makuvaza's controversial accession to the Gutuhood here as I hope to deal with it fully elsewhere.² By the time J.H. Williams arrived as mudzviti for the Gutu district, Makuvaza's succession was complete and Chingombe and the others who had challenged his claim had, thanks to Makuvaza's diplomacy and alliance with the Whites, been effectively silenced.³ Gutu then had some two hundred and thirty kraals under him and these kraals (villages) were split up into twenty-eight sub-districts under sub-chiefs (or 'machinda'). The principal machinda were Mataruse, Makumbe, Denhere (son of the late Chief Gutu Denhere whose death in March 1892, had sparked off the succession dispute);⁴ Rwodzi (son of Gutu Denhere's predecessor and 'one of the most intelligent'⁵ as well as influential⁶ headman of the tribe), Nyamandi (son of Makuvaza's opponents in 1892), Chingombe (brother of the leading contender for the Gutuhood in 1892 and one of the most powerful of Gutu's sub-chiefs having sixteen kraals under him and huts to the number of 502);⁷ Machingura (the second in succession to the paramountship,⁸ and father of the late Gutu Manguwo), Maburutse, Ndawi, Jinjika, Mupata, Madzana, Mazuru and Maungwa:- Maburutse being the first in line of the succession.⁹ These sub-chiefs settled all minor cases and disputes in their districts, but all the major cases like murder, witchcraft, and disputes touching on the succession to the sub-chieftainship were referred to Gutu ^{himself} for final decision.

Upon this traditional political structure was imposed, after 1895 the new political power of the Whites in the person and office of the Native Commissioner. As might be expected this development was most unwelcome to the traditional rulers who saw clearly that their power and traditional authority was not only being undermined but also being supplanted as well as superseded by that of the Native Commissioner by virtue of the superior military power behind him - and which power

¹ See NVG2/1/1, A Drew's Annual Report, Gutu 1900-1901; and DV2/2/3 (pp.305-15), Report upon the General Progress & C. of the District of Victoria during the year 1st October 1895 to 30 Sept. 1896, by Civil Commissioner & Resident Magistrate, Captain G.F. Vizard, 28 Dec. 1896, where Vizard stated, however, that although Chibi, Chirimuhanzu, Gutu and Zimuto had turned collaborators and rendered excellent service in the suppression of rebel chiefs, yet there had been disaffection amongst some of them, 'and, from what they themselves say, [they] would have joined to rebels had not the two spies [messengers?] who were captured near Victoria in May last [1896] been shot'.

² See my paper (in draft) - 'Gutu Tribal History to 1898', pp.14-17.

³ For the Gutu succession see, DV5/1/1, Chaplin (Victoria) to Dr L.S. Jameson, Salisbury, 25 Mar. 1892; D3/1/1, Court of Ordinary Jurisdiction, Fort Victoria, J.H. Werrett's trial for treason, 28 June 1892; CT1/15/2, Dr Jameson (Victoria) to Cape Town Office of the B.S.A. Company, 15 July 1892; and N9/1/7, Gutu Annual Report (prepared by A. Drew, N.C., Victoria), for the year ending 31st March 1901.

⁴ As footnote 1. ⁵ N3/1/6, Williams, N.C. Gutu, to C.N.C., 16 June 1902.

⁶ NVG4/1/2, Gutu monthly report for February 1915. In addition to being an important headman Rwodzi, who died in 1915, was according to Native Commissioner E.T. Kenny, 'a very wealthy native, having 19 wives and owning some 300 to 400 head of cattle', NVG4/1/2, Gutu, monthly report, February 1915.

⁷ NVG2/1/1, Williams, N.C. Gutu, to C.N.C., 17 October 1901. and N3/1/6, Williams, N.C. Gutu, to C.N.C., 16 June 1902.

⁸ N3/1/6, Williams, N.C. Gutu, to C.N.C., 16 June 1902.

⁹ See N3/33/8, 'History of the Mashona Tribes', Gutu.

had been amply demonstrated in the crushing defeat of the Ndebele and Shona rebels. The situation produced by the new political dispensation was productive of friction as Chief(s) and Native Commissioner(s) vied for supreme power over their African charges. Gutu was no exception to this general pattern, and there were serious disagreements between Gutu Makuva and the representatives of the B.S.A. Company Administration.¹ For although he had by his collaboration with the Whites against his 'brothers' in 1892 cast himself in the role of the ideal collaborator, Makuva was no fool and he proved a particularly difficult collaborator to deal with. He always pushed to the limits the boundaries of the political sphere within which he now had to operate. Unlike his fellow collaborator Chirumhanzu Tshinyama in Chilimanzi who proved to be utterly incompetent and lost all influence with his own people to the disgust of the Administration,² Makuva proved himself a capable ruler, enjoyed the support of his headmen,³ and exercised enormous influence over ^{many} people, as Native Commissioner Kenny with a touch of regret noted in 1913:

This man is quite an influential person, and has considerable respect shown him by his natives, and it is greatly to be regretted that he does not use his influence in a direction more useful to the Government.⁴

Friction between Makuva and Jakata was bound to arise because Makuva wanted to be regarded as a semi-independent chief almost like his predecessors had been, while Williams was determined to weaken Gutu's power. It was Jakata more than anybody else who did the most to discredit Gutu and to lower his prestige and influence.⁵

On appointment a Native Commissioner had to be everything in his district. In addition to performing the duties of the dual role he fulfilled as 'the eyes and ears' of the Government in Salisbury and 'ambassador' of the tribe(s) under him ('his natives') to the Government, he had to act as labour recruiting agent using his so-called 'moral influence/persuasion' (which in fact were euphemisms for force); he had to be a 'do-it-yourself' architect, surveyor, builder, doctor, lawyer, veterinary surgeon, agricultural 'expert', and to perform the duties of a paramount chief.

¹ See for example N3/1/6 - Enquiry held by W.S. Taberer, Acting C.N.C., Mashonaland, into complaints made by Paramount Chief Gutu as to his treatment at the hands of J.H. Williams, Acting N.C. of the District, September 1902; A3/18/27 - C.N.C.'s Office to Administrator's Office, 28 January 1918, forwarding C.N.C. Taylor's Report of his investigation of the administration of native affairs in Gutu.

² NVG4/1/1 - F. Wilson Fox, Acting Assistant Native Commissioner, Chilimanzi to N.C., Gutu, 8 September 1905.

³ A3/18/27 - C.N.C.'s Office to Administrator's Office, 28 January 1918.

⁴ NVG4/1/2 - Gutu, Annual Report for 1913.

⁵ See pp 24-30 below.

It was in his role as paramount chief that the Native Commissioner tried and pronounced judgement on the cases brought before him. Some of the cases were simple and straightforward, but others were extremely complicated and required careful and patient handling, while others again might be years old, as Acting Native Commissioner Talbot found in Charter District. In 1898 Talbot settled about 278 disputes which were almost invariably about women and cattle. 'Some of the cases were very old, in many cases dating back to the time of the grandfather of the man who brought the case, the latter knowing absolutely nothing about the case, except by hearsay or tradition'.¹ This was so because amongst the Shona a case is never closed unless and until it has been satisfactorily settled. The ruling dictum is 'mhosva hairovi', i.e. a crime is neither forgotten nor allowed to go unpunished no matter how many years it might take to bring the criminal to justice. Talbot like many other N.C.s, was, quite understandably, bewildered by all this and his solution was as drastic as it was simple: 'any case', he wrote, 'dating back before the occupation of the country by the Chartered Company I have refused to settle'.²

At Gutu, Williams tried his best to settle disputes either personally or by referral to Chief Gutu. The cases he recorded make interesting reading not because of the legal technicalities involved, but rather because they show what life was like in Gutu then, and what the daily routine of an N.C. was like. One interesting, but not particularly pleasant, feature that emerges from these cases is the prominence (and number) of guns in violent disputes. Of the one hundred and twenty-three cases Williams recorded five resulted in murders and one in attempted murder; almost all of these cases were concerned with 'rovora' (lobola), women-stealing, cattle-rustling and ordinary assault. It is evident from a perusal of these cases that, as a distinguished student of Shona history has remarked,³ there was something of a particularly violent streak in Gutu (and indeed in Shona) society at this time and guns played a large part in it.⁴

It was Jakata's achievement that he more than anyone else purged Gutu of this violence, and in the process gained undying fame (or notoriety) as the man who 'tamed' Gutu. Amongst the Karanga of Gutu and Victoria Districts one

¹ N9/1/4 - Yearly Report, Charter District, 1898.

² Idem.

³ See D.N. Beach, 'The Rising in South-Western Mashonaland 1896-7' (University of London, Ph.D. thesis, 1971), p.148.

⁴ See Historical Manuscripts - J.H. Williams W1 5/1/1, official diary, 1897-98, passim. See also N9/1/5, Yearly Report, Ndanga District, 1899. In this district alone three cases of armed Africans having raided villages were reported and the offenders caught and sent up for trial before the High Court in Fort Victoria. There was also reported the nasty case of a woman who had had her nose and ears cut off (probably for an adulterous offence or witchcraft). The N.C., Ndanga, had confiscated 104 guns - 'taken from natives for either raiding or deserting their kraals'.

often hears the remark: Jakata ndive rangamapengo wakatonhodza Gutu naChingombe (i.e. lit. Jakata is the chastiser of the wild (or mad) who tamed Gutu and Chingombe). And so thorough was this taming of 'the wild' that by 1902 Gutu was regarded as a very peaceful district.¹ So effectively too had Jakata 'tamed' Gutu that by 1901 Chief Gutu's power and prestige had been reduced to a mere shadow of its former glory. Consequently, Alfred Drew (Dururu) could remark with much justification that 'Gutu himself has not much power. He has some control over his own immediate people and that is all'.²

This, Drew continued, was 'rather a good thing as otherwise he would be a very powerful chief to reckon with. His predecessors were all very powerful and the biggest chiefs of this part of Mashonaland, in their time'.³

But now to turn to some of the cases Jakata had to settle. The first recorded case came up for trial on 6th April, 1897. This was a simple civil case. The plaintiff was one Mapaike who laid a charge against 'Sezuba' (Chizuva?). 'Between the two', Williams remarked, 'is a standing quarrel'.⁴ Chizuva had gone into Mapaike's fields and destroyed the latter's grain. Chizuva admitted the offence and was 'punished and cautioned ... not to do it again'.⁵ 'Punished', in Jakata's vocabulary, meant flogged with the sjambok.

The next case, which was heard on 17 May, 1897, concerned guns and women. This was the case of 'Sgaua' (probably Chakawa) versus 'Uchu' (Huchu). 'Uchu', said Chakawa, 'years ago bought four guns to resist me as I was coming to him at my rightful home from Mount Rasa. We have been quarrelling ever since'. Lately, however, Chakawa continued, Huchu had burnt 'small field huts' (i.e. matura = granaries) belonging to Chakawa's son 'saying as he did so "why do you i.e. Chakawa's son laugh with my women?"'.⁵

In true Shona style the quarrel between Chakawa and Huchu had been extended to Chakawa's son for in Shona logic the man who commits a crime damns not only himself, but also makes practically all the members of his family equally culpable for his offence. Consequently, amongst the Shona, a quarrel between two individuals from two different families or even, as not infrequently happens, between two brothers, can easily develop into a family vendetta.

The guns involved in this case were: one double barrellled breach loader, one Winchester repeating rifle, one elephant gun and one single barrel muzzle loader, plus seventeen cartridges - quite an impressive armoury for those days. The

¹ See p.30below.

² NVG2/1/1, Annual Report, Gutu, 1901.

³ Idem.

⁴ Hist. Hss, W1 5/1/1, Williams' official diary, entry for 6 April 1897.

⁵ Idem.

disputants were cautioned about their conduct and forced to promise to live as friends in future, but the guns were confiscated.¹

On the 5th of June, 1897, another gun case came up for trial. One Zishate lodged a complaint against Zumba. 'Zumba', said Zishate, 'came to my kraal at night and took six head of cattle. I traced them to his kraal, [but when I] asked why he took them he said [he had done so because] I had told a police boy where to get his rifle'.²

Clearly guns had become a status symbol much as cattle and goats were status and power symbols among the Karanga. Indeed, in some cases, guns took the place of cattle in the settlement of rovora (lobola).³

The next interesting case was tried by Williams whilst he was on patrol at Munyikwa's kraal on 23rd June 1897. This was the case of Shumbayaonda vs Charumbira - a singularly nasty case of women-stealing and physical brutality. Charumbira, taking advantage of Shumbayaonda's blindness, forcibly took two women from him and gave them to his friends. Then apparently not satisfied with snatching the women from this man, Charumbira went on to take away the only cow Shumbayaonda possessed. When the latter remonstrated with him, Charumbira 'threw a dish of hot porridge in Shumbayaonda's face'. In giving his judgement, Jakata fined the heartless Charumbira seven head of cattle to be paid over to Shumbayaonda as compensation for the loss of his two wives, and 'two goats for scalding his face'. In addition, Charumbira was given a 'good thrashing' and warned that if he ever repeated such a crime he would be gaoled.⁴

On 9th August, 1897, a big case came up for trial before the N.C. at Gutu Office. One 'Shilling' lodged a complaint against his father-in-law. Shilling had married a woman who died (most likely before she bore him any children). After a while Shilling demanded a replacement according to custom. But his father-in-law, most insultingly, gave him a girl 'which I refused saying she was my child' (i.e. the girl was too young to be a wife). Shilling had then gone and taken a woman from his in-laws by force, but after a while she ran away. Then the aggrieved Shilling, in company with one Chingombe, his own brother-in-law, went to his in-laws' kraal with the object of killing Mazavaza, the brother of his late wife. Chingombe threw two assegais at Mazavaza, but missed. It was only the timely intervention of Kaguva, chief over Shilling and Chingombe, that saved Mazavaza from death on that day. Kaguva told Shilling and Chingombe to desist from attacking Mazavaza and go home. They seemingly obeying the command of their chief desisted from the attack and went home. But once they got home they enlisted the help of six others and reattacked Mazavaza's kraal in which, fortunately, there were then only three people. During the fracas that followed, one Mayingofa hit one of Shilling's men, Huni, on the head. Huni died two days later.

With the help of Alfred Drew (Dururu), Jakata, quite surprisingly considering

¹ Hist. Mss, W1 5/1/1, entry for 17 May 1897.

² Ibid, entry for 5 June 1897. ³ Ibid, entry for 23rd May 1897.

⁴ Hist. Mss W1 5/1/1, entry for 23rd June 1897.

his record of harsh and stiff sentences, only fined Shilling one head of cattle which was, even more surprisingly still, paid over to Chief Gutu.¹

The list of such cases is inexhaustible and not much purpose would be served by quoting any more, for a perusal of a few brings out the reality—almost unchanging reality - that rovera-cattle, women, cattle stealing, and guns formed the stuff of quarrels and crimes in Gutu society then. Some of the cases recorded were old and very entangled like Hama's which will be quoted as a final example.

Hama complained that 'Chimesa' (Chimedza) took a cow belonging to him owing to a quarrel he had with one Machingura years before. During the trial, however, it emerged that the cow in fact was not Hama's but belonged to one Mhepo, And so in giving judgement Jakata ordered Chimedza 'to pay back the cow he had to Hama and in his turn Hama to pay the cow back to Mhepo whom he had stolen it from some time previously'.²

In addition to his judicial duties the Native Commissioner had to ensure effective administration of his district. In the early days this was done by the N.C. himself going on patrol through his whole district or through the agency of the Native Messenger Police (zvikonzi) or the British South Africa Native Police. It was largely by this means, the patrol, that the Native Commissioner kept himself informed of the latest political development amongst 'his natives'. The constant patrolling of the reserves also served the purpose of reminding the Africans of the presence of the N.C. and of the military might behind him.

In those early years of white rule in Rhodesia, the Native Messenger Police were used for all purposes. In addition to their normal duties i.e. carrying the N.C.'s messages to the Chiefs and their people and 'smelling out' tax defaulters, the Native Messenger Police also acted as intelligence agents. It was they who, while on patrol, gathered most of the information, current rumour and gossip that formed the basis of the Native Commissioner's report to Head Office and guided his action and policy.

The N.M. Police were known as 'vana vamanbo' (the children/sons of the Chief, i.e. the Native Commissioner), and woe betide the man who was rash enough to try to brush them aside. Because of the wide discretion they enjoyed,³ the police often abused their powers. For example they used to detain those people they disliked, or who disliked them, at the N.C.'s station for days on end without allowing them to state their case. Where extortion⁴ was not the motive, the

¹ Hist. Mss W1 5/1/1, entry for 9 August 1897.

² Hist. Mss W1 5/1/1, entry for 1897.

³ According to S.P. Hyatt, one of the early settlers in Rhodesia and a very trenchant observer of the Rhodesian scene, it was the lethargy of certain N.C.s, especially those with a Natal background, that enabled the police 'to do much as they liked, to assess the hut tax, and to level blackmail from the whole countryside'. q.v. S.P. Hyatt, The Old Transport Road (London, 1914), p.174.

⁴ Hist. Mss W1 5/1/1, Williams to Taylor, N.C. Charter, 21st August 1897, re Kagura, a native of Gutu, who complained about the police at the Range Office refusing to present him to the N.C., Taylor, 'until he, Kagura, paid them the sum of thirty shillings which he refused to do'. Needless to say, Kagura's 'obstinacy' got him nowhere as he went back home without stating his case.

police invariably excused their conduct by saying that the 'mambo' was too busy with important matters to attend to the would-be litigants' trifling complaints, so they had better wait - tomorrow perhaps ... In such cases the tribesmen shook their heads and sighed deeply - the sigh of impotence and resignation in the face of an incomprehensible and confusing system of justice;¹ while some, in anger, went home and either vowed² never to take their cases to the N.C.'s office again, preferring to make the best of a private settlement,³ or repented of their folly and made it up with the messenger police.

These police were further both feared and hated by the Africans because of their habit of demanding girls and women from their hosts for illicit intercourse while they were on patrol. In addition to this the police i.e. both the Native Messenger Police and the B.S.A. Native Police ('maburisa okukamba' or 'zyidengumuneyi') generally made themselves unpopular by their annoying habit of demanding the production of registration certificates ('zyitupa') even when men were working out in the fields and sometimes, so it is said, even when men were coming from relieving themselves in the bush.⁴ In Charter District, the Native Commissioner,

¹ N9/1/12, Annual Report, Charter District, 1909; and N9/1/14, Annual Report, Charter District, 1911, N.C.'s remarks re Africans' views regarding the administration of justice by the Whites.

² As expressed in the words of a popular ballad in Gutu, one of whose stanzas runs as follows [very literal translation]:

<u>Karanga</u>	<u>English</u>
Tamba wakangwara muzukuru	Play carefully grandson (or nephew)
Unokaruka wava nonunondo	Else suddenly and unbeknown to you you may
mumakumbo	find yourself with a sword on your legs
Chikunguru* wakadana Shapi	Chikunguru summoned Shapi
Namahwera paJakata**	And Mahwera to Jakata
Handichapasviki vakomana	There I shall never go men
Pandakerobwa doma	Where I was beaten on the cheek
Neyemvuu rikanyenga	With the whip of the hippo's hide and (the cheek) became septic.

* Chikunguru was another of J.H. Williams' nicknames - the word simply means something that is conspicuously large.

** PaJakata - used as a locative, meaning the N.C.'s station at Gutu. It is an indication of Williams' notoriety that the N.C.'s camp at Chilimanzi, Chomukova, was also called 'Jakata' like its counter part in Gutu. I have known the words of the above ballad since my youth, although of course I did not realize their significance until very recently.

³ N9/1/6, Annual Report, Charter, 1913 in which the N.C. remarks: 'Africans are secreting crime and resorting to settling their disputes by their time - honoured system of compensation',

⁴ From my father's recollection. Although all this was vexatious to the Africans, such demands for the production of registration certificates were perfectly legal as the African was expected to have his registration certificate on his person at all times and in all places. See for instance A3/18/1, folio 187, Minute by H.K. Hole, Secy to the Administrator, 4 March 1910, in which he observes that 'Under the existing law a native might be prosecuted for not having his certificate even if he were at the bottom of a [mine] shaft'.

J.W. Posselt, noted with concern that the police's injudicious demands for the production and inspection of registration certificates were becoming unnecessarily harassing to the Africans; indeed, in this district cases had occurred where some kraals were visited three times in one month. 'I submit', Posselt wrote, 'there is no need for such frequent demands on well known natives, and the inspection of R.C.'s should be carried out with far more tact and discretion. I am of opinion Native Constables possess too extensive powers which are open to abuse. Natives have been arrested on the slightest pretext of refusing to produce their R.C.'s and this has led to cases of resisting the Police and bribery'.¹ The bribes were offered to avoid the unpleasantness of arrest for, as Posselt, a particularly sharp and observant Native Commissioner, observed, in many cases the arrested were taken round the district while the native constable or messenger police completed his patrol. Because of this, it was many days before the suspects were charged in court and, not surprisingly, it often happened that the period of arrest exceeded the sentence.²

The police, in self-defence, complained that the Africans were too frequently drunk or indifferent, thus making the performance of police duties unnecessarily tedious. It was unfortunately 'too true' that beer drinking was excessive and the behaviour of many of the Africans 'most tantalizing' and, in many cases, almost 'tantamount to defiance'.³

But even when that has been said in their defence it cannot be denied that the police more often than not, acted with unnecessary swagger and wanton vindictiveness. Fortunately, however, such conduct, when detected, did not go unpunished. Those members of the police who were found to have indulged in such malpractices were severely punished and discharged from the service as happened to two of Jakata's police 'boys', Madzuva and Mabangani. On 26 May, 1897, Jakata found out that these two constables had been in the habit of amusing themselves by firing on Natives unprovoked. Enquiries also revealed that these two 'yana yamambo' had raped a couple of women. Williams 'gave them a sound thrashing and discharged them at once'.⁴

On the whole, however, the police gave yeoman service to the Administration and became an indispensable factor in the effective government of Africans.⁵ Some,

¹ N9/1/14, Annual Report, Charter District, 1911.

² N9/1/17, Annual Report, Charter District, 1914.

³ N9/1/13, Annual Report, Charter District, 1910. The 'evil' of 'native drunkenness' was not that the Africans drank too much; rather it was that (in and around the townships especially) 'a much stronger brew akokiaan?' was made, 'and the visiting of several beer drinks in one day, when brands are mixed, is conducive to much drunkenness' - q.v. N9/1/16, Annual Report, Charter District, 1913.

⁴ Hist. Mss. W1 5/1/1, entry for 26 May 1897.

⁵ See correspondence in N3/4/2, Chiefs, Headmen and messengers.

like Singela in Gutu, rose to positions of authority and trust and could be left in charge of the station when the N.C. went into town.¹ In Gutu, Jakata had a particularly good and effective team of messengers composed of Richards, Madzura (before his discharge from the service), Naglass, Machingambi, Jacob, Mashingaidze and Mabenda, headed by Mahachi and Singela. It was with the help of these men that Jakata effectively ran Gutu with a system of constant patrols.

On 17th May 1897 native messengers Richards and Madzura returned from patrol. Their patrol had taken them to Chitsa's country and thence to Mazuru's, Chingombe's, Makonese's and Magombedze's - the wild eastern, south-eastern and southern part of the district. They reported that all was peaceful and quiet in those parts although the rinderpest had been very bad - practically all the cattle were dead except at Maburutse's where the disease had not yet struck.²

On the same day messengers were despatched in all directions of the district to bring in all the headmen who possessed rifles. On the 23rd May Singela and Mangisi were detailed to bring back a rifle and shot gun in the possession of Chinvara and Makonese respectively. Chinovava had bought his gun from an African for one cow in 1895, while Makonese had bartered 'eight goats and six sheep' for his shot gun. Makonese had later 'lobola'ed" his wife with his gun.³

On the 26th May, 1897, the messengers sent out three days earlier to summon all the sub-chiefs who possessed guns to the N.C.'s office returned with the wanted men, viz. Chingombe, Mataruse, Manyikwa, Makonese, Masunda, Makamure and Chivasa. Williams was struck and impressed by both the quality and quantity of the guns. On enquiring where they had got the guns from, Williams was informed that some had come from Kimberley 'years ago', while others had been bought from white men two or three years previously i.e. around 1894/5.

The guns, six in number, were all Martini Henry rifles, Masunda owning three, while Makonese owned the one revolver in the 'cache'. Jakata confiscated the rifles and revolver and told the chiefs that they would only get their guns back if they told him where they got their ammunition from.⁴

Having got the 'machinda' of Gutu together, Jakata then performed an act of great significance for the future history of the Rufura (as far as tribal politics were concerned). He staged a public reconciliation between Gutu Makuvaza and the defeated contenders for the succession in 1892. He 'introduced' the machinda to Gutu (on 27th May 1897) urging them all 'to make friends again which they did in a most satisfactory manner'.⁵ This

¹ Hist.Mss. W1 5/1/1 - entry for 27 October 1897.

² Hist.Mss. W1 5/1/1 - entry for 17 May 1897.

³ Ibid, entry for 23rd May 1897.

⁴ Ibid., entry for 26 May 1897.

⁵ Ibid, entry for 27 May 1897.

public reconciliation between Makuvaza and 'his father's sons' (vana vababa vake) to a very large extent healed the wounds and bitterness that had been caused by Makuvaza's disputed succession. After this, the legitimacy of Makuvaza's rule was never again disputed or challenged¹ by the other sons of Chavurura; indeed one of his sons, Magaya, later became Chief Gutu.²

Meanwhile disarmament and the building of large unified villages continued apace, and as a result of these measures white rule took firm root in Gutu. The building of large unified kraals or maraini (lines), as they came to be known, was a sore issue with the Africans. Amongst the Karanga the history of this period and subsequent years is neatly capped in the words of the following protest song:³

Karanga

Kwakatanga chibharo
Kukauya maraini
Teverere nigerero
Ngombe dzedu dzapera

English

First came forced labour
Then came the 'lines'
Followed by contour ridges
Our cattle are finished.

The building of 'misha yamaraini' was an administrative measure for the more effective political control and government of Africans. By grouping the previously scattered villages on convenient points along the patrol road, the Government forced Africans to come down from their hill strongholds and build in the more accessible open flats and valleys where they could be more easily got at in case of disturbances or revolt. In the mind of the Administration the building of villages in the open veldt reduced the dangers of conspiracy and revolt. The possibility that by bringing the people down from their relatively isolated settlements in the hills the Administration might unwittingly be helping to unite the Africans by making them realize that the Administration was the friend of no one and the enemy of all blacks, was outweighed by the military consideration that if in fact the Africans staged another uprising they would be dealt with and crushed in the open country rather than in the hills where the fighting tended to degenerate into desultory guerrilla warfare. With the memory of 1896/7 still fresh in the minds of the settler community and the Administration, such warfare had to be avoided as it was costly in both human and financial resources, and above all in morale.

¹ Although this was largely the case, it did not root out feelings of jealous rivalry between Makuvaza and Chingombe - q.v. Makuvaza's remarks on Chingombe's relations with Native Commissioner Kenny in A3/18/27 - CNC's office to Administrator's Office, 28 January 1918.

² He died in 1957 - was succeeded by Manguwo Machingura.

³ I have known the song since my youth. The song is a trenchant commentary on Rhodesian history - forced labour (chibharo), 'lines' (maraini), the making of contour ridges (nigerero/makandiwa), and cattle culling.

The building of unified kraals also cut down considerably the mileage a man on patrol had to cover. Whereas in the past a policeman on patrol may have spent a day visiting say five villages scattered about in a three mile radius of his starting point, he might now, thanks to the 'maraini', visit something like double that number of villages strung along a ten mile stretch in the same time as before. This, of course, was quite a considerable improvement administratively considering the shortage of administrative manpower and other resources and the state of communications then. By cutting down the amount of ground to be covered and saving time, even more systematic, constant and effective patrolling of the country could be undertaken.

But the Africans hated the whole scheme of building unified kraals because amalgamation meant physical and psychological humiliation to those who had to move and overcrowding to both the uprooted and the host kraals. For those removing to a new site it meant leaving their ancestral lands and graveyards. This meant a major disturbance in the psychological equilibrium of the people concerned; for how could they honour their ancestors if they could no longer offer prayers and sacrifice at their graves? For the politically conscious removal from one's old site meant submission to the authority of the host kraal-head or headman since the latter was not likely to be willing to surrender or share power with the leader of the incoming group even though the man might have wielded more authority and enjoyed greater prestige. It was largely this process (especially in its more accentuated form of the major removals of Africans from privately held land on to the Reserves in the period after 1910), rather than any deliberate policy to 'rationalise' their succession systems that led, in many of the Shona chiefdoms, to the political eclipse of formerly important families and the rise to political prominence of formerly insignificant or very junior houses.

A further reason why the Shona hated nisha yemaraini was that amalgamation of kraals might involve having to live next to a muroyi (sorcerer or witch), and some villages then,¹ as now, had the reputation of being 'nisha yevaroyi' (the villages of witches/sorcerers). Not surprisingly therefore people were most loth to live in 'maraini'. Thus in Gutu the people of Chief Shumba who then lived at Makaure (present day Chatsworth) refused to build with him because they believed him to a sorcerer.² It was probably fear of witchcraft too that motivated the people of Kugara, Watungwa, Chidembo, Whindiza and Mukorovergwa (one of Gutu's most important sub-chiefs), in their refusal to build with their chiefs.³ All these people were, however, brought in to the N.C.'s Office on 3rd October and were ordered to complete the building of their unified kraals in two weeks' time, 'otherwise they would get into trouble'.⁴

¹ I can well recall my parents telling me of the doings of a certain village in the Lambende area of Zimuto Reserve the inhabitants of which reputedly had a special beer laddle reserved for imprisoning strangers. This was known as 'mukombe womweni' (the stranger's laddle). Further, it is alleged the inhabitants of this village were in the habit of begging any one of their number who had a visitor to allow them to imprison the guest saying: 'Tipei chitsiga chenyu tigumbure' (Give us your tree stump so that we may knock it down).

² Hist. Mss. W4 5/1/1 - entry for 6 October 1897.

³ Idem.

⁴ Idem.

But even though the N.C.s might, like Jakata in Gutu, tell the people concerned to stop 'such nonsense and lose no time in building their kraals',¹ the fact remained that Africans believed in, and feared, the effectiveness of witchcraft and/or sorcery, and tended to attribute all misfortunes and illness to the civil machinations of the 'varovi', as Jakata himself noted when he wrote:

I have had considerable trouble with the Natives leaving one kraal for another without first asking permission to do so. . . Being so superstitious as they are, they are continually complaining of being poisoned by others and every ailment they have consider some one has a grudge against them ...²

Jakata's observation is supported by the remarks of D.H. Moodie, N.C. at Ndanga. Discussing crime in his district, Moodie lamented the prevalence of witchcraft:

With very few exceptions every crime is due either to witchcraft or a beer drink quarrel. Any event the least bit out of the ordinary is submitted to the bones [i.e. hakata] for decision: this curse is very firmly established here and will take generations to eradicate.³

Further confirmation of the Africans' fear of and belief in witchcraft comes from H.M. Jackson, Superintendent of Natives for the Bulawayo Circle. Reporting on the Ndebele of Umzingwane Reserve's unwillingness to move into the Belingwe No.2 Reserve Jackson wrote:

Several chiefs pointed out that to dwell there [in Belingwe No.2 Reserve] is impracticable because its present denizens are addicted to and skilled in witchcraft and would certainly exert their occult powers against interlopers. On this point their conviction is proof against argument.⁴

The people's fear of witchcraft and their consequent reluctance to move into large amalgamated kraals created serious dilemmas for the chiefs and headmen. The Native Commissioner at Marandellas's, Ernest Morris, noted this when he wrote:

¹ Iden.

² NVG2/1/1 - Half Yearly Report, Gutu, 30 September 1901.

³ N9/1/7 - Annual Report, Ndanga, 1901.

⁴ N3/16/9, folio 77 - Minute by H.M. Jackson, Supt. of Natives, Bulawayo, 1st June 1920; my emphasis. The C.N.C., Taylor, however, explained this fear of being bewitched on the Ndebele's part in terms of their fear of 'retribution' for their past raids on the Shona - q.v. *ibid.*, Minute by C.N.C., Taylor, 12 June 1920.

[All] this [i.e. building of amalgamated kraals] was done with no little trouble, most of the Natives ... objecting to live in large kraals; they preferred building in the bush in some isolated spot as by this means they often evade paying their hut tax, and avoid coming in contact with their chiefs and Government Agents. Some of the headmen rendered assistance in moving Natives into large kraals, [and] in one district the work was done entirely by the headman, but I regret to say most of the headmen have no influence whatever over their people. They are afraid of losing popularity. The Natives know this and tell the headman, if he enforces anything they do not like, they will move to another division, [and] the headman rather than lose his people will allow them to do as they like, and will not report the matter for fear of being accused by his following of working for the Whites against them ...¹

This was a simple but perceptive statement of the dilemma that faces the African chiefs in Rhodesia: are the chiefs, willy-nilly, Government 'stooges' used by the settler regime to suppress the African people; or are they, as has often been claimed (especially by the White regime itself), the only tone and sole representatives and spokesmen of their people; or are they neither of the above? This dilemma has never been resolved and continues to bedevil Rhodesian politics to this day.

But whatever the answer to the Chiefs' dilemma might be, one thing is certain, and that is that the Chief who did not act as expected of him got short shift from the Government either by being deposed from office² or by having his subsidy drastically reduced³ or completely withdrawn.

The provision of labour was one of the major functions of the Native Commissioners in the early years of white settlement in Rhodesia. The reason why N.C.s acted as labour recruiters is simple. It is that their 'moral persuasion' or 'word' was more productive of native labour (as they were feared by the Africans) than any of the coaxing or financial inducements that labour agents and their touts could offer. This fact was pointedly stated by D.H. Moodie, N.C., Ndanga, when he remarked:

¹ N9/1/5 - Annual Report, Marandellas, 1899.

² See for instance, N3/4/5 folio 127 - definition of Chief Chirumhanzu Chaka from office, 1914.

³ Ibid., folio 32 - R. Lanning, N.C., Plumtree, to C.N.C., 5 December 1922, re reduction of Chief Mafindo Sithole's subsidy. Gutu Makuvaza himself had his subsidy reduced from £5 per month to five shillings per month for displaying what the C.N.C. called a 'studied attitude of opposition to the Government'. - q.v. A3/18/27, C.N.C., Taylor, to Secretary, Department of Administrator, 16 October 1917.

Native Commissioner [s] turning out labour is not a fair criterion. Get the finest labour agents in the world and let them try by fair means and without the 'word' of the Native Commissioner to turn out labour. The result would considerably astonish the mining companies.¹

On the 7th October 1897, Williams was instructed by Alfred Drew, N.C., Victoria, to get together 'boys' and send them to the N.C., Untali, for work on the Untali - Salisbury railway line.² Jakata always acted swiftly in such matters and, on the following day, his native messengers were on the move collecting labour. Native messenger Mashingaidze was detailed to get 'boys' from Denhere's, Rwodzi's and Zinyemba's; Maglass and Muchadenyika were sent down to Nyamandi, Chingombe, Mazuru, Kagura, Muniyikwa and Mataruse's districts; while Jacob went to Mukaro, and Magogo struck westwards to Ndawi's and Nechitoro. Mashingaidze returned on the 12th with the news that Denhere and the other machinda's people were unwilling to turn out for work. Magogo too was met with a blunt refusal to go to work from Ndawi's people. Thereupon Jakata sent out Mahachi, his head messenger with Mashingaidze, Magogo and Mabanda to Ndawi to collect the recalcitrant young men and bring them as well as Ndawi himself in 'to explain why they did not come in when wanted by me'.³ Ndawi and his people were duly brought in and were cautioned against disobeying the N.C.'s summons, and then, surprisingly enough, allowed to go home.⁴

Then Williams went on patrol inspecting villages and warning the people of the forthcoming hut tax collection. Those headmen whose kraals were found to be in a 'filthy state' were all severely censured and had their guns confiscated on this score. Rwodzi lost three guns, while Musarurgwa had his one and only gun confiscated for failing to clean up his kraal when told to do so and not reporting a trader who had built his store in his district. Several small huts and whole villages were destroyed at Rwodzi's, Musarurgwa's, Washaya's and Makumbe's because the owners had tried to evade the hut tax.⁵

Meanwhile 'boys' had been rounded up for work in Untali. Two hundred men were sent to Untali in October 1897 and two hundred to Selukwe in January 1898; and the collection of the hut tax was also completed. It says much for the effective and energetic manner in which he worked that in Gutu Jakata took only sixteen days to collect all the hut tax due and all arrears, whereas in some districts hut tax collection dragged on for weeks or even months, e.g. Ndanga, where Williams had to be sent as a matter of urgency in February 1898 to help Ecksteen who was terribly behind with his tax collection.⁶

¹ N9/1/7, Annual Report, Ndanga, 1901.

² Hist.Mss. W1 5/1/1, diary entry for 7 October 1897.

³ Idem.

⁴ Idem.

⁵ Hist.Mss. W1 5/1/1, entry for 14 October 1897.

⁶ Ibid, entries for 16-18 November 1898.

Having completed the 1897 hut tax collection the N.C. then warned the Natives of Gutu to prepare for the 1898 collection. Several chiefs responded by sending their young men to Selukwe and Gwelo to earn the cash with which to pay the tax. Those who remained in the kraals raised their tax money in various ways, principally by selling cattle, sheep and goats or grain.

During 1898 Jakata alone sent 1 822 men to Gwelo and Selukwe to work in the mines; but hundreds more left on their own account without obtaining 'passes' from the N.C. either because they did not consider it necessary to take out such 'passes', or because Williams was not available at Gutu since he often had to leave his own district to act in other districts, particularly Ndanga and Chilimanzi. Williams lamented this state of affairs. 'I am greatly handicapped in my attempts to supply labour to Selukwe and Gwelo', he wrote, 'owing to my being constantly out of my district as the Natives, unless you are continually telling them of the advantage to be derived from labour and prepare for the forthcoming hut tax, are in the habit of remaining at their kraals and when the time's come for them to pay their hut tax they invariably ~~are~~ unprepared ...'¹

It is apposite here to make some brief remarks on the Africans' unwillingness to take up regular paid employment of any description. Africans did not have many wants then; in fact, economically, they had practically all they wanted, although they had lost a large number of their cattle as a result of the rinderpest epidemic. Since they enjoyed economic independence they naturally and quite logically saw no point in taking up regular paid employment. In any case regular employment under the whites was irksome and sheer drudgery compared to the seasonal labour of their traditional economic cycle. Moreover, the generality of white employers were harsh and exacting task masters as often as not ready to sjambok their African labourers for real and/or imaginary insubordination or desertion. Furthermore, the white employers often tricked the African out of his wages especially when the end of his contract drew near.² This of course was done in order to compel the African worker to stay on; but it did not improve the labour situation at all as its only effect was to increase the Africans' reluctance to work for the whites. The Boer farmers (mabhunu), especially those in and around Victoria and Enkeldoorn, had a particularly bad reputation in this respect.³

¹ N9/1/5, Annual Report, Gutu, 1st April 1899.

² Employers of this type were the despair of conscientious N.C.s, q.v. NVG4/1/1 - monthly report, Gutu, for July 1909, where E.T. Kenny, N.C., Gutu, urged 'punishment of a very severe nature' against them.

³ N9/1/5, Annual Report, Gutu, 1899. See further NVG1/1/1 - Acting C.N.C., Taberer, to Assistant N.C., Gutu, 10 September 1902, quoting quarterly report for Chilimanzi district, 30 June 1902, in which Williams stated the Boers for their maltreatment of their African labour force.

In addition to all this, the Shona then as now, had a strong dislike, almost pathological fear, of underground work in the mines.¹ Work underground was referred to as 'kuviwa, uri munenvu' (i.e. being buried alive).² Thus no Shona man in possession of his full wits would, without some form of compulsion, undertake such labour. It was this unwillingness to work on the part of the indigenous Africans that explains, in part, why the Southern Rhodesian Government resorted to the use of forced labour - chibharo. The nascent capitalist economy of Rhodesia simply had to have labour or else the mines would have to close down, as Jakata bluntly observed.³

The problem, however, as Williams saw it in 1899, was not the Africans' reluctance to go out to work; on the contrary Jakata asserted that the Natives, especially those of the Victoria District, were 'most willing to turn out to work and would in time make very good mining boys as they do not object to working underground in the least'.⁴ Rather, the cause of the trouble was, according to Williams, mismanagement at the mines, insufficient medical care, malnutrition, and bad housing. Selukwe in particular had a bad reputation as 'a most unhealthy place for Natives to work at'.⁵ In 1898 alone, for instance, more than 10% of the Africans sent there either died at Selukwe itself or at their kraals, on their return, through diseases contracted while they were at the mine. Gutu lost heavily, for out of the two hundred and thirty kraals which comprised the district, there were not five villages out of that number which did not lose a man from sickness contracted in Selukwe. Indeed, 'some of them lost up to four and five'.⁶ Ndanga, Gutu's neighbouring district in the south for which Williams was also responsible for a time, also suffered heavily: of the 286 men the district had sent to Selukwe for one month only, thirteen died from illness while at Selukwe, while 'a considerable number returned home sick being unable to complete the one month of their contract'.⁷

Several complaints were made about the food given to the African

¹ This was the case despite Williams' assertion to the contrary - q.v. paragraph below.

² Recollections of my father and numerous other old Africans I have spoken to in Zimuto, Serima and Gutu Reserves.

³ See N/9/1/5 - Annual Report, Victoria District, 1899; also N9/1/4 - Annual Report, Charter District, 1898.

⁴ N9/1/5 - Annual Report, Gutu, 1899.

⁵ N9/1/5 - Annual Report, Gutu, 1899.

⁶ Idem.

⁷ Idem.

labourers on the mines. The meal was insufficiently ground and the food 'sadza' badly cooked so that those who ate it were seized with wrenching stomach pains. Thus it is obvious that the mine employers of labour, like the farmers, were only interested in exploiting black labour. Once the native had his strength sapped out of him or fell ill, he was driven away from the mine as a nuisance. In view of all this it is hardly surprising that Africans were most unwilling to go to work; hence the Government's resort to chibharo, in order to bail the miners and farmers out of a serious labour difficulty.

The ill-treatment of Africans by their white employers was deeply deplored by Williams who spoke up strongly for their better treatment. 'Unless the Native is well looked after when at work', he warned, 'the labour difficulty will become much more difficult than it is now whereas if proper accommodation was made for the Native and if properly qualified doctors were engaged by the mining companies the condition of things might improve'.¹ But for a variety of reasons which don't concern us here, the mining companies remained impervious to the pleas of the N.C.'s for reform and improved conditions of labour. As a result of this 'devil-may-care' attitude of the mining companies (and farmers) the country was losing labour, sometimes experienced men, to the more attractive Rand and Kimberley mines.²

During these years (1897-1902) Gutu, like all the other Shona and Ndebele chiefdoms was undergoing a slow but insidiously pervasive political transformation - a process that left the traditional tribal institutions of government physically intact but emasculated of all real and meaningful authority. The Native Commissioner was the new power and authority in the land. The Native Commissioner and his native messenger police (often supported by the native B.S.A. Police) were the immediate visible symbols of the might of the new white order and it was on him that the government of the Africans now rested, the chiefs, in this case Paramount Chief Gutu Makuvaza and his headmen, being merely his 'eyes and ears', or his 'machinda'. His word was law, his authority unchallengeable and not to be questioned; he could make or depose chiefs, amalgamate and/or break up tribes. And the Native Commissioners (and their latter day 'descendants', the District Commissioners) regarded themselves as the Supreme Chiefs, Fathers and guardians of 'their natives'. They became rigid paternalists who demanded unquestioning and blind obedience from their charges because they, in their self-assumed wisdom 'knew' what the Africans wanted and what was good for them. In Rhodesian parlance the Native Commissioners and the officials of the Native Affairs Department became 'fundis' (experts) on 'native affairs'; they were the men who 'knew the native and how to handle him'. That this 'expertise' was largely a fallacy and a myth is beside the point here; what is important, however, is that it was (and still is) widely believed by white Rhodesia to be true. The fallacy was to a very large extent created by the N.C.s themselves who demanded unreasoning obedience from 'their natives' and got it by instilling fear of the white man into the African mind. The African's fear of the N.C. and his traditional deference for the man in a position of authority were mistaken for love and respect. The Native Commissioners got the respect they wanted or rather demanded because they never

¹ Idem.

² N9/1/5 - Annual Report, Gutu District, 1899.

saw (and in fact were unwilling to see) Africans as individuals but always as a corporate amorphous entity with whom contact of any sort was always on an official basis. The 'true African native' of popular white Rhodesian myth was the black man who, whether he be chief, headman, school teacher or preacher etc., humbly took off his hat to every white man, woman and child and said: 'Greetings Bass, or Nkosikazi'. Any African who tried to question the N.C.'s word or the basis or reasonableness of his action was contemptuously dismissed as being a 'cheeky kaffir' or a foreign, usually communist, inspired agitator.

This mental attitude is clearly illustrated by the case of Chief Ranga of Charter District. During the months of tax-collection (June-August) of 1914, Chief Ranga was detained by N.C. J.W. Posselt at the Range Office on account of the 'large number of tax defaulters in his tribe'.¹ The chief won his release from detention by requesting leave to go home and 'hurry up' the defaulters, promising to return within ten days' time. But once he was free Ranga did not bestir himself over the issue. Three weeks went by but he did not return to the N.C.'s office. Consequently, Posselt sent a messenger requesting the Chief to present himself at the Range. Ranga however did not bother to go. The N.C. then sent another messenger 'with definite instructions' for the Chief to appear. But, 'not only did Chief Ranga not come in at once but he arrived two full days after the messenger returned and in a very drunken state'.² For his 'disobedience' Ranga was fined £2 or alternatively fourteen days imprisonment with hard labour.

But the Legal Department was unhappy with this judgement, although they did not doubt that 'substantial justice' had been done. Their disquiet stemmed from the fact that, as the Legal Assistant put it, no evidence had been led to show that the Chief had been informed why his presence was desired by the Native Commissioner, 'consequently he could not know that the request for his attendance was reasonable'.³

The question that immediately arose out of this, and which Posselt himself asked,⁴ was: what constituted a 'reasonable request'? To this Taberer, the Superintendent of Natives for the Salisbury Circle, replied that he saw 'no reason to define a 'reasonable request'.⁵ Posselt himself answered the question thus:

It is quite foreign for natives to question the reason or reasonableness of a Native Commissioner's summons and any attempt or encouragement to do so would at once strike a vital [sic - fatal?] blow at the fabric of authority and control which a Native Commissioner exercises over natives.⁶

¹ N3/4/5, N.C. Posselt, Charter, to Supt of Natives, Sby, 9 Dec. 1914.

² Idem.

³ N3/4/5, Legal Assistant to Secy, Dept of Administrator, 24 Nov. 1914.

⁴ Ibid, Posselt to Supt. of Natives, Sby, 9 December 1914.

⁵ Ibid., Minute by Taberer, 14 December 1914.

⁶ As footnote 4 above.

The Chief Native Commissioner, H.J. Taylor, stood by his officials and minuted that the questioning of authority was 'altogether foreign to native custom and discipline'.¹ Although the Legal Department was still unsatisfied, they, however, did not pursue the matter further.²

This arbitrary administration of justice was the hallmark of the B.S.A. Company's administration of the Africans. This arbitrariness was of course surreptitious and was carried on in a manner deliberately designed to deceive the Imperial watchdog - the High Commissioner - at Cape Town as his representative in Rhodesia, the Resident Commissioner, was 'studiously kept uninformed of the real state of Native Administration'.³

That this deception of the Imperial representatives was deliberate can scarcely be denied; on the contrary, there is strong evidence for it from High ranking Company officials. In November 1898, for instance, we find the N.C. at Victoria, Alfred Drew (then the most senior Native Department official in Victoria Province) offering the following advice to his fellow N.C. Williams at Gutu:

[I] have received a wire [from Head Office in Salisbury] that you have got to make out a report monthly for the High Commissioner which I have to send up with the one I am to make out myself. As they have told us the reports are for the High Commissioner I take it they wish us to leave out anything that would be likely to be disagreeable to His Excellency.⁴

And in 1899 we find no less an important Company official than the Chief Native Commissioner for Mashonaland, Taberer himself, severely reprimanding Williams for his having mistakenly interpreted his instructions, at the time of Sir Marshall Clarke's visit to Victoria, and thereby gratuitously granted the Africans a large meeting with the new Resident Commissioner instead of arranging for a small closed and inconsequential private meeting between Sir Marshall and a few of the big (and old) chiefs of Victoria Province. Taberer, who was greatly perturbed by the implications of this lapse on Williams' part wrote:

I have heard privately that in consequence of my private note to you requesting that Gutu and one or two other of the big chiefs in the Victoria District might be got in by you if possible to meet Sir Marshall Clarke⁵ you had a collection of

¹ NB3/4/5, minute by Taylor, n.d.

² Ibid, Legal Assistant to Chief Native Commissioner, 17 Dec. 1914.

³ NB1/1/7, B.W. Armstrong to High Commissioner, n.d. (but possibly February/March 1899).

⁴ NVG1/1/3, A. Drew (writing from Makaure [Chatsworth]) to Williams, 19 November 1898.

⁵ NVG1/1/1, W.S. Taberer to Williams, Private, 22 Sept. 1899.

about 5 000 natives there to see him. A great deal has been made out of this as of course it would be quite wrong for Sir Marshall to hold any indaba with the natives or for them to imagine that they have anyone else than myself and the N.C.'s to recognise. The report of the large gathering annoyed me immensely, as I only meant to convey to you the impression that Sir Marshall simply wanted to see the few important Chiefs, not for any indaba or to address them in any way, but simply to satisfy a curiosity to see Chiefs about whom he hears so much from time to time ... when I wrote to you there was no idea of his holding an indaba or discussing matters of their administration with them ...¹

These words need no emphasizing or explaining.

During the years of Williams native commissionership, a profound shift in locus of power took place. Gutu and his machinda's former political power was effectively wrested from them; political power now lay with the Native Commissioner in his capacity as representative of the B.S.A. Company Administration. But the shift in the balance of power did not go unchallenged by Paramount Chief Gutu Makuvaza. Jakata's methods of administration, the recruitment of native labour etc ... were challenged by Gutu (and his headmen) who also laid serious charges of misconduct against his Native Commissioner. These issues came to a head in 1902 when Gutu forced an inquiry to be held into Williams' conduct of affairs during the years 1897-1902.

Makuvaza's major complaints against Williams were that he had accumulated cattle by dubious means;² that he thrashed his people for no reason whatsoever; that he forced his young men to go to work; that he interfered with Gutu's performance of his duties unnecessarily and took every opportunity to humiliate and discredit the chief; and that he had prevented Gutu and his people from complaining to the Chief Native Commissioner in 1899 about their grievances against their N.C.³

Gutu's first complaint against Jakata concerned his having been 'locked up' by the N.C. at Gutu Office. Gutu had been ordered by the N.C. to travel to the Range Office, Charter District, to catch the coach that would take him and his retinue to the Coronation festivities in Salisbury. But Gutu missed the coach and returned home. On nearing his kraal however Gutu and his followers were informed by Williams' native messenger police that they must go to the N.C.'s Office straightforward. On arrival at the station,

¹ NVG1/1/1, Taberer to Williams, 16 October 1899.

² This has been dealt with above - see pp.4-5.

³ See correspondence and report of inquiry held by Acting C.N.C., W.S. Taberer, at Gutu in August/September 1902, in N3/1/6.

however, Williams gave his messengers orders to 'lock up' the Chief and his followers in the local 'trunk'. Those locked up including Gutu himself were Kurambwi (Gutu's son), Gavi, Taziveyi, Chingombe and others. The following morning Makuvaza asked Williams why he had been locked up. Williams replied that it was because he (Gutu) had been late to get to the Range Office and for missing the coach to Salisbury. 'I replied that my legs had got swollen and were still swollen from walking and thus delayed'.¹ Jakata's reply to this was to tell the chief to go home and get ready to pay the hut tax.²

Makuvaza had then made a request for a period of grace to allow all who had gone to work to return with their tax money. The request was bluntly refused and Gutu told to go home and hurry up his people. After six days Jakata sent for him, but Gutu declined to go to the Office as he feared he might be locked up again. The N.C. sent three times but Gutu still declined to attend at the Office; on the fourth summons, however, Makuvaza relented and went up to see Jakata, only to be told that the N.C. wanted to see 'all the young men in order to see which of them would be required to pay the tax'.³

In his defence Jakata said that Gutu had been given four clear days to get to the Range in (a distance of some 50 miles), 'but wasted his time on the road drinking beer ...' and had consequently missed the coach. He denied having given the order that Gutu should be locked up and blamed his 'police boys' for the muddle. He admitted he had reprimanded Gutu for his negligence of duty because he considered it his duty to do so 'seeing the expense and amount of trouble that was taken to ensure his attending the festivities'.⁴

In view of Jakata's denial, who then was responsible for locking up Gutu and his followers? Knowing the character of Jakata it is unlikely that he had not sanctioned the locking up of Gutu. On the other hand it is very probable that the police, out of overzealousness to please their master, or acting out of spite to humiliate Gutu, exceeded their instructions. It is more probable, however, that both Jakata and his police wanted to teach Gutu a lesson for 'disobeying' the Native Commissioner by failing to catch the coach to Salisbury at the Range. Whatever the explanation might be, the

¹ This was probably true for Makuvaza was then an old man - q.v. NVG4/1/1, Taberer to Williams, Private, 22 September 1899; and NVG4/1/1, Annual Report, 1909.

² N3/1/6, Enquiry held by W.S. Taberer, Acting C.N.C., Mashonaland, at Gutu re Chief Gutu's complaints against J.H. Williams, Acting N.C. of the district, August/September 1902.

³ Ibid.

⁴ N3/1/6, Williams to C.N.C., Salisbury, 3 December 1902. The coronation festivities of 1902 seem to have been widely boycotted by the Africans - q.v. N3/4/4, folio 17, J.W. Posselt, N.C., Charter, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 14 June 1911.

experience and indignity of being locked up apparently had a very salutary effect on Gutu, for, on the next journey to the Range, 'Gutu reached his destination comfortably on the morning of the fourth day without extra exertion on his part'.¹

Chief Gutu's second charge against Williams was one that touched him on a sore spot as it had a direct bearing on his authority as paramount chief. Some years before Williams was appointed N.C. of the District, Chief Gutu had heard of two young men who had quarrelled because one had killed the other's mother. Gutu had investigated the case and the man who had committed the offence had been fined two cows and two calves which were paid to Makuvaza 'as I was paramount Chief of the District'.² As far as all those involved in the case were concerned the matter had ended there. But then on his arrival in the district, Williams got to hear of this affair and reopened the case and fined Gutu four head of cattle and a gun to be paid back to the man who had previously been fined by Gutu himself. Furthermore, Gutu complained, 'I was fined two head of cattle by Mr Williams which were killed by Mr Williams and eaten by him and his messengers, and I was put in gaol. I was put in the lock up as a prisoner during the hearing of this complaint, and was kept there 2 days ... I was locked up day and night'.³

In effect Chief Gutu was asking the question: how could a chief, a paramount chief for that matter, be a chief if he could no longer fine his people as of old? How could he rule his people effectively if his decisions and judgements were always subject to review and/or supersession? This was obviously intolerant and no man could be chief in such circumstances. (Gutu of course regarded himself and wanted to be regarded as his forefather and predecessors in office had been, i.e. as the most powerful and influential chief of the Karanga chiefs of this part of Mashonaland).⁴

Williams angrily refuted Gutu's second allegation that he had converted two of the cattle concerned to his own use. According to him 'Nothing of the kind occurred'.⁵ He agreed that one 'beast' had been slaughtered at his station but not by himself but by Gutu, and the meat eaten by Gutu and some of his sub-chiefs, some of it being given to the messengers. Gutu, said Williams, had taken this 'beast' 'unlawfully' from some of his people. He, Jakata, thought it would be a lesson to Gutu 'if he killed the beast at my station and not be allowed to dispose of it otherwise'. Gutu had been locked up, on this, his first, occasion for taking four head of cattle and some grain from one of his people i.e. the man who had killed somebody else's mother as

¹ N3/1/6, Williams to C.N.C., 3 December 1902.

² N3/1/6, statement of Chief Gutu against Williams.

³ Idem.

⁴ See A3/18/27, C.N.C.'s office to Administrator's Office, 28 January 1918, request by C.N.C. on, 'Administration of native affairs, Gutu district'.

⁵ N3/1/6, Williams to C.N.C., 3 December 1902.

stated by Gutu himself. Gutu had been warned by Drew and by Williams himself, Jakata continued, not to 'conceal' such cases. 'Previous to this', said Williams, 'I had often to reprimand him for not behaving as a Paramount Chief should ...'.¹ There can be little doubt that Gutu believed he was behaving as a 'Paramount Chief should' i.e. as his predecessors had done, and that he regarded the N.C. as a meddling individual. But not according to Jakata who saw Gutu as 'a Chief with no sense of justice and I have continually had to warn him not to overcharge his people in settlement of cases tried by him; several times Natives have complained to me of his extortionate demands, in addition to this he had little or no power over his Natives and can hardly get them to do anything for him'.²

The third charge Chief Gutu and his people brought up against the Native Commissioner was the latter's ill-treatment, i.e. sjamboking, of the young men. The people had approached Gutu with their complaints and requested him to report the matter to the Chief Native Commissioner. Unfortunately for Gutu and his people Jakata, through his police, 'got to hear of this [i.e. the people's dislike of the sjambok] and told us that if any one refused to take a thrashing when he gave it to him he would be sent away to England'.³ 'I', Gutu told the C.N.C., 'then told Mr Williams that none of us wanted to go to England and that we would take the thrashing'.⁴ But Chingombe and Musarurgwa, two leading headmen, 'refused to take the thrashing and said they would rather go to England';⁵ and persisted in urging Gutu to complain to the C.N.C.⁶ 'Mr Williams', Gutu concluded, 'is constantly thrashing my natives and still persists in this. He thrashed just lately Washaya and

¹ Ibid, Williams to C.N.C., 1 September 1902.

² Idem.

³ N3/1/6, Statement of Chief Gutu against Williams.

⁴ N3/1/6, Statement of Chief Gutu against Williams.

⁵ N3/1/6, Statement of Chief Gutu against Williams.

⁶ N3/1/6, Statement of Chief Gutu against Williams.

and Gumindoga and Magaya* and a number of Chipenzi's** kraal ... He has always thrashed my people ever since he has been in the district for little or no reason whatever'.¹

On being questions by Taberer why he had not complained to the C.N.C. (during the occasion of his visit to Gutu in 1899) of the various treatments at the hands of Jakata, Makuvaza replied that 'previous to the arrival of the Chief Native Commissioner Mr Williams sent for him and told him that he was to make no complaints but to say that he was quite satisfied with his treatment by Mr Williams and Mr Williams gave him a beast to give to the C.N.C. as a present from Gutu'.² Clearly threats, intimidation and bribery were ready and useful weapons in effectively silencing Africans and suppressing their complaints against deeply felt grievances. Such were the means and methods employed to browbeat Africans into that unquestioning as well as unreasoning obedience to the Native Commissioners that the new political order and its agents demanded.

Jakata emphatically refuted Gutu's charges. As to preventing Gutu and his people from speaking to the C.N.C. on the occasion of his visit in 1899, Jakata stated that he had 'in the presence of the late Captain Roach, Captain Bowden, of the British South Africa Police and also of Mr [Francis?] Myburgh now also of the police', got up and addressed the Natives after introducing them formally to Mr Taberer, the C.N.C. for Mashonaland, and told them all, Headmen and thousands of ordinary Natives, that if any of them were dissatisfied or had any complaints to make, they were at liberty to say all they had to say, either against me or my messengers and Police boys. Mr Taberer also asked them not to be afraid, but to speak up if they had any troubles they wanted remedying [;] instead the Africans however had unanimously answered and said they had no complaints and requested that I, as their Native Commissioner, should not be sent to Victoria to act for Mr Drew who was being sent out to Selukwe'.³

In view however of the fact that native messenger Mahachi had informed Williams of the meeting Gutu and his headmen had held to discuss the complaints they wanted to make,⁴ and in view of Gutu's allegation that Williams himself had told him and his people not to say anything against him,⁵ it is not surprising that the people refrained from airing their grievances. Any one who was foolish enough to denounce Jakata and his administration in public would surely pay dearly for it when the C.N.C. left, viz. by being severely flogged. However Chingombe and Musarurgwa did speak up, privately though, and, surprisingly enough, not to the C.N.C. but to Williams himself, telling him that they did not want to be sent out to work and disliked the sjambok. Jakata replied by using another threat - the sjambok, he said, would not be used,

¹ N3/1/6, Statement of Chief Gutu against Williams.

² N3/1/6, Taberer's words.

³ N3/1/6, Williams to C.N.C., 3rd Dec. 1902 - most likely the request for Williams to stay at Gutu was inspired by Williams himself.

⁴ See page 27 above.

⁵ See page 27/28.

but 'all offenders, who will soon become very numerous, will be sent to Victoria, where you will get long terms of imprisonment and in some cases lashes also'.¹ Whereupon Gutu, Chingombe and Musarurgwa, according to Williams, said unanimously:

We do not know when we are well off, no one ever gets punished for nothing, and if the young men are allowed to do as they like the country will not be fit to live in, our wives will be misbehaving themselves with the young men.²

Consequently Chingombe and Musarurgwa's request for a second indaba with the C.N.C. was refused 'as every opportunity was given the Natives of airing their grievances at the big one ... and if they were afraid to speak up on that occasion when told by the C.N.C. and myself to air their grievances, they had no right to take up valuable time, as the books had to be looked into and other matters attended to'.³ This put an end to Chingombe and Musarurgwa's attempt to speak up.

Williams blamed lack of manpower and the Native Commissioner's insufficient authority as being partly responsible for some of the harsh aspects of his administration of Africans in Gutu and Chilimanzi. He complained that, 'On appointment a Native Commissioner is sent out to take charge of a district and is not given any instruction as to how he is to control his natives, [but] is left to do the best he can ... A man can hardly control thousands of Natives without sometimes punishing a few, in fact it is an impossibility to do so ...'.⁴ He went on to justify his conduct by claiming that he was not the only Native Commissioner who had sjamboked Africans. 'My treatment of Gutu and his people', he said, 'has been in no way different to that of other Native Commissioners throughout the country, from the Chief Native Commissioner downwards. It is hardly likely that I should be the only one who sjamboked Kaffirs if others did not'.⁵

Jakata's claim that he was not the only one who thrashed natives is not far from the truth. Practically all the N.C.s did it. This was all part and parcel of the process of the institutionalisation of State violence in the administration of Africans which is such a noticeable feature of the post 1896/7 Rhodesian Administrations.⁶

¹ N/3/1/6, Williams to C.N.C., 3rd December 1902.

² Idem.

³ Idem.

⁴ N3/1/6, Williams to C.N.C./, 3 December 1902.

⁵ Idem. According to S.P. Hyatt, The Old Transport Road, p.174, and also by repute (in the Victoria Province) the Native Commissioner of Chibi, Peter Forrestall ('Ndambakuwa'), used his sjambok very liberally.

⁶ See for instance L2/2/6/1, Acting C.N.C., W.S. Taberer, to Chief Secretary, 13 May 1902 (and correspondence with the Resident Commissioner) - re the destruction of Chief Chigi Nkota's crops, personal property and village as a consequence of him and his people's refusal to pay hut tax.

Williams further denied that he had wantonly thrashed Africans as Makuva alleged. All he had done, he claimed, had been done for the best possible motives, 'as a glance at my report whilst administering Chilimanzi District¹ should be sufficient to show that I had the interests of the Natives at heart, and that I did not approve of Natives being badly treated by the white people who came in contact with them'.² If, however, anyone doubted his sincerity, he continued, they were at liberty to make enquiries from the missionaries of the Berlin Missionary Society and the Dutch Reformed Church at Gutu's, Victoria, and Ndanga. These were men, Williams said, 'above the pale of suspicion' who had been at their stations for many years now, were well spoken of by the Africans,³ and 'knew the manners and customs of their natives thoroughly, speaking the language fluently'.⁴ These men, he continued, 'would never have tolerated any one treating the Natives harshly in these days and I have been in charge of the two above mentioned districts [Victoria and Ndanga] in addition to my own for months at a time, and therefore they have [had] plenty of opportunity of judging my ways and treatment of the Natives'.⁵

By the standards of the Native Department and Rhodesian white society Williams had, at the time of his resignation from the Company's service, rendered yeoman service in Gutu. Gutu had been 'pacified' and the paramount chief's power had been reduced to a mere shadow of its former substance and glory. Moreover, the Gutu natives had been cowed into submissive obedience. 'It is always remarked by people going through Gutu's!', said Williams with justifiable pride, 'how well the Natives are behaved there compared with some of the other districts of the country where people hardly get civility from the natives. If these people were not under proper control and dissatisfied, this would hardly be the case'.⁶

In 1902 Williams resigned from the Company's service. He was then very disillusioned because the Administration had passed him over for promotion to full Native Commissioner status.⁷ More immediately, however, the inquiry into his conduct of affairs in Gutu disgusted him and forced his resignation. Whatever the real reason for his resignation might be, his mind was made up and he terminated a promising career as a Company man in these simple words:

As I said before I do not wish to serve the B.S.A. Company any longer in any capacity at all; I hope what is going to be done will be done as soon as possible, so that I can follow my own inclinations hereafter. I have done my best to do my duty in a most difficult position, half the time doing two men's work.⁸

This was a fitting tribute to himself.

¹ For an extract of this report see NVG1/1/1, Acting C.N.C., Taberer, to Assitant N.C., Gutu, 10 September 1902.

² N3/1/6, Williams to C.N.C., 1 September 1902.

³ NVG4/1/1, Annual Report, Gutu, 1908. ⁴ N3/1/6, Williams to CNC, 3 Dec. 1902.

⁵ N3/1/6, Williams to C.N.C., 3 Dec. 1902. ⁶ Idem.

⁷ NVG2/1/1, Williams to C.N.C., 6 Sept. 1901, and Williams to C.N.C., 16 Sept. 1907; also N3/1/6, Acting C.N.C., Taberer, to Chief Secretary, 18 Nov. 1902.

⁸ N3/1/6, Williams to C.N.C., 3 December 1902.

MASHASHA, F J

J H Williams, Native
Commissioner of Gutu,
1897 - 1902.

Dept. of History.
Henderson Seminar paper.
1979.