

Hlengwe Memories of the Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle, 1975–1979

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Abstract

The Hlengwe of the south-eastern lowveld of Zimbabwe are a minority group with a war history that remains largely unwritten. In Zimbabwe a lot has been written about the liberation struggle, covering the heroic acts and suffering of the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups at the hands of colonial soldiers, but very little has been mentioned about minority groups such as the Hlengwe. Using oral evidence collected through interviews during the time of field research for my PhD thesis between 2014 and 2016, I analyse, in this article, memories of the Hlengwe about their participation in the struggle and their suffering at the hands of both the colonial soldiers and the liberation fighters or guerrillas. These memories reveal that the much-celebrated liberation struggle also had its “dark” side, which has been glossed over by most nationalistic scholars and patriotic historiography.

Keywords: Hlengwe; Karanga; memories; liberation struggle; ZANLA guerrillas; masses

Introduction

Zimbabwe’s liberation war narratives propagated through national school history text books, columns in mainline newspapers, propaganda papers like the *Patriot*, books published by former government ministers, and television and radio programmes have all related tales of the noble and heroic deeds of the Zimbabwean guerrilla fighters. Most of the popular narratives lack deeper analysis of the interactions between the liberation fighters and the peasants, and where they provided such analyses, these were only about the very cordial relations between the guerrillas and the peasants. They deliberately or unconsciously glossed over the dark side of the war and the unsavoury incidences between the guerrillas and the masses. Most of the stories were about the Shona and Ndebele, to the total exclusion of the minority groups such as the Tonga, Nambya, Venda and Hlengwe, to mention a few. This makes it sound as if the minority communities did not participate in



and were not affected by the liberation struggle. This article analyses the Hlengwe's memories about their experiences during the liberation struggle. These memories reveal that the history of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle is still an unfinished story as the stories of the minority communities are yet to be fully documented.

Hlengwe Support for the Liberation Struggle

After a few isolated cases in the 1960s of skirmishes between guerrillas and white people, with the Chinhoyi Battle of 1966 being the one that was reported on the most, the nationalist struggle entered its full-fledged militant phase in the 1970s, starting with the December 21, 1972 Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army's (ZANLA) attack on Altena farm in the Centenary district (Moorcraft and McLaughlin 2008). In 1975, isolated guerrilla groups were seen by a few people in parts of the south-east lowveld. By 1976, according to popular Hlengwe oral memory, ZANLA forces were fully operational in Matibi 2, Sengwe and Chitanga in Matibi 1, which are predominantly Hlengwe territories. It was at this time that the Hlengwe began to interact with the Shona-speaking ZANLA guerrillas.

Like most rural folks in Zimbabwe, the Hlengwe had no reason not to welcome the ZANLA liberation fighters because they had many grievances against the colonial masters. By the 1970s most of the Hlengwe were in the reserves of Matibi 2, Matibi 1 and Sengwe, having been evicted from their original homelands that had come to belong to the Europeans as sugar, cotton and citrus plantations in the Hippo Valley, Triangle and Mkwasine Estates (Bannerman 1978; Chisi 2013; Wolmer 2007; Wright 1972). Some of the land had been turned into game reserves and cattle ranches such as the Gonarezhou Game Reserve and the Nuanetsi Ranch (Tavuyanago 2016; Wolmer 2007; Wright 1972). The Hlengwe were also exposed to heavy taxation and forced labour. Hunting and exploitation of forest resources, which were the mainstay of their economy, were strictly banned, leaving them facing a bleak future as they tried to eke a living on agriculture in a very dry area. In the 1960s, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) activists at Gonakudzingwa made the people conscious about the evils of the colonial system and the need to stand up and fight to regain their land (Alexander 2011; Wright 1972). Therefore, it is undeniable that the Hlengwe had every reason to support the liberation struggle.

Of great interest to scholarship is to know whether, by the time that the ZANLA guerrillas entered the south-east lowveld, the Hlengwe who had formerly supported ZAPU, were ready to transfer their allegiance to ZANU and to support its liberation agenda. Some Hlengwe oral sources corroborated what some scholars have said about how ZANLA forces mobilised mass support for the liberation struggle. ZANLA placed great emphasis on the political education of the Zimbabwe workers and peasants so as to elicit support from the masses and recruit more people for guerrilla warfare training. Moorcraft and McLaughlin (2008) believe that ZANLA succeeded in recruiting masses in their area of operation because what they said resonated with local grievances. These authors said:

ZANLA recruits were educated in the “National Grievances.” Issues such as land alienation, education, health and welfare discrimination, political oppression, low wages and social inequalities were the staples of recruits’ political diet (Moorcraft and McLaughlin 2008, 75).

The guerrillas articulated issues that were the sources of Hlengwe resentment toward colonial rule. One interviewee said that, though people in the Chibwedziva area of Matibi 2 had not lost land, the ZANLA guerrillas had convinced them about the evils of colonialism, especially the issue of cattle tax through which they were forced to pay 30 cents per beast. Most Hlengwe did not understand why they had to pay this harsh tax for their cattle (Musengi, Interview, 05/07/2014). Most interviewees admitted that they had supported the struggle because they had wanted national independence (*chucheko*). In the National Archives of Zimbabwe (File AOH 448), Mavundla Chiseko revealed that he had not joined any political party but had supported the war because “The guerrillas were fighting for our independence and needed assistance. So we assisted by donating money and clothing items.” Chiseko emphasised that there had been a close relationship and a deep understanding between the guerrillas and the people, “Because we knew they were fighting for independence and we would also benefit. We had to be on their side to get independence.”

In line with the popular narrative, most of the Hlengwe people supported the guerrilla war effort by whatever means possible in order to regain independence and to free themselves from colonial oppression. *Hosi* (Chief) Sengwe said that he was the first person to give food to the guerrillas in the Sengwe communal area, and the largest number of guerrilla recruits in Matibi 2 and Sengwe came from his own area (Sengwe, Interview, 11/07/2014). Eric Gezani, the son of *Hosi* Gezani, said that the late Chief Dumezulu Gezani had also suffered at the hands of the Rhodesian soldiers for supporting the guerrillas, while five of his sons went to join the liberation struggle (Gezani, Interview, 09/07/2014). Many young Hlengwe men, together with Karanga, went to join the struggle on the side of ZANU. However, retired Brigadier Calisto Gwanetsa, one of the first guerrilla recruits from Matibi 2, said that, in general, there were more Shona or Karanga than Hlengwe who had joined the struggle from Matibi 2 and Sengwe (Gwanetsa, Interview, 13/07/2013).

However, opposed to the grand narrative about the popular support for the struggle was the revelation through Hlengwe memory that it was not solely the growth of nationalist consciousness that caused many Hlengwe to support or join the guerrillas. Some Hlengwe supported the guerrilla war involuntarily out of coercion and fear of guerrillas or fear of torture by Rhodesian soldiers. Two Hlengwe ex-ZANLA guerrillas’ stories proved that they joined the armed struggle as they found themselves between a rock and a hard surface. Chisandako Pikanisi, a Hlengwe ex-ZANLA guerrilla, said that he had gone to Mozambique to join the liberation fighters because the Rhodesian soldiers had been looking for him after fresh prints of his shoes had been seen very close to a point where a Rhodesian military vehicle had been hit by a landmine in the Masivamele area in Matibi 2 (Pikanisi, Interview, 05/07/2014). Masenyani Machuvukele, another Hlengwe ex-ZANLA guerrilla,

said that he had joined ZANLA following the torture of people by Rhodesian soldiers after a major battle in the Chibgwedziva area (Machuvukele, Interview, 04/07/2014). Some people were press-ganged by guerrillas to join the struggle. Willis Chauke revealed that many young men from Matibi 2 and Sengwe communal areas had been force-marched to Mozambique by the guerrillas when they had been found herding cattle in the bush. He said that this had stemmed from guerrillas' fear that if the herd-boys were left alone they could possibly report the guerrillas' movements to the Rhodesian soldiers (Chauke, Interview, 09/07/2014). This corroborates Parker's (2006) assertion that the guerrillas had "press-ganged" their recruits at times. Therefore, some of the Hlengwe's support for the liberation struggle was not voluntary but a response to circumstances that left them with very few options.

One case of forced support for the liberation struggle was reported by Chauke, a Hlengwe teacher, in his unpublished writings compiled by a missionary by the name of Houser. Chauke (2009, 47) claims that some of the demands made by guerrillas on the civilian population were outrageous. He recalls one instance at Lundi Mission in the Chitanga area:

The (guerrilla) commander instructed one of his two subordinates to hand the order list to the headmaster. We were given ten minutes to read through the list. In simple words this was a very long and heavy list. The list included items such as, pairs of boots, denim trousers, khaki or denim shirts, denim jackets, heavy-duty socks, packets of sweets, biscuits, pain-killing medicine, Dettol, bandages, methylated spirits, liquor, spirits and brandy. The headmaster made a rough calculation of the cost of goods on the list. The author vividly remembers that it was about ten thousand dollars. Mind you, this was in 1978—this was a lot of money when the dollar was very powerful. Salaries and wages were still in hundreds, tens and units. This was in spite of the fact that a very small number in the mission were gainfully employed. It was a shock.

The Hlengwe teacher further states that the guerrilla commander rejected any alterations to the list for whatever reason (Chauke 2009). It was this manner of obtaining supplies from the masses which made some of them resentful. This is why Kriger (2008) made the conclusion that Africans were mainly coerced into supporting the war effort by guerrillas. However, the issue of popular support for guerrillas remains highly debatable as there are established scholars who argue that the Africans supported the war because of the accumulated grievances against the colonial regime (Frederikse 1984). It is therefore very difficult to separate feigned and genuine support for the struggle.

The “Dark Side” of the Liberation Struggle: Stories about the War Rarely Told

This section looks at some unfavourable happenings during the struggle, which are rarely talked about in the “Patriotic History” of Zimbabwe. Most of them have to do with guerrilla behaviour during the time of the struggle. Tarugarira's (2015) observations are important in understanding the nature of interaction that followed between guerrillas and the Hlengwe

masses. He says the fear factor was critical in guiding relations between the guerrillas and the masses during the militant phase of the nationalist struggle:

The armed “sons” and “daughters” could by-pass traditional myths and taboos with impunity The “fathers” and “mothers” had to bow to the prescriptions of the “son” who learnt to kill and maim them. The father was emasculated since his authority was undermined and the mother was de-womanised since the myths that shrouded motherhood in a traditional setting were deconstructed. (Tarugarira 2015, 182–83)

He continues: “Peasants stood in fear particularly after witnessing the deaths of the alleged sell-outs and witches by guerrillas” (Tarugarira 2015, 183). Even by 2014, during the time of my research, many Hlengwe were not at liberty to discuss certain sensitive issues about the liberation struggle. However, a few were able to open up when interviewed individually.

It is clear that power relations between Hlengwe commoners and guerrillas were unequal, with the latter being the more powerful due to their ability to instil fear from the barrel of the gun. Hlengwe memory proves that, whilst they supported the struggle there was also fear and resentment of some guerrilla activities, which saw a parallel history being made in the form of a deepening Hlengwe ethnic consciousness as the Hlengwe saw themselves as victims of the gun-wielding Shona ZANLA guerrillas. The interviews revealed that there had developed some salient struggles within the struggle between the Shona-speaking ZANLA guerrillas and sections of the Hlengwe population, especially the older generations. The guerrillas were accused of showing little respect for Hlengwe customs and traditions. This does not mean that black Rhodesian soldiers were angels. The despicable behaviour of the liberators threatened the survival of imagined key pillars of the Hlengwe identity. This left many Hlengwe with little choice except to reorganise and find salient ways of retaining them.

Many Hlengwe interviewees expressed bitterness about how their language and culture had been disrespected by the Rhodesian soldiers and the ZANLA guerrillas. Whilst there was a consensus among the interviewees that in the early years of the war there had been cordial relations between the Hlengwe and the Shona guerrillas, they also confirmed that differences over cultural issues had begun to emerge as the war progressed. According to some sources, in the early years, the guerrillas observed Hlengwe culture and *enawu* (the law) but with time their behaviour changed for the worse (Gezani, Interview, 08/07/2014; Tolola, Interview, 09/07/2014). The progressive degeneration of guerrilla behaviour resulting in the wilful breaking of taboos was also observed by Maxwell (1993) in the Katerere Chiefdom in north-east Zimbabwe. The Hlengwe who were willing to talk about the behaviour of some renegade guerrilla forces said that key areas of conflict had concerned guerrilla sexual relationships with *vanhwanyana* (young Hlengwe women), the language of communication, and the general interaction with villagers that had sometimes ended up in the guerrillas showing no respect even to the elderly and *tihosi* (chiefs). The guerrilla-Hlengwe interaction brought out the ugly face of ethnicity. Hlengwe resentment

of Shona guerrillas was therefore centred on the latter's desecration of Hlengwe cultural symbols, which resulted in a hardening of feelings towards the guerrillas.

Hosi Gezani remembered that in the early days of guerrilla infiltration into Hlengwe areas, "*Hambu kuxuxa nava nhwanyana avanga mahi. Avaku ahikeseliwi*" ("The guerrillas did not even hold casual conversations with young women, in keeping with Hlengwe customs. They said that it was against their rules of engagement with the masses") (Gezani, Interview, 08/07/2014). However, when they became more familiar with the territory, they began flirting with the young women even in the presence of adults. It was this behaviour of some guerrilla elements that heightened Hlengwe ethnic consciousness; they watched as predominantly Shona gun-toting guerrillas abused their young women. Such hard feelings were still being expressed during the time of my field research. One source summarised it all too well when he said, "*Loyo anghakoma chibhamu unafreedom yokuendla leswo aswilavako keloyo anghakomangi nchumu*" ("A man with a gun has the freedom to do as he pleases to one who is unarmed") (Chauke, Interview, 09/07/2014). His words expressed the helplessness and vulnerability of the Hlengwe's position during the time of the armed struggle.

One old man claimed that the guerrillas were in the habit of "capturing" young girls, taking them to the guerrilla bases, "*sviya sviyativa hanyo leiya itivikana navakulukumba*" ("where they would learn about those things only known by the adults") (Ndavani, Interview, 10/07/2014). What he meant by "things only known by adults," was that the young women engaged in sexual activities with the guerrillas at very young ages. This confirms Ranger's claims that in the last years of Zimbabwe's guerrilla warfare, from 1978 to 1979, there was a "crisis of guerrilla legitimacy," due to deterioration in behaviour (1986, 381). Tolola (Interview, 09/07/2014) said that many young women had lost their virginity and had ended up with "fatherless" children in the sense that the children's biological fathers were not known, a thing which disappointed the Hlengwe elders who could only watch helplessly as their daughters struggled to raise their "*bastard* children of war."

What disappointed the Hlengwe who had been schooled on chastity and morality during their initiation to adulthood was that they were seeing taboos being broken right before their eyes by uncircumcised armed men. Conservative Hlengwe loathe cross-cultural marriages between Hlengwe and uncircumcised Shona men, derogatorily referred to as *maxuvurhi*, but now their *vanhwanyana* were being sexually abused by the same. Shona Rhodesian soldiers were also abusing the Hlengwe girls in the protected villages. The misbehaviour by unruly elements within the ranks of the guerrillas and the Rhodesian forces was interpreted in ethnic terms. The *vaNyai* (Hlengwe derogatory term for Shona) were doing as they pleased with Hlengwe young women. The breaking of taboos on sex caused widespread resentment. Although the Hlengwe had always engaged in early marriages, their response to the abuse was for parents to marry off their daughters much earlier than usual to save them from forced sexual relations with guerrillas, whereas some

sent their daughters away to live with relatives in urban areas (Tolola, Interview, 09/07/2014).

The Hlengwe also resented the imposition of Shona as a language of communication in their homeland. They claimed that the guerrillas demanded that everyone speak in Shona at *pungwes* (night vigils of masses and guerrillas) or in the presence of guerrillas. They did this so as to be able to follow every conversation. One informant said that the guerrillas would always say to most Hlengwe who were not fluent in Shona, “*Taura zvatinozwa tose iwe mudhara*” (“Speak in a language that we all understand old man”) (Chauke, Interview, 09/07/2014). Mukungulushi (Interview, 13/07/2014) said that the Hlengwe were not allowed to speak in “Shangaan” (Xihlengwe) at all. Most frustrating was that the guerrillas spoke to the Hlengwe in Shona without interpreters. Therefore there was a battle of languages. Chauke (Interview, 09/07/2014) felt that the Hlengwe language had been looked down upon (“*Se asvimaha ku lirhimi levan’wani litsikeleleka hasi*”). The forced use of *Xinyai* created in the Hlengwe a hatred of Shona, and, in response, the Hlengwe would always speak in their language in the absence of the guerrillas or in low tones at gatherings, insulting or deriding the guerrillas addressing them. These were attempts to frustrate the Shona-isation of the Hlengwe. This language war deepened the ethnic boundaries between the Shona guerrillas and most Hlengwe. Therefore there was a parallel process of the growth of Hlengwe tribalism alongside the growth of Hlengwe nationalist consciousness as the guerrillas threatened to destroy Xihlengwe, a strong pillar of Hlengwe identity.

Some expressed the sentiment that although the war had been painful, they had suffered more because of the ill-treatment by some guerrilla elements when they had been part of the “bush communities” that had emerged as the war had intensified. The “bush communities” were mainly composed of some Hlengwe who remained outside protected villages as a result of successfully evading the Rhodesian soldiers or being driven out of the protected villages by guerrillas who at times cut the security fence and freed the people (Gezani, Interview, 08/07/2014). These were supposed to be liberated communities but some believe that the commoners were being ill-treated by the guerrillas. A female informant said that, in a bush community across the Mwenezi River from Chikombedzi Mission where she had lived, relations had become strained over food distribution, which had been the responsibility of the guerrillas. According to her, this was because, after preparing mealie-meal the traditional way, which involved pounding the maize grain in mortars using pestles, the guerrillas would then say to the civilians, “*imi vabereki munodya guva isu tisu tinodya upfu*” (“You, the fathers and mothers or parents [the civilians] will eat the husks while we eat the fine meal”) (Name undisclosed for ethical reasons, Interview, 13/07/2014). This bred ill-feelings among the peasants against the guerrillas, which caused some to escape and return to the protected villages or to urban areas.

Unreported Killings of Civilians by Guerrillas

One dark side of the liberation struggle had to do with the torture and killings of civilians by guerrillas. Many people were not willing to talk about these atrocious acts committed

by the people's army. However, the few that talked revealed some crude methods by which so-called sell-outs and witches had been killed by the guerrillas and local collaborators. There were some callous murders of prominent Hlengwe civilians by the guerrillas under the pretext of eliminating sell-outs. This is similar to what Nyambara (2002) observed in Gokwe, leading to the conclusion that the guerrilla war in Gokwe was a virtual attack on modernity. In Gokwe, successful farmers were killed by guerrillas simply because they were better off than most of the people. Most of the successful farmers were seen as government collaborators (Nyambara 2002). In general, Zimbabwe's liberation war heightened tensions within rural communities, which resulted in many killings of innocent people, as rivals used the guerrilla presence to settle old scores.

In the words of one Hlengwe interviewee, he never wanted to have another war experience in his lifetime because what he saw during the liberation war was enough. At one time he witnessed a gruesome killing by guerrillas and *mujibhas* (collaborators) of a village-head accused of being a government supporter. They crushed his skull using traditional pestles and logs (Makiri, Interview, 02/07/2014). However, two war-related deaths that shocked the Hlengwe community were of two of their luminaries, Joseph Muzamani Chauke, a Hlengwe school inspector, and the Reverend Naison Chipetani Chauke, the principal of Lundi Bible College. These men were considered to be some of the very few educated and successful Hlengwe men. Very few people were willing to talk about these killings, but they insisted that the murders were unjustified (Woman informant, name not disclosed for ethical reasons, Interview, 13/07/2014).

As for Joseph Muzamani Chauke, who was murdered at the Chikombedzi Mission in August 1976, a woman informant and friend of the Chaukes intimated that, at the time that the guerrillas killed him, he was actually eager to meet them so that he could persuade them to use their influence to convince more Hlengwe young men and women to go to school (Friend of the Chaukes, Interview, 06/08/2016). Unfortunately, the first time that he met them was the night of his death. He was accused of being a sell-out and government sympathiser. His murder shocked the Hlengwe community and stirred immense Hlengwe anger against the guerrillas. Chauke describes it as the "brutal murder" of Muzamani (Chauke 2009, 176). The brutality was that he was tied to a tree and burnt to death using old newspapers and plastic bags. He pleaded innocent, and instead of being subjected to this horrendous torture, he pleaded to be shot so that he could die quickly. These pleas were ignored. As he was being killed, his wife, who was one of the first nurses in the area, was made to watch this horror. She was also stripped naked and beaten all over, and at the same time forced to serve tea to her husband's killers and locals (Friend of the Chaukes, Interview, 06/08/2016). One of the oral sources stated that since the day of Muzamani Chauke's killing, most Hlengwe and other locals who had witnessed the act, had interacted with guerrillas with a great deal of fear, suspicion and hatred (Woman, name not disclosed for ethical reasons, Interview, 13/07/2014).

In 1978, the Hlengwe community was also shaken by the abduction and disappearance of another high-profile Hlengwe church leader and principal of the Lundi Bible College, Naison Chipetani Chauke, for, yet again, unclear reasons, besides being called a sell-out. One Hlengwe said of Naison Chauke:

All those who knew Reverend Naison Chauke would not hesitate to confirm that he was a pious Christian. He was a devoted and dedicated Christian and preacher. He was a believer in high morality and good discipline (Chauke 2009, 148).

The events surrounding the disappearance of the Reverend in 1978 remained a secret until December 2018. A man who had witnessed the torture and bayonetting of the Reverend revealed to the family that he knew where he had been buried. After the Reverend's remains had been found and positively identified, many more people who were young collaborators during the time of the war came forward to inform the widow of what had happened on the night that he had been killed. It was then revealed that his murder was as a result of unverified reports made to guerrillas by *chimbwidos* (female guerrilla collaborators). These *chimbwidos* were part-time Bible college students that the Reverend might have reprimanded who then took advantage of their relations with the guerrillas to settle the score with the principal. Without any thorough investigations, the principal was force-marched through the school grounds and beaten in front of school children and the mission community. The whole mission community was gathered at a place near the mission church building and witnessed him being beaten in the presence of his wife, children, fellow mission pastors, Bible school students and the congregation. He was then taken to a place called Nine Band at the confluence of the Runde and Makwe Rivers, where the guerrillas used to have *pungwes* (night vigils). There he was stripped naked and beaten with all sorts of objects throughout the night and the following day until around 16:00 when he was bayoneted in the stomach by a drunken guerrilla. By then he was bleeding profusely and his whole body was fractured and he could hardly help himself (Male informant, Lundi, 24/09/2018; Female informant, Chitanga area, Interview, 24/09/2018).

The Rhodesian Security Forces and the Creation of a Hlengwe Ethnic Army

Interviews also revealed the existence of a unique government military unit among the Hlengwe, which did not exist elsewhere. The Hlengwe revealed that as the liberation war had progressed, a special military force known as the Shangaan (Hlengwe) Army, had been formed, operating only in Hlengweni. The army was a good example of Enloe's (1996) "ethnic soldiers." According to Enloe (1996), ethnic soldiers are geographically distinct and they usually occupy territories on the regional peripheries of the state. They share certain intra-communal characteristics, in that they are categorised as "tribes," meaning that they are "societies with rather confined societal boundaries in which bonds of personal allegiance and reciprocity play basic roles in locating authority and distributing power," and they are culturally distinct (Enloe 1996, 283). She further says that, even though they are part of the bigger army they are typically organised in units of their own, with insignia

and uniforms highlighting the distinction of the unit, and the military elite keep the regiments of these armies explicitly communal. The Shangaan Army was an ethnic army that imagined a Hlengwe identity.

Parker (2006) posits that this army was formed as a counter to ZANLA's approach of controlling people by default through fear and intimidation:

The local Shangaans (Hlengwe) had been subverted by the guerrillas and I decided on a personal venture in an attempt to win back their support. I founded the Shangaan Army. My thinking based on the objectives ... win the hearts and minds of the people, deprive communist guerrillas of support from an intimidated populace and deny them access to food and shelter. (Parker 2006, 70)

One former member of the Shangaan Army also said that this army had been formed because Rhodesian security agents had failed to penetrate and win the support of the Hlengwe (Tolola, Interview, 09/07/2014). However, a former commander of the 400-men Shangaan (Hlengwe) army said that the army had been formed after two Hlengwe headmen had made strong representations to the government officials about how “*maGuard Force echiNyai*” (Guard Forces with emphasis on their Karanga/Shona ethnicity) had been abusing the Hlengwe each time the latter had left or entered the protected villages (Former Commander of Shangaan Army, Interview, 06/09/2016). Two women interviewees confirmed the abuse of Hlengwe women by the Guard Force unit. They said that the Guard Forces had had a low opinion of Hlengwe women and had often sexually abused the young women for the simple reason that they had known that, unlike the Shona, Hlengwe women, the majority of whom were illiterate, would not report them to the authorities out of fear (Mushavi, Interview, 06/08/2016; Sibanda, Interview, 06/08/2016). The high rate of illiteracy among the Hlengwe also resulted in their being beaten for failing to memorise their national identity numbers, which was a requirement by the Guard Forces to prove that the identity cards that people carried were theirs (Ndirowei, Interview, 17/07/2014). Following successful meetings between the traditional leaders and government officials, the former agreed to help with the recruitment of the first group of young Hlengwe men who were trained as soldiers with the special responsibility of protecting their parents.

The young men of the Shangaan army were also used to lure fellow unemployed Hlengwe to join the force. It was easy to do since they were now earning Rhodesian \$20.00, the equivalent of £20,00 British Sterling, as a salary and had a good grey uniform which became associated with the Hlengwe military unit of the Rhodesian security forces (Commander of the Shangaan Army, Interview, 06/09/2016). The parents of the recruits also received some money from the government as a token of appreciation. However, some were press-ganged in the same way that the guerrillas also got their recruits (Former Commander of the Shangaan Army, Interview, 06/09/2016; Parker, 2006; Tolola, Interview, 09/07/2014). The recruitment was also designed in a manner that all recruits had to have “extended families or businesses that connected them to a large audience in the area,” and this was achieved by abducting teachers, headmen, tailors, herdsman,

storekeepers and other respected members of the community as a way of making the abductees' relatives quickly support their own husbands, fathers or relatives at large (Parker 2006, 71). By the time that the force was disbanded just before independence, it stood at about 400 men (Former Commander of the Shangaan Army, Interview, 06/09/2016). Therefore both coercion and enticement were used to make the Hlengwe people join the army.

The training was conducted in the Xihlengwe (Shangaan) language so as to give the unit its ethnic identity. The trainees were all forced to use Hlengwe pseudonyms such as Khomanani, Hangalangakani, Ahichavi Nchumu and many others (Former Commander of the Shangaan Army, Interview, 06/09/2016). Their training was, besides producing Hlengwe soldiers, also meant to inculcate Hlengwe values in them. Shangani-speaking white people who were said to have knowledge of Hlengwe customs and history of the Shangani tribes in both Rhodesia and South Africa, such as the Sparrow family and the brothers John and Peter Henning, were used in this project. After training they were deployed to their home areas where they worked amongst their own people. The rationale behind this deployment of forces was that the Hlengwe would support and associate with a military unit composed of men of their own ethnicity. The Hlengwe commoners were also made to believe that it was their own army, and the force was made to believe that it had a duty to defend the locals, who were their own sisters, fathers and mothers.

Many oral sources confirmed that the treatment of *vanhwanyana* and the Hlengwe population in general had improved after the coming of the Shangaan Army, reflecting a general appreciation of the army's role (Chauke, Interview, 09/07/2014; Gezani, Interview, 09/07/2014).

Conclusion

Hlengwe oral memory about the liberation struggle proves that though the Hlengwe supported the struggle, like all colonial masses, they also had their own interpretations of the struggle. Their stories do not just corroborate grand narratives of unquestionable support for the struggle, but instead reveal that within the popular liberation struggle there were many unwritten histories in the making. These stories reveal that people joined and supported the struggle for different reasons such as the desire for independence and to escape fear and coercion, being press-ganged and forced by limited options to join the struggle, which seemed to be the only way out. They also reveal the salient ethnic struggles at local level within the nationalist struggle. It is also clear that, although liberation fighters were people's heroes, they had a dark side, which tainted their heroic acts. This was associated with a crisis of behaviour among the guerrillas, reflected through acts such as breaking Hlengwe taboos with impunity, disrespecting Hlengwe culture and traditional authority, sexually abusing young women, killing some people deemed to be sell-outs without carrying out thorough investigations, killing some people to settle old scores, and committing grisly or gruesome killings of perceived sell-outs. Hlengwe memories also reveal unique attempts at social engineering as a strategy by the colonial regime to counter

guerrilla efforts to mobilise the masses, which resulted in the creation of a Shangaan Army. It is clear that the history of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle is not a finished story, for there are many stories to be retold by the people once they overcome their fears.

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