

An Appraisal of Alvord's 'Gospel of The Plough' on The Transformation of The Peasant Communities of The Gutu District of Zimbabwe: 1926-1960.

Gilbert Tarugarira.
Department of History
Midlands State University
Gweru, Zimbabwe

Abstract

Western historians and social scientists have accustomed Africans to a particular interpretation of history which celebrates the view that it is ideas that mould the actions of men and women. As a result, the agricultural history of Zimbabwe has been written with philosophies being considered as the driving force behind agricultural transformation or change. Philosophies are considered as precursors to any change in the people's quality of life. The study of that change is therefore the study of changes in ideas about agriculture and of the individuals who came up with these ideas. In the case of the agricultural history of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Alvord the agricultural philosopher is considered to have been wholly instrumental in initiating agricultural changes. This study however argues that in as much as Alvord initiated reforms, these were efforts by a capitalist ruling group to primarily serve the capitalists. Those in his small group felt a genuine sense of self-fulfillment and accomplishment, they liked the work they did, and they had the security of social position and accumulated wealth. The orthodox economic theory which guided Alvord was based on an individualistic view of society, in which socio-economic structures were analysed from the standpoint of their efficiency in maximizing individual welfare. It is argued in this paper that nothing can be discussed about rural development without giving reference to the people and issues of power, allocation of resources and culture; hence Alvord's efforts were in futility.

Key words:

Introduction

Reportedly the first agricultural missionary to be appointed in Africa, Emory Delmont Alvord an American Methodist missionary assumed duty in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in October 1926 as an Agriculturalist for Instruction of Natives (Annual Report Director of Agriculture 1946:37). Alvord directed the 'Alvord Scheme' for agricultural development in Native Purchase Areas and Reserves and was credited with the foundation of the agricultural extension service for African areas. He devised measures for the improvement of farming whereby he hoped to eliminate bush-fallowing, maintain more or less continuous cultivation of arable lands, maintain or raise soil fertility, increase yields and lay a basis on which more

advanced farming techniques could be developed. Before Alvord, the white settlers considered African farming a haphazard affair. During the more than two decades he worked among Africans, he bragged about having created wants and desires which bodily lifted the Africans out of the sea of ignorance and superstition which hitherto engulfed them. When he retired in March 1950 as Director of the Department of Native Agriculture, he was credited with providing a faithful service to all reserve and purchase areas of Rhodesia. Indeed, more than a vestige of Alvord's work can be seen in current programmes of rural development.

According to Raid (1977:432), the 'success' which Alvord scored at Mt Selinda following the introduction of a course on Methods of Teaching Agriculture resulted in the Government deciding to adopt Alvord's scheme for agricultural demonstration work for Africans in 1924. Since then, Domboshawa churned qualified demonstrators and by 1931, there were 265 demonstration plots in the country. Those peasant farmers who were trained in or followed the rigorous modern farming techniques prescribed by agricultural extension workers were able to increase the productivity of both staple food and cash crops. They formed local farmers' clubs, expanded their land claims and generally evolved into a distinct socio-economic group considered by Rukuni (1994) as 'part of the communal area agricultural prime movers'. Statistics given by Yudelman (1964:140) highlighted that, 'while master farmer families in the 1960s were only 30 per cent of the communal area population, they accounted for all the increased productivity'. Marveling at the success of new farming techniques, Dumbutshena remarked:

Agricultural demonstrators, trained and qualified lived with the people and taught them most effectively the value of crop rotation, manure and fertilizers. The settler governments seriously put into effect the plans for the training of Africans in the methods of farming. Their schemes paid dividends. Zimbabwe can be proud of having a rural population that knows, if not everything, at least the most important rudiments of agriculture. When Zimbabwe becomes independent, her problem will not be the lack of trained manpower in the field of farming. It will certainly be how to keep down agricultural produce in order not to flood the market (Dumbutshena (1975:48).

Praises showered upon Alvord were admittedly deduced from achievements on the ground. However, although some of the measures meant to improve African agriculture were quickly adopted, Kay (1972:85) argued that they also made limited appeal. The Africans did not accept the views held by the Department of African Agriculture, the government and Europeans in general that African use or misuse of land constituted a serious threat to the basic resources of the country which ultimately denied them a reasonable standard of living. Whether or not Africans had their standard of living transformed for the better is the focal concern of this

study. Could it be that Alvord was merely an idealistic, agricultural evangelist who lacked the much needed faith in what he was doing?

The Gospel of the Plough: Conceptual Schema

When Alvord preached his 'gospel of the plough', the hallmark of his teaching was working together with God in order to get good crop yields while at the same time taking good care of the soil. In 1930 Alvord warned that 'Prayers are unclean without action' and that 'Faith without work is dead' (S 1542/C19, précis for NAD Conference, Victoria Falls, 1933). His argument was that if poverty had to be alleviated and people's quality of life improved, emphasis was on combining prayer with hoeing if the prayers were to be answered. Alvord saw superstition, ignorance, witchcraft and worship of the 'unknown' and taboos which shrouded methods of agriculture as the factors militating against increased agricultural production among Africans. From his point of view, African agricultural practices were wholly primitive, wasteful and destructive. He remarked:

The African has many superstitions, taboos and customs which are just as foolish... and these are connected with the Africans' cattle as well as with his crops and as his cattle are concerned, they are a great drawback to his advancement. To the African, his cattle are regarded as a bank, where numbers count more than quality or value for beef. They are also essential for lobola (Alvord 1933).

Alvord's psyche pictured Africans who lamentably lacked in the qualities of initiative, application and discipline. The Commissioner on Native Education added that African agricultural methods were wasteful, slovenly and unnecessarily ineffective. Thus, when Alvord initiated his scheme for training Africans in agricultural demonstration work he held the conviction that a fellow African was the best person to 'teach agriculture to the superstition steeped African who attributed high crop yields to "divisi", "muti", witchcraft, charms and the favour of the ancestral spirits.' (Report by the Commissioner on Native Education 1925). Admittedly, the belief that magic was indispensable in successful business was strong among Africans and seashells (*nyengerezi*) were used as a charm (*divisi*) for bountiful harvests. When Paul Chidyausiku wrote the novel *Pfungwa Dzasekuru Mafusire*, he was evidently bent on breaking the belief in witchcraft and magic. On agriculture and fertility medicine (*divisi*), he says:

Our people are no longer fools, but it is just that many of them have not yet seen the light. They are still being fooled like children in many things. There is no fertility medicine, listen that I may tell you, Mushongavende. Fertility medicine is in your hands. Fertility medicine is knowing to cultivate in the correct way. These things of anointing and blowing, or of little animals that are said to go and fetch grain in people's stores, I do not believe in the least. I say it is just a lie. (Chidyausiku 1960:31, 32)

In the novel the character Mafusire attributed his own excellent crops to the use of enlightened agricultural methods. Obviously such remarks could have been good music to Alvord's ears.

The landed background to evolution and revolution in African agriculture

Gutu District is situated in the south-east of Zimbabwe. It is separated from the Buhera District on the north by the Nyazvidzi River, from the Bikita District on the south-east by the Dewure River and its tributary the Mungezi River. On the west and south-west, it abuts on the Chirumanzu and Masvingo Districts. After the occupation of Southern Rhodesia by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in 1890, the official policy with regard to African tenurial system in Gutu District was to let the Africans continue operating as they had always done. Meanwhile the company had granted large tracts of land to the pioneers who knew little about farming. Native Commissioners had power to demarcate land to the Africans as a way of implementing the 1894 Order-in-Council. Thus, when the boundary of Gutu Reserve was drawn in 1902 by the Company, the north-west part of the Reserve had been carved out to speculators. In the first decade of the 20th century, settler agriculture was still at its infancy and so peasants were the only salvation in the provision of food to developing mining centres. In 1908, an estates department which had been established to promote European settlement requested the readjustment of the original land distribution, arguing that some reserves were too large while others were too small. The readjustment of reserve boundaries caused apprehension among Africans. Before Alvord, many Africans refused to adopt the modern agricultural techniques recommended by some Native Commissioners since 1911 (Floyd (1959:19), Palmer (1968:24) and Weinrich (1975:19). The fear was that good crops would lead to further alienation of African land. The end of company rule in 1923 witnessed a European desire to completely segregate African and European areas. The main recommendations of the 1925 Morris Carter Commission were embodied in the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, whose general intention was to bring about a gradual removal of the Africans from European lands into reserves and Native Purchase areas.

Already in 1930, E.D. Alvord, the agriculturalist in the Native Department, was reporting that:

On many Reserves the populations are dense and they are heavily stocked with cattle so that much of the area is what we term old, worn out Native lands. On these Reserves we are trying to induce the people to centralize their arable lands and set aside permanent grazing lands for their cattle. It is not our intention to necessarily encourage greater production, but rather to reduce the area under cultivation and to encourage better methods on smaller lands in order that people may grow sufficient for their needs and more land may be available for grazing purposes (S1193/F3 Alvord to Chief Agriculturalist 1/4/30).

The implementation of the Act whose effects began to be felt in 1934 in Gutu District witnessed the pegging of 19 farms on land which was occupied by Musarurwa and Zinyemba's people. As a result of the promulgation of the Land Apportionment Act and the subsequent creation of Purchase areas, the Lands Commission assigned four Native Purchase Areas (NPAs) to Gutu District, namely Dewure (152 600 acres), Caledon (6 350 acres), Mazare (3 797 acres) and Nyazvidzi (68 600 acres). Dewure and Caledon were later merged to form Dewure in 1941 (Palmer 1968:256). The Native Land Board (NLB) which oversaw development in the areas and selected applicants for farms demanded "personal occupation" of the farms, but this policy as Cheater (1984:159-62) observed was difficult to enforce, especially when "absentee farmers" worked for the state as clerks, policemen, and the like. Applications poured in from government messengers and clerks, police, and those who manned other minor, though critical, offices of the state. By 1936, 59 farms had been bought and occupied in the District. According to Weinrich (1975:21), the slow increase in the uptake of purchase area farms was due to the unsuitability of much of the land set aside for African purchase, the need to survey the land before it could be brought to the market, and also that much of the land was illegally occupied by Africans living under chiefs in adjacent tribal areas. By the mid-1940s criticism mounted of purchase area farmers as poor, inefficient farmers who rarely even visited their farms. Many thought the scheme should be abandoned as a failed freehold experiment and that given the shortage of land for reserve Africans, the amount of land so far settled in the purchase areas was too generous (Shutt 1997). White farmers in the District also advanced socio-economic and psychological reasons for possessory segregation. They cited the fears that close proximity of their farms to native lands would spread livestock disease, that stock thefts would increase and that land values would depreciate. J. Crossby of the Chatsworth Farmers' Association filed a report to the Lands Commission complaining that African ownership of land close to white men's farms would lamentably lower the value of land and thus militate against white settlement (ZAH 1/1/4 Evidence to the Lands Commission 1925). The Gutu - Felixburg Farmers Association voted in favour of separate areas for the two races (S 597 Letter to NC Gutu 03/04/1925). Alvord himself on the other hand saw the partial segregation afforded by the Native Reserves as a vital necessity. His argument was that since the reserves would not be enlarged, the alternative was to develop them. As a result, the indigenous inhabitants of Gutu who applied for farms were expected to have Master Farmer Certificates, failure of which they had to prove ownership of cattle, farming implements like ploughs and indicate how much money they were able to pay in monthly installments. By 1948 agricultural demonstrators Mapfumo, Ndongwe, Mutihero, Mashingaidze, Nyashanu, Zimudzi and Chipondoro had been deployed in Gutu so as to assist the farmers in Purchase Areas. The deployment of the demonstrators into NPAs saw a shift of focus from assisting those in the reserves who needed the help most considering that they were crowded.

The attempts to contain the deteriorating economic situation in the reserves led to the enactment of the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 which was designed to enforce good farming methods such as the construction of contour ridges, destocking and prevention of further land fragmentation in reserves. In passing the NLHA therefore, the government hoped to curtail the mobility of the reserve Africans with the expectation that permanence could result in better methods of farming. It can as well be argued that the philosophy behind this practice was that, in order to milk a cow then one must have it stand still, making it possible for settlers to extract surplus from the peasants. The NLHA largely Alford's design, did not in any way solve the land problem. Holleman (1969:66) saw the Act as 'one of the boldest and technically best prepared measures of agrarian reform in Africa' and yet it had disastrous effects on African agriculture and general welfare.

Education and the ideology of efficiency

The picture of Gutu before 1922 showed a peasant economy successfully defending itself against the demands of capital and the state for labour and taxes. Summers (1994:7) noted that Africans in Gutu as in some other regions, consistently pursued work according to their own schedules, not those of would be employers, as they ploughed and harvested their fields at home before going out to seek wage work to pay taxes. After describing the period of the late 1920s as the zenith of peasant prosperity, it has to be noted that this wealth was not generated solely from agricultural and stock sales, but that over the course of the three decades from 1900, the wage earnings of migrant workers had steadily become the dominant source of rural wealth.

By the 1920s however, Africans had developed specific educational expectations and wants such that they evaluated mission and government schools according to the curriculum and conditions they offered. While hundreds of unemployed labour migrants flocked to the schools, the hunger for education should not be viewed as a sudden decision to abandon 'tradition' and accept European culture. It was rooted in the pragmatic realization that an educated person had better job possibilities and more control over produce markets. As Davis and Dopcke (1987:80) have put it, the desire for education was consistent with a commitment to traditional strategies for accumulation. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) mission's effort at agricultural improvement and 'community development' did not have much impact either as every promise of progress made by the missionaries seemed more and more to be a dream deferred. The curriculum was taught largely in English and concentrated on weaning the students from African to Western culture. Schooling alone was never enough to achieve social mobility. Not surprisingly then, the 'efficiency analysis' excluded the possibility that educational systems were well managed within the limitations of a system that only maximized

the productive potential of a small percentage of the population. The modernization perspective found in America which informed Alvord's policies was totally different from what Zimbabwean farmers could adapt with alacrity. African belief systems were accompanied by specific values, logic and interpretation of cause-effect which led to different choices about lifestyle, spirituality and practices of farming. For the Africans, the role of ancestors, sacred animals and places, the role of rituals and spiritual technologies, the time concept and the relationship of humankind to nature were embedded in the much denigrated taboos. Totemism with its related taboos was rubbish and yet it was a resource management technique which protected animal and plant species from extinction. For Alvord, it was unthinkable that knowledge could be found in taboos. However, Matsika (2012:162) argues that there is an African philosophy comprising the spirit, nature (land) and society (humans) under which land belongs to the spirits of the area and is therefore considered common property. This shows that African agriculture was closely connected with religion. The education provided in Alvord's demonstrators' programme as well as the master farmer training programmes was mainly scientific, meant to uproot the 'barbaric' and 'superstitious' African thinking from people's minds (Sadomba 2010). While African epistemology provided room for paranormal cognition where knowledge was based on spiritual mediumship and divination, in Western thought this would be equivalent to telepathy or premonition.

According to Davis and Dopcke (1987:82), the religious movements which spread in the late 1920s and 1930s for example the Zion Christian Church of Samuel Mutendi appropriated and transformed biblical symbolism where the Holy Spirit was conceived to be more powerful than the Europeans' 'scientific' knowledge. Independent church leaders were directly involved in the quest for good rains and proper crops which brought them in direct confrontation with the white men's scientific knowledge. The '*ungano yembeu*' gave Zionists a chance of having the seed, soon to be sown in their fields, blessed by their leader. Flails and pegs to be used in the fields were brought together with the seed for blessing (Daneel 1977:187). Mutendi's image as a rainmaker or mediator of rain attracted several chiefs into his Church. Chief Mazuru in the Gutu district and several of his people were converted to Zionism, baptizing twenty-eight members on one Sunday. Such developments undoubtedly affected the attitudes of most ruralists towards the Alvordian enterprise which was closely identified with the colonial administration.

The Master Farmers, ploughs and productivity

The Master Farmer programme introduced by Alvord in 1929, provided that whoever wished to become a Master Farmer was inspected and examined by the Extension Service. If the farming activities reached the required high standard

one was awarded a Master Farmer certificate and badge (Jordan 1978:516). The Victoria Master Farmers Association represented 201 affiliated Master Farmer Clubs with about 8000 Master Farmer members. By 1942, there was an increased interest in village improvement and sanitation where people competed for shields and cups in football and other sports. As already indicated, the master farmer's certificate became an essential prerequisite for obtaining a purchase area farm, and remained so until the early 1960s. The practice even continued after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 as a prerequisite for those to be allocated land under the resettlement programme. Besides having cattle, master farmers were expected to have equipment which included ploughs, harrows, cultivators and scotch carts. The number of ploughs in Gutu rose from 550 in 1923, to 1300 in 1929 (S235/503 NC's Annual Report 1923). The acquisition of ploughs meant that the acreage under cultivation increased while on the other hand, soil erosion which played havoc in the reserves was also being traced to the development of the plough technology. As people with ploughs swallowed up large portions of arable land, those without ploughs were forced to relocate or simply stayed on the dwindling space. Ranger (1985:69, 70) has also linked the predatory expansion of the ox-ploughing entrepreneurs to the colonial construction of the concept of 'shifting agriculture' and administrative arguments to limit ceilings on landholdings. The plough also reduced the grazing land for the African owned cattle whose population continued to increase. While in 1922 Gutu and Chikwanda reserves had 31 559 cattle, the population had risen to 81 799 by 1945 (S1862 NC Gutu's Miscellaneous Report 1950). The growing use in ploughs which connoted an advance in the economy of human labour was so unintelligently applied that its results were of doubtful economic benefit. Both the expansion of arable lands and the improper use of the plough contributed to the irreparable damage of land resources in the reserves. In 1938, 4 million acres in the reserves were said to be damaged seriously and in 1941, it increased to 8 million (Bhebe 1989:20, 21). Although less damaging than the sleigh or sledge, the wheeled ox-drawn cart vehicle, like the plough, added to the menace of erosion in the poorly maintained roads. By 1943, conservationists reported that, Gutu, among other reserves was in a deplorable state in terms of declining natural resources (McIlwaine 1943:8).

Destocking

While Gutu was late to feel the full impact of most state 'environmental' policies, it became a testing ground for one of the most controversial, compulsory destocking in 1938. While some independent buyers participated, all cattle sold ultimately went to Liebigs, whose cannery at West Nicholson was the only *de facto* market for low-grade cattle. In the Gutu reserve, due to poor quality grazing, approximately 12 acres per beast were required but because of the increase in cattle, the area had shrunk to 7.9 acres per beast (Report on Certain Sales of Native Cattle:1939:21) Already by 1939, the colonial government had cited overstocking as one of the

causes of ecological collapse in Gutu. The result was destocking which started in 1945. Within two years, compulsory destocking had taken away from Africans 59 614 cattle (S 1217/9 Summary of Destocking Results 1947). NCs were empowered to cut down herds on a culling and quota basis where voluntary control was not deemed sufficient. One dip tank attendant Ronnie grew unpopular in the Munyikwa, Mazuru and Chinyika areas. 'He would cull your fattest beasts which were taken to market centres such as Baro, Dahwa, Marangwani, Mugo and Chihonga where the beasts were sold to white farmers for 8 shillings or at times a bag of maize a beast (Tarugarira 2013).

When destocking was introduced, Africans were told that their cattle either had diseases or were the wrong breed and had to be eliminated. It was true that some cattle including those owned by whites were attacked by foot and mouth disease but what puzzled African cattle owners was that some of their cattle which were said to be diseased were sold to Europeans, mostly farmers or butchers. In the late 1950s a lot of 'diseased' cattle were driven by Ronnie's men from Baro, Dahwa and Chinyika to an unknown destination where they were *presumably burnt* (Makura 2013). Destocking one can argue, was a weapon used by the government to ensure the impoverishment of the African. All senior staff of Alvord's Department of African Agriculture were appointed culling officers and were authorized to enforce cattle owners to reduce their stock. The owners could sell or slaughter their excess stock. No price-support programme was launched and many Africans felt that prices paid were unrealistically low. This added to African resentment. Family bulls (*mabhuru emisha*) were castrated during the destocking period. Native demonstrator Ndongwe carried out excessive castration in Gutu district in August 1946 (S 482/145/3A CNC's December Memorandum 1949). Reports of coercion during the cattle culling aroused the concern of Rev.Arthur Shearly Cripps, Rev.A.G.Jackson (a DRC minister in Chibi), and Ruth Comberbach, the wife of the former Gutu Native Commissioner who regarded destocking as a political experiment in coercion. People protested against destocking through songs which attacked the exercise. Mordekai Hamutyinei, a teacher became very popular in the Chingombe area and even beyond for composing such songs (Hamutyinei 2013). Destocking was also countered by a refined system of ownership. To eliminate the risk of losing cattle, one would distribute the herd among his sons and it was common to have about five dipping cards for cattle from the same kraal. For the Africans in Gutu, the culling of cattle was a new and ominous experience of aggressive state intervention into their daily lives. Munguke, addressing the Commission of Enquiry at the Devuli dip tank, eloquently expressed the meaning of this change that 'it was the authorities who assisted us to accumulate wealth and to get rich, and from that we have been told ...that the water is getting short and that we have too many cattle' (ZAX I/1/2 Meeting at Devuli tank).To implement a destocking scheme in a society which valued cattle not merely for

their economic, but social and spiritual value, had far reaching effects. To the Africans, cattle meant more than agricultural stock. They constituted a significant measure of personal wealth, a traditional source of lobola, the medium of payment for tribute, or of retribution for wrong-doing. The importance of cattle to the relative rise in rural prosperity was recognized by the native commissioners. Cattle were the focus of festivities, rainmaking ceremonies and social observances of all kinds and could be exchanged for grain during drought periods. The linking of de-stocking with community development in the minds of many rural people was to prove an obstacle in the implementation of this policy.

In any case, a closer look at the erosion problem in the reserves outrightly indicates that the bulk of it was a result of the African way of cultivation made imperative by the land segregation policies. People had no alternative but to continuously plough on sloppy and rocky areas. Thus the issue of ecological deterioration was actually not a matter of overstocking but a symptom of the negative impact of the colonial land policy on the African economic activities. In 1946, the Chief Native Commissioner of Gutu even questioned the effectiveness of destocking as a means of control. The cumulative effect of the changes described so far was to accelerate deterioration of natural resources and reduce the productivity of land.

Authoritarian Planning of African Agriculture

The technical development phase of the colonial agrarian policy comprised four main activities namely agricultural extension, centralization, destocking, and land husbandry. From the 1930s, the state had encouraged farmers to combat soil erosion and as Hughes (2010:79) put it, 'the American-born Alvord wished, at all costs, to avoid an African version of Oklahoma's Dust Bowl'. Demonstrators, just like the Jeanes teachers would preach hygiene and building of houses with bricks to prevent deforestation. Incidentally the creation of many dongas due to brick moulding and cutting trees to burn the bricks were not considered as a threat to conservation strategies. Centralization (separation of arable and grazing lands and allocation of standardized plots to each landholder) and soil conservation schemes were also carried out through forceful persuasion. Although centralization was generally welcomed by African cultivators because they saw the immediate advantages for cattle herding, it deprived their land of manure because it increased the distance between the cattle byres and the fields, and few peasants made the effort to cart cattle manure to their fields. Centralisation also concentrated vast numbers of livestock in one area leading to overgrazing and exposure of soil to the damaging action of water and wind. The huge herds of cattle were also frequently driven to and from the dip-tanks as well as grazing and watering places along definite paths which soon developed into gulleys and dongas. As a means to raise production, centralization was generally a failure.

Alvord admitted: "We have wasted our time for 17 years in conducting agricultural demonstrations work" (Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, the CNC and Director of Native Department, 1961:25). The results had been poor and he placed the blame on what he called the African's failure to change and adopt new farming methods. He concluded that African peasant farmers would never change without compulsion and control and called upon the state to adopt drastic methods to combat the deteriorating ecological conditions in the reserves. Both Alvord and the settler administration had to fight an uphill struggle against what some officials regarded as the Africans' 'stupid and short-sighted conservatism' regarding improved use of land (Holleman 1951). For Kay (1972:85), it was an unequal struggle which led even Alvord to despair. The demonstrators had to guide, advise and supervise people in all sorts of community improving enterprises. They may not have been completely wrong, but were not completely right either. It was not only the profit motive that determined the behaviour of the peasant. Security was paramount. For demonstrators, efficiency was the paramount principle. Similarly, the only way to persuade poor farmers to work harder and produce more was to pay them a good price for their crops. The Africans questioned Alvord over producing more crops when there was no market. If their income increased and their financial position improved, there was a good chance that they would welcome changes. Many of the new men who came forward to obtain a master farmer certificate did so in order to move out of the reserves. A sample of 286 master farmers in the year 1960 showed that 40% had joined the training scheme to purchase a farm, and 60% to learn better farming techniques (Jordan 1966:9). The Land and Agriculture Bank, which was formed in 1924 and was crucial to the success and indeed the very survival of settler agriculture during the hard years of the late 1920s and early 1930s, served "persons of white descent only" (S 139/21 Manager, Land Bank to CNC 3/9/26). The problem did not, however, lie with the peasants but with the poor and crowded land assigned to them, grossly inadequate technical services, and the total lack of credit facilities. The State and Alvord were merely birds of the same feather which were flocking together. They failed to make headway and this explains why the Commission on Native Production and Trade of 1944 was later turned into law, the Land Husbandry Act of 1951.

Too many cooks!

Alongside the movement for better methods of African agriculture, there was developing interest among educationists in improving the general standards of living of the community as a whole. Basing on the recommendations of the Phelps Stokes Commissions (1920-21 and 1923-4), an experiment of initiating Jeannes teachers was instituted in 1929 (The Native Development Act, No.5 of 1929(Statute Law of Southern Rhodesia.Sect.1). When Harold Jowitt was appointed Director

of Native Education, Alvord was transferred to Jowitt's Department in 1927. The Native Development Act of 1929 provided for the establishment of schools, institutions and other works for purposes of native development. Its other category included demonstrations and instruction for adults in hygiene, home economics, agriculture, forestry, irrigation, building, carpentry, iron work, sanitation, organized recreation and similar matters (Passmore 1972:19). Jowitt trained Jeannes teachers who moved around the reserves giving advice on matters of farming, home and hygiene. Difficulties arose from the division of authority and responsibility between three agents of direction—the Department of Native Development, Department of Native Affairs, and the missions. Alvord went on to create community demonstrators whose activities overlapped with those of the Jeannes teachers and agricultural demonstrators. In his 1933 report, Alvord indicated that the community demonstrators were to 'propagandize, guide, advise, assist and supervise in community improving enterprises. Passmore (1972) draws attention to the functions to 'propagandize' and 'supervise' which she argued paid little attention to the evoking of initiative and stimulation of the community to develop its own form of organization. In 1944, the then Acting Secretary for Native Affairs E.T. Palmer also expressed misgivings about the depths to which the newly inculcated standards in agriculture had actually penetrated. About the same time, Alvord himself reached the conclusion that the bulk of the African farmers in the reserves had remained unmoved by his Department's efforts, and would continue to do so until some form of compulsion was used (Passmore 1972:24). In the mid 1950s purchase area farmers and cultivators in the reserves formed their cooperative societies. In 1958 a revolving fund was established to grant loans to African peasants. Although all African peasants who had been allocated land under the Land Husbandry Act were eligible for these loans with attractive terms, Weinrich (1975:27) noted that a very tiny fraction of African peasants availed itself of these loan possibilities. Peasants were reluctant to secure the loans largely because they did not have a capitalist orientation and were thus unconcerned with the need for a surplus as an end in itself. The state and its Alvordian ideology failed to capture the peasant.

Fear of Competition

The Cattle Levy and Maize Control Acts of 1931 were a direct African subsidy for European agriculture. Their promulgation curtailed the prospects of accumulation through peasant production. As a result, capital penetrated into the African rural economy through both wage labour and cash crop production. Settlers, particularly poor farmers, displayed a remarkable paranoia about 'Native Development', which, so they thought would render the Africans undue advantages in their competition with the white farmers (*The Herald* 18/8/1933). There was a general fear that as the Africans advanced they would crush the Europeans by competition. When

Alvord encouraged Africans to grow maize, European farmers loudly complained and in 1934 the training of agricultural demonstrators was temporarily suspended (Palmer 1968:51). The Superintendent of Natives from Southern Mashonaland submitted a memorandum criticizing Alvord for teaching the Africans to grow maize and recommended that the growing of maize by Africans be prohibited, as it was the white men's crop. Rather, Africans were to be taught to build good houses, to make simple furniture, to cultivate their lands scientifically and to improve their stock. The initial efforts to improve African agriculture met with distrust and reluctance by African cultivators and with opposition from European farmers who feared African competition for the limited markets of the early 1930s. Paradoxically, the whites complained about the African's backwardness and barbarism, but feared the competition they posed and believed that they were advancing too rapidly. For as long as the government's position was the disarticulation of traditional society, there is no way Alvord would go his own way. Davis and Dopcke (1987:91) argue that there were undoubtedly some whites who genuinely understood 'separate development' to mean the growth of self-sufficient peasant communities and prosperous 'industrial villages' just as their opponents had real fears of competition from African peasants and artisans. However, the dilemma was how to create or craft a development policy which would allow peasant production to survive and subsequently meet the demands of the European labour market. The logical conclusion seemed to be that the African should learn no skills which the European offered in the labour market, and that his soil should not produce food which the European could sell him.

About us without us

Alvord's schemes placed emphasis upon the material, technical and economic aspects of advancement, relegating the human element. Mararike (1995) defined the human factor as a spectrum of human characteristics and other dimensions of human performance that enable social economic and political institutions to function and remain functional over time. The human factor approach to development acknowledges the role of natural resources, capital, technology and institutions together with personality characteristics to operate them. Alvord did not provide room for Africans to set goals and objectives, develop visions and ideas, put in place programmes and procedures with which to monitor and evaluate progress in terms of planning, designing and implementing policies. Development had to start and end with the people without prescribing austerity and other measures that brought hardships among people as in the case of land seizures and destocking. In applying his technical policies, Alvord tended to function as if he was dealing with an aggregate of individuals, rather than a society with a firm-knit social structure of its own. As Passmore (1972:49)

put it, it was not the winning-over of numerous individuals to new methods that was required, but the conversion of an integrated structure. The peasantry Alvord was dealing with was internally differentiated. Society consists of relationships between human beings and as a result, the structure of society has an influence on people's overall behaviour. A serious miscalculation made by Alvord as the advocate of community development was the assumption that a village constituted a group of people with common interests. The power structure on a rural level was ignored. Every community included people who wielded power and it was they who took control of community development. From the early colonial period, as Ranger proffered, the peasant category included mixed subsistence farmers and migrant labourers, small peasant producers and rural entrepreneurial producers, then master farmers in the reserves and Purchase Area farmers. Ranger also distinguished peasants from teachers, storekeepers and businesspeople whom he referred to as 'petty bourgeoisie' or 'middle class'. He also separated Purchase Area farmers, master farmers and other 'progressives' from his peasant concept. Kriger (1988:247) observed that many of Ranger's Reserve entrepreneurs and Purchase Area farmers got their cash to invest in farming from working for the government as police, teachers, clerks, and sometimes 'boss boys' on European mines and farms. Alvord, who was responsible for the agricultural demonstration and centralization policies and who actually spent considerable time in the reserves, was ignorant of the psychology and economics of agrarian production among a differentiated peasantry. His attitude was quite ruthless. It involved squeezing the black population and preventing them from competing with white producers but still regarded them as impoverished, primitive and incompetent. He justified the state and his own actions as actually being in the interests of the Africans. According to Drinkwater (1988:64) this reasoning by both Alvord and the state that the African people did not know what was good for them and what their own 'real' interests were explains his failure to win the hearts of many.

The economy of affection, used here to denote networks of support, communications and interaction among people connected by blood, kin, community or other affinities like religion was frowned upon. The working parties in the form of *nhimbe*, *humwe* or *jakwara* practices among the Africans sprang from the needs and dynamics of micro rather than macro-structures. In the period under study, productive and reproductive processes at the household level were still very much embedded in the economy of affection. The operation of land clearing, digging, planting, weeding, harvesting and thrashing were usually accompanied by beer drinking, the people working together in groups from one's land to another. Drinking beer, eating meat and beating drums characterized these gatherings. It is this element of common enjoyment which had the effect of binding people into an emotional unity. The Shona proverb *Chara chimwe*

hachitswanyji inda (One thumb cannot crush a louse. It takes two) emphasizes and demonstrates that community efforts always succeed while those of individuals who want to work on their own always fail. Alvord discouraged such gatherings, claiming that after a beer drink people went into the fields with weary bodies and bloodshot eyes, to gather in the scanty yields from their scanty labour.

Conclusion

Most of the literature on Alvord has touted him as the agriculturalist who transformed the lives of the African 'savages' from the doldrums of primitivity to modern civilization through his demonstration and master farmer training programmes among other activities. In the interests of colonial rule, he made indelible marks in that the 1951 Native Land Husbandry Act was largely compounded from his programmes and the implementation of intensified conservation. While some traces of his efforts remain, the study has shown that the failures encountered tended to outweigh the successes. The deterioration of the African areas continued in Alvord's face, reaching alarming proportions by 1950. The subsequent squeezing of Africans on barren areas, resulting in ecological deterioration, destocking, centralization and the use of the plough worked against Alvord's campaign to improve the Africans' quality of life. As a result the highly acclaimed successes by Alvord to positively transform the peasant communities were a tale of too much ado about nothing.

References

Archival Sources

NAZ S2307/1/2 DND to CNC, 23 May 1929,
S 132/2 (1932), Acting NCG to SONV, 12/1/32.
S 1542/E2, NCG to CNC 27/6/35,
S 482/145/3A CNC'S December Memorandum, 1949.

S139/21, Manager, Land Bank to CNC 3/9/26.

S1217/9 Summary of Destocking Results, 1947.

S235/503 NC's Annual Report 1923;
S235/507 NC's Annual Report 1929
S 235/517 NC's Annual Report 1930
S1862 NC Gutu's Miscellaneous Report to 1950
S1193/F3 Alvord to Chief Agriculturalist 1/4/30

S 1542/C19, précis for NAD Conference, Victoria Falls, 1933

S 597 Letter from the Chairman of the Gutu-Felixburg Farmers' Association to NC Gutu 03/04/1925.

ZAH 1/1/4 Evidence to the Lands Commission 1925.

ZAX1/1/2 Meeting at Devuli tank.

Reports and Statutory instruments

The Native Development Act, No.5 of 1929. Statute Law of Southern Rhodesia.Sect1.

Southern Rhodesia, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Certain Sales of Native Cattle in Areas occupied by the Natives, 1939.

Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, the CNC and Director of Native Department, 1961.

Report by the Commissioner on Native Education, 1925

Southern Rhodesia. Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, Chief Native Commissioner and Director of Native Development, attached Annual Report of the Director of Agriculture for the 1946

McIlwaine, R., Natural Resources Board. Memorandum on the Conservation of Natural Resources on Land Occupied by Natives, Salisbury 14 January, 1943

Interviews

Interview with Zvotoona Tarugarira, Makura, Gutu, July 2013

Interview with Garai Hamutyinei, Chingombe, Gutu, August 2013

Interview with Fanoti Makura, Makura, Gutu, July 2013.

Newspapers

The Herald 18/8/1933

Unpublished Sources

Drinkwater, M.J (1988) The State and Agrarian Change in Zimbabwe's Communal Areas: An application of Critical Theory. Unpublished Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, University of East Anglia, 1988.

Sadomba, Z.W (2010) African Cosmology and Womanism in Zimbabwe's war veterans-led Revolution: Beginnings of African post-colonial emancipation? Conference presentation, Harare.

Articles and Books

Alvord, E.D (1943) *The Gospel of the Plow or a Guided Destiny: An autobiography*

Bhebe, N (1989) *B Burombo: African Politics in Zimbabwe 1947-1958*, College Press, Harare,

Bazeley, W.S (1935) 'First Principles of Native Policy' in *NADA*.

Cheater, A (1990) "The Ideology of 'Communal' Land Tenure in Zimbabwe: Mythogenesis Enacted?" *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 60, No. 2

Chidyausiku, P (1960) *Pfungwa dzaSekuru Mafusire*, Mambo Press, Gweru.

Davis, B and Dopcke, W (1987) 'Survival and Accumulation in Gutu: Class Formation and the Rise of the State in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1990-1939' in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.14, No.1 (Oct., 1987)

Daneel, M.L (1977) 'The growth and significance of Shona Independent Churches' in Bourdillon, M.F.C. (ed) *Christianity South of the Zambezi*, Vol 2, Mambo Press, Gweru.

Dumbutshena, E (1975) *Zimbabwe Tragedy*, East African Publishing House, Nairobi.

Jordan, T.W.F.J (1978) 'The Victoria Master Farmers Association' *NADA* Vol xi, No.5.

Holleman, J.F, (1951) 'Some Shona tribes of Southern Rhodesia' in Colson, E and Gluckman, M. *Seven Tribes of British Central Africa*, MUP for Rhodes-Livingstone Institute.

Kay, G. (1972) *Rhodesia: a human geography*, University of Rhodesia, Salisbury.

Kruger, N (1988) 'The Zimbabwean War of Liberation: Struggles Within the Struggle' in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.14, No.2.

Hughes, D.M (2010) *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape, and the Problem of Belonging*, Palgrave Macmillan.

- Matsika, C (2012) *Traditional African Education*, Mambo Press, Gweru.
- Mararike, C.G (1995) 'Indigenous Leadership Styles: Can Grapes be Picked from an Orange Tree?' in Senyo B.S.K.Adjiboloso (ed) *The Significance of the Human Factor in Africa Economic Development*, Praeger Publishers, Westport.
- Palmer, R (1977) *Land and Racial Domination*, University of California Press, Los Angeles.
- Passmore, G.C, (1972) *The National Policy of Community Development in Rhodesia*, University of Rhodesia, Salisbury 1972,
- Posselt, F (1939) 'Native Education' in *NADA* No.16, 1939.
- Raid, M.G (1977) 'Fifty years on: A tribute to E.D.Alvord, Founder of the Agricultural Extension Services for the People of Rhodesia in 1926' in *NADA* Vol 11 No.4.
- Ranger, T.O (1985) *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe A Commemorative Study*, London, James Currey.
- Shutt, A.K (1997) 'Purchase Area Farmers and the Middle Class of Southern Rhodesia, c. 1931-1952' in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3
- Summers, C (1994) 'Educational Controversies: African Activism and Educational Strategies in Southern Rhodesia, 1920-1934' in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.20, No.1
- Weinrich, A.K.H., (1973) *African Farmers in Rural Rhodesia, Old and New Peasant Communities in Karangaland*, London, Oxford University Press.
- Yudelman, M (1964) *Africans on the Land. Economic problems of African Agricultural Development in Southern Central and East Africa with special reference to Southern Rhodesia.*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts.