

Refugees and Squatters: Immigration and the Politics of Territory on the Zimbabwe-Mozambique Border

David McDermott Hughes

To cite this article: David McDermott Hughes (1999) Refugees and Squatters: Immigration and the Politics of Territory on the Zimbabwe-Mozambique Border, Journal of Southern African Studies, 25:4, 533-552, DOI: [10.1080/030570799108461](https://doi.org/10.1080/030570799108461)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/030570799108461>



Published online: 04 Aug 2010.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 291



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 2 View citing articles [↗](#)



*Refugees and Squatters: Immigration and the Politics of Territory on the Zimbabwe–Mozambique Border**

DAVID MCDERMOTT HUGHES

(Rutgers University)

For Mozambicans, border-crossing is neither new nor liberating. Many current analyses of refugees, labour migrants, smugglers, and other 'transnational subjects' emphasize their range of options, arguing that they are less and less constrained by porous, politically 'soft' international borders. This article argues that, for at least a segment, the Mozambique–Zimbabwe border is hard and constraining, and has been so since the beginning of the twentieth century. Mozambican small-holders do cross it, but emigration strips them of rights and privileges they enjoy in their own country. In Vhimba, a Zimbabwean community on the Mozambican border, headmen have allocated farmland to Mozambican migrants on much less favourable terms than they have to Zimbabwean internal migrants. During Mozambique's recent war, the double standard became especially stark. Headmen and other Zimbabweans associated these destitute refugees with pre-colonial clients, and refugees behaved accordingly. In a fashion modelled loosely on nineteenth century pledging, hosts circumscribed refugees' ability to negotiate their access to land. Specifically, Vhimba's headmen exploited Mozambican migrants as pawns in territorial disputes with the state and with a private land-owner. Along this international boundary, small-holders revived archaic mechanisms of subjugation and retooled them for contemporary purposes.

The Main Events

In 1991, a large wave of refugees from war and drought in Mozambique's Mossurize and Sussundenga Districts streamed across the Rusitu River into Zimbabwe's Chimanimani District. Many found their way to Tongogara refugee camp, but a good number preferred to settle and farm in the Zimbabwean small-holder community of Vhimba (see Figure 1). Vhimba lies within Ngorima Communal Land, a narrow slice of territory left to the subjects of Chief Ngorima's people after massive land alienation. These small-holders and, in particular, their headmen still covet the areas of private estates and national parks taken

* Part of this article is a version of ch. 4 in 'Frontier Dynamics: Struggles for Land and Clients on the Zimbabwe–Mozambique border', PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1999. Conducted between 1995 and 1997, this research was assisted by the World Bank, by the Center for African Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and by a grant from the Joint Committee on African Studies of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies with funds provided by the Rockefeller Foundation. The Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation and the MacArthur Foundation supported the writing of this article. Jocelyn Alexander, Elizabeth Colson, Louise Fortmann, Christine Hastorf, James McCarthy, Melanie Hughes McDermott, Donald Moore, Janet Sturgeon, and anonymous readers provided helpful suggestions. I am especially indebted to the Centre for Applied Social Sciences at the University of Zimbabwe, the Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources, and the Vhimba Area Development Committee for hosting and otherwise facilitating my research. None of these individuals or institutions bears any responsibility for the conclusions herein.



Figure 1. Zimbabwe showing position of Vhimba.

from them as much as a century ago. From 1991 onwards, they used Mozambican refugees as pawns in turf wars. Headmen settled refugees on contested pieces of land, on the Hayfield B estate and in Chimanimani National Park. They exploited these vulnerable people in order to take back lost territory.

This article argues that Mozambican refugees allowed themselves to be placed in harm's way in these battles because they submitted – in a way few Zimbabweans did – to the personal authority of their hosting headmen. A colonial history of forced labour prepared them not for turf battles, but for forms of power centered on the use and abuse of dependent people. Most recently, Renamo's tributary system 'pre-adapted' them to the state of defenselessness in which they entered Zimbabwe and begged for land. In other words, the conditions of refugees' departure from Mozambique, as dependent destitutes, facilitated the terms of their residence in Zimbabwe, as human boundary beacons. Vhimba's headmen converted weak people into seized land.

Refugees and Borderlands

The exploitation of refugees in Vhimba stands outside much of the current scholarship on transnational migrants and international borders. Until a decade or so ago, anthropologists and other social scientists mostly abided by the conventional notions of destitute refugees, longing emigrés, and inviolable borders. All of these images imply spatial constraint, or what Malkki criticizes as 'the spatial incarceration of the native'.¹ According to the conventional 'sedentarist metaphysics',² individuals and social groups inhabit specific territories outside of which they become vulnerable or dysfunctional. The Mozambican refugees in Vhimba *do*, in fact, have this relationship to their zones of origin. Yet, many anthropologists and other social scientists have ceased to take such rootedness seriously. Instead, scholars now herald late twentieth century phenomena of de-territorialization and transnationalism. The geographer Harvey points to the accelerating flows of capital, people, and ideas. We are now, he says, experiencing 'time-space compression', such that we may

1 L. Malkki, 'National Geographic: the Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7, 1 (1992), pp. 24–44.

2 *Ibid.*

take part simultaneously in lifeways separated by vast physical distances.³ Appadurai writes that the contemporary world is composed of 'global ethnoscapes' – montages of people in motion. Ethnography, he exerts, should now turn its attention to the 'unyoking of imagination from place'.⁴

This approach has already affected research on African refugees. Many contemporary writers view refugees as possessing greater freedom and borders as constraining them much less than conventions would lead one to expect. Hansen's foundational essay on Angolans in Zambia emphasizes that many refugees neither need nor desire to live in camps – and they have other options. Zambian relatives introduced fleeing Angolans to headmen and helped them to obtain farmland. In effect, a trans-border safety net of kin and ethnic ties enabled refugees to resettle 'spontaneously' in small-holder communities.⁵ In the same voluntaristic vein, Jehovah's Witnesses chose when to leave Mozambique during its civil war, where to go in Malawi, and when and how to return. As Wilson writes, they exercised 'refugee initiative' such that, 'Flight, far from simply disrupting existing social networks, had been a deliberate movement that actually utilized and strengthened them'.⁶ As many of the Witnesses originated in Malawi, expatriation from Mozambique was neither unprecedented nor socially alienating. Indeed, for some, emigration as a 'refugee' is but one instance in a wider pattern of opportunistic cross-border activity. In this view, refugees are migrant labourers, smugglers and other cosmopolitans fortuitously involved with the United Nations. They virtually possess what Ong – writing about diasporic Chinese businessmen – calls 'flexible citizenship'.⁷

The notion of emigrants as flexible opportunists draws strength from a further shift in perspective towards national borders. In regard to Africa, scholars have overcome their surprise at the permanence of the borders established by European powers in 1884–1885. Since the post-independence state leadership did nothing to move the borders, Africanists looked for change locally. Many found that communities had not redrawn but had simply erased inconvenient borders. Zartmann writes that Senegalese border residents are 'somewhat oblivious of international frontiers and national citizenships' and, in assimilating and welcoming Guineans, they are 'simply receiving large numbers of fellow tribesmen'.⁸ In the same vein, Asiwaju declares, 'Judged ... from the viewpoint of the border society life in many parts of Africa, the partition can hardly be said to have taken place.'⁹ Furthermore, because borderlands lie outside the developing cores of national territory, they constitute what Asiwaju calls 'special areas of socio-political ambivalence'.¹⁰ This 'reality of borderlands where communities merged into one another'¹¹ explains Flynn's recent finding that people living along the Benin–Nigeria boundary call each other 'border'.¹² In spite of the centrifugal pull of two capital cities, these and similar partitioned populations have

3 D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford, 1990).

4 A. Appadurai, 'Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology', in R.G. Fox (ed), *Recapturing Anthropology* (Santa Fe, NM, 1991), p. 202.

5 A. Hansen, 'Once the Running Stops: Assimilation of Angolan Refugees into Zambian Border Villages', *Disasters* 3, 4 (1979), p. 369.

6 K.B. Wilson, 'Refugees and Returnees as Social Agents: the Case of Jehovah's Witnesses from Milange', in T. Allen and H. Morsink (eds), *When Refugees Go Home* (Trenton, NJ, 1994), pp. 237, 241.

7 A. Ong, 'On the Edge of Empires: Flexible Citizenship among Chinese in Diaspora', *Positions*, 1, 3 (1993), pp. 745–778.

8 I.W. Zartmann, 'Portuguese Guinean Refugees in Senegal', in H.C. Brooks and Y. El-Ayouty (eds), *Refugees South of the Sahara* (Westport, CT, 1970), p. 144.

9 A.I. Asiwaju, 'The Conceptual Framework', in A.I. Asiwaju (ed), *Partitioned Africans* (London, 1985), p. 4.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

11 P. Nugent and A.I. Asiwaju, 'Introduction: the Paradox of African Boundaries', in P. Nugent and A.I. Asiwaju (eds), *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (London, 1996), p. 9.

12 D.K. Flynn, '“We are the Border”: Identity, Exchange and the State along the Benin–Nigeria Border', *American Ethnologist*, 24, 2 (1997), pp. 311–330.

established a common interest and identity. They have done so not only by migrating and smuggling but also, more obviously, by maintaining a transnational kindred and ethnic affiliation. In short, these and similar authors treat borders as soft: if the lines exert any social influence at all, they unite people rather than divide them.

This transnational work has already generated much criticism independent of the good people of Vhimba. In general, skeptics wish to introduce caveats and distinctions to the 'febrile fascination'¹³ with movements across borders. 'The state', a recent collection reminds us 'continues to play [a role] in the everyday lives of its own and other citizens'.¹⁴ That role impinges on some border crossers rather more than on others. As Mitchell writes, capital traverses borders and oceans with much less difficulty than do people.¹⁵ Hyndman's clever comparison of Switzerland and Somalia makes the point strikingly clear: the Swiss allow money in and keep immigrants mostly out; meanwhile, Geneva-based aid organizations channel large sums of money to southern Somalia precisely to discourage people there from entering Kenya.¹⁶ The Somali case reveals a bias towards elites prevalent in much of the transnational literature. The flexible citizens who populate hotel lobbies rarely rub elbows there with refugees and illegal immigrants. For the latter, border crossing smacks more of terror than of tourism. Even among refugees, groups with pre-existing advantages may adapt more easily to exile. The Jehovah's Witnesses described by Wilson possessed organization and leadership to a striking degree. Similarly, Spring finds that female Angolans in Zambia rose in social position much more readily than their male counterparts.¹⁷ They divorced their Angolan husbands and remarried wealthier Zambians while their ex-husbands could not afford the higher Zambian bridewealths and remained single. These differential, highly contingent outcomes point to the (now perennial) need for nuanced, ethnographic study of flesh and blood people along and across borders. 'Global ethnoscapes' and soft borders cry out for analysis in specific locales.

The Zimbabwe–Mozambique border

Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands present the ideal conditions for flexible citizenship and other forms of transnationalism. From a physical point of view, the border with Mozambique is soft in the extreme. Along more than 1000 kilometres, guards staff only seven check-points. Vehicles must pass through these crossings. For pedestrians, the border is un supervised, unfenced and mostly unmarked. Indeed, in these technical terms, the border is softer for small-holder farmers than it is for elites who drive. Socially, as well, the placement of the border would seem to facilitate immigration. It cuts through areas where the Korekore, Manyika, and Ndaou dialects of Shona are spoken, and bisects smaller linguistic pockets as well. The border jumper will encounter no language barrier with his hosts, and they may well share bonds of blood and marriage. Indeed, a history of (im)migration into and through Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands has unsettled colonial and post-colonial administrations, creating a pervasive 'cartographic anxiety'.¹⁸ The site of this research is no exception. In Vhimba, extended families have been binational for generations.¹⁹ Mozambicans regularly ford the Rusitu to attend the Vhimba primary school,

13 K. Mitchell, 'Transnational Discourse: Bringing Geography back in', *Antipode*, 29, 2 (1997), p. 101.

14 T.M. Wilson and H. Donnan, 'Nation, State and Identity at International Borders', in T.M. Wilson and H. Donnan (eds), *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 2.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 101–114.

16 J. Hyndman, 'Border Crossings', *Antipode*, 29, 2 (1997), pp. 149–176.

17 A. Spring, 'Women and Men as Refugees: Differential Assimilation of Angolan Refugees in Zambia', *Disasters*, 3, 4 (1979), pp. 423–428.

18 D.S. Moore, 'Contesting Terrain in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands: the Cultural Politics of Place, Identity, and Resource Struggles', Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1995, pp. 245–248.

19 J. Alexander, 'The State, Agrarian Policy, and Rural Politics in Zimbabwe: Case Studies of Insiza and Chimanimani Districts, 1940–1990', D.Phil dissertation, Oxford University, 1993, p. 54.

located only 50 meters across the border. I bathed daily *in* the border – the Rusitu River – sometimes drying myself in Zimbabwe and sometimes in Mozambique. In short, people can and do cross this border regularly.

This permeability, however, is neither surprising nor interesting. The more pertinent questions – and the ‘tougher’ ones for transnationalism – involve the social standing of border crossers. As Ranger notes, Britain, Portugal and France drew Africa’s borders as ‘sifters of labour rather than as barriers to its movement’.²⁰ In the process of permitting travel, these borders create and differentiate among categories of people. Employers in Zimbabwe are well aware of this dynamic: they give citizens working in industry the highest minimum wage; agricultural labourers (including many legal foreigners) get a lower minimum wage; and illegal Mozambicans on the tea estates often receive over-valued maize in place of wages.²¹ Other, more subtle forms of discrimination stem from differences in political culture between migrants and nationals. Shaped by particular colonial and post-colonial administrations, Mozambican small-holders do not necessarily share cultural values and concepts with nearby brethren across the Anglo–Portuguese line of partition. A stone’s throw from Malawi, Mozambicans await the return of Portuguese shop-owners – a catalyst of development recognizable only to them.²²

In Vhimba, the border delimited in 1898 became important in local social relations within little more than a generation.²³ As a bizarre case of arson reveals, the borderland nurtured a form of transnational parochialism. In 1929, a Vhimba woman testified, ‘[The] Accused said to me if I keep making beer across the Portuguese Border he would burn our hut. He wanted me to make beer this side so that he could join in.’²⁴ The alleged arsonist lived in Vhimba and could easily have forded the Rusitu to drink beer in Mozambique. Why did he so studiously (and soberly) avoid that country? He may have done so because he owed taxes there. Portugal and its chartered Companhia de Moçambique imposed particularly onerous forms of *chibaro*, payable in cash but failing that, demanded in labour.²⁵ By mid-century, *de facto* *corvées* – carried out by chiefs and native police – were regularly provoking Mozambicans to emigrate.²⁶ Fleeing residents of Mossurize simply traded one set of obligations to their chief for a less severe one to his Rhodesian opposite number. Those Mozambicans who stayed endured harrowing stints of work in Manica Province’s plantation sector.²⁷ To make matters worse, they received no formal education, rendering them, in

20 T. Ranger, ‘Studying Repatriation as Part of African Social History’, in T. Allen and H. Morsink (eds), *When Refugees Go Home* (Trenton, NJ, 1994), p. 287.

21 On related points, see K.D. Manungo, ‘The Plight of the “Migrant Workers” in the Commercial Farms of Mazoe’ and J.P. Mtisi, ‘Workers’ Rights versus Economic Reality of Profitable Production in the Zimbabwe Tea Industry? The State’s Handling of the 1985 Minimum Wage Dispute’, both papers presented at the International Conference on the Historical Dimensions of Democracy and Human Rights in Zimbabwe, Harare, 9–14 September 1996.

22 H. Englund, ‘Waiting for the Portuguese: Nostalgia, Exploitation and the Meaning of Land in the Malawi–Mozambique Borderland’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 14, 2 (1996), pp. 157–172.

23 For a discussion of the Anglo–Portuguese Boundary Commissions, see H. Schmidt, ‘“Roads or other Notable Features do not Exist”: the Anglo–Portuguese Boundary Commissions of 1898 and 1905/06’, Paper presented to the African Studies Association annual meeting, Chicago, 29 October–1 November 1998.

24 National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) S 1071, ‘Case of Rex vs. Musoreyani, preliminary examination, 12 November 1929’.

25 Records on forced labour in Gogoi, northern Mossurize come from the 1927 and 1928 annual reports of the Gogoyo Mission Station (of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions): NAZ historical manuscripts UN 3/10/1/22/7, p. 2; UN 3/20/1/23/13, p. 1. Secondary works addressing the Companhia de Moçambique include M. Newitt, *Portugal in Africa* (London, 1981). M. Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1995). L. Vail, ‘Mozambique’s Chartered Companies: the Rule of the Feeble’, *Journal of African History*, 17, 3 (1976), pp. 389–416.

26 Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique (hereafter AHM), Inspeção Nacional dos Serviços Administrativos e dos Negócios Indígenas, Caixa 39, ‘Relatório da Inspeção Nacional da Circunscrição de Mossurize’, 1946, p. 247.

27 The estates drawing workers from Mossurize were mostly in the vicinity of Macequece (now Vila de Manica) and Vila Pery (now Chimoio).

Vhimba's view, backward and uncouth. 'They have not studied. They are used to war,'²⁸ Zimbabweans explained in reference to benighted Mossurize.

In the early 1990s, Vhimba's headmen also considered Zimbabwe to be different, and they knew how to turn the border to their advantage. Zimbabwe's history of land alienation and technical land-use planning had directed rural conflict not towards forced labour, but towards cadastral boundaries and claims to land. The Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 trained small-holders in resisting official intrusions into their use of land.²⁹ More generally, in course of periodic dispossessions in Chimanimani District, chiefs, headmen, their subjects, and branches of the state created a system of power and legitimacy based on struggles over agricultural land. Headmen learned to use their capacity as land allocators against threats from outside and from within the community. Vhimba's commoners also learned how to protect their interests in negotiating with headmen over access to land. Nearby Mozambicans, on the other hand, acquired no such skills: their fortune in losing no substantial parcels to white settlers simply made them naïve in territorial matters.³⁰ For this reason, Vhimba headmen have followed different conventions when allocating land to Mozambican migrants than when allocating to Zimbabwean migrants. Particularly with regard to recent in-flows of refugees, Vhimba's headmen treated immigrants not only differently but *worse* than Zimbabwean internal migrants. Refugees were settled on the most vulnerable, contested slices of territory. Notwithstanding their kin and ethnic ties to Vhimba, the newcomers had no choice in the matter of their residence. Unwilling squatters in national parks and elsewhere, these Mozambicans served as transnational pawns in Zimbabwean turf wars beyond their ken.

Land Allocation in Vhimba, 1946–1997

During the colonial period, land allocation became the gateway through which all male migrants entered Vhimba. Since the 1890s, expropriation, in-migration, rising population density and state conservation policies had directed conflict towards land and placed headmen at the center of managing and participating in land-related conflicts. Since migrants continued to arrive in Vhimba, land allocation remained headmen's principle responsibility. Men came to Vhimba in order to establish homesteads and farm, or they came in order to establish homesteads where their wife or wives farmed while they worked elsewhere. Women came to Vhimba either in the company of their migrating husbands or to marry and live with men already resident in Vhimba. The women who migrated alone to Vhimba were widows. In these cases, a male relative or acquaintance usually spoke with the headman regarding the widow's parcel of land. Land allocation, then, was the mechanism through which headmen discussed with other men so as to locate new homesteads and fields in Vhimba.

Analyses of settlement and land tenure in Zimbabwe often treat these discussions as a

28 'Havana kudzidza. Vajaira hondo.' All such quotations derive from participant observation, conversations, and interviews conducted in Vhimba (Zimbabwe) in 1995, 1996, and 1997 and in Chief Gogoi's and Makuyana's areas, northern Mossurize District (Mozambique) in 1997.

29 For a recounting of resistance to the Act in Chimanimani District and in Ngorima Communal Land in particular, see J. Alexander, 'The State, Agrarian Change and Rural Politics', pp. 51–59.

30 Mossurize was unusual in Manica Province for the degree to which it was spared concessions. Compare with the Portuguese *colonato* established in Sussundenga in the 1960s as described by J. Alexander, 'Terra e Autoridade Política no Pós-Guerra em Moçambique: o Caso da Província de Manica', *Arquivo*, 16 (1994), pp. 9–11. Other studies of areas of Mozambique where land was alienated, such as the fertile Nkomati and Limpopo Valleys, find land conflicts similar to those in Zimbabwe: H. Gengenbach, '“I'll Bury You in the Border!": Women's Land Struggles in Post-War Facazisse (Magude District), Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 1 (1998), pp. 7–36. G.W. Myers, 'Competitive Rights, Competitive Claims: Land Access in Post-War Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, 4 (1994), pp. 603–632.

‘black box’. Such accounts tend to focus on the outcome, rather than the process, of settlement. In so doing, they reduce land allocation to a single decision taken by a single actor, usually the headman. For example, in Holleman’s classic *Shona Customary Law*, the headman drives a stake into the ground he has chosen for the new household.³¹ Migrants necessarily submit to his fiat. In an alternative scenario, migrants drive their own stakes, or they allocate land to themselves.³² Both models envision one active party and one passive party. Neither approach grapples with the real nature of much decision making – the muddling of multiple protagonists who do not know each other well. In this vein, Shimmer Chinodya’s novel *Dew in the Morning* contains a scene in which an older brother, visiting from town, secures more land for his rural siblings:

At sunset ... he remained with us to show us the area he wanted earmarked for our fields when we grew up. ... The area was about thirty acres in extent, and along each border he cut down the bushes and laid them out in a rough line. “Tell headman Simon tomorrow that I propose this area for your fields.”... We laughed at the determination that was blind to the gathering dusk and to the fact that he was assuming the role of the headman.³³

Interestingly, this land-grabber still seeks the approval of the headman. He is engaging in the kind of murky manoeuvres that lie in between allocation by the headman and self-allocation by the migrant, between a dictate from above and a *fait accompli* from below.³⁴

Although Chinodya’s story concerns an existing, expanding family in headman Simon’s area, newcomers can play the same tricks. Still, it seems more reasonable that current subjects, like those in the story, should enlarge their holding unilaterally than that absolute newcomers should try to do so. Are not strangers, especially those without relations in the area, completely at the mercy of headmen? In fact, migrants have some leverage: headmen want more subjects for greater prestige, tax revenues, and better services – quite apart from the possibility of using certain migrants as boundary beacons. In many cases, migrants do bargain with headmen over the sites where they should live and farm.³⁵ A migrant may pick his own spot and subsequently ask for the headman’s permission (the strategy in Chinodya’s tale), he may reject the first location offered and ask for another, or he may consult two adjoining headmen and take the best offer. Like Scott’s ‘everyday forms of peasant resistance’, these tactics have the advantage of being covert.³⁶ Both parties can eventually cover up their bargains and respect the accepted hierarchy. Everyone, including many academic observers, holds to a ‘party line’ – that the headman allocated the land, full stop.

In Vhimba, a particular class of migrants *did* obey this party line. These newcomers accepted the first parcel headmen offer them. Twenty-nine heads households proved suitable for an analysis of bargaining in land allocation.³⁷ Fourteen of these received, with or

31 J.F. Holleman, *Shona Customary Law* (London, 1952), p. 6.

32 In Insiza District, Alexander, ‘The State, Agrarian Policy and Rural Politics’, p. 120. With regard to women in Nyanga District, D.S. Moore, ‘Contesting Terrain in Zimbabwe’s Eastern Highlands: the Cultural Politics of Place, Identity, and Resource Struggles’, PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 1995, p. 607.

33 S. Chinodya, *Dew in the Morning* (Harare, 1982), p. 160.

34 On the importance of negotiation – as opposed to simple rules – in African rural politics, see S. Berry, *No Condition is Permanent* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), and L. Rose, *The Politics of Harmony: Land Dispute Strategies in Swaziland* (Cambridge, 1991).

35 As suggested in V. Dzingirai, ‘The Politics of Human Settlement: Getting Settled in the Sikomena Area of Chief Dobola’, *Zambezia*, 21, 2 (1994), pp. 172–173.

36 J.C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (New Haven, 1985).

37 Of a study of 67 households in 1996–1997, there were 37 households whose heads migrated to Vhimba from outside Vhimba for the purpose of farming (rather than for the purpose of creating a home base from which to migrate to formal sector jobs). The figure of 29 is arrived at by making the following exclusions: three households for whom information on bargaining was not available; two who insisted that they approved of the first site offered to them and, hence, did not bargain; one cattle-owner who need a site with grazing land, of which there was a very limited number; and two Mozambican widows who would have had difficulty bargaining indirectly and did not try.

Table 1

			Choice (<i>N</i> = 14)	No choice (<i>N</i> = 15)
Zimbabwean-born	Ngorima natives	With kin	2	0
		Without kin	3	1
	Non-Ngorima natives	With kin	1	0
		Without kin	4	2
Mozambican-born	With kin	0	2	
	Without kin	4	10	

Table 2

	Choice (<i>N</i> = 14)	No choice (<i>N</i> = 15)
Kin ties	3	2
No kin ties	11	13

Table 3

	Choice (<i>N</i> = 14)	No choice (<i>N</i> = 15)
Birth in Ngorima's area	5	1
Birth outside Ngorima's area	9	14

without requesting it, a choice of parcels. In the remaining fifteen cases, the headman offered only one site. What accounts for the different ways in which these headmen – Chikware, Tiyekiye and Muhanyi – treated people? Migrants' kinship ties to Vhimba or birth or prior residence in Chief Ngorima's polity could affect the outcome. In fact, none of these variables was as important as the national origin of the migrants. By and large Zimbabweans chose among two or more possible parcels while Mozambicans conceded to headmen's first and only proposal. To be precise, 77 per cent of Zimbabweans chose while only 25 per cent of Mozambicans did; 71 per cent of those who chose were Zimbabwean and 80 per cent of those who did not choose were Mozambican (see Table 1).

The tables summarize the data and the influence of common kin, a common chief, and common nationality. Kinship – meaning any, even very distant, relation of blood or marriage – does appear to play a role in land allocation to Zimbabwean migrants. All the Zimbabweans with relations in Vhimba were able to choose their plots. Among the Mozambicans, however, headmen treated Vhimba's kin no better than non-kin. Given the limitations of a very small sample, Zimbabweans appear to benefit through their Vhimba relatives, while, for Mozambicans the prejudice against foreign citizenship overwhelms all mitigating factors. A comparison of the households purely on the axis of kin ties reveals

Table 4

	Choice (<i>N</i> = 14)	No choice (<i>N</i> = 15)
Zimbabwean-born	10	3
Mozambican-born	4	12

no clear correlation of blood and marriage with negotiating room (see Table 2). A similar comparison, this time purely on the basis of prior residence in Ngorima's polity,³⁸ appears to indicate that natives of Ngorima's area fare rather better upon arrival in Vhimba (see Table 3).³⁹ Since Chief Ngorima's border coincides with the national border, however, this distribution is misleading. All Mozambicans are foreign to Ngorima's area; so a test that controls for nationality in order to measure the bias based on chiefly affiliation must include only Zimbabweans. Table 1 shows that, among this group, Ngorima's subjects had hardly more choices than those from outside the chieftaincy. Headmen thus scarcely discriminated on the basis of a migrant's kin or chief. The basis for favourable or unfavourable treatment was nationality (see Table 4).

From their fortunate position, Zimbabweans applied a number of strategies to open and conclude negotiations with Vhimba's headmen. S.M. arrived in 1994 from Shurugwi. He wanted space to plant fruit trees in the lowland of Vhimba. After the intercession of his wife's sister's husband, Headman Tiyekiye offered S.M. a plot close to the Rusitu River. S.M., however, found this field too small; so he went alone to Chikware who proposed a larger field high up, close to the escarpment. In effect S.M. shopped with two headmen and took the better of two not entirely satisfactory alternatives. M.C. preferred to live high up and chose the more elevated of the two sites Chikware presented him in 1972. In 1981, C.K.B. chose among three alternatives. Further back, probably in the 1950s and 1960s, Chikware virtually permitted self-allocation: with his blessing, two arriving heads of household scouted the territory themselves. 'My family and I looked for the place',⁴⁰ said Z.M. M.M. reported a similarly conciliatory attitude on the headman's part: 'I want a place', he demanded, and Tiyekiye queried, 'Which place do you want?'⁴¹ In sum, give and take – and sometimes just 'give' – characterized the interactions between Zimbabwean land-seekers and Vhimba headmen.

To Mozambicans, by contrast, the very same headmen made 'take it or leave it' offers. I.R.M. tried to bargain after Chikware showed him a spot on the western side of Nyakwawa Forest. Chikware told him the spot he desired was not available since the family who previously occupied it might still have a claim. In another case, a headman offered claimed land, and only claimed land, to a Mozambican migrant. Tiyekiye showed M., who crossed the Rusitu from neighbouring Chief Mafussi's area in 1991, a slice of E.N.'s fallow fields. According to M., Tiyekiye then announced: 'You have now seen the place to hoe'⁴². Having no other choice, M. did farm there and has tolerated an uneasy relationship with his neighbor ever since. Almost all the remaining fourteen land allocations to Mozambicans were equally unilateral. Whereas Zimbabweans 'wheeled and dealt' their way into Vhimba, Mozambicans came, saw one place, and they settled immediately.

Interestingly, money was not an issue. The non-economic nature of land allocation is all the more striking because deals could so easily include finance. Most migrants did offer a token of respect to the headman upon receipt of a parcel of land. In

38 Chieftom (rather than headman's area) is the relevant unit of analysis here because I have already limited the study of land allocation to migrants moving between (rather than within) headmen's jurisdictions.

39 One could also hypothesize that prior residence, at any time, in Ngorima's area was the explanatory variable. There are, however, no migrants who were born outside Ngorima and lived in Ngorima's area, outside Vhimba, before coming to Vhimba. Intermediate points between a migrant's place of birth fall into three categories: small-holder areas outside Ngorima Communal Land (in either country), migrant labour sites in Zimbabwe, Mozambique or South Africa, and outside Ngorima's historical boundaries, and migrants labour sites inside Ngorima's historical boundaries but outside the small-holder tribal trust land. These last areas include the Forestry Commission and private plantation forests, areas in which workers, unless born in Ngorima, do not hold any rights or obligations towards the chief.

40 'Takatsvaka nzimbo' (Vhimba, 12 November 1996).

41 'Ndinoda nzimbo' ... 'Munoda dunhu ripi?' (Vhimba, 13 February 1997).

42 'Watoona nzimbo yokurima' (Vhimba, 11 November 1996).

Table 5

	Through 1989 (<i>N</i> = 16)		1990 onward (<i>N</i> = 13)	
	Choice	No choice	Choice	No choice
Zimbabwean-born	8	2	2	1
Mozambican-born	2	4	2	8

earlier times, people gave him a chicken, or *huku*, and the current monetary substitute is still called *huku*. Thus, land allocations could provide headmen with financial resources, as well as the social and political capital to be discussed below. A mercenary headman would do well to place *huku* payments at the centre of negotiations over land and get the most he could from weak bargainers. Indeed, onlookers frequently suspected Tiyekiye, Chikware and Muhanyi of doing precisely this and of selfishly ‘selling the land’⁴³. Yet, virtually all of the subjects of the migration study quoted *huku* amounts within an order of magnitude of the local price of a live hen. Indeed, the Mozambican refugee migrants, who haggled the least, received the cheapest plots. If land allocation was a real estate deal – in which Mozambicans did *not* deal – the sticking point was always location.

Why did Mozambicans acquiesce? My field assistants thought Mozambicans were ill-treated because many arrived only in recent years, when land had become scarce. These informants cited 1990 as the turning point. In the 1980s, they said, migrants chose their places, but from 1990 onwards, free spaces were increasingly unavailable. In this view, time and population density, not the nationality of migrants, affected the degree of flexibility in headmen’s allocation of land. To a certain extent, the distinction between these variables is a false one: most of the migrants who came in the 1990s were Mozambican refugees from the 1991–1992 drought (ten of thirteen), and most of those who came before were Zimbabwean (ten of sixteen). Mozambican migrants encountered the unfavourable conditions of high population density and uncompromising headmen much more frequently than did their Zimbabwean counterparts and, predictably, headmen told almost all of them exactly where to live. Yet, the minority figures – small as they are – reveal that headmen exercised a bias against Mozambicans and in favour of Zimbabweans in both periods. Zimbabweans arriving in the 1990s had more choices than Mozambicans. Similarly, in the 1980s, Mozambicans negotiated to a much lesser extent than did Zimbabweans. It is true, however, that conditions were more difficult for everyone in the 1990s. Mozambicans chose their plots less often than before, and so did Zimbabweans, but before and after 1990, Zimbabweans had consistently more autonomy in land allocation. Nationality matters after all.

Land Allocation as Personal Pledging

Nationality matters because land allocation meant something very different in the case of Mozambicans in the 1990s. A history of land alienation and of the resulting high population densities in the communal lands had conditioned Zimbabweans to view land as a political issue. Arriving in a new communal land, they *expected* to bargain with headmen over the location and quality of allocated fields. Yet, what was seen as a real estate deal for Zimbabweans, was perhaps closer to a ‘personal estate’ deal for Mozambican refugees. Before independence in 1975, conflict in Mossurize had turned on the allocation of (forced)

43 ‘*kutengesa nyika*’.

labour rather than the allocation of fields. Under the Portuguese system of *chibaro*, headmen and chiefs apprehended tax defaulters and sometimes any subject for work on distant plantations or on road construction. In so doing, they and their white supervisors built on the earlier, much harsher pattern of *kukhonza*.⁴⁴ This form of servitude dated from the pre-colonial Gaza Nguni kingdom, a Zulu-offshoot whose capital lay in Mossurize from 1862 to 1889.⁴⁵ During the Nguni raids and related famines, people pledged themselves to lineage heads, exchanging labour and rights over progeny for physical and economic security. At least in the oral tradition, Mozambicans understood that flight from one's home to a new area incurred a change of status. Integration among hosts would depend not on negotiations over land, but on personal pledging to a headman.

Now, after a peaceful hiatus, conditions similar to those associated with *chibaro* and Gaza Nguni *kukhonza* reappeared in northern Mossurize. The Renamo rebel movement conquered the area in 1987 and established a system of forced labour that came to be known as *chikoroka*.⁴⁶ Chiefs and headmen thereupon stepped into their colonial roles: they recruited porters and other workers for external demands. *Chikoroka*, then, rescued a relationship of servitude that had been atrophying under Frelimo's socialist rule. *Chikoroka* also created an enabling environment for the efflorescence of that relationship in the course of the 1991–1992 drought. Even before rainfall collapsed, the labour *corvée* and similar taxes in food had diminished households' agricultural capacity. In addition, a strategy of semi-hiding in forested areas had reduced the space under cultivation. Finally, migrant labourers were staying put in South Africa. Even had their remittances reached home, this money would not have significantly improved food security: war had interrupted road transport and, therefore, suspended nearly all grain markets in Mossurize. In sum, smallholders disposed of almost no economic or productive resources. The one resource they possessed in abundance was their position of servitude, and they put it to good effect across the border, in Zimbabwe.⁴⁷

In the minds of Vhimba residents, Mozambicans' acts of *kukhonza* conformed to old and new models of subordination. Elders associated personal pledging with suspensions of the usual patrilineal conventions of bridewealth. For example, they recalled Shangwa Ngorima's (chief from roughly 1939 to 1955) 'orphan' (*nherera*), a man whose parents had died in Gaza-Nguni raids in the previous century. He fled to Ngorima's home, married Ngorima's daughter without bridewealth, served as the chief's assistant, and – in theory – ceded to Ngorima rights over his children (principally the right to negotiate *their* marriage

44 This argument is more fully developed in Hughes, 'Frontier Dynamics: Struggles for Land and Clients on the Zimbabwe–Mozambique Border', pp. 41ff.

45 In fact, the capital moved short distances during that period. For an overview of the Gaza Nguni kingdom, see G.J. Liesegang, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des Reiches der Gaza Nguni im Südlichen Moçambique, 1820–1895', PhD Dissertation, Cologne University, 1967; G.J. Liesegang, *Ngungunyane* (Maputo, Arquivo de Património Cultural, 1996). Published contemporary sources that describe the Nguni social organization in Mossurize include: A. M. Cardoso, 'Expedição às Terras do Muzilla', *Boletim da Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa*, 7, 3 (1887), pp. 153–211. H. Depelchin and C. Croonenberghs, *Trois ans dans l'Afrique australe*, vol. 2 (Brussels, 1883). S.V. Erskine, 'Journey to Umzila's, South East Africa, in 1871–1872', *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 45 (1875), pp. 45–128. S.V. Erskine, 'Third and Fourth Journeys in Gaza, or Southern Mozambique, 1873 to 1874, and 1874 to 1875', *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 48 (1878), pp. 25–56. For an oral historical account of Gaza Nguni 'slavery', see W. Mhlanga, '(1) The Story of Ngwaqazi. (2) The History of the Amatshangana', *Native Affairs Department Annual*, 25 (1948), pp. 70–73.

46 Northern Mossurize experienced a relatively mild form of Renamo control, resembling the 'tax areas' described by R. Gersony in 'Summary of Mozambican Refugee Accounts of Principally Conflict-Related Experience in Mozambique', report submitted to Ambassador Jonathan Moore, Director, Bureau for Refugees Program and Dr Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of African Affairs, Washington, DC, April 1988; cited in C. Nordstrom, *A Different Kind of War Story* (Philadelphia, 1997), pp. 96–98.

47 S. Berry similarly describes people's instrumental use of social networks and relationships in 'Social Institutions and Access to Resources', *Africa*, 59, 1 (1989), pp. 41–55.

payments).⁴⁸ This type of bride service had, however, mostly died out by the 1990s, and Mozambican men did not engage in it in Vhimba. A second 'free' form of marriage mirrored the events of the 1990s more closely: distressed families offered their unmarried daughters gratis or the woman herself appealed to a man who could feed her. During the drought, a destitute Mozambican woman pledged herself to M., a Vhimba man, beseeching: 'Please take care of me. Please marry me'.⁴⁹ M. refused this responsibility, but W.C. accepted an identical offer from a girl fleeing from the vicinity of Beira. Finally, in cases only reported second-hand, Mozambicans offered their daughters in exchange for food. To Zimbabweans, these practices indicated great hardship (*kusvupika*), the lack of basic means (*kushaya*), and *kukhonza*. Such drought-era marriages grafted the search for basic subsistence onto a 'kinship idiom'.

By contrast, a second set of meanings for *kukhonza* centered on (to put it awkwardly) a 'border idiom'. Whereas the marital interpretation of pledging focused on common, cross-border kindred, this more political understanding treated the border as distinctly 'hard'. With a few exceptions, the warring parties of the 1980s and 1990s confined their depredations to the Mozambican side the Rusitu River. Once residents of Mossurize exhausted sources of support from kin and neighbours, their priority was clearly to flee to Zimbabwe. From the Rusitu, these destitute people could proceed to camps where relief food was available or remain in Ngorima Communal Land where it would be possible to farm in safety. In either case, they were technically and legally refugees, and Zimbabweans and Mozambicans translated this circumstance into a new meaning of *kukhonza*. For example, 'One who does not have relatives is called a *mukhonzwa* [someone who has performed a *kukhonza* act] ... it is similar to refugees'.⁵⁰ Other observers identified a *mukhonzwa* more broadly, as any undocumented alien: 'We say he has *-khonza* because he does not have identity papers from here'.⁵¹ Finally, a Mozambican-born newcomer to northern Mossurize defended himself from my suggestion that he had *-khonza*, saying, 'I do not *-khonza*. I am in Mozambique. I was born in Mozambique'.⁵² In short, to *-khonza* was to cross the border in desperate circumstances.

More precisely still, the definition applied much more readily to Mozambicans entering Zimbabwe than vice-versa. With peace and an efficient state system of famine relief, Zimbabweans could hardly imagine fleeing to a land they identified as backward, violent and poor. Indeed, informants reported that only a handful of Vhimba families had taken refuge in Mozambique during Zimbabwe's war of the 1970s. Ironically, the relief apparatus that allowed Zimbabweans to stay put rendered Mozambicans doubly vulnerable as long as they stayed in Vhimba. Refugees who wished to avoid deportation to the Tongogara refugee camp depended absolutely upon the collusion of headmen. Yet, headmen had many reasons to eject foreigners from their communities. Unlike most Zimbabwean internal migrants, these Mozambicans came with no letter from District Government attesting to a clean criminal record. With a war underway Vhimba residents suspected that people were fleeing Mossurize not only as victims of violence but perhaps as wanted perpetrators. One headman confessed that he distrusted refugees for precisely this reason and, therefore, did not let them choose their places of residence. Ordinary citizens were disinclined to extend

48 Informants on both sides of the border linked this type of subordination to the status of *muranda*. Chief Gogoi, who was nonetheless careful to distinguish *kukhonza* from *muranda*, defined the latter as 'someone who takes a child [bride] without paying bridewealth' – '*munhu anatora mwana asikasi kuroora*' (Gogoi, 17 July 1997).

49 '*Mungangondichengete. Mungangondiroore*' (Vhimba, 19 September 1996).

50 '*Usina hama unonzi mukhonzwa ... akafanika semarefugees*' (Vhimba, 20 May 1997).

51 '*Tinoti wakhonza nokuti haasi chibarwa chemuno*' (Vhimba, 8 March 1997).

52 '*Handikhonzi. Ndiri muMozambique. Ndakabarwa muMozambique*' (Makuyana, 13 July 1997). Yet, the same man distinguished migrant labour in South Africa from the circumstances that would lead one to *-khonza* in a foreign country.

networks of support, information and the like to such shady characters. Refugees were, therefore, ultimate strangers and outsiders.⁵³

Did Zimbabwean headmen and Mozambican migrants consider their interaction as a form of pledging? Did they understand themselves to be making a personal estate deal, rather than the real estate deal conventional between Zimbabweans? In discussions regarding land allocation to Mozambicans, *kukhonza* constituted at least a strong undercurrent, politically charged and personally embarrassing. M.M., a Zimbabwean man, admitted Mozambican land seekers into his definition of *mukhonzwa*: ‘A person arrives and says, “I want a homestead site” ... this person has no relatives and comes from elsewhere’.⁵⁴ At least one headman saw land allocation in this way. If ‘I -*khonza*’, said Muhanyi, ‘I want a homestead site’ for a short period.⁵⁵ The transient nature of this land allocation was important: these fields might be considered short-term relief goods for people who needed to plant immediately. This headman gave such interim/temporary plots to numerous Mozambicans in 1991–1992, most of whom had returned to Mozambique by 1995. Other headmen and the Mozambicans themselves shared a general confusion regarding *-khonza* and land allocation. They agreed, however, that Mozambican refugees were especially vulnerable outsiders, to a degree equivalent to that of a *mukhonzwa*. In the 1990s, headmen allocated land to these refugees, as to earlier Mozambicans immigrants, on unfavourable terms. Refugees, for their part, do not appear to have attempted any of the bargaining strategies familiar to Zimbabwean migrants. In land deals, they submitted to headmen’s first proposals. The outcome for these Mozambicans was a striking form of manipulation in the land politics of Vhimba.⁵⁶

Vulnerable People in Perilous Places

When refugees started arriving in Vhimba land politics were heated and likely to become more so. Structural conflicts existed on three levels, and all involved land. Foremost was the series of grievances against those who had alienated land from Ngorima’s polity. Other conflicts were based directly on control of land, and pitted headmen against each other. Finally, headmen needed to justify their positions to commoners in Vhimba. Allocating land was one way to do just that. Headmen, then, could employ land allocation in order to strengthen themselves first, against the state, second, against rival headmen, and third, against their subjects. In the early 1990s, headmen did manipulate land allocation in all of these ways. They succeeded in doing so precisely because the right kind of migrants – Mozambican refugees – arrived at the right time.

By 1990, resentment towards in the government on the issue of past land alienation had been building for a decade. In the 1970s, guerillas fighting to liberate Zimbabwe had promised Vhimba small-holders ‘You may live where you want to’.⁵⁷ Small-holders

53 Even so, these Mozambicans fared far better than those who fell into the clutches of cross-border slaving circuits. For Zimbabwe, see M.F. Chingono, *The State, Violence, and Development: the Political Economy of War in Mozambique* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 107–108. For South Africa, see E. Koch, ‘Slave Trade still a Booming Business’, *The Weekly Mail* (Johannesburg), 5–11 June 1992, pp. 9–10. P. Stober, ‘Seeking a Better Life, She was Sold for R200’, *The Weekly Mail* (Johannesburg), 5–11 June 1992, p. 9.

54 ‘*Kuuya munhu unosvika unoti, “Ini ndinoda pokugara” ... asina hama, anobva kumwe*’ (Vhimba, 8 February 1997).

55 ‘*Ndakhonza. Ndinoda pokugara*’ (Vhimba, 11 November 1996).

56 These findings closely parallel those in J. McGregor, ‘People without Fathers: Mozambicans in Swaziland 1888–1993’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, 4 (1994), especially pp. 560–561. Although, as McGregor observes, Mozambican border residents entering Swaziland in the 1980s did not formally *khonta* to a chief, they did become clients of hosting families and, in consequence, endure constraints and abuse in the course of gaining access to land.

57 ‘*Munogona kugara pamunoda*’ – recalled by a non-combatant Vhimba resident (Vhimba, 4 October 1996).

understood that they could and should return to estates and other expropriated lands after independence. Thus emboldened, Headman Muhanyi and four other families moved back inside the section of Chimanimani National Park from which they had been evicted in the 1960s. They farmed there only until 1981, when the Department of National Parks reasserted control over this part of the Parks' estate. Rangers of the new, black-ruled Zimbabwe simply implemented colonial-era legislation and tossed the 'squatters' out of Matsenderero (See Figure 2). 'In what way have those without a place to live been liberated?',⁵⁸ an evictee asked me rhetorically as we noted that the following day was Zimbabwe's Independence Day. On the anniversary itself, another resident argued: 'The border was taken by the heroes [of the liberation struggle]'.⁵⁹ Acts of omission compounded the state's guilt: the land redistribution programme of the early 1980s gave the parastatal Forestry Commission first pick of the best land on the main Chimanimani plateau. The two small farms designated for small-holders in the Nyahode and upper Rusitu Valley lay far away from Vhimba – too far for Vhimba residents to gain a foothold in the scramble for resettlement on them. Finally, the state's post-Independence revival of land-use planning threatened to marginalize headmen from the process of settlement.⁶⁰ Measured in hectares, Vhimba's headmen and commoners gained nothing from the change of government. Together, they shared a searing sense of betrayal by a government verbally committed to land redistribution.⁶¹

Vhimba residents, however, lacked a means to express and act upon their land claims. Obviously, the best – and perhaps the only – way to claim the land was to establish huts and crops on it. Squatting was the small-holders' weapon of choice in post-Independence land wars, and, once squatters were installed, the government had a hard time dislodging them.⁶² Nonetheless, existing Vhimba residents were understandably wary of opening fields or sending their sons into a 'forbidden zone'. Zimbabwean internal migrants were equally prudent. Through social networks, they learned of the existence and location of these areas. They then bargained their way out of disputed zones and onto safer parcels. Mozambican migrants, we have seen, had less room to manoeuvre than did Zimbabweans in land allocation. Headmen might have deployed them inside the alienated areas, but very few Mozambicans arrived in the 1980s (only one family in the sample). Enter the refugees. These particularly afflicted Mozambicans would live nearly anywhere. Headmen must have realized that they could send refugees, like infantry, over the trenches and into disputed ground. In the event, headmen settled refugees a small distance inside Chimanimani National Park and the Hayfield B private estate.

While thus expanding the collective perimeter of their Communal Land, these headmen also used refugees to counter threats from within Ngorima's polity. The boundaries between headmen's areas were as doubtful, if less changeable, than those delimiting Ngorima Communal Land. In these headman-to-headman disputes land allocation was doubly effective. It constituted both a seizure of land and an extension of political jurisdiction. This

58 'Vanhu vasina pokugara vanosununguka chii?' (Vhimba, 17 April 1995).

59 'Muganhu wakatorwa nemakamba' (Vhimba, 18 April 1995).

60 Alexander, 'The State, Agrarian Policy, and Rural Politics', pp. 360–370. On pp. 361–362 she describes headmen's use of refugees to assert in authority over land in northeastern Chimanimani District, a process close to that in Vhimba.

61 Elaborated further in D.M. Hughes, 'When Parks Encroach upon People: Expanding National Parks in the Rusitu Valley, Zimbabwe', *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 20, 1 (1996), pp. 36–40, and D.M. Hughes, 'Frontier Dynamics', pp. 99–115.

62 J. Herbst, *State Politics in Zimbabwe* (Harare, University of Zimbabwe Press, 1990), ch. 4. Alexander provides a detailed picture of the squatter wars in wider Chimanimani District, in 'The State, Agrarian Policy, and Rural Politics', ch. 7. For a case of squatting inside Nyanga National Park, see D.S. Moore, 'Contesting Terrain in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands: Political Ecology, Ethnography, and Peasant Resource Struggles', *Economic Geography*, 69, 4 (1993), pp. 388–393.

correlation rested on the association of control over people with control over land in Zimbabwe. Colonial era evictions, migration to the communal land, and subsequent land allocation in Vhimba had forged that link. In the 1990s as in the past, migrants owed beer to the land allocator and, in some cases, passed state taxes through him as well. The beer drinks, especially, affirmed the headman's position as social dean and land manager. As a form of thanks to the headman, each migrant family must invite its new neighbours – and the headman – to a 'house warming' celebration. Having thus extruded a permanent base of clients and allies, therefore, one headman could erode the sovereignty of another. Yet to live as a protege of one headman on land claimed by another was not comfortable. Someone who knew enough and could negotiate to avoid this predicament would try to do so. As expected, the people thrown by one headman into another's area in the 1990s were overwhelmingly Mozambican.

A second threat to headmen from close to home concerned the status of the office of headman itself. The English term 'headman' encompasses the Shona terms *sadunhu* and *sabhuku* as well as, more tangentially, the Ndaou dialect terms *sharuka* and *doda*. The title *sadunhu* dates from the pre-colonial period, while *sabhuku* is a more recent creation. Native commissioners unintentionally begat the latter term when, at the turn of the twentieth century, they invested certain *masadunhu* (plural of *sadunhu*) with tax books, hence the English-derived root *bhuku* (book) in *sabhuku*. Throughout the colonial era, the new rank stirred uncertainty and conflict. Did a book-bearing *sabhuku* rank above, below or equal with a *sadunhu* who had never acquired a tax book? To muddy the waters still further, officials introduced the term 'kraalhead' and occasionally applied it to some or all of Vhimba's headmen. At Independence, the issue was further complicated: the new government abolished direct taxation in the communal lands, but the title *sabhuku* persisted. Thus, in 1995, respondents disagreed strongly on the proper hierarchy between say, *sabhuku* Tiyekiye and *sadunhu* Chikware. One factor that swayed these popular political judgements was land allocation. Some Vhimba residents based their order of ranking upon the accomplishments of given headmen in settling migrants, especially when migrants lived close to the respondent. Of course, since all the *masabhuku* and *masadunhu* in Vhimba and its environs hosted refugees in the early 1990s, land allocation produced a stalemate. By 1997, however, nearly everyone knew of the Rural District Council's 'development levy' introduced four years earlier and payable directly to one's *sabhuku*. Although most people continued to evade the tax, the clear majority now placed the *sabhuku* above the *sadunhu*.

Notwithstanding this affirmation, Vhimba's *sabhuku* – as well as its *sadunhu* – still had to watch their backs. A final internal threat stemmed from the recurrence of succession disputes for the office of headman. Colonial intervention in chiefly polities was again partly to blame. *Pax Britannica* had suppressed the use of fratricide and banishment as tools for settling controversy over succession. In place of these effective if ruthless, methods, district administrators substituted their own principles and ceremonies for official installation. Yet no headmen in Ngorima's polity received the official imprimatur; under the Chiefs and Headmen Act (1982) they were not and still are not 'headmen', and *sabhuku* Tiyekiye bemoaned his deprivation of salary, medallions, and of the coveted pith helmet – though it is not clear that recognized headmen, as opposed to chiefs, are legally entitled to any of these perks. Without these official endorsements, headmen were exposed to brothers and cousins – ominously alive and close at hand – who could reveal or concoct a past misapplication of the 'traditional' rules of succession. Office-holders, then, were forced to engage in what John Comaroff describes as a constant campaign to defend their status.⁶³

63 J.L. Comaroff, 'Rules and Rulers: Political Processes in a Tswana Chiefdom', *Man*, new series, 13 (1978), pp. 1–12.

They waged continual succession disputes against the possibility that they would be uncovered as regents who had overstayed their welcome.

Both Tiyekiye and Chikware were in this precarious position, and both tried to use land allocation to their benefit. Tiyekiye's father assumed office in 1948 as a regent for his younger cousin (his mother's brother's son), the son of the headman originally invested by Chief Ngorima. This regent, however, reigned until his death, and succeeded in passing the office to his son, the present Tiyekiye. Neither Tiyekiye nor his deceased father belonged to the clan of the original headman and of Ngorima himself, *mwoyo*. To make matters worse, Tiyekiye belonged to an apostolic church and, hence did not deliver offerings to ancestral spirits of the sacred forest lying within his domain. His non-converted younger brother performed the ceremony, but many of Tiyekiye's subjects found the substitution less than ideal. Tiyekiye's incumbency was, therefore, uncertain. At any moment his subjects might decide that his father's cousin, still living within Ngorima Communal Land could do a better job.⁶⁴ Chikware's grasp on power was even weaker. He took the office in 1990 in place of his older brother who was absent on migrant labour. For Chikware and Tiyekiye to retain the respect of their people, it was essential that they were seen to perform well. What better device for this effort than land allocation? Through land allocation, Tiyekiye and Chikware demonstrated they that could, indeed, perform as headmen should perform. Their strategy was all the more effective because much of the land allocated was once confiscated by the state. Vhimba residents resented that injustice so that, on this front, headmen were and are fighting 'the good fight'. Only an improvident public – to extend the metaphor – would unseat successful generals in the midst of winning a popular war.

In summary, headmen used refugees in multiple ways to advance their claims on numerous fronts. Against private and public land-owners, refugees were a beachhead. They served the same purpose against neighbouring headmen. Finally, with regard to commoners, the allocation of land demonstrated a headman's efficacy and legitimacy as a ruler. Each of the three headmen in Vhimba – Tiyekiye, Muhanyi and Chikware – benefited from these manipulations of refugees. In spatial terms, the allocations that benefited them most occurred in three areas, the Mukwiratunhu section of Chimanimani National Park, in the Hayfield B estate, and in a disputed slice of communal land I will call the 'Chisambavarongo wedge' (see Figure 2). The remainder of this article discusses these cases in turn.

The first allocations in Chimanimani National Park conjoined internally and externally directed conflicts. In 1991 and 1992, Headman Tiyekiye settled four households in the Mukwiratunhu area. Three of these families had left Dombe in Sussundenga District, Mozambique because of drought and war, and the fourth arrived from Chipinge, Zimbabwe.⁶⁵ None had any choice in the matter of land allocation. As a site for external deployment, Tiyekiye picked Mukwiratunhu because, he said, 'It was inhabited before. Mafatu died there. Maparara died there too.'⁶⁶ Matsenderero had also been previously occupied, but National Parks was particularly vigilant with regard to moist forest, as opposed to the rocky upland of Mukwiratunhu. Tiyekiye, therefore, thought he

64 In fact, Tiyekiye did lose his office to that man in mid-1998. (1) Personal communication from Elias Nyamunda, Secretary, Vhimba Area Development Committee, 14 September 1998. (1)

65 The head of household in this case may also have been born in Mozambique. There is extremely little communal land in Chipinge District, Zimbabwe, especially in the eastern part. Except for the tiny Tamandayi Communal Land, commercial tea estates occupy the entire eastern part of the district, and most of the residents of these estates are Mozambican migrant labourers. This migrant could very well have been a Mozambican tea picker who tried to hide his Mozambican nationality for obvious reasons. In one other case, Vhimba residents identified as Zimbabwean a migrant who arrived from the Ratelshoek estate in Chipinge District, but the migrant himself eventually disclosed to me his birth in Gogoi.

66 'Yaigarwa kare. Mafuta akafirei-wo. Maparara akafirei-wo' (Vhimba, 24 April 1997).

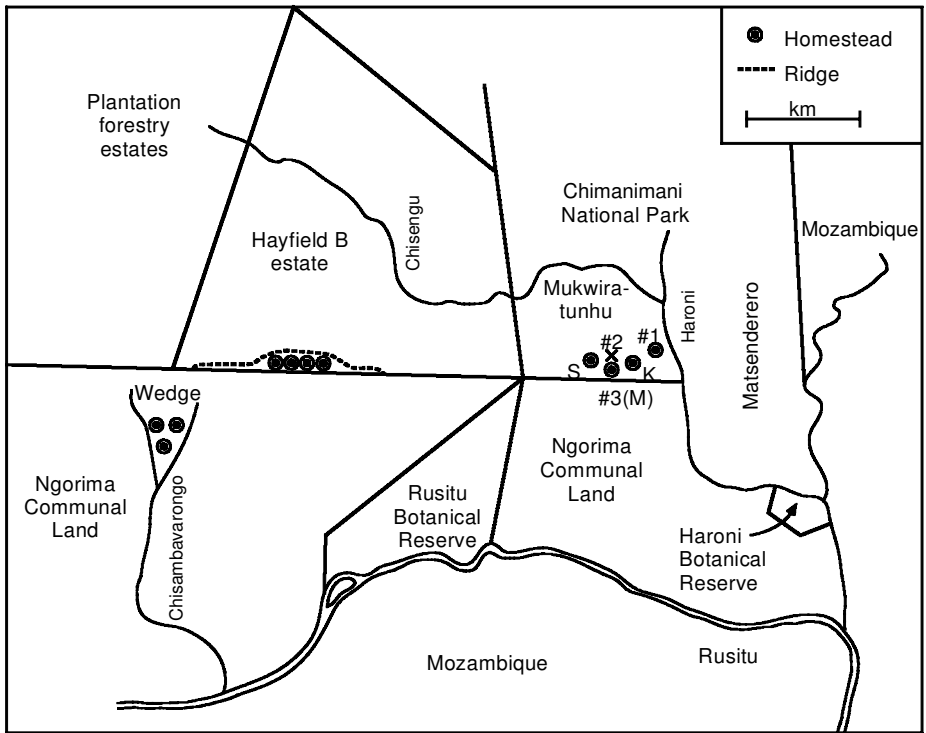


Figure 2. Map of Vhimba, Zimbabwe and adjoining areas.

could make his claim to Mukwiratunhu stick, and, of course, he believed the claim to be legitimate.

In the event, Tiyekiye's allocations provoked opposition from within Vhimba even before National Parks intervened. By allocating in Mukwiratunhu, Tiyekiye may have overstepped his authority with regard to another headman. Muhanyi claimed to rule Mukwiratunhu, Matsenderero and the immediately adjoining stretch of communal land. Muhanyi and his younger brother were two of the household heads evicted from Matsenderero in 1981. Muhanyi, however, was a *sadunhu* rather than a *sabhuku*; so his subjects were in the colonial 'book' of Tiyekiye. Did the responsibility to tax residents of Mukwiratunhu confer on Tiyekiye the privilege of settling people there? (The question was made still murkier because there had been no tax in eleven years, and because non-citizens in hiding from the law would not have paid tax anyway.) The Muhanyi family thought not: the *sadunhu*'s nephew protested, 'Tiyekiye wants to rule areas that are not his'.⁶⁷ Initiating a public relations campaign against Tiyekiye, Muhanyi posted a sign in Mukwiratunhu declaring: 'Let us try to do the wishes of the owner of this place, David Muhanyi. Live well with others in this place. Care for your livestock.'⁶⁸ Eventually, the Muhanyis and wider Vhimba opinion forced Tiyekiye to 'hand over' these four families.⁶⁹ It was agreed retroactively that Muhanyi had allocated the land in Mukwiratunhu.

Concurrent with the 'invention' of these allocations, Muhanyi was actually distributing plots in Mukwiratunhu to migrant families on his own account. Indeed, it was

67 'Tiyekiye anoda kutonga nzvimbo dzisiri dzake' (Vhimba, 20 March 1995).

68 'Ngatiedze kuita zvido zvemuridzi wenzvimbo ino, David Muhanyi. Kugara nevamwe zvakanaka munharaunda. Chengetai zvipfuyo zvenyu'.

69 People used the English expression.

essential for him to do so when he did. Until the protocol between himself and Tiyekiye was formalized, Muhanyi was in a 'use it or lose it' situation: if he did not exercise his duties as headman, Tiyekiye might take them from him altogether. During the 1991–1993 period, Muhanyi put four families into Mukwiratunhu. Three of these were Mozambicans; one was Zimbabwean, from Bikita District; and none of them chose their land. These allocations – combined with the handover from Tiyekiye – established that Muhanyi was in charge of Mukwiratunhu. All of the eight families there owed their continued residence in Vhimba to Muhanyi.

By 1995, however, six of these families had departed, and Muhanyi faced another set of challenges to his authority. In 1993, National Parks identified the removal of 'squatters' – especially 'illegal immigrants' – from Chimanimani National Park as a priority.⁷⁰ They undertook a campaign of evictions too complex to be given full treatment here. As part of this effort, threats and intimidation from scouts may have influenced the six families, all Mozambican, to return to their home country. At the same time, the end of the drought, the 1992 peace accords, and the non-violent conclusion of the 1994 elections made repatriation to Mozambique much more appealing. Whatever the cause, the refugees' desertion was a blow to Muhanyi: the flags he had planted in Mukwiratunhu were now gone. Shortly thereafter, however, a small influx of migrants gave Muhanyi another chance. This time he did not thrust settlers deep in Mukwiratunhu towards the Chisengu River, as before. Instead, he used them to make a compromise, as markers of the conciliatory boundary he wished to establish between his territory and the Park. In late 1996, he placed C., who arrived from Gogoi (Mozambique) and did not negotiate, at point #1 (see Figure 2 for the location of settlements discussed here). Together with two of the original eight families that remained (S. and K.), C. formed a roughly east to west line, parallel to but 200 metres or so north of the official Park boundary. When M. immigrated from Dombe (Mozambique) early in 1997, Muhanyi sought to complete that line by siting him at point #2, directly between S. and K.⁷¹ The plan was not entirely successful because M did not want his wife exposed to wild animals and other insecurities of the bush while he worked in South Africa. M. negotiated for a stand just slightly to the south, at point #3. Thus Muhanyi created a crooked rather than a straight line, but he created a boundary nonetheless.

Inside the Hayfield B estate, Headman Chikware has undertaken an analogous counter-demarcation. The expulsions of the early 1980s had spared one household, that of K.C., located just south of the ridge between the Rusitu and Chisengu Valleys (see Figure 2). Chikware appears to have decided that this ridge would make a fair border between the Communal and estate land. Rather than repopulating the Chisengu Valley, therefore, Chikware settled three families in the amphitheatre-shaped area around K.C. In these cases, as opposed to those in Mukwiratunhu, the issue of choice in land allocation was not salient. E.C., who received his allocation in 1992, already had farmed at a primary residence in the lowland part of Chikware's area. Migrating from elsewhere in Ngorima Communal Land in 1994, K.M. was a formal sector worker and not particularly concerned about the location of his fields. Finally, V.M. who arrived in 1995, was a widow and could not be expected to bargain over land. These migrants did not have strong reasons to oppose their use as Chikware's boundary beacons. By refraining from bargaining – even when some of them could have – these Zimbabweans put themselves in the position of Mozambicans. They became a second row of boundary beacons in the creeping re-annexation of Ngorima's lost lands.

70 E. Kawadza and C. Rogers, 'A Report on the Haroni–Rusitu Botanical Reserves', memo, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management, Harare, 1993, p. 2.

71 A neighbour just outside Mukwiratunhu described Muhanyi as wanting 'to make a boundary' ('*kuita* boundary') and as desiring that these households 'make one line' ('*kuti vaite* line *rimwe chete*') (Vhimba, 26 July 1997).

Surprisingly, C.L., the owner of Hayfield B, accommodated Chikware's push northwards. He was aware of the families squatting on his land. Indeed, he insisted that the border did not follow the ridge, but approximated a line slightly to the south, what would be the edge of the amphitheatre before the ground slopes steeply towards the Rusitu. Yet, he had taken no steps to evict those four families, having only informed them that they were trespassing. 'We are in the yard of the white man',⁷² one of E.C.'s wives was told, and, therefore, we must not allow fires to escape. More tolerant of squatters than the ZANU–PF-led government, C.L. was considering granting the four families long-term leases on Hayfield B. In effect, this land-owner had conceded Chikware's cautious re-demarcation of the boundary. For him though, the new line was firm. Encroachment further north would place people in the Chisengu watershed, which C.L. planned to reserve as a butterfly sanctuary. 'No way!' responded C.L. when petitioned – remarkably – by a former evictee.

The final disputed area of land allocation in the 1990s lay along the border between Chikware's and Headman Muitire's areas. The Chisambavarongo stream separated their jurisdictions. High up the escarpment, however, it was difficult to distinguish the true Chisambavarongo from a tributary (see Figure 2). Based on self-serving interpretations, both headmen claimed an almost uninhabited wedge of territory lying between the Chisambavarongo and another watercourse. Prior to 1991, Muitire had settled only one household, a Zimbabwean family, in this area, and Chikware had no presence there. In 1991 and 1992, however, Chikware inserted two Mozambican households, one headed by a widow, from Dombe. Both families were refugees, and neither negotiated in the course of receiving their parcels. As a result, the majority of households living in the 'Chisambavarongo wedge' owed their land to Chikware and all them contributed to the offerings to his spirits. One would conclude, as does the head of the Zimbabwean household, that 'Chikware snatched Muitire's land'.⁷³

* * *

Two factors stand out in the territorial struggles discussed above: the particular people and the particular land at stake. Chikware snatched land, Tiyekiye reappropriated land, and Muhanyi reclaimed land by proxy. The foot soldiers in every one of the turf battles described above were migrants and largely Mozambican refugees. Mozambicans migrants were 'pre-adapted' to politics based on the control of people. Forced labour, from the *chibaro* of Portuguese administrators to the *chikoroka* of the civil war, had imprinted submission as the model for relations between chiefs and commoners. Submission, moreover, was doubly appropriate for those rendered destitute by war and drought, and it was expected, on both sides of the border, as the concomitant of immigration. Mozambicans knew how to *-khonza*, and Zimbabwean headmen knew what to do with them when they did *-khonza*. Chikware, Tiyekiye and Muitire used refugees to claim territory and fight for the lost lands around and within Vhimba. Mozambican settlers, in effect, became the pegs of new boundaries, expanding the zone of small-holding and shrinking Chimanimani National Park and the Hayfield B estate.

The only boundary that Vhimba's headmen did not redraw was the international border. On the contrary, by fashioning border crossers into border beacons, Tiyekiye, Chikware and Muhanyi reaffirmed the political importance of the Rusitu River. The river and the Zimbabwe–Mozambique border separated those who negotiated for land from those who simply accepted the terms given them. Vastly different colonial and

72 'Tiri muyard yemungezi' (Vhimba, 23 April 1997).

73 'Chikware wakavvuta nyika yaMuitire' (Vhimba, 14 April 1995).

post-colonial histories, again distinguished by the border, prepared Zimbabweans to bargain over land and Mozambicans to pledge themselves to headmen. Finally, the border – and its associated identity papers, refugee camps, and the like – made Mozambicans illegal and vulnerable in Vhimba. If the Rusitu Valley corresponds to Appadurai's 'global ethnoscape', then it is riven by a cultural and political disjuncture that radically constrains trajectories of movement and travel.

The Mozambican refugees described above are certainly not sedentary, but neither are they de-territorialized. On the contrary, their birth in a particular national territory shaped the fact and manner of their integration in Vhimba. In a second sense, as well, the hosting of Mozambicans was fundamentally geographical because headmen acted from territorial desires. Appadurai's celebrated 'unyoking of imagination from place'⁷⁴ seems not to have arrived in Vhimba. Its delay does not indicate some kind of primitivism on the part of African small-holders, left behind by time-space compression and post-modern cosmopolitanism. Clearly, Vhimba's headmen are not international financiers or 'flexible citizens'. Nor are they likely to ascend to these exalted positions anytime soon. Instead, they are marking a hundred-years of territorial theft committed against them by and under various governments. This history of dispossession and spatial compaction has firmly yoked imagination to place. Sadly, the politics of territory are alive and well in Vhimba.

DAVID MCDERMOTT HUGHES

Department of Human Ecology, Rutgers University, 55 Dudley Road, New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA

74 Appadurai, 'Global Ethnoscapes', p. 202.