

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

David McDermott Hughes

Rutgers University  
United States of America

Abstract:

For Mozambicans, border-crossing is neither new nor liberating. Many current analyses of refugees, labor migrants, smuggles, and other “transnational subjects” emphasize their range of options, arguing that they are less and less constrained by porous, politically “soft” international borders. This paper argues that, for at least a segment, the Mozambique-Zimbabwe border is hard and constraining and has been so since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 favorable 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 modeled loosely on 19<sup>th</sup>-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.

Paper presented to the Conference on Migration and Urbanization in Comparative Perspective, Johannesburg, South Africa, 4-7 June 2003.

## **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 smallholder 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 areas of private estates and national parks taken 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 territory.

This paper 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 labor 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 condition 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 two ago, anthropologists and other social scientists mostly abided by the conventional notions of destitute refugees, longing émigrés, and inviolable borders. All of these images imply spatial constraint, or what Liisa Malkki criticizes as "the spatial incarceration of the native" (Malkki 1992). According to the conventional "sedentarist metaphysics" (Ibid), 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 the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century phenomena of de-territorialization and transnationalism. The geographer David Harvey points to the accelerating flows of capital, people, and ideas. We are now, he says, experiencing “time-space compression,” such that we may take part simultaneously in life ways separated by vast physical distances (Harvey 1990). Arjun Appadurai writes that the contemporary world is composed of “global ethnoscares” – montages of people in motion. Ethnography, he exhorts, should now turn its attention to the “unyoking of imagination from place” (Appadurai 1991: 202).

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. Art 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 obtain farmland. In effect, a trans-border safety net of kin and ethnic ties enabled refugees to resettle “spontaneously” in small-holder communities (Hansen 1979: 369). 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 Ken 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.” 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 laborers, smugglers, and other cosmopolitans fortuitously involved with the United Nations. They virtually possess what Ong – writing about diasporic Chinese businessmen – calls “flexible citizenship” (Ong 1993: 745-78).

The notion of immigrants 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 welcoming and assimilating Guineans,

they are “simply receiving large numbers of fellow tribesmen” (Zartmann 1970: 144). 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.” Furthermore, because borderlands lie outside the developing cores of national territory, they constitute what Asiwaju calls “special areas of socio-political ambivalence” (Asiwaju 1985: 4, 13). The “reality of borderlands where communities merged into one another” (Nugent and Asiwaju 1996: 9) explains Flynn’s recent finding that people living along the Benin-Nigeria boundary call each other “border” (Flynn 1997). In spite of the centrifugal pull of two capital cities, these and similar partitioned populations have 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 authors treat border 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” with movements across borders (Mitchell 1997: 101). “The state,” a recent collection reminds us, “continues to play [a role] in the everyday lives of its own and other citizens” (Wilson and Donnan 1998: 2). 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 (Ibid, 101-14). Hyndman’s clever comparison of Switzerland and Somalia makes the point strikingly clear: the Swiss allow money in and keep immigrants out; meanwhile, Geneva-based aid organizations channel large sums of money to southern Somalia precisely to discourage people there from entering Kenya (Hyndman 1997). The Somali predicament reveals a bias towards elites prevalent in much of the transnational literature. The flexible citizens who populate hotel lobbies rarely rub shoulders with refugees or 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 female Angolans in Zambia rose in social position more readily than did their male counterparts (Spring 1979: 423-28). 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 a 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 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 km, guards staff only seven check-points. Vehicles must pass through these crossings. For pedestrians, the border is unsupervised, unfenced, and mostly unmarked. Indeed, in these logistical terms, the border is softer for small-holders who walk 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 Ndau dialects of Shona are spoken. The border-jumper will encounter no language barrier with his or her hosts, and they may share bonds of blood or 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” (Moore 1995: 245-48). The site of this research is no exception. In Vhimba, extended families have been binational for generations (Alexander 1993: 54). Mozambicans regularly ford the Rusitu to attend the Vhimba Primary School, located only 50m. 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 (1994: 287) notes, Britain, Portugal, and France drew Africa’s borders as “sifters of labour rather than as barriers to its movement.” In the process of permitting travel, these lines create and differentiate among categories of people. Employers in Zimbabwe are well aware of this dynamic: they give citizens working in industry the minimum wage; agricultural laborers (including many legal foreigners) get a lower minimum wage; and illegal Mozambicans on the tea estates often receive over-valued maize in lieu of wages (Manungo 1996; Mtisi 1996). 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 neaby brethren across the Anglo-Portuguese line of partition. A stones's throw from Malawi, Mozambicans await the return of Portuguese shop-owners – a catalyst for development recognizable only to them (Englund 1996).

In Vhimba, the border delimited in 1898 became important in local social relations within little more than a generation.<sup>1</sup> As a bizarre case of arson reveals, the borderland nurtured its form of transnational parochialism. In 1929, a Vhimba woman testified before the magistrate, “[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.”<sup>2</sup> The alleged aronsist lived in Vhimba, but he may have avoided Mozambique because he owed taxes there. Portugal and its chartered Companhia de Moçambique imposed particularly onerous from of *chibaro*, payable in cash but, failing that, demanded in labor. By mid-century, de facto corvées – carried out by chiefs and native police - were regularly provoking Mozambicans to emigrate. 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. To make matters worse, they received no formal education, rendering them, in Vhimba's view, backward and uncouth. “They have not studied. They are used to war,”<sup>3</sup> 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 labor, but towards cadastral boundaries and claims to land. The Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 trained smallholders in resisting official intrusions into their use of land.<sup>4</sup> 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,

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the Anglo-Portuguese Boundary Commissions, see Schmidt (1998).

<sup>2</sup> NAZ file S 1071, Case of Rex vs. Musoreyani, preliminary examination, 12 November 1929.

<sup>3</sup> “*Havana kudzidza. Vajaira hondo.*” Meanwhile, in Mossurize, Schafer (1999: 100) found that “National identity is surprising strong...”

<sup>4</sup> For a recounting of resistance to the Act in Chimanimani District and in Ngorima Communal Land in particular, see Alexander (1993: 51-59).

acquired no such skills: their fortune in losing no substantial parcels to white settlers simply made them naïve in cadastral matters. 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 settled on the most vulnerable, contested slices of territory. Moreover, 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. As long as migrants continue to arrive in Vhimba, land allocation remains headmen's principle responsibility. Men come to Vhimba in order to establish homesteads and farm, or they come in order to establish homesteads where their wife or wives farm while they work elsewhere. Women come 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 are widows. In these cases, a male relative or acquaintance usually speaks with the headman regarding the widow's parcel of land. Land allocation, then, is the mechanism by which headmen discuss 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 “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* (1952: 6), the headman drives a stake into the ground he has chosen for the new household. Migrants necessarily submit to his fiat. In an alternative scenario, migrants drive their own stakes, figuratively speaking: they allocate land to themselves.<sup>5</sup> Both models envision one active party and one passive party.

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<sup>5</sup> In Insiza District, see Alexander (1993: 120). With regard to women in Nyanga District, see Moore (1995: 607).

Neither approach grapples with the real nature of much decision making, the muddling of multiple protagonists who do not know each other well. More in this vein, Shimmer Chinodya's novel *Dew in the Morning* (1982: 160) 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.

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.

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 (Dzingirai 1994: 172-73). 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 (1985) "everyday forms of peasant resistance," these tactics have the advantage of being covert. 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, on the other hand, a particular class of migrants *does* obey this party line. These newcomers accept the first parcel headmen offer them. Twenty-nine heads of households, of larger number I interviewed in 1996-1997, are suitable for an analysis of bargaining in land

allocation.<sup>6</sup> The heads of these households migrated to Vhimba between 1946 and 1997. Fourteen of them received, with or without requesting it, a choice of parcels. In the remaining 15 cases, the headman offered only one site. What accounts for the different ways in which these headmen - Chikware, Tiyekiye and Muhanyi - treated arriving 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 is 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% of Zimbabweans chose while only 25% of Mozambicans did so; or 71% of those who chose were Zimbabwean and 80% of those who did not chose were Mozambican.

**Table 1**

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

Table 1 summarizes these data and the influence of common kin, a common chief, and common nationality. Kinship 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

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<sup>6</sup> With the assistance of Elias Muhanyi, I interviewed the heads (mostly men) of 67 households separately (although often surrounded by family members) at their homesteads. Of these, 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 and did not try.

mitigating factors. A comparison of the households purely on the axis of kin ties reveals (Table 2) no clear relationship of blood and marriage with negotiating room.

**Table 2**

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

A similar comparison, this time purely on the basis of prior residence in Ngorima's polity, appears to indicate that natives of Ngorima's area fare rather better upon arrival in Vhimba (as in Table 3).<sup>7</sup>

**Table 3**

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

Since 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

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<sup>7</sup>One could also hypothesize that prior residence, at any time, in Ngorima's area is 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: smallholder areas outside Ngorima Communal Land (in either country), migrant labor sites in Zimbabwe, Mozambique or South Africa, and outside Ngorima's historical boundaries, and migrants labor sites inside Ngorima's historical boundaries but outside the smallholder TTL. 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.

choices than those from outside the chieftaincy. Headmen then hardly discriminated on the basis of a migrant's kin or chief. The basis for favorable or unfavorable treatment was nationality (as shown in Table 4).

**Table 4**

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

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 wanting 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 a place,”<sup>8</sup> recalled said Z.M as I interviewed him. 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?”<sup>9</sup> In sum, give-and-take - and sometimes just *give* - has 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

<sup>8</sup>“*Takatsvaka nzimbo*” (Vhimba, 12 November 1996).

<sup>9</sup>“*Ndinoda nzvimbo*” ... “*Munoda dunhu ripi?*” (Vhimba, 13 February 1997).

claimed land to a Mozambican migrant. Tiyekiye showed M., who crossed the Rusitu from neighboring Chief Mafussi's area in 1991, a slice of E.N.'s fallow fields. According to M.'s recollection, Tiyekiye then announced: "You have now seen the place to hoe."<sup>10</sup> Having no other choice, M did farm there and has tolerated an uneasy relationship with his neighbor ever since. Almost all the remaining 14 land allocations to Mozambicans were equally unilateral. Whereas Zimbabweans virtually "wheeled and dealed" their way into Vhimba, Mozambicans came, they saw one place and they settled immediately.

Interestingly, money has not been an issue. The non-commoditized nature of land allocation is all the more striking because deals could so easily include finance.<sup>11</sup> Most migrants do offer a token of respect to the headman upon receipt of a parcel. In 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 center of negotiations over land and get the most he could from weak bargainers. Indeed, a number of third parties told me, in confidence, that they suspected Tiyekiye, Chikware and Muhanyi of doing precisely this and of selfishly "selling the land."<sup>12</sup> 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, adult chicken. Indeed, the Mozambican refugee migrants, who haggled the least, got their plots cheapest, that is, as free relief goods. If land allocation was a real estate deal - in which Mozambicans did *not* deal - the sticking point was location, location, 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 (10 of 13), and most of those who came before were Zimbabwean (10 of 16). Mozambican migrants encountered the unfavorable conditions of high population density and

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<sup>10</sup>"*Watoona nzvimbo yokurima*" (Vhimba, 11 November 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Andersson (1999: 555) makes a similar argument regarding the symbolic and political nature of land allocation.

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 favor 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 tougher 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 of in land allocation (as shown in Table 5). Nationality matters after all.

**Table 5**

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

### **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 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 a real-estate deal for Zimbabweans, was perhaps closer to a “personal estate” deal for Mozambican refugees. Until the mid-1990s, conflict in Mossurize had turned on the allocation of (forced labor) rather than the allocation of fields. There, people viewed their headmen through the lens of Portuguese-era *chibaro* and – in reference to an earlier time – through the much harsher experience of *kukhonza*. This latter form of servitude dated from the pre-colonial Gaza Nguni kingdom. During the Nguni raids and related famines, people pledged themselves to lineage heads, exchanging labor and rights over progeny for physical and economic security. At least in the oral tradition, Mozambicans understood that flight from one’s

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<sup>12</sup> “*kutengesa nyika.*”

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 of a century, conditions similar to those associated with Gaza Nguni *kukhonza* reappeared in northern Mossurize. The Renamo rebel movement conquered the area in 1987, and established a system of forced labor that came to be known as *chikoroka*. (see Chapter 2). 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, under Frelimo's socialist rule, was atrophying. *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 labor corvée and similar taxes in food had diminished households' agricultural capacity. Meanwhile, a strategy of semi-hiding in forested areas had reduced the space under cultivation. Finally, instability and Frelimo's policy against migrant labor impeded travel to South Africa (Schafer 1999: 68). The little money workers did remit could not have significantly improved food security: war had interrupted road transport and, therefore, suspended nearly all grain markets in Mossurize. (Zimbabwean smallholders did sell grain to Mozambicans, but at a particular price - to be discussed below). In sum, smallholders disposed of nearly 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.

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, married the chief's daughter without bridewealth, served as the chief's assistant, and – in theory – ceded to Ngorima rights over his children (principally to negotiate *their* marriage payments).<sup>13</sup> 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.”<sup>14</sup> M – who recalled the event with moral ambivalence in our private conversation – refused this responsibility. He wanted no trouble from the woman’s relatives, should they eventually appear. W.C., however, 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*. These drought-era marriages represented, in other words, a kinship idiom for issues that were, at root, economic.

By contrast, a second set of meanings for *kukhonza* centered on a (to put it awkwardly) a “border idiom.” Whereas the marital interpretation of pledging focused on a 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 of the Rusitu River. Once residents of Mossurize exhausted sources of support from kin and neighbors, their priority was clearly to get 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.”<sup>15</sup> 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.”<sup>16</sup> Finally, a Mozambican resident of Chief Macuiana’s area defended himself from my suggestion in an interview at his homestead that he had *-khonza*, saying, “I do not *-khonza*. I am in

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<sup>13</sup> 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).

<sup>14</sup> “*Mungangondichenge. Mungangondiroore*” (Vhimba, 19 September 1996).

<sup>15</sup> “*Usina hama unonzi mukhonzwa ... akafanika semarefugees*” (Vhimba, 20 May 1997).

<sup>16</sup> “*Tinoti wakhonza nokuti haasi chibarwa chemuno*” (Vhimba, 8 March 1997).

Mozambique. I was born in Mozambique.”<sup>17</sup> 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 vulnerably as long as they stayed in Vhimba. Refugees who wished to avoid deportation to Tongogara 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 networks of support, information and the like to such shady characters. Refugees were, therefore, ultimate strangers and outsiders.<sup>18</sup>

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.”<sup>19</sup> At least one of the three headmen also saw land allocation in this way. “If I *-khonza*,” Muhanyi told me in a formal interview, “I want a

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<sup>17</sup> “*Handikhonzi. Ndiri muMozambique. Ndakabarwa muMozambique*” (Macuiana, 13 July 1997). The man distinguished migrant labor in South Africa from the circumstances that would lead one to *-khonza* in a foreign country.

<sup>18</sup> 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 (1996: 107-8). 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.

<sup>19</sup> “*Kuuya munhu unosvika unoti, ‘Ini ndinoda pokugara’ ... asina hama, anobva kumwe*” (Vhimba, 8 February 1997).

homestead site” for a short period.<sup>20</sup> 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 *kukhonza* and land allocation. They concurred, however, that Mozambican refugees were especially vulnerable outsiders to a degree equivalent of that of a *mukhonzwa*. In the 1990s, headmen allocated land to these refugees, as to earlier Mozambicans immigrants, on unfavorable 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.<sup>21</sup>

### **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 to a greater or lesser degree. Foremost was the series of grievances against those who had alienated land from Ngorima's polity. Other conflicts based directly on control of land pitted headmen against each other. Finally, headmen needed to justify their positions to commoners in Vhimba. Allocating land was one way to do just this. 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, at the right time, the right kind of migrants arrived - Mozambican refugees.

By 1990, resentment towards in the government on the issue of past land alienation had been building for a decade. When conversation turned to the lost lands, Vhimba smallholders often recalled that the guerrillas had promised them personally, “You may live where you want

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<sup>20</sup> “*Ndakhonza. Ndinoda pokugara*” (Vhimba, 11 November 1996).

<sup>21</sup> These findings closely parallel those of McGregor (1994: esp. 560-1) and Schafer (1999: 91). 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. Schafer documents cases where Mossurize refugees worked for Zimbabwean smallholders in exchange for access to a portion of the hosts’ land.

to.”<sup>22</sup> That is, after independence, smallholders could and should return to estates and other expropriated lands. With such encouragement, Headman Muhanyi and four other families moved back inside the section of Chimanimani National Park from which they had been evicted in the 1960s, a forested area known as Matsenderero. They farmed there only until 1981, when the Department of National Parks reasserted control over the margins of the Park. Rangers of the new, black-ruled Zimbabwe simply implemented colonial-era legislation and tossed the “squatters” out of Matsenderero. “In what way have those without a place to live been liberated?”<sup>23</sup> an evictee asked me rhetorically as we noted that the following day was Zimbabwe’s Independence Day. On that anniversary, a meeting of the Village Development Committee (Vidco) addressed the status of Mukwiratunhu – the adjoining area of the Park annexed over the Native Commissioners’ objections (see Chapter 3). Again, the post-independence state was reaffirming colonial policy. “The border was taken by the heroes [of the liberation struggle],”<sup>24</sup> accused one man at the Vhimba meeting. Acts of omission compounded the state’s guilt: the land redistribution program of the early 1980s gave the parastatal Forestry Commission first pick of the best parcels on the main Chimanimani plateau. The two small farms designated for smallholders 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.<sup>25</sup> Measured in hectares, Vhimba’s headmen and commoners gained nothing from the change of government. Together, they formed a searing sense of betrayal by a government verbally committed to land redistribution (Hughes 1996).

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. Chief Garayi Ngorima had used this cheap form of counter-surveying against the Rusitu Mission (Chapter 3). Squatting was also smallholders’ weapon of choice in post-Independence land wars, and, once squatters were installed, the government had a hard time politically

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<sup>22</sup> “*Munogona kugara pamunoda*” - recalled by a non-combatant Vhimba resident (Vhimba, 4 October 1996).

<sup>23</sup> “*Vanhu vasina pokugara vanosununguka chii?*” (Vhimba, 17 April 1995).

<sup>24</sup> “*Muganhwa wakatorwa nemakamba*” (Vhimba, 18 April 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Alexander (1993: 360-370) describes this process thoroughly and (Ibid: 361-62) describes headmen’s use of refugees to assert authority over land in northeastern Chimanimani District, a process close to that in Vhimba.

dislodging them.<sup>26</sup> 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 refugees. These particularly afflicted Mozambicans would live nearly anywhere. Headmen must have sensed 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 property.

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 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 neighbors - 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 protégé 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 office of headman itself. The English term "headman" encompasses the Shona terms *sadunhu* and *sabhuku*.<sup>27</sup> The title

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<sup>26</sup> For accounts of "squatter wars" in Zimbabwe, see Alexander (1993: 247ff), Herbst (1990: 63ff), and Moore (1993: 388-93; 1997: 96-101; 1998: 358-60). For another narrative of headmen's use of "strategic land allocation," see Andersson (1999: 575-76).

<sup>27</sup> More tangentially, it also encompasses the Ndaou dialect terms *sharuka* and *doda*.

*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 20th century, they invested certain *masadunhu*<sup>28</sup> with tax books, hence the English-derived root *bhuku* in *sabhuku*. Throughout the colonial era, the new rank stirred uncertainty and contestation. Did a book-bearing *sabhuku* rank above, below or equal with a *sadunhu* who had never acquired a tax book? At Independence, the question became doubly vexed: the new government abolished direct taxation in the communal lands, but the title *sabhuku* persisted nonetheless. 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 to 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.<sup>29</sup> 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 bemoans his deprivation of salary, medallions and of the coveted pith helmet.<sup>30</sup> Without these official endorsements, headmen are exposed to brothers and cousins - ominously alive and close at hand - who would reveal or concoct a past misapplication of the "traditional" rules of succession. As in the bride-service marriages mentioned in Chapter 3 - which resulted in *de facto* matrilineage -

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<sup>28</sup> *Ma* is the plural prefix for both *sadunhu* and *sabhuku*.

<sup>29</sup> Maxwell (1999: 149ff) provides the most detailed academic account of a post-mortem succession dispute in independent Zimbabwe.

<sup>30</sup> Although it is not clear that recognized headmen, as opposed to chiefs, are legally entitled to any of these perks.

strategies for seeking power focused on exploiting the loopholes in patrilineal conventions. If successful, aspirant headmen would convert the patrilineal succession of titles into a *de facto* collateral system, allowing the younger brother (or cousin) to succeed the older one. To forestall this outcome, office-holders needed constantly to assert their legitimacy (Comaroff 1978). In effect, they waged continual succession disputes against the possibility that they might be uncovered as mere regents.

Both Tiyekiye and Chikware are 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 belong to the clan of the original headman and of Ngorima himself, *mwoyo*. To make matters worse, Tiyekiye belongs to an apostolic church and, hence does not deliver offerings to ancestral spirits of the sacred forest lying within his domain. His non-converted younger brother performs the ceremony, but many of Tiyekiye's subjects find the substitution less than ideal. Tiyekiye's incumbency is, therefore, uncertain, and his subjects may decide that his father's cousin, still living within Ngorima Communal Land could do a better job.<sup>31</sup> Chikware's grasp on power is even weaker. He took the office in 1990 in place of his older brother who was absent on migrant labor. For Chikware and Tiyekiye to retain the respect of their people, it was essential that they be 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 additionally effective because much of the land allocated was once confiscated by the state. Vhimba residents resent 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 on numerous fronts. Against private and public landowners, refugees were a beachhead. They served the same purpose against neighboring headmen. Finally, towards commoners, the allocation of land demonstrated a headman's efficacy and legitimacy as a ruler. Each of the three headmen in

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<sup>31</sup> In fact, Tiyekiye did lose his office to that man in early or mid-1998. Personal communication, Lovemore Munyori, Secretary, Vhimba Area Development Committee, 14 September 1998.

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” (Map 4). The remainder of this chapter 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 (Map 5). Three of these families had left Dombe, Sussundenga District, Mozambique because drought and war, and the fourth arrived from Chipinge.<sup>32</sup> None had any choice in the matter of land allocation. As a site for external deployment, Tiyekiye picked Mukwiratunhu because, as he told me and an officer of the Vhimba Area Development Committee, “It was inhabited before. Mafatu died there. Maparara died there too.”<sup>33</sup> Matsenderero had also been previously occupied, but the Parks Department was particularly vigilant with regard to moist forest - rather than the rocky upland of Mukwiratunhu - in southern Chimanimani District. Tiyekiye, therefore, thought his could make his claim to Mukwiratunhu stick and, of course, that that claim was 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, is 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 by the facts that there had not been a tax in 11 years, and that non-citizens in hiding from the law would not have paid tax anyway.) The Muhanyi family thought not: the *sadunhu*'s nephew protested to me,

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<sup>32</sup> 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 laborers. 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.

<sup>33</sup> “*Yaigarwa kare. Mafuta akafirei-wo. Maparara akafirei-wo*” (Vhimba, 24 April 1997).

“Tiyekiye wants to rule areas that are not his.”<sup>34</sup> In a more public campaign against Tiyekiye, Muhanyi had 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.”<sup>35</sup> Eventually, the Muhanyis and wider Vhimba opinion forced Tiyekiye to “hand over” these four families.<sup>36</sup> 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 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 stuck four families into Mukwiratunhu. Again, three of these were Mozambicans; one was Zimbabwean, from Bikita District; and none of them chose their parcels. 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 (Kawadza and Rogers 1993: 2). 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 and did not negotiate, at point #1 (Map 5). Together with the two of original eight families that remained

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<sup>34</sup> “*Tiyekiye anoda kutonga nzvimbo dzisiri dzake*” (Vhimba, 20 March 1995).

<sup>35</sup> “*Ngatiedze kuita zvido zvemuridzi wenzvimbo ino, David Muhanyi. Kugara nevamwe zvakanaka munharaunda. Chengetai zvipfuyo zvenyu.*”

<sup>36</sup> People used the English expression.

(S. and K.), C formed a roughly east-to-west line, parallel to but 200 meters or so north of the official Park boundary. When M immigrated from Dombe early 1997, Muhanyi sought to complete that line by siting him at point #2, directly between S. and K.<sup>37</sup> 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 zig-zag rather than a straight line, but he created a boundary nonetheless.

Inside the Hayfield B estate, Headman Chikware has undertaken an analogous “counter-demarcation” (Map 5). The expulsions of the early 1980s had spared one household, K.C., located just south of the ridge between the Rusitu and Chisengu Valleys. 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 amphitheater-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. Thus, 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.

Surprisingly, C.L., the owner of Hayfield B, has accommodated Chikware's push northwards. He is aware of the families squatting on his land. Indeed, he insists that the border does not follow the ridge, but approximates a line slightly south, what would be the edge of the amphitheater before the ground slopes steeply towards the Rusitu. Yet, he has taken no steps to evict those four families, having only informed them that they are trespassing. When I visited one of E.C.'s wives at the homestead, she recalled having been notified: “We are in the yard of

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<sup>37</sup> A neighbor just outside Mukwiratunhu described Muhanyi as wanting “*kuita* boundary;” “to make a boundary” and desiring that these households “*kuti vaite* line *rimwe chete*,” “make one line” (Vhimba, 26 July 1997).

the white man.”<sup>38</sup> The estate owner, furthermore, warned her not to allow fires to escape. More tolerant of squatters than the ZANU-PF-led government, C.L. is considering granting the four families long-term leases on Hayfield B. In effect, this landowner has acceded to Chikware's cautious re-demarcation of the boundary. For him though, that line is firm. Encroachment further north would place people in the Chisengu watershed which C.L. plans to reserve as a butterfly sanctuary. “No way!” responded C.L. when, in the aftermath of a ceremony and feast he had sponsored, evictees grew bold enough to petition him directly.<sup>39</sup>

The final disputed area of land allocation in the 1990s lies along the border between Chikware's and Headman Muitire's areas. The Chisambavarongo stream separates their jurisdictions. High up the escarpment, however, it becomes difficult to distinguish the true Chisambavarongo from a tributary (Map 5). Based on self-serving interpretations, both headmen claim an almost uninhabited wedge of territory lying between the Chisambavarongo and another water course. 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 owe their land to Chikware and all of them, in fact, contribute to the offerings that he makes to his spirits. One would conclude, as does the head of the Zimbabwean household, that “Chikware snatched Muitire's land.”<sup>40</sup>

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Two factors stand out in the cadastral 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 schooled in politics based on the control of people. Forced labor, from the *chibaro* of Portuguese

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<sup>38</sup> “*Tiri muyard yemungezi*” (Vhimba, 23 April 1997).

<sup>39</sup> On 16 February 1997, C.L. – having paid for a beer and goat party the previous day – hosted a *kudira* ceremony carried out by Headman Chikware on Hayfield B. C.L. had asked to Chikware to perform the ritual in the hope that such spiritual respect would overcome problems plaguing his small sawmill. The sawmill was engaged in the extraction of eucalyptus, which had colonized Hayfield B from the neighboring forestry estates.

<sup>40</sup> “*Chikware wakabvuta nyika yaMuitire*” (Vhimba, 14 April 1995).

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 smallholding and shrinking Chimanimani National Park and the Hayfield B estate.

The only boundary that Vhimba's headmen did *not* redraw was the international border. To 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 terms given them. Vastly different colonial and post-colonial histories, again distinguished by the border, prepared Zimbabweans to bargain over land and Mozambicans to, instead, 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 (1991: 202) celebrated "unyoking of imagination from place" seems not to have arrived in Vhimba. Its delay does not indicate some kind of primitivism on the part of African smallholders, left behind by time-space compression and post-modern cosmopolitanism. Clearly, Vhimba's headmen are not international financiers or "flexible citizens." Nor are 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 politics to place. Sadly, the politics of territory are alive and well in Vhimba.

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