



Livelihoods after Land Reform in Zimbabwe

Working Paper 9

Land, Graves and Belonging: Land Reform and the
Politics of Belonging in Newly Resettled Farms in
Gutu, 2000-2009

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The land reform that has unfolded in Zimbabwe since 2000 has resulted in a major reconfiguration of land use and economy. Over 7 million hectares of land has been transferred to both small-scale farm units (the A1 model) and larger scale farms (the A2 model). The land reform has had diverse consequences, and there is no single story of what happened and its implications.

The Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex, UK), the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS, University of the Western Cape, South Africa), the African Institute for Agrarian Studies (AIAS, Harare), the Centre for Applied Social Sciences Trust (CASS Trust, Harare) and the Ruzivo Trust (Harare) came together to support a small grant competition aimed at generating new case study insights based on original and recent field research by young Zimbabwean scholars. The aim was to bring together solid, empirical evidence from recent research in the field. There were over 70 applicants, and 15 small grants were offered. The result is this Working Paper series. All papers have been reviewed and they have been lightly edited. In all cases however they remain work-in-progress.

Today policymakers are grappling with the question of ‘what next’? How can a new agrarian structure be supported, and a vibrant rural economy be developed? Yet such discussions are often taking place in a vacuum, with limited empirical data from the ground and overshadowed by misperceptions and inappropriate assumptions. We hope this series – together with the wider research work being undertaken by our organisations and partners – will help to enhance policy making through a solid evidence base.

As these papers clearly show, there have been highly varied impacts of the post-2000 land reform: on rural livelihoods, on agricultural production, on markets and the economy, on farm workers and employment, on the environment and on institutions and governance arrangements, for example. And these impacts have played out in very different ways in different places. These papers cover a range of themes and offer insights from across the country.

They add up to a complex picture, but one that offers key pointers for the way forward. They counter the excessively pessimistic picture often painted about Zimbabwe’s land reform, yet highlight important failings and future challenges. We very much hope that they are widely read and shared, with the insights made use of as Zimbabwe charts its way forward.

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The small grant competition was coordinated through the Livelihoods after Land Reform research programme (www.larl.org.za).

Summary

The return to ancestral lands has been at the centre of the land reform rhetoric. This argument is premised on the fact that many communities were displaced from ancestral lands during the colonial period hence they saw the Fast Track Land Reform Programme as an opportunity for them to 'return' to their old homes. This paper explores and analyses the issues surrounding land disputes in the village model (A1) after the land reform programme and the role played by the regime of traditional authorities in determining how belonging is negotiated. It also analyses the conflicts between autochthons and migrants over the control of the new resettlement areas and over the authority of village heads and chiefs. Claims to land based on ancestral graves and autochthony are also analysed in lieu of the power of political authorities in allocating land. The paper offers an analysis of the intricacies of land tenure in the newly resettled areas and examines the interface between politics and traditional authority on how belonging is negotiated in these contexts. The research is largely based on qualitative interviews with resettled farmers in Gutu and also informal interactions as well as personal observations.

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Acronyms

DA	District Administrator
DLC	District Lands Committee
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
NC	Native Commissioner
VIDCOs	Village Development Committees
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front Party

Introduction

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in Zimbabwe has been analysed in a variety of ways. Much emphasis has however been placed on the chaotic manner in which the process was carried out, the new forms of livelihoods it provided and also its impact on agricultural productivity and former farm workers (Sachikonye 2004; Chaumba et al. 2003; Moyo 2000). As a result, little attention has been paid on institutional authority in the resettled farms, especially the regime of traditional authority. The redistributive nature of the land reform has brought new trajectories of belonging which need to be problematised. The newly resettled farms have seen the conflation of people from different areas and different traditional authorities which transformed the resettlement areas into some kind of a melting pot. Moreover, the influx of people from different areas into the newly resettled farms, especially in the more communal A1 Model has engendered new politics of belonging which has widened the division between those who see themselves as autochthons or the owners of the land and those viewed as outsiders. Furthermore, chiefs and headmen have also sought to reconfigure their traditional boundaries and expand their authorities into these areas which they consider to be their lost ancestral lands. Consequently, *matongo* (old homes), *mapa* (ancestral burials), rivers, mountains and other traditional markers of boundaries have assumed a new significance in the land reform aftermath. The land reform has thus brought with it not only new forms of livelihoods but also new and often contested forms of belonging as well as the intensification of boundary disputes.

Using the case of Gutu District, this paper argues that the return to ancestral lands has been one of the major issues at the centre of the land reform in Zimbabwe. A number of traditional authorities have seen the land reform as an opportunity to 'return' to their ancestral lands alienated during the colonial period and to redefine their boundaries. In most cases traditional authorities have used old homes and graves to lay claim to the areas opened up by the land reform. The paper also explores the role of traditional authorities in the resettled areas and how their powers have intersected with or have been undermined by the government sponsored village committees and political elites.

Since not much has been written on the regime of traditional authority in the newly resettled areas, oral history was the mainstay of this research. The paper tries to recover the voices of traditional authorities in the land reform discourse and examine how they have negotiated their boundaries and recast their authority in the new resettlements. The paper is largely based on oral interviews with traditional authorities, newly resettled farmers and government officials. Structured and semi-structured interviews were held with the aim of capturing the life histories of people who benefited from the land reform programme in Gutu together with those who consider themselves to be the autochthons of the area.

The first section gives an overview of the FTLRP, land restitution and the politics of belonging in Zimbabwe. It discusses the land reform in the context of land reclamation, return to ancestral lands and the re-establishment of traditional authorities in the newly resettled farms. The second section uses ethnographic data gathered in Gutu to explore the intricacies of land reclamation, boundary disputes and the authority of traditional authorities in the aftermath of the FTLRP. It also analyses the role of village committees in the management of resettlement areas and how this has led to the marginalisation of traditional authorities. It observes that although the FTLRP has arguably left out traditional authorities in the management of the new resettlement areas, the traditional authorities have largely been quite resilient in their efforts to reclaim their lost lands, renegotiate traditional boundaries and recast their authority in these areas.

Land Reform and the politics of belonging: An overview

There has been a general assumption that the FTLRP has led to the marginalisation of traditional authorities as the management of the newly resettlement areas has been the responsibility of village and district land committees as well as War Veterans and Base Commanders. This has meant that traditional authorities have been left on the margins in as far as the management of the newly resettled farms is concerned. Be that as it may, some traditional authorities have been making efforts to recast their authority in the areas, renegotiate boundaries and reclaim alienated ancestral lands. The FTLRP has thus provided traditional authorities with the opportunity to pursue an agenda akin to land restitution as they have been making a number of claims both substantiated and unsubstantiated over the new resettlements which they view as their *matongo* (old homes). According to Marongwe (2003:174) 'despite the fact displacement of communities took place several decades ago, there was still an expectation that the government would facilitate their return to their original home areas under the current land reform programmes.' Thus the non-recognition of such historical land claims by the policy makers coupled with the communities' desire to return to their traditional land alienated during the colonial period was one of the major factors that fuelled land occupations (Marongwe 2003: 171). The return to ancestral lands is arguably at the centre of most redistributive land reform projects in third world countries (see James 2007). Struggles over control of ancestral lands have thus shown the centrality of *matongo* and *mapa* (ancestral burial sites) in the Shona people's negotiation of belonging in the newly resettled farms. Mazarire (2008; 2009) has argued that the struggles over land in Chishanga in Masvingo Province in Zimbabwe have revolved over the people's return to their ancestral *gadzingo* (traditional headquarters). A *gadzingo* was at once a clan's traditional headquarters, burial ground for important figures, a place of ancestral veneration as well as a stronghold and a place of refuge during attacks (Mazarire 2009:7). This thus made ancestral lands such as the *gadzingo* an important feature in Shona people's construction of their *nyika* (territory).

The colonial displacements which led to the carving out of large farms by a few white farmers alienated many locals from their homes. The completion of this displacement and emplacement circle with the Fast Track Land Reform Programme has nevertheless created a crisis of belonging leading to a number of boundary disputes. This is further complicated by the fact that very few people actually 'returned' to their original homes during the FTLRP making the newly resettled farms a melting pot full of people who could at best be described as outsiders living among very few truly autochthonous people.

The FTLRP can also be argued to have led to the extension of the traditional authorities' power into the resettlement areas. Formerly the government through the Ministry of Local Government Rural and Urban Development argued that the provisions of the Chiefs and Headmen Act (1982) stipulated that chiefs could only exercise authority in communal areas meaning that farms and resettlement areas were out of bounce for the traditional leaders (Mubvumba 2005: 46). However, the FTLRP brought a new trajectory to the role of traditional authorities in the resettlement areas providing chiefs and headmen with an opportunity to seek restitution, reclaim their ancestral lands or to recast their authority in these formerly alienated lands. Chakanyuka (2007) argues that the FTLRP provided the traditional authorities who are the custodians of cultural heritage places with the

opportunity to reclaim their lost ancestral lands and sacred places and in some instances demand restitution. As she puts it,

For the government, FTLRP was meant to return land to the dispossessed indigenous people yet for most rural communities it was not only access to fertile land but also restorations of cultural links with the land of their ancestors. Hence from the beginning, the FTLRP was accompanied by claims based on ancestral links to the land. (Chakanyuka 2007: 4).

In some instances the land reform brought conflicts between those who viewed themselves as the autochthons and those they viewed as outsiders or strangers. Some settlers do not respect the traditional authorities in the area because they hail from different areas and therefore do not have a sense of belonging in the resettlement area. They fail to observe the sacred *chisi* holidays and prefer observing religious days such as the Sabbath or Sundays. Due to the same reason some settlers also do not respect the sacred sites nor do they participate in traditional rituals such as rainmaking ceremonies (Chakanyuka 2007: 76). Such a scenario has brought the settlers who come from areas other than the resettlement areas into a collision course with those who claim direct links with original owners of the area and thus feel to be custodians of the land, sacred places, and ancestral graves.

Village committees and the marginalisation of traditional authorities in Gutu

Gutu is one of the most overcrowded districts in Zimbabwe. It lies in Masvingo Province which tops the list of the most overcrowded communal areas in Zimbabwe. It falls in Natural Regions (agroclimatic regions) 3, 4 and 5, with the largest part of the district being in Region 5 which is characterised by poor soils and low rainfall. Not surprisingly, most of the lands that were alienated during the colonial period fall in Regions 3 and 4 which have comparatively better soils and better rainfall. The new resettlement areas in Gutu are in wards 1, 7 and 32. At present there are 27 traditional authorities in Gutu, 9 of which are chiefs and 18 are headmen. The majority of the chiefs and headmen are of the *Gumbo Madyirapazhe* clan. Chief Makore and Chief Chiwara are of the *Moyo Duma* clan whilst Serima is of the *Gushungo* clan. Some of the traditional authorities were moved from their ancestral lands when their lands were alienated during the colonial period or their chieftaincies abolished by the colonial government when their areas were alienated.

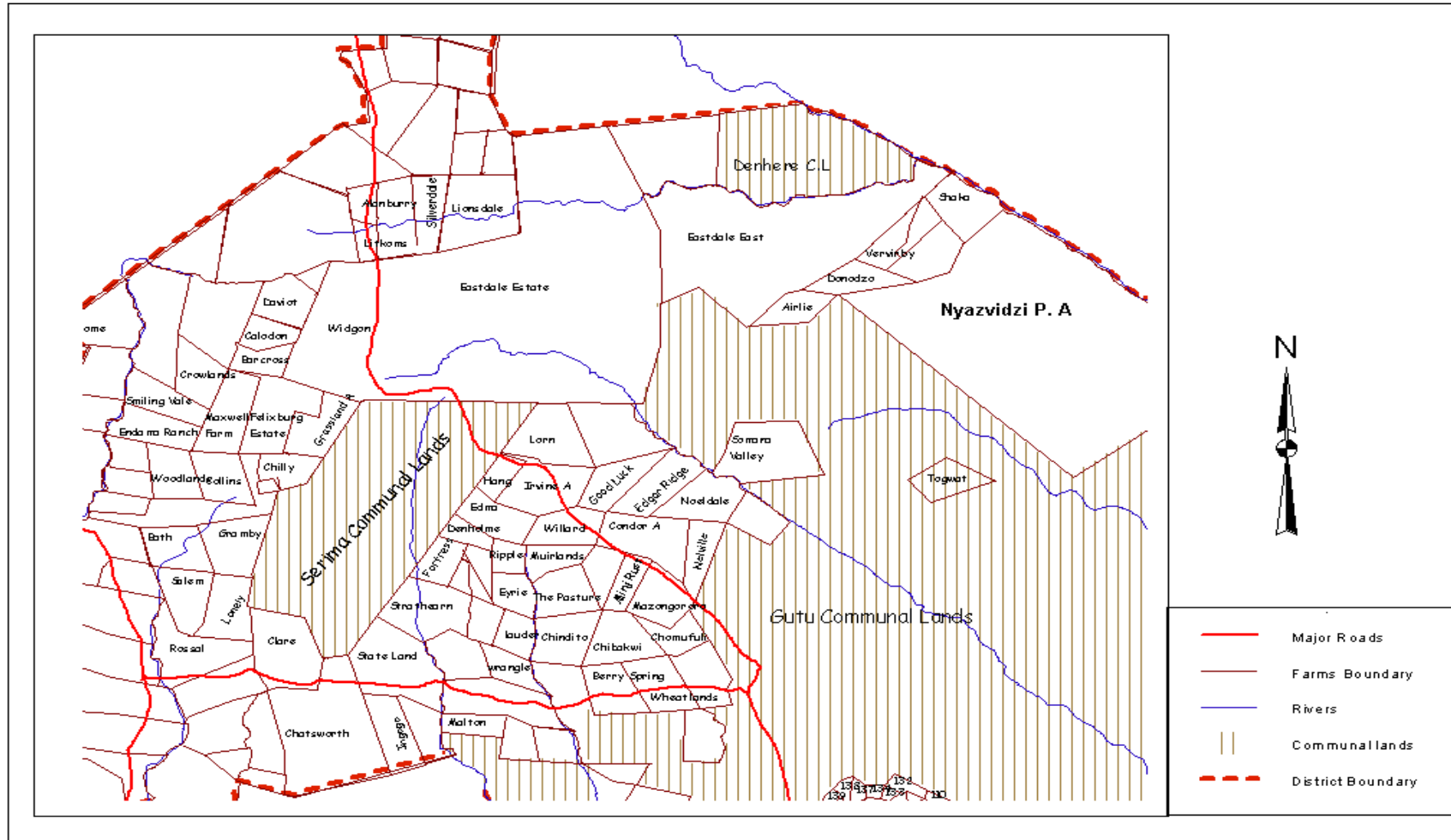
When large tracts of land such as the Eastdale Estate formerly owned by Willoghbys Consolidated Company were alienated this led to massive displacements of people. The affected people were either moved to new areas together with their traditional authorities or were placed under other traditional authorities. Chief Serima and Headman Denhere of the Gutu Dynasty are the main claimants of the resettlement areas in Eastdale Estate. Both traditional authorities claim authority over much of Eastdale basing on the status quo before the colonial land alienation. They have sought to use graves, old homes and landscape features such as mountains and rivers to substantiate their claims. The area covering resettlements in the former Chatsworth Estate which is in ward 32, are being claimed by Headman Gadzingo as well as Chief Serima.

Apart from the Chiefs and Headmen who are making efforts to extend their spheres of influence into the resettlement areas claiming that they are their ancestral lands, there is also another group of traditional authorities whose chieftainships were abolished during the

colonial period. These traditional authorities are seeking to reclaim their alienated ancestral lands and have their authority resuscitated. Among these groups making efforts to take advantage of the FTLRP include Musarurwa who claims to have been removed from the Chindito area and his headmanship abolished in the colonial period and Makumire who claims to have been removed from Eastdale and now wants to return and re-establish his headmanship. However, the government has put a moratorium on the resuscitation of abolished chieftainships and refuses to entertain any attempts to have these abolished chieftaincies reclaim their positions and land for fear of opening up many such claims (Interview with N. Muzenda 25 August 2009). This has left people like Musarurwa and Makumire with little room to manoeuvre. As Chakanyuka (2007:88) puts it, 'the FTLRP policies were not sensitive to the demands by communities of returning back to the ancestral lands but were more concerned with landlessness.'

Before the FTLRP, the white commercial farms were out of bounds for traditional authorities as chiefs and headmen's authority were confined to communal and resettlement areas. Since chiefs and spirit mediums were left out of the administrative hierarchies of the commercial farms they continued to be alienated from both their ancestral lands and their sacred sites like ancestral burials. The FTLRP therefore provided people with an opportunity to have access to their sacred places from which they were alienated since the colonial period and also to re-establish their authority on the land and the people. In spite of such efforts, however, the government seems to have continued with its policy of sidelining traditional authorities choosing to work with elected village committees and councillors. Hence, traditional authorities have had to compete for space with village committees in as far as the administration of the resettlement areas is concerned.

Figure 1: Map Showing Communal and Resettlement Areas in Gutu



Village committees, which are also known as 'seven member committees' because they are composed of seven office bearers have been the mainstay of institutionalised management of the resettlement areas. These committees report to the District Lands Committee chaired by the District Administrator. The District Lands Committee has the responsibility of identifying 'vacant land' and allocating it to other beneficiaries. It also has the power to withdraw the offer letters given to plot holders in an event of a violation of the offer conditions or absenteeism from the plot. The new village committees strongly resemble the Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) created in the early eighties. According to Goebel 2005:106), 'VIDCOs were to be secular and democratic, a departure from the traditional local institutions, which were based on ancestral religion and lineage membership.' She further adds that it was quite easy to impose this new structure in the resettlements because the areas were composed of people from many different home areas and also because traditional authorities usually remained in the communal areas (Goebel 2005: 106). By the same token, the government has used the same ideology in the management of the village models in the newly resettled areas. According to Goebel (2005:107), 'the village chairman is elected by democratic vote and can be deposed if performance is unsatisfactory. The job of the chairman is to channel grievances or issues of dispute from the settlers to the resettlement officer and take information given by the resettlement officer back to the settlers.' These village committees however work with almost complete disregard for traditional authorities. A member of the Uitcom 1 Village Committee in Gutu explained the village committees' relationship with traditional authorities thus:

Village Committees are an elected body mandated by the government through the District Lands Committee to manage the resettlement areas. Chiefs and headmen's powers are confined to communal areas where authority is hereditary and lineage based. We are more concerned with development and productivity than the reclamation of ancestral lands, sacred places and the powers of traditional authorities. (Interview with Mr. Gumbo (pseudonym) 10 August 2009).

This illustrates the kind of importance placed on village committees and how this has affected the functions of chiefs and headmen in the new resettlement areas. Because village committees see themselves as functioning outside traditional authorities' spheres of influence they have continued to work with complete disregard for authority of traditional leaders.

Silverdale, Uitcom, Allenbale and Lionsdale which are all located to the north of the district are each divided into three villages. Each of these farms is managed by a seven member village committee. In most cases the village committees are composed of people who are well known in the village and often are first comers in the farms. In some instances, these people will also be influential war veterans or politicians. In the end they combine their political clout and the authority they wield as elected members of the village committees to command respect in the villages and determine policy. In the case of Silverdale, Mr Manenji Murodhini, being one of the first settlers in Silverdale farm has used his influence as a first comer to assume the unofficial position of the farm chairman (Interview 12 September 2009). He thus heads the committee which oversees the work of all the three village committees in Silverdale. This is however outside the norm as other farms such as Uitcom and Allenbale do not have a farm committee or a chairperson as they only work with a village committee. Yet because of his influence as a first comer in Silverdale and also as a person with some political clout, Mr. Manenji Murodhini continues to maintain his position as de facto head of the farm. Village 1 is under R. Chizema, Village 2 is under Gotore whilst Village 3 is headed by E. Chara. All these village chairpersons happen to belong to a special group of first comers who claim to have participated in the *jambanja* and therefore claim to have a bigger sense of belonging than the late comers.

Similarly, Uitcom Farm is divided into three villages which are all managed by seven member village committees which report to the District Lands Committee. The majority of the people who settled in the three villages in Uitcom came from ward 18 which covers the Vhunjere and Zinhata areas as well as the Dewure Purchase Areas (Interview with E. Pugele 13 July 2009). War veterans, prominent ZANU PF activists and members of the ZANU PF Youth Wing largely dominate the village committees and determine policy in the villages. For example, Mr. Chamwaura, the Base Commander of Eastdale Estate still holds a considerable amount of power and is consulted by village committees in cases of boundary and other land disputes (Interview with E. Pugele 13 July 2009). Mr. Chamwaura has managed to combine his position as a liberation war veteran and the fact that he was the leader of the first group to occupy Eastdale to maintain a position of authority. Though the position of Base Commander is not in the formal government structures of management of resettlements he has managed to use his considerable political influence to accumulate wealth and to retain a measure of influence. Though the government is against multiple farm/plot ownership Chamwaura is thought to have more than one plot as well as a large head of cattle 'inherited' from the former white farmer (Interview with E. Pugele 13 July 2009)

The village committees are mandated with spearheading developmental projects such as building of schools, clinics and dip tanks among other projects. Recently the Uitcom village committees managed to make a lot of progress in erecting more permanent structures and teachers houses at Chivake School in Uitcom 1 which was just a pole and mud thatched structure. It is quite apparent that all these projects have been mooted and managed by village committees and prominent war veterans with little or no involvement of traditional authorities who are still jostling to substantiate their claims to the resettlement areas.

Although village committees can identify 'vacant' land within their village and recommend to the District Lands Committee to have that piece of land re-allocated, they do not have the authority to allocate land. In spite of this, it is not uncommon to find cases where village committees try to arm twist the District Lands Committees to allocate land to 'our son who has no piece of land' or 'a very loyal member of the party' (Interview with N. Muzenda 25 August 2009). Consequently the lands committee ends up being asked to approve land allocations made and fiercely defended by village land committees or just chairpersons of these committees. Village committees' functions have also extended to include helping in settling disputes among plot holders. The disputes largely revolve around conflicts over the sharing of communal resources such as pastures and water and also boundary disputes.

It is quite apparent that traditional authorities do not feature much in the management of new resettlement areas as the government prefers to deal with the elected village committees with the traditional authorities being associated with the communal areas. Thus chiefs and headmen find it difficult to assert their authority in the resettlement areas and continue to agitate for the re-establishment of the traditional boundaries that existed prior to colonial land alienation. Section 5 of the Traditional Leaders Act stipulates that 'the chief shall be responsible for taking traditional and related administrative matters in resettlement areas, including nominating persons for appointment as headmen by minister'. According to the Act, the minister is the one with the power to authorize a chief to exercise authority over a certain resettlement area provided that the declared area is a single resettlement ward and does not fall under the authority of more than one chief (Government of Zimbabwe 2006). In spite of all these pronouncements the traditional authorities have continued to play second fiddle to village committees who are responsible for the day to day running of the resettlement areas and are answerable to the District Lands Committees (Mubvumba 2005: 37).

The push towards gender equity in the country has also seen an increased participation of women in the village committees in Silverdale, Uitcom and Eastdale. According to Mr Pugede (Interview 13 July 2009) though men, especially war veterans, ZANU PF activists and pioneer settlers tend to dominate village committees, a significant number of women are being elected into Village Committees. In fact, some women such as Mai Mada (pseudonym) in one of the three villages in Uitcom, chairs the village committee and claims that she is respected by her peers in the committee as well as other villagers. Mai Mada is a former war collaborator and was among the first group of people to take up land in Uitcom (Interview with A. Matangi 10 August 2009). Though this is a unique case in the area it nevertheless illustrates the extent to which the village committee as a management unit has helped women transcend barriers placed by traditional institutions such as chieftainship (Goebel 2005). In the communal areas where traditional authorities are the major institutional authority, women still have little chance to hold positions of authority which democratic institutions in the resettlement areas such as Village Committees are providing. As Marongwe (2003:182) observed, 'some farms, particularly those close to communal and resettlement areas, had fairly even numbers of male and female occupiers. In other cases, wives and husbands participated together in the farm occupations.' Hence the FTLR arguably provided women with not only new livelihood portfolios but also with opportunities to assume positions of authorities in the Village Committees and other structures.

By leaving out traditional authorities such as village heads, headmen and chiefs in the management of the resettlements, the Land Ministry disempowered the traditional authorities which are often portrayed as the 'conservative guard' of the old and unproductive system in the communal areas. This was also coupled with the enactment of legislation which took away chiefs' powers to redistribute land (Alexander 1994:333). Such enactments have made chiefs feel like they have been left out in the management of resettlement areas and replaced by technocrats and democratic institutions such as village committees. It is quite clear that the government is not keen to involve traditional authorities in the agrarian reform. This explains the government's reluctance to allow the land reform to take a land restitution angle which would have allowed those people who could substantiate their claims to ancestral lands to be resettled in such lands (Mubvumba 2005: 18).

In spite of the seeming friction between different groups in the management of resettlement areas the differences between these groups are not always cut and dried. For example, a war veteran can be an autochthon as well as a member of a village committee thus being in a position to articulate the views of one or the other group depending on the occasion. Hence it is quite difficult to separate these groups make them clearly identifiable as its members tend to straddle between groups making use of them to make claims to land, authority and resources. Arguably some people are able to articulate a particular kind of claim more strongly based on their positions as chiefs, members of the village committee, agricultural extension officers or councillors (J. Fontein, Pers Comm 8 December 2009). For instance, a chief or headman can effectively make claims to autochthony basing on links to graves and old homes whilst a village chairperson is able to derive his/her authority from the fact that he/she is a democratically elected officer who represents the District Land Committee. However, this leaves out the common people who fall outside these high profile positions. These common settlers often have to fit into categories such as autochthon/stranger which at times makes little sense to them as some just identify themselves as simple farmers without the added baggage of being identified as either an autochthon or a stranger.

Traditional authorities, disputed territories and belonging in Gutu

The discussion has thus far focussed on the role of village committees as the core management institution for resettlement areas and how this has further alienated traditional institutions from the day to day running of resettlements. This section focuses on traditional authorities' efforts at asserting their authority in the newly resettled areas and how this has impacted on belonging and boundary politics. In spite of the marginalisation that they are suffering at the hands of government imposed institutions such as village committees, traditional authorities have been quite resilient in their attempts to assert their power in resettlements in Gutu.

The return to ancestral homes, redefinition of traditional boundaries and negotiation of belonging are issues that have dominated traditional authorities' efforts at re-asserting their powers in resettlement areas. The land reform in Gutu has also stimulated debates about autochthony and disputed territories as traditional authorities are being engaged in disputes over the extent of their territories and also making efforts to reclaim what they consider to be their lost lands. According to Moyo and Yeros (2007:110) 'during the fast-track process, the role of traditional leaders in beneficiary selection was often overridden by war veterans, but still chiefs did influence policy to the effect of extending their territorial control into contiguous resettlement areas.' This was normally based on traditional authorities' quest to reclaim what they consider to be their alienated ancestral lands.

The much publicised case of Chief Svosve and his people's reoccupation of their ancestral lands in Marondera in 1998 shows the vital yet neglected trajectory of restitution and return to ancestral lands in the land reform discourse. As Marongwe notes (2003:184) 'restitution claims based dispossessions, were a strong rallying point for participants in the [farm] occupations.' As a result, claims to ancestral lands such as the Tangwena people's claims over Kairezi (Manicaland), Sekuru Mushore's claims over Nharira Hills in Marondera (Mashonaland West) and the Ndau people's claims over Chirinda forests among other historical claims have been a major highlight in the FTLRP (Marongwe 2003:186). These people who have historical claims to such lands often view other non-local farmers as 'foreigners' or 'strangers' with little if any claim to the land. As Lentz (2007: 37) argues, the autochthon-allochthony dialectic is often played on conflicts over control of natural resources such as land. Consequently, land and land rights play an important role in the politics of belonging in Africa due to the fact that rights to land 'are intimately tied to membership in specific communities.' Scarcity of land has also increased the need to identify those who 'really belong' to the area and those who are late comers and therefore have limited rights to the land (Lentz 2006:1). Control over land therefore becomes a sign of the extent to which one belongs. It is important to note that though the land reform has not taken a land restitution slant traditional authorities have continued to make efforts to regain control over people and their formerly alienated lands.

In 2001, Mr. Jara Mudziwaniswa the village head of the Mudziwaniswa Village in Headman Mawungwa area left his home together with other people from his village that included his two young brothers. Their intention was to return to their ancestral lands in Harawe area in Chief Chikwanda's area. They allocated each other pieces of land and began to engage in agriculture. Mr. Mudziwaniswa and his brothers were already in the process of negotiating with Chief Chikwanda over the re-establishment of their village when they were told by the police to vacate the farm as it had not yet been gazetted as one

of the farms to be reposed. Narrating their eviction from their ancestral lands Mr. Jara Mudziwaniswa (Interview 17 September 2009) stated that:

Our houses were burnt and crops destroyed by the police. In fact we were forcibly removed from our ancestral lands and now we are back in this barren land with little hope of ever reclaiming our lost lands. Of course later on the farm was gazetted and people resettled but since it is in Masvingo District we stood little chance of returning to the farm as preference was being given to people who resided in the district. However, we still have an emotional attachment to the area because it is the land of our forefathers where they lay buried.

Though Mr. Jara Mudziwaniswa and his people's return to their ancestral lands was short lived, they still cherish the few months they were reunited with their lost ancestral lands. It also reveals the saliency of the materialities of graves, old homes and traditional boundary markers such as mountains and rivers in land reclamations during the FTLRP (Fontein 2009a).

The boundary disputes between Chief Makore and Chief Chikwanda dates back to the colonial period. Colonial land alienations and the resultant re-configurations of reserves saw Chikwanda losing all his land and having to be accommodated by other traditional authorities. According to Mtetwa (1976:313),

As a result of this continued attack on Chikwanda Reserve, its size by 1913 had shrunk to accommodate only the people of Makore, Rupiri and Mutema and not Chikwanda's own people. Thus, the NC [Native Commissioner] said that Chikwanda Reserve was a misnomer since the people of Chikwanda were outside the reserve and suggested that the reserve should be called Makore.

Thus the colonial land alienation which left Chikwanda with virtually no land for his people threw the Chikwanda people into perennial land disputes with other traditional authorities especially Makore who is to the north of Chikwanda in Gutu District.

Chief Makore's land claims presents a very interesting dimension in traditional authorities' land reclamations and attempts to re-constitute their pre-colonial territories and reassert their traditional boundaries. Makore is a chief in Gutu District but belongs to the *Moyo Duma* clan and occupies the area to the south west of Gutu District bordering the Masvingo and Ndanga Districts. He claims that his chieftom used to stretch as far south as the Mbebvume River in Masvingo District prior to the colonial land alienations. However, he lost a large portion of his lands to white farms such as N. Richards, J. Bolland, Springfield, Wepener, Portigieter, Standmore, Dromore, Elands Kop, Bonair, Lynington, and Chidza, among others. These areas used to be occupied by people under Chief Makore before they were displaced to pave way for the creation of the white commercial farms.

Makore also argues that mountains and sacred sites such as Musanawengwe which is in Springfield Farm together with Nyoni and Zishumbe Mountains are well known Makore ancestral *mapa* (royal burial sites). The Zishumbe *mapa* is actually where the Makore founding father Risipambi was interred after being dried according to the *Duma* customs. The Makore people are thus keen to regain custodianship of these important ancestral *mapa* (Interview with J. Tangemhare Councillor Ward 27, Makore, 21 August 2009). The FTLRP has however, seen Chief Chikwanda, who is also of the *Duma* clan expanding his boundary into areas which formerly belonged to Chief Makore. This has been occasioned by a number of issues which include the fact that Makore did not quickly make an attempt to repossess their ancestral lands in significant numbers when the FTLRP was in full swing from 2000 and 2001. On the

contrary, Chief Chikwanda, who was facing serious land shortages, encouraged his people to occupy farms including those in the areas which formerly belonged to Makore. He also settled his representatives into the area and used that to claim the area and impose his authority. Makore's claims to these lost ancestral lands have also been further complicated by the fact that Makore's chiefdom is in Gutu District yet the contested areas are demarcated as belonging to Masvingo District in terms of the district administrative boundaries. The area also falls in Masvingo North Parliamentary Constituency yet Makore is in Gutu South Constituency. Consequently, it has proved a very difficult task for Chief Makore, in spite of the availability of evidence supporting his case to reclaim his ancestral lands which now fall in another district and are now being claimed by Chief Chikwanda who has the advantage of being in the said district. The settlement of people with little regard to the Makore ancestral lands around Zishumbe and other *mapa* has angered Chief Makore who has blamed the constant draughts in his area on the desecration of these sensitive ancestral *mapa*. According to Fontein (2009a: 22) in 2006,

The senior Chief Makore (the acting chief's father), blamed poor rains and failing harvests on 'those fast track people' who 'do not know the land'; and was particularly angry about a local councillor who has occupied Zisubwe [Zishumbe] hill, Makore's sacred *mapa* where their founding ancestor Risipambi lies (dried) buried, and near to his birth place.

Chief Makore thus sees the alienation of Makore people from their ancestral lands and the desecration of the same by 'those fast track people' as contributing to the many calamities befalling his people.

The simmering boundary dispute between Chief Makore and Chief Chikwanda has been raging since 1982 with Makore claiming that Chief Chikwanda is refusing to give him back his ancestral lands alienated during the colonial period. This boundary dispute reached new levels in July 2008 with some youths allegedly working for Chief Chikwanda seriously assaulting acting Chief Makore (Phineas Makore). Chief Makore was admitted at Gutu Mission Hospital after sustaining serious injuries. The case was reported to the police leading to the arrest of twelve villagers suspected to have participated in the assault of Chief Makore (Herald 9 July 2008). The police reported that the incident was allegedly triggered by reports that Chief Makore or his emissaries had 'trespassed into Chief Chikwanda's area after he installed village heads of his choice without the latter's consent, thus the conflict.'¹ Chikwanda believed that the area fell under his dominion whilst Makore was claiming it as his lost ancestral lands.² The situation between these two *Duma* Chiefs has been quite tense that Chief Makore ended up asking for police protection fearing similar attacks from Chief Chikwanda (Herald 9 July 2008). The long standing boundary dispute between Makore and Chikwanda illustrates the complex nature of politics of belonging in the post FTLRP era and the challenges faced by traditional authorities in re-establishing traditional boundaries and reasserting their authority in their former white commercial farms.

There have also been similar boundary disputes in the resettlements in Silverdale, Uitcom and Eastdale Estates. Chief Serima who is of the *Gushungo* clan claims to be the sole traditional authority in all the new resettlement areas to the North and North West of the district. This area covers resettlements such as Eastdale, Silverdale, Lionsdale and Uitcom among others. Mazarire's argument about the centrality of ancestral lands is especially useful in understanding various land claims that are being made by traditional authorities in Gutu (Mazarire 2009). Serima uses known Serima ancestral burial sites and

¹ www.radiovop.com/index.php accessed on 6 October 2009.

² Boundary Dispute: Gutu Chief formally seeks police protection, www.toplawyersnews.com/ToplegalNews/id_71165 accessed on 16 August 2009

nhare (Strong holds) such as Chikwidzire, Gonwe and Songorera all in Eastdale to substantiate his claims over resettlements in Eastdale. The Songorera *nhare* and *mapa* features prominently in Serima oral traditions for it was the centre of Serima defence against the Mfecane invaders. (Interview with Mr. Chikanya, 15 August 2009). It is on the basis of the presence of such sacred sites in the Eastdale Estates that Chief Serima claims to be the sole traditional authority in the resettlement areas in the former Eastdale Estates. Chief Serima's claims are however contested by other traditional authorities such as Hwenga, Denhere, Makumire and Musarurwa. The Hwenga people occupied the areas around the Eastdale Dip tank. When they were displaced in the 1930 they were resettled in Chiguhune to the north east of the district and were allocated their own village. Headman Denhere who belongs to the *Gumbo Madyirapazhe* clan is however also claiming some parts of the same area, especially in Eastdale where he is also using evidence of old homes and ancestral graves to substantiate his claims.

In spite of these counter claims Chief Serima continues to insist that Denhere's claims are without any substance as much of his land was alienated in the 1930s to pave way for the creation of the Nyazvidzi Purchase Areas which are far away from the areas he is claiming now. He thus argues that Denhere's area was confined to the Mvimvi and Mutunduru areas which were alienated for the creation of the Purchase Areas not the areas which became white farms. Many of the displaced Denhere people were relocated to Mwenezi whilst the remnants were confined to the Mvimvi area in the north-eastern parts of the district (Interview with Mr. Chikanya, 15 August 2009). Moreover, Headman Makumbe, who is also of the *Gumbo Madyirapazhe* clan, also claims some areas in Eastdale Estates. He argues that his land stretches up to Dewure River into areas which are also being contested by Chief Serima (Interview with Mr. Chikanya 16 August 2009). Though it is undisputed that Serima controls much of Eastdale it quite difficult to dismiss the claims of rival claimants such as Denhere especially given the fact that they also point to material evidence such as old homes, ancestral graves as well as sacred sites.

Mr Nicros Makumbe of the Mudavarwe clan also claims the same area arguing that the area originally belonged to the Mudavarwe clan. He argues that Dhombo Mountain was a *mapa* for the Mudavarwe as it was used for the burial of important people in the clan (Interview with Mr. N. Makumbe, 12 September 2009). He claims that when other people were driven out of the area to Chiguhune his family together with a number of other members of the Mudavarwe clan decided to stay put and work for the white farmers who took over their land. Thus when the land occupations began in 2000, Mr. Makumbe chose to remain in his ancestral lands and thus took up land in Uitcom Village 1 in the vicinity of where his parents used to live. Though he was allocated a piece of land close to Chivake River in Uitcom Village 1 Mr. Makumbe instead asked his nephew to run this plot on his behalf as he chose to stay in the area designated for Chivake School arguing that 'this is where my forefathers used to live' (Interview with N. Makumbe, 12 September 2009). From his arguments, it is clear that Mr. Makumbe belongs to a group of farmers whom Fontein (2009b) refers to as 'new yet autochthonous farmers who easily relate to the 'history-scapes' and real landscape features of the area such as graves, trees, springs, rivers, hills as well as *matongo* (old homes). Such farmers use their links with these areas which are their *matongo* to legitimise their occupation or re-occupation on the area. Such a position enable these 'returning' autochthons to articulate certain claims to the land and also to assert their authority as people who have direct, if not imagined, links with the original owners of the land. They can easily point to old homes as well as graves of their ancestors in legitimising their claims to autochthony. Yet it should be made clear that it is not only because of the simple 'presence' of graves, old homes, hills and springs among other landscape features that traditional authorities have been able to substantiate their claims to the land but it is more importantly about the materiality of such features. It is about the history and culture that these features are able to articulate and also about how such articulations impact on the

people. These features thus impact on the imaginings of the local people in as much as they make use of them to construct belonging.

Traditional authorities are pushing for the establishment of village heads (*maSabhuku*) in the resettlement areas that would be answerable to the chiefs and headmen and would ensure that the authority of the traditional leaders is not neutralised by that of the village committees. At present, though no village heads have been installed in the resettlement areas in Eastdale, Uitcom and Silverdale, Chief Serima has appointed representatives in the villages who work towards ensuring that traditional customs such as the *chisi* holiday and sacred sites are respected. Chief Serima sees this as a precursor to the appointment of substantive Village Heads under his authority. The appointment of village heads is already causing a lot of conflicts among rival traditional authorities in Gutu especially given the contestations over boundaries. In Ward 7, Gooile Hoop, Willands and Mazongororo farms are hotly contested by Chief Serima, Headman Gadzingo (Dzimba Madondo) and Headman Makumbe. All the three traditional authorities make historical claims to the area and also use old homes, mountains and graves to legitimise their claims. Interestingly all have also made attempts to install village heads in the area or at least their representatives. However, though Chief Serima has been more vigorous in his claims and in his attempts to install his *maSabhuku* (village heads) he has made little progress in this end. It is believed that the reason why Serima has failed to quickly install his *maSabhuku* and bring the area into his sphere of influence is that he has been asking the aspiring village heads to give him one head of cattle each so that he would recognise them as village heads under his authority. This has not gone down well with the aspirants who see it as an excessive demand bordering on extortion. As a result of this, Headman Makumbe and Headman Gadzingo have decided not to make such demands in order to appease the disgruntled aspirants and gain their allegiance in the battle for the control of the area (Interview with Mr. D. Mberikwazvo, Gooile Hoop Farm, 12 December 2009). It is quite evident that the installation of village heads is one of the greatly contested issues in the land reform discourse as it has the effect of reconfiguring traditional boundaries as well determining who belongs where? This explains why the appointment of village heads has raised so much debate and so many disputes.

In some cases, funerals become theatres of struggle as boundary politics are often played on such occasions. For instance, when somebody dies, the bereaved family has to inform the immediate traditional authority who is often a headman or chief before they can bury their relative in his *ivhu* (soil). In the case of Eastdale, Silverdale and Uitcom, people inform either Chief Serima or Headman Denhere depending on which traditional authority they fall under. The choice to inform one traditional leader over the other thus strongly suggests one's allegiance and has serious consequences in boundary politics. In the event that representatives of both traditional authorities attend the same funeral in a disputed area, tension often arises over who has the authority to speak at the funeral as the traditional authority of the area (Interview with J. Mumanyi 15 August 2009). In the end, some people prefer to just inform their village committees to avoid the controversies that come with the involvement of chiefs and headmen in resettlement areas. As Chabal (2009: 49) notes, 'a properly executed burial reinforces the collective sense of belonging, without which the person is not fully human and the community is not fully complete.' Similarly, Geschiere and Nyamnjoh (2000: 435) argue that many Cameroonians consider burial locations as a very important criterion for belonging. In essence the basic test for one's belonging will be to ask them to show where their ancestors are buried. A failure to do so would be interpreted as meaning that the person belongs elsewhere, in this case where the bones of his/her ancestors are interred (see Geschiere 2009). Hence funerals and graves have so much significance in the negotiation of belonging in Africa. Belonging is here linked with attachment to a physical place which draws its meaning from people's attachments with the ancestral graves. As Shipton (2009: 20) argues, 'graves are the symbolic focal points of human attachments to place: the living and dead, the social and the

material, all connect here.' Yet this need not suggest that place is the only variable in the belonging matrix. It is just but one of the many variables in complex assemblages of ethnicity, kinship, religion and language.

Rainmaking is another ritual which sees the power dynamics and politics of belonging being played in newly resettled areas. In Gutu rainmaking ceremonies are normally done at the beginning of every rainy season at the clan's main *mapa*, which is usually located in the ancestral *gadzingo* and the smaller *mapa* in the wards. Normally all people in the ward are asked to contribute millet for the brewing of the traditional beer used for the rainmaking rituals. In the case of Makore, people visit Masvitsi Hill, which is also Makore's *mapa*, to ask for rain from the spirits of the chiefs buried there (Mahachi 1986). As Chabal (2009: 29) puts it 'the relation of land and sense of origin are both rooted in the location where ancestors are buried and propitiated.' This places *mapa* and other sacred places at the centre of people are belonging. The other chiefs in Gutu like Serima and Chiwara also have their different *mapa* where they contact their rainmaking and other rituals. Each family is supposed to contribute millet or *rapoko* to be used in brewing the beer used in the rituals. However, often such ceremonies also lead to conflicts over boundaries in resettlement areas as contributing millet for a ceremony organised by a rival claimant to the area often denotes one's allegiance. Consequently, some people prefer not to contribute towards such ceremonies for fear of being labelled as having allegiance to a certain traditional authority. Others especially those belonging to the Apostolic Sects usually refuse to contribute towards such rituals arguing that they are against their Christian beliefs (Interview with J. Mumanyi 15 August 2009). Thus, together with funerals, rainmaking ceremonies provide stages where belonging and boundaries are negotiated. These rituals and their performance provide traditional authorities with a platform to assert their authority as well as creating tensions between rival claimants to a territory.

Apart from contestations over boundaries and reclamation of lost ancestral lands the land reform has also brought about dual belonging as some people are straddling between communal areas and resettlement areas. This straddling is largely induced by the fact that some people see their positions in the resettlement areas as very insecure. For example Mr. Mutangi who owns a plot in Eastdale still maintains his old home in Guzha Village under Chief Nyamande. As he puts it, '*handina kusiya ndapisa musha wangu kwaGuzha*' (I did not burn my homestead in Guzha). 'I just left my eldest son to take care of the homestead as I am trying to improve my livelihood here in the farms.' (Interview with A. Mutangi 10 August 2009). Such farmers who continue to hop between communal areas and resettlement areas seem to be trying to use communal areas as a safety net in case they lose their plots in the resettlement areas. Some farmers however argue that they are content with the conditions in the resettlement areas and have cut ties with their old homes in communal areas. On the contrary, Manenji Murodhini who is the Farm Chairman of Silverdale claims that he has cut ties with his old home in Headman Mazuru's area and now feels that he belongs to Silverdale though he stills occasionally returns to his old home for funerals and other family gatherings (Interview 12 September 2009). Manenji Murodhini's stance however seems to be influenced by the fact that he was among the first comers in Silverdale and an important figure in the community rendering dual residence or dual belonging difficult to maintain for him. The practice of straddling therefore seems to be less common among those farmers who consider themselves to be pioneers in their villages and are also important figures in the community than late comers who do not have a strong sense of belonging.

Conclusion

What emerges here is that whilst for the technocrats the land redistribution programme is about taking land from the minority white farmers and giving it to the landless black majority, the traditional authorities did not quite see the programme in the same way. Instead, they view it as an opportunity to reclaim lost ancestral lands, graves, mountains, and sacred places and also to re-establish their *nyika* boundaries which had been greatly altered during the colonial period. It is quite clear that though the management of the resettlement areas has centred on government technocrats and the village committees, traditional authorities have continued to push for their recognition. The FTLRP has also brought new challenges for traditional authorities in Gutu who have continued to be locked in disputes over the re-alignment of their boundaries. Any analysis of the politics of belonging in the resettlement areas must therefore appreciate and address issues surrounding reclamation of ancestral lands and boundary politics. For the Eastdale Estates, Silverdale and Uitcom, the boundary conflicts pitting Chief Serima and Headman Denhere are illustrative of the intricate and fluid nature of traditional boundaries and the centrality of graves, mountains, and rivers, among other features, in the negotiation of such boundaries. Makore and Chikwanda's claims over resettlements to the south east of Gutu bordering Masvingo District, are complicated by the fact that the area now falls in Masvingo District therefore making it quite difficult for Chief Makore to reclaim his ancestral lands. It is quite evident that the Fast Track Land Reform Programme has brought about new trajectories of belonging and also broached questions about disputed territories and disputed boundaries. These claims and counter claims reveal the intricacies of land reclamation in the aftermath of the FTLRP and the importance of graves, old homes, mountains and rivers in traditional authorities' efforts to reclaim their ancestral lands and re-establish their authority. This has been an important subtext to the FTLRP in Gutu and other communal areas in Zimbabwe.

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