

**Conference Theme: “Beyond” the Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Struggles, Prospects, projections and Myths**

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Topic: Take us back to the graves of our ancestors! Land as a source and site of conflict in the Gutu District of Zimbabwe, 2000-2016.

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**ABSTRACT**

Land is a primary and fundamental, highly symbolic resource for the vast majority of African people. It is a core element in the complex social relations of production and reproduction. Being a valuable and immovable resource of limited quantity, its ownership and usage invoke emotional responses which spill into questions of autochthony and identity politics. As this paper demonstrates; how land should be used, owned and controlled and by whom has revealed a highly contested and conflictual terrain in Gutu. The volatile dynamics of conflict have not always conformed to the conventions of logic. Claims over ancestral land in Gutu have also had an impact on people’s identity and their feelings of connectedness with the social and cultural environment in its entirety. However ignoring these complexities has led to tenure reforms which have aggravated land-based conflict. In this paper, I argue that while conflict has been a symptom of persistent inequalities, it has provided an opportunity for the elite to consolidate their holdings of land and valuable resources. The reluctance by the District Administrator’s office to recognize and resolve lingering disputes born of the land and agrarian reform programmes has triggered extended protests and violence, prompting local-level institutions to make fragile and ill-conceived decisions on land ownership. With economic, symbolic and emotional aspects at stake, the Gutu experience is studied to show that while land has been a source of conflict, it remains an essential element in peace building in post-conflict situations.

## **Introduction**

### **Geographic preface and peopling of Gutu.**

Before 1902, there were no proper, systematic methods or guiding scientific surveys for demarcating boundaries. Mountains Rasa, Ziro and Chomfuli and rivers such as Mungezi, Nyazvidzi and Dewure were largely the recognized features marking the fluid and porous boundaries.<sup>1</sup> Successive histories claim that the area then inhabited by the VaHera-Shava and the vaDuma before the vaRufura invasion encapsulated the regions lying between Shashe and Nyazvidzi rivers, Zvivagwe (now Sebakwe) to Ndanga and the confluence of Dewure and Nyazvidzi rivers.<sup>2</sup>

To that extent, the terrain hereinafter referred to as Gutu district, is situated in the south-east of Zimbabwe. Its northern boundary is on the main watershed south of Chivhu. It is separated from the Buhera district to the north by the Nyazvidzi River, from Bikita district to the south-east by the Dewure River and its tributary, the Mungezi. To the west and south-west, it abuts on the Chirumhanzu and Masvingo Districts. To the west, the district is bounded from Zimuto communal lands by Popoteke River.

The defeat of the Shiri and Garwe signaled the beginning of the end for many of the surrounding chiefdoms namely Mukaro, Norupiri, Mawere, Munyaradzi and Chiwara who were forced into senior or junior partnerships with Gutu and his powerful followers. As such, the main genealogies living in Gutu are the Gumbo-Madyirapazhe under the chiefs Gutu, Munyikwa, Chitsa and Chingombe, and their kinsmen Headmen Nyamandi, Denhere, Mataruse, Makura, Nemashakwe, Maburuse, Magombedze, Makumbe, Maungwa, Ndawi, Mupata and others.

There are also the Hera Shava-Wakanonoka of Headman Munyaradzi, a kinsman of Munyaradzi; the Garwe (Shumba-Muvavarirwa) of Nesongano; the vaMukaro

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Chief Gutu, 13 July 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Chief Gutu, 13 July 2013.

(Moyo-Nyakuvengwa) of Headman Mukaro. There are also the Duma people of Chief Chiwara settled around Mount Vinga and Makore and a few Rozvi and Shiri scattered all over the District.

Many other clan groups, for example, the Ngonya-Serima dynasty that moved from Zvimba to the upper Dewure area in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century or the Shonga-Wozhere group from Maungwe that settled a little to the north–west of Serima some years later, were accepted as subjects of the paramount chief Gutu.

Beach notes that other *dzinza* or *rudzi* titles which included names such as Govera, Mhari, or Ngowa; Nyamondo's son Ndidzi of Rozvi and Mkushi of the Negove Rozvi ancestry also found their way to the area of Chief Gutu during the dispersal of the Rozvi dynasties of the 1840s and 1850s. Since the creation of the modern Gutu District in 1902, successive chiefs in Gutu followed a policy of consolidating Rufura domination by placing members of the ruling family in key positions as sub-chiefs (*machinda*).<sup>3</sup>

In full cognizance of its boundaries, the district encapsulates other chiefs who have different totems, for example Chiwara, Mukaro and Chikwanda of the Moyo totem, Gonye of the Shonga totem, Munyaradzi- Shava; Mutema-Shoko; Serima-Gushungo and others. These migrated into Gutu from different places, Serima from Zvimba, Gonye from Makoni, Munyaradzi from Buhera, and Chiwara from Musikavanhu.<sup>4</sup> The inhabitants of Gutu (*vanhu vemaGutu*) came from diverse clans of varying historical depth.

This coalescence, believed to have begun between 500 and 300 years ago, has continued to this century. The absence of unifying historical traditions, coupled with the contrasting histories of numerous clans, has not prevented interaction

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<sup>3</sup> F. Mashasha, *The Early History of the Gutu Chiefdom*, Department of History, University of Zimbabwe, p.11.

<sup>4</sup> C. S. Makari, *Magamba eChimurenga: Josia Tungamirai*, p.14.

among them. Although two or more clans or villages may differ historically, both accept the identification of being considered people of Gutu.

Some descendants of the non-Gumbo clans enjoyed certain flexibility by being able to attach themselves to the hosts. Munyaradzi was spared because one of his daughters had been married to the Chief.<sup>5</sup> Gutu Chaurura, for example, later married the daughter of Nesongano who bore him his two eldest sons Rwodzi and Denhere.<sup>6</sup>

### **The politics behind Land allocation**

The period between 1962 and 1973 had people taking advantage of the absence of formal law to expand their allocations in various ways. Chiefs and their subordinates grabbed land for themselves, and demanded gifts and bribes for allocating land to the landless and even brought aliens onto the land.

In a study on changing patterns of African land use in Southern Rhodesia, Floyd concluded that ‘corruption of the kraal heads’ authority with regards to land allocation was commonplace and by 1950, land allocation had become a negation of those traditional customs.<sup>7</sup> Chief Makore had to seek the advice of the DC Menzies on how to deal with the question of squatters at Gono’s kraal.<sup>8</sup> Those who were labeled squatters were those from whom the chief would have failed to extort ‘gifts’. Chirikure’s people who had been displaced during the creation of Native Purchase Areas in the Dewure area lost many cattle to the chiefs through bribery and *rufimbi*.<sup>9</sup>

Chief Vondo Mude Mukozho Gutu was taking goats and money for himself from people in Chikwanda and was also demanding money for making wrong and

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Kudakwashe Munyaradzi, Gutu, 10 August 2013.

<sup>6</sup> F. Mashasha, *The Early History*, p.12.

<sup>7</sup> Floyd, B. N. in Native Affairs Annual Report, 1961, *NADA Vol 40*, p.98.

<sup>8</sup> PER 5/Chief Makore/72 Squatters at Gono kraal.

<sup>9</sup> E. G. Howman, ‘Rufimbi’ in *NADA*, 1950, p.31. *Rufimbi* is a medicine which was believed to have mesmeric effects. Its use enabled cattle rustlers or thieves (*makororo*) to get away with a number of cattle from some villages without being detected or caught. It was common among chiefs to engage professional thieves in acquiring cattle. See also D.C.H.P. ‘Mangoromera’ in *NADA* 1933, p.61.

unknown boundaries. Chief Nerupiri was forced to pay £40 for the redrawing of a boundary and £4.50 for *badza* (the hoe the chief had used to mark a boundary peg).<sup>10</sup> The ‘Rhodesian Informers’ went on to plead for a European Paramount chief to try all Chikwanda cases than Chief Gutu, a tyrant who harassed people.<sup>11</sup>

Chief Chitsa had demanded £48, 2 cattle and 2 sheep from Mutuvi so that he would become a new kraal head in an area to be allocated.<sup>12</sup>

While extortionate chiefs clandestinely accumulated wealth, it is however important to note that those who leveled charges of incompetency might have been aspirants to the chieftainship position who were out to defame the incumbents.

### **The Land, patterns of settlement and social stratification**

The political elite dominated by the Gumbo-Madyirapazhe used landownership to explain and legitimize its preeminent position.<sup>13</sup> The chiefs and village heads were more privileged than the rest because all land was vested in the chieftom. As a result, the positions they held afforded them opportunities to occupy quality land and keep more cattle than others.

According to Beach the distinction between those who held different types of soils did not lie exclusively between the dominant lineage and the others.

Between 1892 and 1898, the official policy with regard to African traditional land tenure system in Gutu District was to let the Africans continue operating as they had always done. This explains why land aggrandizement which took place in

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<sup>10</sup> PER 5/CHIEFS/14/6/73 Boundaries.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> PER 5 Chief Chitsa/72

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Chief Gutu, Gutu, 13 July 2013.

some parts of colonial Zimbabwe during the 1890s was less pronounced in the Gutu District as Palmer noted,

In this District which lies to the North-east of Fort Victoria and to the South of Charter, very little land had been alienated to Europeans during the 1890s so that the Native Commissioner had no difficulty in creating the Gutu Reserve.<sup>14</sup>

However, as a way of implementing the 1898 Order-in-Council, Native Commissioners who did not even know what land had been alienated to Europeans were asked to demarcate land to the Africans. An estates department established in 1908 to promote European settlement requested for the readjustment of the original land distribution on the basis that some reserves were too large compared to others.

In 1900 Chief Shumba and his people were forced to move into Gutu reserve so that they could pave way for settlers who wanted to live around the Chatsworth area.

In 1905, the Cademeyer brothers pegged a farm on the Chidza River which encroached into the reserve thereby displacing Maungwa's people.<sup>15</sup> Although the Cademeyer brothers' action infringed the African land rights as legalized by the reserve boundary, boundaries of the reserve had to be altered so that the whites could be given a favourable consideration.

In the same area south of Chikwanda, J. Vermaal who had occupied Braakfontein farm in 1908 did not even wait to be granted permission by the Civil

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<sup>14</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1977, p. 256.

<sup>15</sup> L 2/2/117/47 Secretary to the Administrator, Victoria Farmers Association.

Commissioner to change his farm to the one adjoining Dromore farm which was his other farm.<sup>16</sup>

The pegging of the Braakfontein farm robbed the people under Mabheure and Murombo of their grazing land. In the above cases, the white farmers in question had found that the loose sandy soils in the south of Chikwanda were suited to the growing of tobacco and so it was the profitability of tobacco in 1905 which gave impetus to land alienation.

The Verlos and Excelsior farms extended far deep into the Chikwanda reserve only to be surrounded by Makore, Muunde and Vhetu families.<sup>17</sup> To justify the land grabbing, Huntley, the Superintendent of Natives in Victoria claimed that many thousands of acres of the reserve were not required or used by the Africans and so were being locked up to no purpose.<sup>18</sup>

In 1909, Kenny the NC of Gutu, recommended that Chiwara reserve which was one of the independent chiefdoms in the Duma Confederacy lying east of Gutu reserve, be allocated 10 000 acres of land including the Vinga hills and not the Mungezi area which had fertile soils. According to Kenny, all the graves of the preceding Chiwara chiefs were still seen on the Vinga and so it would be very hard for the Chiwara people to leave the country which had been occupied by their ancestors for centuries past.<sup>19</sup>

The reorganization of the Department of Agriculture under Eric Nobbs fueled the BSAC to pursue what Palmer termed the 'white agricultural policy.' Africans were to be moved from Crown land into reserves In 1909, the imposition of a rent on

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<sup>16</sup> L 2/2/117/47 Letter from the Estate Department and Civil Commissioner to Secretary Victoria Farmers Association, 1908.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with J.Chikombingo, Gutu, 6 August 2014.

<sup>18</sup> R. Mtetwa, 'The Political and Economic History of the Duma People of South Eastern Rhodesia 1716-1945', p.311.

<sup>19</sup> L 2/2/117/47 Kenny NC Gutu to SN Victoria 1909.

those Africans residing on Company lands witnessed a large scale movement into the reserves. In 1910, the NC of Gutu reported that the movement into the reserves was so enormous that it had badly disfigured his register.<sup>20</sup>

By the time D.E Mackintosh took over his farm in Fairburn in 1913, Kenny the NC of Gutu and his clerk Phayre had approved land acquisition by Joe Levason at Fernadow, Van Aswegan at Airlie, Alivier on Lorn in the stretch of land lying between Gutu-Mpandawana and Chatsworth.<sup>21</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Charlie Burrows (Mvimvi), Pywell (Glenary), Tom Bezuidenhout (Edina), Toe Bradshaw (Trafalgar) and Welman (Good Luck)-names of farms in brackets-acquired huge farms in the same area.<sup>22</sup> Farms Mvimvi and Good Luck sliced part of Gutu reserve which was occupied by the Madondo and Mudzitiri families under the Denhere chiefdom. The affected people had to withdraw to Vutsinda.<sup>23</sup>

In 1915, the NRC recommended the reduction of Gutu reserve. Three portions with an acreage of 167 310 were carved from the reserve over and above the 1500 morgen of the Caledon Estate extending north of the Devuli river near Mount Rasa. Denhere and Musarurwa's people who had been occupying the area stretching from Nyazvidzi River to Soti Source had to leave. Denhere whose *dunhu* had five villages had to move to an area between Nyamaturi and Nyazvidzi rivers. This area later became Nyazvidzi Purchase Area. Following Denhere and Musarurwa's departure, there was an influx of soldier settlers and seven of them Fleetwood (Wheatlands), Jenkins (Gongwe), Tracey (Willand), Dyer (Chibakwe),

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<sup>20</sup> N9/4/23 Report of the NC Gutu for the year ending December 1910.

<sup>21</sup> Hist.Mss.W05/9/1 D. A. E. Mackintosh: Gutu Early Settlement days.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with J. Chikombingo, Gutu, 6 August 2014.



Hudson (Chindito), Townsend (Chomfuli) and W. E. P. Nell (Surat), availed themselves of the offer and commenced farming operations in 1920.

White farmers in Gutu also advanced socio-economic and psychological reasons for possessory segregation. They cited the fears that close proximity of their farms to native lands would spread livestock disease, that stock thefts would increase and that land values would depreciate.

### **Native Purchase Areas and the Creation of a ‘modern’ Agricultural Elite.**

Native Purchase Areas (NPAs) were created where ‘only natives could acquire land or have interest in land. Europeans could only enter if their presence was for the benefit of the natives’.<sup>24</sup> The Lands Commission assigned four NPAs to Gutu District, namely Dewure (152 600 acres), Caledon (6 350 acres), Mazare (3 797 acres) and Nyazvidzi (68 600 acres). Dewure and Caledon were later merged to form Dewure in 1941.<sup>25</sup> While NPAs were created so that indigenous inhabitants of Gutu could buy out farms, the main aim of the colonial government was to settle the Sotho who had accompanied some white settlers from South Africa.

Mr. Craig, the government land surveyor working in Fort Victoria, actually advised all Basotho who came to him wanting to purchase land to go to Dewure Purchase Area which had been ‘reserved for them’.<sup>26</sup> As Mujere observed, ownership of freehold land in Purchase Areas became one of the major ways through which the Basotho established a sense of belonging and claimed an attachment to the land which was otherwise dominated by the Karanga under Chief

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<sup>24</sup> L. Powys-Jones, ‘The Native Purchase Areas of Southern Rhodesia’ p.21

<sup>25</sup> Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination*, p.256.

<sup>26</sup> S138/81 Superintendent of Native Fort Victoria to CNC Salisbury, 10 October 1932.

Nemashakwe and Chingombe of the Gumbo Madyirapazhe clan and those under Chief Chiwara of the Moyo Duma clan.<sup>27</sup>

The indigenous inhabitants of Gutu who applied for farms were expected to have Master Farmer Certificates, failure of which they had to prove ownership of cattle, farming implements like ploughs, harrows, cultivators, scotch carts and indicate how much money they were able to pay in monthly installments. According to Shutt, in the early years of the purchase areas, many applicants 'were from towns while others were alienated from reserve life-those cut off from traditional avenues of wealth accumulation and prestige, such as black South African immigrants (such as Basotho), mission based farmers and ordinary clergy.'<sup>28</sup>

The implementation of the LAA whose effects began to be recognised in 1934 in Gutu District witnessed the pegging of 19 farms on land which was occupied by Musarurwa and Zinyemba's people. The farms namely: Zeru, Jermanda, Rufundi, Masaisai, Jerenye, Soti, Zinyemba, Gandi, Dara, Chirongwe, Chakata, Mumunya, Muluti, Soti Source, Hlonjani, Gabi, Inyamaturi, Machengura and Sikatu, all ranged from 1100 to 1700 morgen in extent.<sup>29</sup> Some of Musarurwa's people who resided in the area on which Gabi farm was pegged were prosecuted when they were found farming and wandering about without permission.<sup>30</sup>

Some of the evacuated people moved to Chiguhune where they joined Denhere's people who had also been moved out of Eastdale Estates owned by Lonrho while others crossed the Nyazvidzi River into Gombe in the Buhera District.

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<sup>27</sup> J. Mujere, 'Autochthons, Strangers, Modernising Educationists, and Progressive Farmers: Basotho Struggles for Belonging in Zimbabwe 1930s-2008', p.75.

<sup>28</sup> A. K. Shutt, 'Purchase Area farmers and the Middle Class of Southern Rhodesia, c.1931-1952', p.562.

<sup>29</sup> S 1857 General Report of the 'Soti Area' by Land Inspector R.Cecil Boyes, 27/08/34.

<sup>30</sup> S 1857, NC Gutu's letter No. 288/43 to CNC with regard to Gabi farm.

Tavaziva's people, who had been moved out of Eastdale West and Shashe Fountains, either settled in the Serima Reserve or proceeded into Chilimanzi (Chirumhanzu) District. Many other evicted groups had to wander from one chief to another negotiating for settlement areas.

By 1936, 59 farms had been bought and occupied in the District. The establishment of the NPAs saw the driving out of people into the reserves and loss of land by Chiefs Chiwara, Nemashakwe and Chingombe. Chiwara who controlled the south-west of the Dewure Purchase Areas lost some of his land to the farms and the boundaries had to be moved.<sup>31</sup> Nemashakwe, Manhenhe and Mutakura who lived in the area which became Dewure Purchase Area moved to Vhunjere where they mixed with Chipiro's people.<sup>32</sup> Chizema also led a group and established himself at Mataruse. Denhere and Musarurwa's people were driven out of Nyazvidzi Purchase Area and found their way to Chiguhune and Mutunduru.<sup>33</sup>

Although the farms Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal were initially earmarked for the Basotho, their divisions were acquired by the Karanga from surrounding areas such as Munyikwa, Chiwara, Serima and Chingombe among other areas in the District. Among those who acquired farms in the Dewure Purchase area were Vengai, Dondofema, Maraiwa, Mudyahoto, Madheya, Mavhundu, Madare, Mukonoweshuro, Madzura and Dumbu.<sup>34</sup>

Matizira from Makore, Purazeni from Chitsa, Nyere from Munyaradzi and Derera from Nyamande were among some applicants who sought to secure land for the first time upon establishing that their land in the reserves was inadequate for their

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<sup>31</sup> S2929/8/3 Delineation Report-Gutu: Report on Chiwara Chieftaincy, Chikwanda Reserve, Gutu, 19 February 1964.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Francis Mukaro, Gutu, 26 July 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Dondofema, Sengai, Gutu, 30 May 2013.

needs.<sup>35</sup> By 1950, 1 665 Africans had become master farmers, and by 1965 the number had increased to 14 626.<sup>36</sup> Some of the Gutu master farmers had been trained at Makoholi Agricultural Institute and were given farms on the basis of certificates they had acquired.

Temerai and Tendeukai Makura were allocated farms in the Nyahonda area of Bikita while Mahohoma and Rwatiringa went to Mutunduru.<sup>37</sup> By the time of the NLH Act peasant choices of land were severely limited by overcrowding in the reserves. Land reallocations in Gutu resulted in the movement of people under headmen Nyanda, Mubvekeri, Mapurazi, Maduveko and Gofa from Cheninga area to Serima.<sup>38</sup>

## INDEPENDENCE

The rapid commercialization of agriculture after 1980 also generated intense competition for land where the ensuing competition saw the powerful and wealthy people often manipulating the land allocation institutions and rules to accumulate large holdings.

In 1981, the Customary Law and Primary Courts replaced chiefs' and headmen's courts with elected presiding officers.

The District Councils Act 1981 set up elected district councils as key institutions of rural local government while the Communal Land Act provided for the regulation of the occupation and use of communal land.

In 1982, the Communal Lands Act gave district councils authority over land allocation, thus displacing the Tribal Land Authorities.

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<sup>35</sup> S 2044, Applications for Land in Native Area 1950-1955, Native Commissioner Gutu.

<sup>36</sup> G.A.Smith, *Agricultural Extension Work in Rhodesia with particular reference to African Areas*, Alvord Institute, Fort Victoria, 1966, p.29. In 1953, a master farmer's certificate became an essential prerequisite for obtaining a purchase area farm, and remained so until the early 1960s. Alvord bragged about the success of Vambe whom he regarded as a progressive and prosperous farmer and an outstanding leader of his people, who dressed well as any white man. The yardstick with which Alvord measured Vambe's success included a total of four wives, well dressed and well fed children, all living in well-built brick houses ownership of cattle, goats and pigs, a large wagon, a cart, ploughs, harrows, cultivators and planters. In addition, his many children had been or were being educated in mission and government schools and Vambe had raised their tuition fees and expenses from his farming operations.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Gibson Zvotoona Tarugarira, Makura, Gutu, 24 December 2013.

<sup>38</sup> PER 5/SERIMA/64 'Report on Serima Community'

A 1984 directive by the then Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe created VIDCOs, WADCOs, district and provincial development committees. These comprised of civil servants chaired by administrators, and the Provincial Governor who was a powerful political appointee. The VIDCOs and WADCOs were intended to create an entirely new basis for rural authority.<sup>39</sup>

Responsibility over land allocation was transferred from the traditional leadership of chiefs, headmen and village heads to the rural district councils which in turn executed their functions through VIDCOs and WADCOs. Since then, conflict between village heads and VIDCOs was outrightly a struggle for power and patronage.

The erosion of the gains the chiefs had accumulated under colonialism meant that the new government felt a strong suspicion and possibly fears for chiefs' alleged association with the Rhodesian Front government.<sup>40</sup>

Chiefs were thrown into the dust bins of obscurity to obliterate their seemingly unfavourable influence among the people.

New notions of entitlement as purportedly enshrined in the socialist ideology fractured and further undermined the authority of traditional social roles and networks.

In some instances, those who had held positions of authority prior to independence were simply renamed and inserted within the new ZANU hierarchy.

Members of important lineages who had been alienated during the Rhodesian period but retained legitimacy in the eyes of the people were brought back to replace those who had usurped their positions during colonial rule.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> P.S. Nyambara, 'The Politics of Land Acquisition and Struggles over Land in the 'Communal' Areas of Zimbabwe: The Gokwe Region in the 1980s and 1990s' *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol.71, No.2, 2001, pp.253-285.

Administrative reforms and procedures created opportunities for local political players to assert (or reassert), to negotiate (or renegotiate) entrenched or more volatile positions of status and entitlements in the fabric of local politics.

Chiefs however managed to establish a working relationship with the new government to the extent of pressurizing the government to restore their old powers. Under the mutable rubric of reconciliation and through an appeal for the preservation of culture and custom, senior government officials defended the recognition given to chiefs.

### **The politics of land redistribution**

While the resettlement programme by the new government was meant to ease land pressure, it was slow to take effect and in some cases, even the 1985 Land Acquisition Act, which was intended to aid in the acquisition of land for resettlement was scarcely used. Instead, Palmer argues that the Act aided in the accumulation of land by the black elite since some farms offered to the government were rebuffed and shoved onto the private market, where they eventually ended up in the hands of 'senior members of the government and the new black ruling elite.'<sup>41</sup>

After the expiry of the Lancaster House Constitution, provincial land identification committees, with representatives from Agritex, ZANU-PF and the Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU) were established to identify land for acquisition.

In 1995, the ZANU-PF dominated National Land Task Force was established, marking an important movement in the locus of decision-making beyond the reach of ministerial structures.

In Gutu, farmers like Makierk (popularly known as Makaki), Odendaal and Dicken Mal (popularly known as Derek) had up to 1995 remained on their farms and

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<sup>41</sup> R.Palmer, 'Land Reform in Zimbabwe, 1980-1990', *African Affairs*, 89, 355, 1990, pp. 180-1.

started to develop fully the Gutu area which had been demarcated as the European area.

C. Odendaal, whose family owned Condor and Lorn farms, was elected as the Councillor who represented the white community in the area. When veterans of Zimbabwe's liberation war initiated a wave of occupations of commercial farm land in 2000, the government was quick to come up with a policy- the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). More people moved into the farms around the years 2000 and 2001 following the invasion of farms surrounding the Roy area by war veterans led by Black Jesus.

At the same time, some people made calls that they wanted to be resettled in the lands once occupied by their forefathers. Musarurwa and his people wanted to go back into the Jirimanda area.<sup>42</sup>

The rising competition over land opened a hornet's nest of potential conflict between land occupiers and government authorities, the ruling ZANU-PF and influential members, based on attempts to evict the occupiers or exclude them from benefitting in the allocation process. There were open conflicts within the District Lands and Resettlement Committee which controlled land distribution.

The Committee was made up of representatives of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), District Development Fund (DDF), Local Government, War Veterans Chairperson, Council Chairman and a Chief. As Lund put it, struggles over land fanned the flames of political conflict.<sup>43</sup>

**In Gutu, there were numerous localized and contradictory waves of land occupation.** As the central state increasingly lost authority and control, new sources emerged. Although the District Lands and Resettlement Committee was

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Francis Mukaro, Gutu, 26 July 2013.

<sup>43</sup> C. Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, p.2.

formally chaired by the District Administrator, in most instances war veteran leaders were in control. The war veterans were the law unto themselves.

The dramaturgical invasion of Clare, Lonely and Northdale farms in Gutu is illustrative. In October 2000, war veterans established their base on Clare Farm and asked the farm owner to leave through an operation code named '*Operation Garirainoko*'.

The Lonely Farm one of J. M. Erasmus's eight farms was first invaded in 1999. In 2001 government through its officials pegged land and provided offer letters to the new occupants led by Comrades Muchaparara and Gunpowder.

Another group of war veterans also led by Comrade Muchaparara invaded Northdale farm belonging to J. C. Jovner who had a diary project.

J. C. Nell's Chindito farm was briefly occupied by the then Vice President Muzenda before he moved to Muirland (Tariro) Farm where his son Tongai Muzenda, the former ZANU-PF legislator for Gutu West resides.

Following Muzenda's footsteps, Shuvai Mahofa also went into Chindito farm where she inherited the derelict farming equipment Muzenda had left behind before she moved into J. C. Smuts' Ludron farm.<sup>44</sup>

The former Minister of Finance, Samuel Mumbengegwi went into Floradale farm.

**The partisan and autonomous character of land committees displaced older forms of authority over land.** ZANU-PF credentials were necessary to the exercise of authority. Committees of the FTLRP, civil servants, Ministers and ZANU-PF stalwarts started to bring in new beneficiaries to take over land thereby instigating new waves of occupations.

The Chinyaure people went into Harvey Farm.

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<sup>44</sup> Shuvai Mahofa is the former ZANU-PF Member of Parliament for Gutu South who also served for more than a decade as Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Cooperative and Women's Affairs. In 2015, she was appointed Resident Minister of the Masvingo province.



McIntosh's Grasslands farm and Silverdale farm (which was one of J. C. Smuts' four farms in the area) were occupied by people from Makura, Mushangwe, Muchekayaora and Mazuru areas led by Ephraim Marwizi the former ZANU-PF legislator for Gutu East. Plots in these farms were first allocated to those villagers who had paid money for the welfare of base commanders and their platoons whose role was to drive out the white farmers.<sup>45</sup> Chipisa and Inyatsitsi Farms owned by Campbell Holdings were allocated for resettlement. The insecurity of tenure alongside the politics of *jambanja* fed criminality on the farms where looting and vandalism of farm property was common.

Arguably a privileged group of veterans, politicians and business people immensely benefitted from the Fast Track Land Development Programme. Lovemore Matuke then ZANU-PF's Masvingo Provincial Chairman and former legislator of Gutu Central Constituency moved into Chris Nell's Tommy Farm. Tarirai Mandebvu the former ZANU-PF legislator for Gutu West went to settle in Eastdale Farm. It was indeed the land grabbing of elites which provoked veterans into angry protests at the ZANU-PF December 2000 congress. The extent of abuses was further revealed in an official 'land audit'. According to Brian Raftopolous and Ian Phimister, 'the displacement of settled people by the party elite; elite struggles over prime land and the use of 'hired thugs' by sections of the ZANU-PF leadership to press their demands; and the problem of multiple ownership amongst prominent members of the ruling elite'<sup>46</sup> were also part of a picture of the struggle for political power and land in Gutu.

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Ephraim Marwizi, Gutu, 22 August 2013.

<sup>46</sup> B. Raftopolous and I. Phimister, 'Zimbabwe Now: The Political Economy of Crisis and Coercion' *Historical Materialism*, 12:4,2004, p.370.

The people from the Zinhata, Magombedze and Mupata areas who were resettled in the Chipisa and Inyatsitsi farms had bumper harvests throughout the mid-1990s. One of the resettled farmers Munashe Ganyiwa

Tongai Muzenda became a renowned wheat farmer while Shuvai Mahova started cattle ranching. Of interest though is how the land issue created categories of identity in terms of political loyalty and war of liberation credentials. According to Bratton, 'the chiefs succumbed to predatory temptations, in the process transforming themselves into wealthy political barons'

Briefly, in the words of policy-makers, land reform is envisaged to:

- provide security of land tenure in order to promote investment in land;
- establish appropriate land allocation and land use through national- and local level land use planning and development;
- establish mechanisms that facilitate the socio-economic development of the country through the development of land use and development guidelines at national and local levels;
- facilitate reorganisation of urban and rural settlement;
- develop appropriate methods of land protection and conservation,

**'people have come to their own local arrangements'**

## **CONCLUSION**

Specific problems include overlapping land claims, lack of documentation on demographic holding capacities of the farms, politicization of local-level governance,

The issue of restitution remains a key policy dilemma for as long as access to land via social relations and identities are trans-generational,

The centralized and top-down nature of government means that it is difficult for policy-makers to remain in touch with rural realities, and it is easy for rural people to misunderstand government intentions.

New land legislation cannot be understood on a purely technical level, but only by appreciation of the politics and power relations in the country.

Control is often located within a hierarchy of nested systems of authority, with decision-making powers in relation to many functions located at local levels.

Land administering authorities and rights holders, and levels of socio-political authority (e.g. chiefs and headmen) is subject to shifts and changes. This has consequences on the degree of accountability of authority structures to rights holders.

Social, political and resource use boundaries are usually clear but often flexible and negotiable, and are sometimes the source of tension and conflict.

Both land rights and authority systems are politically embedded; thus power relations and political processes are often key to determining the distribution of rights and benefits.

Discourses of 'custom' and 'tradition' are key resources for political actors, traditional authorities as well as emerging elites, and the meanings of these terms are often highly contested.