

'We Want to Belong to Our Roots and We Want to be Modern People': New Farmers, Old Claims Around Lake Mutirikwi, Southern Zimbabwe¹

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Abstract: Based on fieldwork carried out between June 2005 and July 2006, this paper questions common assertions which suggest that recent 'fast track' land reform in Zimbabwe did not fit with local understandings of land tenure. While fast track land reform was not officially planned as a form of 'land restitution', in Masvingo District members of different local clans who occupied areas of state land, earlier resettlement schemes or were allocated plots on resettled farms around Lake Mutirikwi, often made very specific claims to land which appealed to autochthonous knowledge of the landscape, invoking memories of past occupations and the burial of ancestors in the land. Such claims were reinforced by the official 'return' of the powers of chiefs over resettlement areas and often sat uneasily next to both the increasing participation of technocratic government planning departments such as AREX (Agricultural Research and Extension), and the waning authority of war veterans who initially spearheaded the land occupations of 2000. Dealing with contemporary events in the monumental presence of a large modern dam built under colonial rule in the 1960s, and set in the context of ZANU PF's revived, if severely narrowed, discourse of anti-colonial nationalist fervour and sovereignty, this case study points to the complexity of what has often been over-simplistically characterised as 'Zimbabwe's authoritarian turn', highlighting how for some 'new farmers' and others in the Masvingo area, fast track land reform was understood as a response to older, lingering imaginations of, and localised aspirations for, postcolonial stateness and 'modernity' in Zimbabwe.

Introduction

Gore rino ndinoda kusadza GMB nechibage changu!

[This year I want to fill up the Grain Marketing Board with my own maize!]

('New Farmer', Masvingo District)²

But in terms of the broader vision, I have to stress that I think this land reform programme is one of the most wonderful programmes for a third world country to embark upon...

JF - So you are actually very optimistic?

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Yes I am optimistic. I think it is a great thing for a third world country, it really is.
(Chief Lands Officer, Masvingo Province)³

You asked me right at the beginning what were the major changes that I have seen since the 1970s up to now, and I said that at independence that was when there were very dramatic changes in what had been going on in agricultural development and extension. But now, having had our conversation ... I think that even the period we are going through now is one of profound ... change. It is a very exciting period, especially in terms of land tenure, there have been very dramatic changes... Since the 1980s there were not many changes in land tenure, but then all of a sudden in 2000 there was this revolution, which has thrown up all sorts of new challenges for development agencies in this field. And some of us we need to have a paradigm shift in the way that we do things.

(Provincial AREX Officer, Masvingo Province) ⁴

One remarkable feature of the comments above, which were made to me during fieldwork around Lake Mutirikwi in Masvingo district in southern Zimbabwe between June 2005 and July 2006, is the sense of optimism they convey. This optimism and enthusiasm, which was carried in the words and actions of many people involved in very different ways in Zimbabwe's recent land reform in that area at that time, is remarkable not only in the face of the huge volume of national and international criticism that has been levied at Zimbabwe's dramatic agrarian reform programme, but also in the context of the very severe economic, environmental, social and political problems which have faced the country and nearly everyone in it, including 'new farmers', in recent years.⁵ It is well known that accompanying fast track land reform in 2000, there emerged a new brand of "authoritarian nationalism", which has involved an increasingly "extreme and violent political intolerance" of any perceived opposition to the ruling party, continuing economic decline, very high unemployment, and in May/June of 2005, a grossly disproportionate government attack on the informal economy and urban housing, all of which has been punctuated by several controversial and hard-fought elections (2000, 2002, 2005, and most recently March and June 2008, which witnessed the most extreme political violence in Zimbabwe since the 1980s), and ever more restrictive legislation on citizenship, the media and NGOs.⁶ In addition to all of this, Zimbabwe has been terribly affected by the AIDS catastrophe, with thousands dying every week, and more recently, amid failing urban infrastructure and health services, a cholera epidemic that had infected 60,000 and killed over 3000 people by the end of January 2009.⁷ Finally, between 2001 and 2005, much of the country experienced a series of severe droughts which dramatically exacerbated existing food shortages and hunger, and undermined, even among some apparent loyalists, enthusiasm for the government's land reform programme. By the time of the combined local, parliamentary and presidential elections of March 2008, these concerns had reached such a crescendo that even in ZANU PF's rural strongholds support was beginning to dwindle, and a few prominent politicians, 'new farmers' and war veterans across the country, including in the Masvingo area, renounced their support for the ruling ZANU PF party in favour of independent candidates or even Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC.⁸

In this broader context, one could wonder what the apparent optimism that I noted in 2005-2006 was all about, and an immediate answer may relate to the point above about drought and hunger, given that the 2005-2006 rainy season was, in much of the country, plentiful and

promising of good harvests.⁹ A similar point is soil fertility and the productive potential of land on the resettled farms. Mafuma Mutsambwa, who came from communal areas in Zaka – “where the soil is now very poor” – to take up land on a resettled farm along Mutare road in February 2000, exclaimed there would be no need to use fertiliser on his land – “not for a hundred years!” – so good was the soil.¹⁰ Rain, soil fertility and good harvests are important, but I think there was more to it than that. To adequately consider the origins of this optimism requires, it seems to me, careful ethnographic reflection on the overlapping and interacting trajectories of individual memories and aspirations within a context of shared, changing visions of a local, national, and even international future. This includes what we could call imaginations of, or aspirations for, what a good, functioning postcolonial, even ‘modern’, state is, could, or should be; or in Ferguson’s words, the “expectations of modernity” that both people and states engage with and foster.¹¹ And here is the focus of this paper; to explore the complex entanglement of different, sometimes contested but often overlapping, aspirations for land, with broader imaginations of postcolonial stateness as they were manifest in the realisation of land reform around Lake Mutirikwi in southern Zimbabwe. In particular, the focus is on the way in which localised ideas and practises of landscape, livelihoods and the past were inevitably entangled with such contemporary discourses of the ‘state’ and ‘modernity’.

Along with the mood of optimism that I came across in Masvingo district in late 2005, another often under reported aspect of land reform in Zimbabwe was the huge amount of hard physical work usually invested in resettlement plots and redistributed farms, which reflected importantly upon the individual commitment of the ‘new farmers’ concerned. There have been a lot of stories in both the national and the international independent press about poor take-up rates, abandoned plots and the underutilisation of resettled land, as well as poor farming techniques employed, the lack of agricultural knowledge, inputs and resources; and about cronyism, the corrupt allocation of A1 and A2 farms, and multiple farm ownership.¹² The government-owned press joined in these debates sometimes, although it has tended, not surprisingly, to emphasise success stories. It has taken an active part in a lively discourse surrounding resettled or ‘new farmers’, and began to publish a new, and obviously targeted, monthly magazine called the *New Farmer*. Less benign renderings of the label ‘new farmer’ for resettlement farmers, such as ‘cell phone farmers,’ or interestingly *varimi /varungu venhasi* [farmers/white people of today] appeared on the street, in muffled beer hall conversations and sometimes in the independent media, and point towards the dynamic and contrary nature of the ongoing conversation within the country about land reform. It is difficult to enter into this discussion without being shunted into one or other end of the polarised debate about ‘Zimbabwe’s crisis.’¹³ Even academic observers have often found themselves trapped by the ‘discursive divides’ of this highly emotive and politicised debate, as was demonstrated again recently when Mamdani waded into the discussion.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is clear that for many new settlers, especially for poorer A1 farmers and their families (many of whom were landless peasants or from overcrowded communal areas), the experience of moving onto and establishing a farm on allocated lands on resettled farms involved huge personal commitments of labour, time and resources. As one war veteran and new farmer in Masvingo district described:

Yes, this involves a lot of effort here on the farms...it's not easy. You have to sacrifice...to achieve something. It is not that we can think, now we have land, and then demand only support from the government...It is not the government who will do the planting and harvesting. It is you yourself who will have to take the risk, and it will show at the end of the harvest if you have managed to do well.¹⁵

In January 2006, one prominent white commercial farmer, who had had several farms acquired and redistributed for resettlement by the government since 2000 but was fortunate, at that time, to remain with one to continue his farming operations, expressed some sympathy with the amount of work involved for new farmers on their allocated plots. As I recorded in my field notes:

Later on I ask them what they think of the new farmers. MHM stresses that many have no knowledge of farming at all, but ADM is more forgiving saying that some are obviously good farmers, and it is impressive what some have achieved given that they have no inputs what so ever, no tractors or anything, they just rely on DDF [District Development Fund] and some on their oxen. He adds "I wouldn't do what they are doing: cutting down bush and ploughing and planting without tractors... that is quite impressive given that they have no inputs whatsoever, but with them just relying on DDF it is very very hard for them."¹⁶

This huge investment of labour and resources suggests that people did have some confidence in their future on resettled farms (even if most people probably kept a foothold in claims to land in communal areas, or indeed employment in urban areas).¹⁷ It also suggests that many people did have a serious commitment to their new opportunities, despite commonplace remarks about new farmers' lack of it. Thirdly, I would suggest that this investment of labour and resources, this material commitment, was accompanied simultaneously by an imaginative investment in, or creative engagement with, broader aspirations for the possibilities of postcolonial 'modernity.' It may be that some individuals were simply, and cynically, acting out of economic self-interest, looking for land and resources, and only that. On the other hand, I am inclined to share Lambek's view that:

Agents are always partly constructed through their acts – constituted through acts of acknowledgement, witnessing, engagement, commitment, refusal and consent. In assuming responsibility and rendering themselves subject to specific liturgical, political and discursive regimes and orders, people simultaneously lay claim to and accept the terms through which their subsequent acts will be judged. People are agents insofar as they choose to subject themselves, to perform and conform accordingly, to accept responsibility, and to acknowledge their commitments.¹⁸

The moral investment or engagement that I suggest accompanied the material commitment made by new farmers may have, for some, amounted to direct, active and uncritical support for the ruling party, its political aims, practices, ideologies and alliances. Clearly, it was not entirely coincidental that fast track land reform was unleashed when it was and in the way that it was, at a moment when the ruling party faced, for the first time in twenty years, a credible political threat to its success in forthcoming parliamentary elections.¹⁹ But for other beneficiaries of land reform, perhaps a majority, this was and is not necessarily the case. They may have been aware of and engaged with several very different discourses and practises all of which invoke or appeal to different imaginations and aspirations of what the nature of the postcolonial state in

Zimbabwe should and could be, even as they were grounded within the particularities of very localised kinds of politics and livelihood strategies.

More to the point, to the extent that people do have a capacity for creative agency, even if they do not control the circumstances with which to be creative, then surely the subjectivities of new farmers and others involved in land reform mattered and continue to matter intensely. These subjectivities, as they emerge in both language and practise, are sites for the possible construction of alternative imaginations of what could be, from the those offered by either side of the polarised political debate in Zimbabwe, between the renewed, but narrowed form of African nationalism of ZANU PF, and the liberal appeals to civic nationalism, development, and human rights of opposition groups.

The intention of this paper then, is to describe these subjectivities as they appeared in the actions and words of new farmers, land occupiers, and others involved in land reform around Lake Mutirikwi between June 2005 and July 2006, and to investigate how they were situated within, yet utilised and engaged with different ideas of stateness, 'modernity' and the future. The article will suggest that those 'in power', whom Mbembe calls the potentate, are sometimes forced to engage with and respond to such alternative imaginings and aspirations.²⁰ I have addressed the same theme elsewhere in relation to the very specific interactions of spirit mediums and war veterans in the context of traditional '*bira* ceremonies' taking place in and around resettlement areas.²¹ This paper deals with the ideas and practices not of just war veterans and spirit mediums, but rather those of new farmers more generally and A1 farmers in particular, as well as technocrats and government employees working in local government departments involved in the land reform programme in the Masvingo area.

New Yet Autochthonous Farmers

As Nyasha Pambirei, the provincial AREG (Department of Agricultural Extension) officer, mentioned during a long interview in April 2006, the Lake Mutirikwi area is particularly interesting for exploring the entanglement of different imaginations of and aspirations for postcolonial stateness in the context of fast track land reform in Zimbabwe, because of the variety of historically different landscapes that continue to co-exist in the same space.

Quite frankly, the fast track land reform programme has been significant in what we do and how it has affected the Mutirikwi area... Why? Because the Mutirikwi habitat is quite peculiar in the province because there is the water there from the dam...[and]...because there is quite a variety of different land uses in the area. Of course there are the commercial farms...which have been affected by the land reform programme, but also there are other commercial activities there, the hotels, the fishing industry, tourism, boating and so on all of which are part of the environment in that area. And of course some of those things AREG is not involved in at all. But AREG is concerned with the agriculture around the dam and there are both farms and communal area adjacent to that dam and in its broader catchment area. The reform process has affected that area; the farms have been taken up and resettled. Mostly it is model A1 resettlement but also some model A2, and we should not forget that there are still some old commercial farms operating in that area too. And apart from those models and commercial farms there are also some special settlement areas, like the small scale farms there at Sikato,

where there are 100 or 150 ARDA plots... Those ARDA plots are individual plots that pre-date the land reform that started in 2000. So in terms of the land scenario there have been changes, mainly the partitioning of the commercial farms into A1 and A2 models.²²

Pambirei might also have mentioned that in the same area there exist several early post-independence resettlement areas that date back to the 1980s and 1990s, some of which involved irrigation schemes (Longdale and Oatlands irrigations Schemes) as well as areas of land which 'reverted' to communal lands, either when the dam was built in the late 1950s and early 1960s, to settle people removed from the dam (in the ZANO area - east of the lake), or after independence (Mzero farm – south of the lake); and there is a game park on the north of the lake which occupies several former farms, and a recreational park which roughly equates with a buffer zone or 'servitude' area immediately surrounding the entire lake.²³ The area also contains Zimbabwe's most important national heritage site, Great Zimbabwe, and several even older rock art sites.²⁴

The area is host to the hotly contested and competing 'history-scapes' of different clans, their spirit mediums and chiefs, which refer not just to memories of past occupation, but to very real places on the landscape, including sacred hills, springs, trees, and importantly to *makuva* [graves] and *matongo* [sites of ruined past homesteads].²⁵ These history-scapes are not just articulated in ongoing disputes over high profile places such as Great Zimbabwe, or more recently, to land on former commercial farms that has become available through fast track land reform, they also include areas of state land which have been reserved as part of the 'servitude' area of Lake Mutirikwi, or for its recreational and game park, as well as the various 'old' resettlement schemes and 'reverted' communal areas that date back to the 1980s and 1990s.²⁶ In the early 1980s, soon after independence, there was a wave of spontaneous land occupation or 'squatting' in these areas by claimants from these related but competing local clans, in which several high profile chiefs and other 'traditional' leaders were directly involved. In most cases these people were later evicted when formally planned resettlement schemes were put in place, which settled many 'strangers' onto the land.

Similar to the situation at resettlement schemes in the Dande area of northern Zimbabwe that Spierenburg has discussed, this settling of 'strangers' – people from elsewhere in Zimbabwe who can make no autochthonous claims to the landscape, who have no specific 'history-scapes' to deploy – has been an ongoing issue of contention in these areas around Lake Mutirikwi.²⁷ In 2000, in the context of the 'farm invasions,' these resettlement schemes and areas of state land around the lake were re-occupied, often by the very same people who had occupied them in the early 1980s.²⁸ Many of these re-occupiers claimed to be occupying not only the very same areas they had occupied in the 1980s, but also the very same places where their own fathers and grandfathers once lived before being evicted by European settlers.²⁹ In their view, they were once again living amongst the *matongo* and *makuva* – ruined homesteads and graves - of their kith and kin. The history-scapes they deployed in order to legitimise their own re-occupations simultaneously undermined and denied the rights of those people, or 'strangers,' formally resettled on those schemes. Crucially, these claims and denials were based on the notion of knowing the landscape, knowing the sacred places - the springs, hills, caves and trees, as well as the graves, their occupiers, and the ruined homesteads that litter these landscapes – and the rules and taboos that apply to them. This knowledge, which is understood

as being more inherent than learned, is based on kinship and relatedness with the past and landscape, and often involves different performances of the past.³⁰

All these different, co-existing landscapes around Lake Mutirikwi are, in a sense, the material manifestations of different ways of understanding of time and space, they are the sedimentations of different teleologies - different understandings of the past, the present and the future and the movement or 'progression' between them - into the material landscape. The question that becomes of interest then is how these different visions and materialities of time, intermingled in the context of current land reform around Lake Mutirikwi, and what the implications are for nature of the 'state' in Zimbabwe. As Ferguson noted, following Fabian and Appadurai, "modern western ways of knowing" - which includes anthropology - "have mapped out ethnologically 'different' places in a spatial array of distinct 'topics' and evolutionary 'stages' ...as if they represented a sequence of historical epochs or evolutionary stages, laid out in space instead of time".³¹ In this way 'modern,' 'western' knowledge understood cultural differences in terms of time, and then laid them out spatially. It is not just anthropology which used this teleological, spatial technique to construct its 'other.' Colonial authorities used a similar technique to divide up land and authority, which in colonial Rhodesia manifested itself, through a long series of legislative measures (most importantly the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951), in the sharp division between Native reserves (later known as the Tribal Trust Lands), and European farming areas, with the Native Purchase Areas forming a kind of middle stage between the two.³² The teleological nature of these colonial land divisions was apparent in the language often used to describe them. For example, it was only in relation to reified notions of 'traditional' and 'modern' forms of land tenure, and movement from one to the other, that the idea of land 'reverting' to communal land actually made any sense at all.

This racial, and teleological division of the land continued into the independence era, with only shallow cosmetic name changes serving as a reminder that something had changed. As Spierenburg and Alexander have both discussed, by the end of the 1980s, when initial, post-independence, land re-distribution efforts waned, the focus of the new state changed to the re-organisation of land use within the communal areas, in ways that recalled the 'high modernist' efforts of technocrats during the 1940s and 50s to 'remake' the Native Reserves.³³ There were some changes to developmental approaches at independence, as Pambirei himself noted (Masvingo Provincial AREX Officer, Field notes 28/4/06), with a renewed focus on agricultural extension in smallholder and communal farming areas having considerable initial successes in terms of increased maize and cotton production.³⁴ Some recent studies argue that when set against their original goals of poverty alleviation, welfare and increased agricultural productivity, and with a focus at the household level, many early resettlement schemes have performed well.³⁵ But despite these changes, and the fact that by 1999 more than 70,000 people had been resettled (far fewer than the famous target of 162,000), the old dualistic land division between commercial and communal areas largely continued right up to the land invasions of 2000. A fundamental question is, therefore, whether fast track land reform was understood as representing, at last, a determined effort to overcome this solidified, colonial distinction between commercial and communal land, between productive and subsistence farming, between so-called 'modern' and 'traditional' forms of land tenure.

To get a sense of this, it may be best to turn to a conversation I had with the chief land's officer for Masvingo Province, in which he described the differences between A1 & A2 resettlement in fast track land reform.

If you look at what we call A1 farms, that is almost like the communal areas, it includes villages which have communal grazing areas, or small plots. In those areas there really is a focus on the equity issue. The aim is to bring people from communal areas, where they live under their chiefs, and to preserve their value system. ...For people to be allocated under the A1 scheme, that is allocated by the district land committees, in which the chiefs play an important role...

For a long time there was a lot of play with VIDCOs [Village Development Committees] and WADCOs [Ward Development Committees] or whatever, but those structures they never really took off the ground... They were meant to flatten out the administration but it was found that the strength of rural people is resident in the chiefdoms. When people have their problems they go and talk to the *sabhukus* [village heads] or the chief, they don't go to the VIDCO chairman. So the chiefs are linked to the land in the communal areas and people go to them to resolve their disputes. This value system is like a religion or a way of life, the chief as custodian of people's heritage...

So it was realised that those VIDCOs in communal areas were not effective, and in the old resettlements, the resettlement councils and chairmen, and even in the new resettlements, where that role was played by the base commanders, all of that is now going to be under the chiefs.

So that is the A1 model resettlement. In the A2 there is something different going on. In the A2 the aim is to distribute land to people who will be able to do commercial farming on those lands. Here the aim is to redistribute that wealth. The white farmers they were in a position of being like the custodians of those commercial farms, of that access to wealth. The aim of the land reform exercise in terms of A2 farms is to redistribute that access to wealth in terms of the commercial farms. It is a process of indigenising commercial farming. And it is solely the bureaucracy which administers that. That is the real territory of the Ministry of Lands, which is the acquiring authority. That is not really where the chiefs come in. Having said that, however, even here the chiefs have recently been saying that they want access to these farms for the *zunde remambo*. So there are discussions going on about providing particular farms for the chiefs to use to feed their people under the *zunde remambo*.³⁶

From these words, it seems that, perhaps, something of the old dualistic land division between commercial and communal areas was being reproduced in new guises through recent land reform. This perspective was reinforced by the fact that all potential new farmers went through some form of 'vetting' and selection, which was not merely political but also relates to the perceived abilities and resources to farm productively. This is particularly the case for A2 farmers where there was considerable pressure not only to actually occupy farms, but to do so productively. New farmers needed to demonstrate that they were productively occupying their plots.³⁷

In the context of continuing food shortages, high prices and the unavailability of foreign currency with which to import food, official concerns about the productive utilisation of resettled farms was increasingly expressed through statements from the very highest echelons of the Zimbabwean Government. There were a series of high profile 'land audits' and in November 2006 President Mugabe gave fierce warnings to new farmers on A2 farms, that the government retained the right to withdraw their '99 year leases' and remove them from the land, if they were not farming productively.³⁸ This concern with land utilisation and productivity recalled the concerns of both past and present opponents to land reform who argued "that the utmost caution should be exercised in transferring land from commercial farmers to inexperienced operators because of the risks posed to aggregate agricultural output," concerns that in the short term were proved dramatically correct in hungry post-2000 Zimbabwe.³⁹

At any rate, Munyani did seem to suggest, in the quote above, that if A2 farming was supposed to be about indigenizing wealth and 'Africanising' commercial agricultural production, A1 farming was about preserving that 'value system' or 'way of life' in which chiefs were understood to act as custodians of peoples' heritage; a distinction which resonated in tones suspiciously similar to the teleological colonial distinction between white 'commercial' and African 'communal' farming areas. But if we were to be leaving Munyanyi's words at this point we would be missing something, which did seem to be profoundly different, or at least was understood as such, in the recent efforts at land reform. He hinted at this above where he mentioned the growing concerns of chiefs about accessing A2 land for participation in the reformulated Zunde ramambo concept.⁴⁰ It becomes clearer if we allow Munyani to continue his tale:

And then the chiefs are saying in relation to those A2 areas, this is our land, so they are involved in that sense. ...Because even though the A2 farms are distributed and administered through the provincial level offices, we are also responsive to the district land committees, which ... have to be consulted in all A2 resettlement. And through those district land committees the chiefs are involved too. So for example in the issue of which white farmers are allowed to stay on their farms...this is often left with the chiefs, who might say this white farmer is ok, he should stay or whatever, because they will have the knowledge and experience of those farmers. So the chiefs do have role in the distribution of A2 land, but we at the Ministry of Lands at a provincial level we carry out the administration. If something does not have the blessing of the chief of that particular area, then we could go straight ahead, but it will cause us other problems in dealing with those areas, and so as stakeholders the chiefs are consulted...

But there is something going on here in terms of that 'value system'. You see along the way there was return to the chiefs by those people who initiated the land reform, those people who began the land invasions. The fast track land reform programme, we can say it was motivated by war vets, they started this, and they put up structures of authority, temporary structures in terms of base commanders and so on. You know the fast track it started as jamba [violence, chaos or disorder] with the land invasions. I don't want to say it was chaos as such but it was jamba, it was carried out with a great deal of speed. And initially those war vets they did not consult the chiefs, they ignored them, they went ahead with the land invasions, and they set up

their own structures of authority. But along the way those people went back to that value system, they went back to the chiefs to give them that custodial role...

On the A2 farms, like on the A1 and in communal areas, people still feel like they need to be under a chief. People still yearn for that value system. You know Zimbabweans we have like a dual citizenship. We want to belong to our roots, and we want to be modern people. So on A2 farms, most people they really want that traditional function, and no one says no to that...

Yes there are some people who are challenging the roles of the chiefs in those area. Many of those people are more educated and have more resources, that is part of the criteria of being granted A2 land. So some of these people may be saying 'what can the chiefs tell us?' but still then at the back of their minds, they still have that sense of allegiance to the chiefs, to that value system...⁴¹

This growing influence of chiefs, not only over 'communal' A1 resettlement areas but also, to some extent, over the 'commercial' A2 resettlement farms, suggests that maybe there was indeed something profoundly different going on across Zimbabwe's agrarian landscapes. Certainly informants often spoke of it in those terms. As Manyani described, the *jambanja* that characterised the early stages of fast track land reform, when war veterans set up their own structures of authority as 'base commanders,' did later change in response to concern among land occupiers for the autochthonous knowledge of the landscape that people making ancestral claims to the land were able to offer. In one interesting example, a war veteran now living on what used to be Desmondale farm explained how when they first occupied the farm in 2000, they relied on the autochthonous knowledge of some particular farm workers, who were not only intimately familiar with both the agricultural and the sacred aspects of the landscape through their long experience of living and working on the land, but also claimed direct kin relationships to the Chikwanda clan who were believed to have occupied the land before colonial appropriation in the 1890s, and in particular to Ambuya VaZarira, an influential spirit medium who was closely involved with war veterans occupying farms in the area, and who has her own particular claims to an area of land on nearby Mt. Beza.⁴²

JF – so when you first came here, before the chief became involved, and you were living here, how did you know where the sacred places were and what you had to do? Or did you just do whatever, build houses anywhere and cut trees everywhere?

Kurasva - it was very easy. When we came here, we talked to the people who have been living here from long ago. There were people here like Sekuru Makwinye here, and others who have lived here a long time and they know all the sacred places which were not to be disturbed and the rules that had to be followed. When we first got here I was walking everywhere during those days with this *sekuru*.⁴³

In addition to the recognition by war veterans of autochthonous knowledge, many new farmers I have spoken to themselves made autochthonous claims to land they were now occupying. Some such 'new but autochthonous' farmers described how when they first came to

occupy the land in 2000, accompanying war veterans spearheading the occupations, they made no mention of their own autochthonous claims, emphasising only their desire for access to the fertile land available on the farms. It was only later, when other settlers, war veterans and local government officials began to recognise the significance of these 'traditional' claims, that they began to announce their own autochthonous claims to the land they were now occupying.

Vavarirai M. Chikwanda – we came back here in February 2000, but how it was that it happened that we came back here, well, these things are things of the soil...

Mutsambwa –The war vets came in here first, they started the invasions, and then we followed... .. when we first came here, we didn't come here saying we are coming back to our land. We just told the base commander that we were coming here for our own piece of land...But later on, when the farm was pegged and the people from the DA's office were saying we don't want to use the English name, we want real names of this area, and we want someone who comes from here, a son of the land, to tell us. So that is when we said we are from Chikwanda, and VaChikwanda here [pointing to his companion] was made a *sadhunhu* [headman] by the DA's office. That was 2001. They wanted someone who knew that land, who could appease the ancestors and who knows the sacred places.⁴⁴

The significance of autochthonous knowledge of the landscape was often recognised when the new occupiers faced unexpected difficulties or problems that were believed to be associated with the unhappiness of the ancestral spirits resident in that area.⁴⁵ One 'new yet autochthonous' farmer who claimed that the land he was occupying near Mt. Beza was where his grandfather had once been a 'big chief,' explained how when he applied for land from the District Administrator, his name was recognised and he was granted not only land but also a position of authority as a (*sadhunhu*) headman under Chief Chikwanda.

This is what caused me to come here to this place, because they were looking in the books saying this person is a chief, so let him come and stay where his *mapa* [sacred site/graves of ancestors] are...

I went to the DA, saying I want a piece of land to farm. He asked me who I was. I told him my name was Solomon Bvungudzire Makasva, and then he said yes, you are the man we have been looking for, someone who knows and is from this land. Then I went to the dare or meeting of the Governor and the DA, and he said 'As he goes there to that land, give him the chieftainship. But the DA said 'No I have already given that land to Chief Chikwanda'. And I said 'But Chikwanda is of the same people as I am. So they said 'ok, go and take the chieftainship.' So I came here and I brewed beer and Chief Chikwanda gave me the title of *Sadhunhu* Bvungudzire. But the actual title has not yet arrived and I don't know when that will happen.⁴⁶

In a strange twist, as war veteran 'base commanders' increasingly deferred to autochthonous knowledge, some 'new yet autochthonous' farmers began to describe war veterans, and other new farmers around them, as *vatorwa* (strangers) in a way reminiscent of the adverse attitudes taken against some 'foreign' beneficiaries of the earlier resettlement schemes to the south and east of the lake by disgruntled local people who had been evicted in the early

1980s to make way for the resettlements. Such denunciations should be understood as being part of a repertoire of rhetorical and practical means through which not only individual assertions of autochthony and right were established and reinforced, but also through which highly complex, localised struggles over legitimacy and authority were played out, implicating overlapping tensions and loyalties among competing political factions and different war veteran groups, as well as chiefs and spirit mediums, clans and kin, and even different churches.⁴⁷ Vavarirai Chikwanda and Mutsambwa explained how, as *vatorwa*, some war veterans were relying on the patronage of the incumbent Chief Chikwanda, who in turn relied on them to buttress his waning legitimacy among his own clan, many of whom were unhappy about his refusal, as a member an apostolic church, to work with the *svikiro* (spirit medium) Ambuya VaZarira.

Mutsambwa – You see VaChuma and Ziki [the war vets] are not our relations, we do not know them, they are *vatorwa*, so they go to that present chief and he is happy to put strangers here on the Chikwanda land as *sabhuku* [village heads] because he needs their support. The present chief is happy about having these strangers here because they won't oppose him. Right now, the *nyika* [land] of Chikwanda needs a chief who recognises the *svikiro* [spirit medium] Ambuya VaZarira.⁴⁸

Unsurprisingly, while most war veterans described how their function as 'base commanders' had elapsed once the initial land occupations were over, several also made it clear that as war veterans they would continue to have a role to play on the new 'committees of seven' set up on farms to work alongside the village heads (*sabhuku*) and headmen (*sadhunhu*) that returning chiefs are to establish in all resettlement areas.

Chuma - We first came here to repossess the land, and then we went to seek for those who occupied this area long back, and we found them. So here it is up to Chief Chikwanda ..to come here to demarcate the land.

JF- so what happens now, are you still the base commander?

Chuma – Basa reBase Commander rakapera [the work of base commanders has finished] now I am the chairman here.

JF – of the committee of seven?

Chuma – yes I am the chairman of the committee here. And there will also be a *sabhuku* here who will be put here by Chief Chikwanda. ⁴⁹

Others explained that their continuing role, as the 'soldiers' of the 'Third Chimurenga' or the 'eyes of the government,' would be to ensure the political gains of the ruling party were not reversed.

So if they put a *sabhuku* here then that person will do the work of *kuchengeta vhu* [looking after the soil]... It will be good if they put a *sabhuku* here who is of the Chikwanda clan, who will know the land and all of its sacred places which must be protected and the trees which should not be cut down.

Yes I will be happy because of that issue of *mitemo wenyika* [rules of the land]. The committee of seven will not just disappear because that *sabhuku* has been put here. No we will go and do the other things, making sure the rules of the land committees are being followed. I am on the political side, that is what the committee of seven will do...we are like the eyes of the government, looking out for opposition and ensuring the government rules are followed. But then if someone does something that is wrong in terms of the traditional rules of the soil, they will have to go to the *sabhuku*, and from the *sabhuku* to the chief...⁵⁰

Similarly, the District Administrator for Masvingo was at pains (in part, no doubt, for his own immediate political reasons) to stress to me during an interview that despite the now formally recognised role of chiefs as traditional leaders on the resettled farms, war veterans continued to have an important role to play in land reform, and their prominent, continuing presence on land committees at district and provincial levels certainly substantiated this.⁵¹ This continuing, political role of some prominent war veterans in the Masvingo area also later materialised in the form of a new wave of political violence and farm invasions in the period leading up to the run off presidential election of June 2008, after ZANU PF's dramatic defeat in the elections of March that year.

If so called 'traditional' authorities did not entirely replace war veterans on resettled farms then they also did not merely displaced the system of rural councils, ward and village committees that was instituted after independence in order to build a new system of more representative local government. Rather, they nudged in alongside them in complex new ways. There was, in the words of Felix Chikovo, Provincial Administrator for Masvingo a marriage of "democratic leaders and traditional leaders."

FC – It is ministry policy that there should be sound local government. And we are under a mandate to emplace traditional leaders into the former commercial farming areas. It has been decided that the way to go is to establish the traditional leader who was in place prior to the change in land use [i.e. the colonial appropriation of the land for European farms]. Where there is no conflict over different claims to a piece of land and boundaries, then we are able to place the leader. Where there are one or two conflicts, we are in the process of resolving those disputes so that we are able to put the proper traditional leader in place.

JF – so this is quite a change because the early resettlements were not under chiefs....

FC – Those early resettlement schemes were definitely not under chiefs. It was the policy position that resettlement land was not communal. The new policy is to emplace all resettlements under traditional leaders. That includes both new resettlements and old resettlements.

[So] the traditional leaders now act outside of just communal areas. These things were the result

of two pieces of legislation: the Traditional Leaders Act and Rural District Councils Act. These acts married together the democratic leaders and the traditional leaders. For example, the village head is now also chairman of the village assembly, which is if you like, a substructure of the RDC [Rural district council]. So there has been a marrying of traditional leaders and development structures. The village head is the chairman of the VIDCO and the WADCO and the ward assembly is headed by the chief or headman, which then reports to the RDC. So the new policy has forced the move, what was once the preserve of the communal areas only, to all the areas....⁵²

This quote illustrates something of the administrative complexity of the very dynamic processes at work in the re-structuring of authority over land in Zimbabwe. It amplifies the suggestion that land reform was understood by some, at least, as a decisive stage in overcoming the bifurcated system of land and authority that Zimbabwe inherited at independence. It also echoes Manyani's suggestion that the growing role of chiefs and 'that value system' as embodied by legislative and bureaucratic changes, reflected Zimbabweans' desire to both "belong to our roots, and to be modern people." This was further amplified, and the situation further complicated, by the increasing role of a wide host of different government technocrats – in the form of agricultural extension workers, National Parks' rangers, and officials from the Ministry of Lands, the Department of Natural Resources and ZINWA (Zimbabwe National Water Authority) – whose main concerns focused on not only the productive use of land but also soil conservation, and the protection of the environment. As the Chikovo stated, "there is an emphasis on sound government," and around Lake Mutirikwi in particular, concerns were raised about the threats that soil erosion – and resultant siltation – caused by new farmers, could have on the long term future of the dam.

....so in some areas this involves putting those local government structures in place, and putting down environmental conservation plans... The thing that we find is urgently required is that the land that has been taken for resettlement does not become quickly eroded or over populated or overgrazed and or wrongly tilled. Around Lake Mutirikwi [this] is seen as critical, and even during the initial land reform stages we had to be careful in case we affected the dam. That is why there is not too much A1 villagisation there, because of the issue of soil erosion affecting the dam ... [so] we concentrated on A1 self-contained schemes, plots where every one would have their own land, in order to encourage effective self-management by people of their own lands.⁵³

Certainly concerns about 'sound local government,' environmental conservation and appropriate forms of land use continued to inform the perspectives of local administrators. At the same time, however, the official 'return' of chiefs and 'traditional' leaders to resettled farms, caused a seemingly endless series of disputes over boundaries, authority and sovereignty, in which many alternative and contested claims to autochthony and competing versions of landscape and the past were invoked.⁵⁴ In line with the larger argument of Alexander's recent book, that state-making in colonial Rhodesia was centrally about land, as indeed the politics of land was always about state-making– it seems clear that the many 'minor theatres of power' that emerged in the complex 'new political terrain' of post-2000 Zimbabwe, were minutely involved in an ongoing, and highly localised process of re-imagining and re-making the Zimbabwean state.⁵⁵ While Chaumba et al. identified a kind of 'reassertion of technocracy' as

war veterans employed technical planning measures to peg out settlements and fields on occupied farms - "in the process [of] turning occupied farms into 'resettlement areas' "-the re-assertion of autochthony that I have been discussing in the Masvingo area indicates that there was a variety of old forms and motifs that were being re-assembled into something new.⁵⁶

On Modernity, State-Making and Zimbabwean Land Reform

In his important work *Expectations of Modernity*, Ferguson describes with great panache the pessimism, or defeated optimism, he encountered in a small mining town in Zambia's Copperbelt during fieldwork in the late 1980s, as the 'myth of modernity' and confidence of progress towards it, was replaced by a 'cynical scepticism' towards fading ideas of a modernising Zambia.⁵⁷ For many, this was a 'world-shattering life experience' that provoked depressing predictions of a kind of 'reversed modernisation,' with the future promising not modernising developmental progress, but rather irreversible decline. This was, as Ferguson put it, "modernisation through the looking glass, where modernity is the object of nostalgic reverie, and 'backwardness' the anticipated (or dreaded) future."⁵⁸

Much of the recent literature on Zimbabwe today has employed a similarly reversed teleological perspective. Many commentators, particularly western journalists, have posited 'Zimbabwe's crisis' as a 'retreat from' or 'end of modernity', and metaphors of 'exhaustion' and 'plunging' have been similarly employed by some academic observers.⁵⁹ Such narratives suggest that as the 'developmental' and democratising imperatives of the state were abandoned and the Zimbabwean elite resorted to increasingly authoritarian rule, it traded in 'promises of development and modernity' for a narrow and divisive redistribution of resources.

In contrast to this apparently persuasive picture, Worby has argued that the current predominance of issues of sovereignty represents less a 'retreat from modernity' and than a redefinition of the nation/state. For 'political modernity,' Worby suggests, has always involved a tension between 'sovereignty' and 'development' and currently the "see-saw of political modernity has tipped to one side – the side of sovereignty".⁶⁰ This argument has strong echoes of Chatterjee's argument that the failure of postcolonial states has not been in the "inability to think out new forms of modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state."⁶¹ In other words, the 'developmental' imagination of the 'modern' state enacted after independence in 1980, which some commentators now suggest is in 'retreat,' was never able to fully deliver on the promises and aspirations of postcolonial political 'stateness.' In this respect, ZANU PF's refocusing upon issues of sovereignty and the redistribution of resources, and the emergence of what Ranger has called "patriotic history", a new streak in Zimbabwe's "whole, coherent and self-perpetuating postcolonial master fiction", were part of a revitalised nationalism that appealed to other, previously excluded aspirations.⁶² While Zimbabwe's authoritarian turn has done much to exclude many, particularly the urban poor, farm workers, women and white commercial farmers, it did simultaneously managed to appeal to some of these other, localised aspirations which have often been thwarted since 1980.⁶³ In this sense, the redistribution of land to the landless, however corrupt, politicised and indeed violent the process may have been, along with the increasing involvement of both war veterans and

traditional leaders in local political structures (which itself is part of a trend common to much of southern Africa), were very astute political moves.⁶⁴

It is here that those observers who have emphasised the continuities in the ideology behind post-2000 land reform with that of the 1980s and 1990s, do make an important point.⁶⁵ The desire for land reform in Zimbabwe has, since independence, continued to be a central tenet of many people's livelihood aspirations, and in broader terms, many imaginations of what a good postcolonial and 'modern' state should be about.⁶⁶ Of course, the motives of these aspirations and their materialisations differed, whether it involved the desire to return to ancestral lands, the opportunity to take forward the 'peasant option' using productive land on A1 plots, or the opportunity to follow "a renewed 'merchant path' of urban professionals, petty bourgeois and bureaucrats" on larger A2 farms; or any combination of these.⁶⁷ Some of these aspirations may have employed profoundly different teleologies, different ways of conceiving of movement through time (and space) towards a goal or destiny. This was best exemplified by the way ancestral claims to land invoked perspectives on time in which the colonial past, and specifically the appropriation of land for capitalist farming during it, was merely a brief interlude in a much longer continuity in the relationship between very specific kin based clan groups, their ancestors and particular territories.⁶⁸ Either or any way, it is important to realise that however much recent land reform has been accompanied by an increasingly authoritarian, violent and exclusive kind of nationalist politics, it is in no way only coercion, violence and force which enabled the land reform programme to be implemented, or provided the means for ZANU PF to keep a firm hold on the reins of power, up until March 2008 at least.

The repeated occupations and evictions of particular areas of state land and re-settlement schemes around Lake Mutirikwi since independence indicate the longevity of particular localised aspirations that were acted out in the context of land reform that was happening across Zimbabwe.⁶⁹ Both studies of the 1998 land occupations in Svosve, and deeper historical studies of the land issue suggest that such aspirations for land based on memories of eviction, and appeals to land restitution, recurred across Zimbabwe. Furthermore, as Marongwe has argued, referring to the "conspicuous examples" of the Tangwena people in Kaerezi, Sekuru Mushore's claims in the Nharira hills, the claims of Ndau people over Chiranda forests, and Chief Manhenga's claims over Gumbuli Farm, "one of the underlying causes of land demands and conflictshas been the non-recognition by policy makers of such historical claims,"⁷⁰ This ties in with Alexander's careful discussion of land reform in the 1980s, when the newly postcolonial state "certainly responded to popular demands, but they allowed little in the way of popular participation Only the state was deemed capable of ensuring that redistribution occurred in a rational and productive manner."⁷¹

In this context, the question of whether fast track land reform did, in contrast to earlier land reform efforts, successfully appeal to such widespread but localised, lingering aspirations for land in the form of a kind of land restitution, takes on particular urgency. In contrast to Manzungu's claim that "in Zimbabwe, unlike in South Africa, the concept of land restitution does not apply," statements by the Council of Chiefs, the very deliberate inclusion of chiefs on district land committees, and efforts to install chiefs, headmen and village heads on resettled farms, and more generally, the importance placed upon 'autochthonous knowledge of the

landscape' by war veterans, land settlers and other involved in land reform, suggest that it did.⁷²

Similarly, conversations with war veterans in the Masvingo area make it clear that they felt strongly enough about the unresolved issue of land to act in 2000, and that the government then responded.

When we were fighting for this country we were fighting for the soil. So then in 2000 we had meetings... So after the refusal of that constitution...we sat down as comrades and we decided no, if we continue like this we will have no land until we die. So then we decided to force the landowners out and to occupy the land. But actually they are not landowners because the land is ours!⁷³

The dubbing of land reform as the 'Third Chimurenga' was not just a reflection of the central role of war veterans in it or the style of "political practice that celebrated lawlessness" and violence known as *jambanja*, but a deliberate attempt to emphasise that this was the final stage of an unfinished programme of national liberation, which appealed to the unresolved, rural nationalist aspirations of war veterans and others.⁷⁴ For many war veterans, the land occupations which started in Masvingo province in February 2000 were not merely a response by war veterans to the beleaguered ruling party's political need to harness rural support.⁷⁵ Rather, they were provoked by the need to complete a task directed by the ancestors, which many traced back to Ambuya Nehanda's legendary last words before being hanged by Rhodesian settlers in 1890.⁷⁶

You see we have not yet finished the war of taking back the land...we have not yet finished the mission that was left by our ancestors. When Ambuya Nehanda said 'my bones will rise', you see, we haven't yet accomplished [what] we, the bones, were tasked to fulfil ... to liberate all the land that we were given by our ancestors. The land of our ancestors must be free...

So unless we fulfil this task... then there is not going to be any peace in this country. We are not going to rest. Even our comrades in arms, who died besides us when we were fighting the war, they are now the spirits that are driving us forward you see. So we have got a lot of pressure from behind ... to do these things to liberate our country, to go forward, for our people.⁷⁷

In this perspective, fast track land reform was a government response to not only the unresolved aspirations of living war veterans, but also those of the powerful ancestors of the distant past, and of the spirits of dead comrades killed during the war. It is this conviction of an ongoing legacy of ancestrally-guided struggle which the ruling party engaged with through its rhetoric of 'patriotic history'.⁷⁸

If the 'liberation of ancestral lands' through fast track land reform can be seen as one result of the government's need to respond to the overlapping and previously thwarted or muted aspirations of war veterans and spirit mediums, then a host of other reforms, including the 'national biras' held in September 2005, the return of judicial powers to chiefs, their new found authority over resettled areas and on district land committees, the *zunde ramambo* project, the amendment of the Witchcraft Suppression Act and the high profile reburials of the liberation war dead across the country and in neighbouring Mozambique and Zambia, may similarly be seen as a government response to the diverse and overlapping aspirations of chiefs, and other traditional authorities, as well as of war veterans and spirit mediums.⁷⁹ All of these thwarted

and muted aspirations, and the delayed efforts by the state to respond to them, seem to suggest that at the centre of the grievances of war veterans, chiefs and spirit mediums was a shared sense of marginalisation and exclusion from processes of state-making at local and national levels.⁸⁰ By responding to these aspirations, the ruling party, in a sense, reopened access to the process of state-making, revitalising the possibility, at least for these particular groups, of making the state work towards their interests.

This is contrary to common-place suggestions that both 'traditional leaders' and war veterans, were, in different ways, merely co-opted by the ruling party into its hegemonic and authoritarian state project. Kriger's work certainly suggests a more complex picture than the framework of 'co-optation' allows, in which the ruling party and veterans have, since 1980, "manipulated and shaped each other as they have pursued their distinct and overlapping agendas".⁸¹ Similarly, studies that have taken a deep historical perspective on particular districts, also suggest that the relationship between 'traditional leaders' and the state, whether colonial or postcolonial, have always been more nuanced and complex than is captured by the notion of 'co-optation'.⁸² In Masvingo, although some chiefs were very closely involved in ruling party structures, my own recent fieldwork has suggested that most chiefs and headmen continued to occupy a very difficult position located between their own personal ambitions, the increasing demands of the bureaucratic local state, intense pressure from the ruling party, and a complexity of competing demands from below - the people they govern or represent.⁸³

But if this increasing role of chiefs and war veterans in local state processes, and particularly on district land committees, does suggest that the ruling party had to respond to their lingering aspirations, what, then, of other important players in the complex 'new political terrain' created by land reform? While spirit mediums often complained that they were ignored in the land distribution process, it does seem that there may have been some sense of empowerment among other people at the receiving end of land reform.⁸⁴ In Marongwe's view, although the 2000 land occupations were instigated as part of ZANU PF's official campaign strategy, "this does not negate the sense of empowerment that some occupiers experienced during the process."⁸⁵ But he also argues that this sense of empowerment was later undermined by the lack of transparency of the controversial land committees.⁸⁶ Munyani, the Chief Lands Officer for Masvingo, was much more resolute about the confidence people now had to vocalize their demands for land, making his job politically difficult.

And part of the problem is that people are now bold enough to demand land that they want or land that they claim is theirs, and not just on the farms but even in the old resettlements and on other areas where land is not opened for resettlement. This is something that has resulted from this land reform programme. Its quite impressive really that people now have that power to demand their land back, and this means there is a need to involve all the stakeholders.

It needs politicians to engage with those issues, even though everyone knows that politicians are very good at promising to respond to peoples' concern and then never coming back to deal with it again. But this needs politicians to engage with it seriously. It's a very sensitive thing. You can't just send people off the land that they have occupied because they are living on the grazing area of an old resettlement scheme. You have to tread carefully, otherwise if I were just

to chase people away I would become a very unpopular Chief Lands Officer! You have to have a sensitive approach. And you have to be careful, if you upset the wrong people you might find yourself labelled MDC. So you have to be careful.⁸⁷

I suspect strongly that the way in which fast track land reform enabled the realisation of these differing, localised aspirations for land may account for the seemingly out of place optimism and enthusiasm which I sensed among new farmers, government officials, war veterans and others in Masvingo district during the 2005-6 growing season. For some who have benefited from land reform, it represented not so much a 'retreat' or 'plunge' from 'modernity,' but the realisation, however imperfect, of aspirations which had been sidelined since independence. We could frame this, as Worby does, in terms of the tension between the demands of sovereignty, and those of development, and suggest that the see-saw of political modernity has swung to the side of sovereignty.⁸⁸ Or we could suggest, as Alexander has done, that the ideology behind the occupations of 2000 reflected a re-imagined nationalism that was "reconstituted as authoritarian anti-colonialism, not modernising developmentalism."⁸⁹ But the problems with both these positions, is that they imply that for new farmers the price of land was 'modernising developmentalism,' as if 'sovereignty' could only come at the cost of 'development.' I don't think this characterisation accurately reflects the aspirations of new farmers at all. The new farmers who I met resemble Eric Gable's 'Manjaco village cosmopolitans' much more than 'modernity's malcontents.'⁹⁰ For them, unlike the "broken lives and shattered expectations" of workers in the Zambian Copperbelt that Ferguson describes, the possibility of past promises being fulfilled, and of achieving entangled aspirations for land and livelihoods – of in Manyani's words "belonging to our roots" and being "modern people" – were not so much a matter of the past, but still of the future.⁹¹

Importantly, the different and overlapping aspirations of war veterans, new farmers and others involved in land reform, did not exclude the desire for technocratic interventions or commercial and productive agriculture normally associated with 'modernising developmentalism.' Most new farmers in the Lake Mutirikwi area emphasised their need for tractors, irrigation, soil conservation, agricultural extension, and all sorts of other things associated with 'development' and 'modern' productive agriculture. I was often asked by new farmers if I would be able to assist them by communicating with donors and NGOs, to enquire about the possibility of supporting local projects by supplying irrigation and tillage equipment. Another good example is the way in which several new farmers I spoke to discussed their need and willingness to dig their own contour ridges in their fields in order to prevent soil erosion – a remarkable assertion given the well known popular resistance that was engendered by the dramatically technocratic, and 'high modernist' soil conservation efforts enforced by officials of the Department of Native affairs during the 1940s and 50s in the context of the infamous Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA) of 1951.⁹²

When I asked both new farmers and government technocrats about this apparent contradiction, I was often given the same answer: "the idea behind contour ridges and the need for soil conservation was good, but it was the forced method of implementation that was wrong." For our purposes here this illustrates how past, 'high modernist' ideas of farming methods, productivity and centralised state planning, persisted on in fast track land reform in Zimbabwe. It also reiterates Moore's point about the 'articulation' and 'entanglement' of

localised and grounded livelihood practises with nationalist legacies of “promised postcolonial freedom.”⁹³ There was often disappointment at the inability, but not the unwillingness, of government to provide the kind of ‘developmental’ assistance required, as became clear in one interview with a war veteran/new farmer:

JF – I was wondering about the role of Arex. You said they came and pegged the fields, have they also come to peg out contour ridges and/or to provide advice for farming?

Chuma – Yes they were supposed to do that, but AREX has a big shortage of manpower. In this whole area....there is only one Arex person, a woman, in charge of this whole area. From the Popoteke to Mhunga, one person. That area is too big for one person, it is too big for her to deal with.

So we are still in need of that Arex department. They need to have more field officers. What we would like is for them to have one officer for each farm. For example this farm here, Green Hills, it has 3100 hectares on which live 389 families. Some of the families live in the two villages, A & B, and the rest on the plots.

... The Department of Natural Resources have been running courses there at the Farmers Hall, just past Mhunga. There have been several courses they have run there but they have not yet really started to enter into the farms....

JF – In the courses are you told about makandiwa [contour ridges] and how to build them or are you waiting for people from Arex to come and peg them for you?

Chuma – Arex they came to peg but they only pegged the plots, not the fields. But I don’t have to wait for them, I can build a contour ridge... This year, with all that rain we had, I have seen a place where the water is carrying away the soil from the field, so I will have to prepare a contour ridge there in that spot. I don’t have to wait for Arex, because I can see where the problem is.⁹⁴

For Munyani, the Chief Lands Officer, while fast track land reform was “a great thing for a third world nation,” the scheme had been planned too quickly, without enough consideration for the huge amount of ‘developmental’ support that would be required.

But in terms of the broader vision, I have to stress that I think this land reform programme is one of the most wonderful programmes for a third world country to embark upon. If we can put the nuts and bolts together properly, and really follow up what has been done so far with proper resources for inputs and for extension services, then I think it really has got potential. The parcelling out of land to people who did not have access to it... Where as before on a farm you might have had a small percentage being cultivated, now you have the same farm distributed to nearly 100 people each of whom are trying cultivate almost the same as was being farmed on the whole land before. So the end result is that there is a huge amount more land being farmed. This means that there is huge potential being opened up by the programme, so

this programme has great potential for a third world country.

Maybe the only problem has been that it is too big. It was too much all at once, when all then systems were not yet geared up for it... It needed all the systems to be in place, so we could, say, have put a farmer into six weeks of training before he was granted his plot or farm, and then for the extension officers to have been able to go with him to the land to provide training there on the spot. so what we needed was a more holistic approach that included all these parallel support systems. They need a lot of resources. So yes perhaps the programme was just too massive... ⁹⁵

Conclusion

If the government's fast track land reform programme was an astute political move that pandered at last to the popular demands of certain sections of society (even as it facilitated the gross exclusion of other constituencies – like the urban poor and farm workers), then the need to provide 'developmental' support too was something the government had to respond to. Hence it is no surprise that there has been a great deal of effort in recent years by government to assist, or perhaps to be seen to be assisting, new farmers through providing access to loans, credit, and agricultural support in the form of tillage, seeds, fertiliser and fuel. Most recently, in the run up to the elections of March 2008, President Mugabe himself handed out substantial amounts of tractors, ploughs and other agricultural equipment to new farmers.⁹⁶ Similarly announcements in 2006 about the development of a new 100 hectare irrigation scheme to draw water from Lake Mutirikwi for communal farmers in Zano area to the east of the lake were for people in that area, a belated realisation of a promise that accompanied their removal to that area when the dam was built in the late 1950s.⁹⁷

In this context the 'reassertion of technocracy,' that Chaumba et al. argued followed an initial period of *jambanja* was to be expected, because it reflected the fact that the multiple aspirations to which fast track land reform was, in a sense, responding, were not necessarily situated in opposition to notions of 'developmental modernity,' but rather invoked them alongside appeals to anti-colonial restitutive justice, and so called 'traditional' claims to the ancestral ownership of land, in very complex ways that deny, even as they often invoke, any dichotomy between 'modernity' and 'tradition' or 'sovereignty' and 'development.'⁹⁸ Of course the government has also had its own interests at stake here, in the need to demonstrate to the world the success of its land programme, and therefore issues of food security, productivity and the adequate utilisation of resettled land have become highly politically sensitive.⁹⁹ But surely this suggests further that the ruling party itself, despite the venom of its re-emerged anti-colonial rhetoric (and, of course, allegations of the corrupt distribution of farms, the looting of farming inputs, equipment and multiple farm ownership, as well as its huge capacity for violence which was demonstrated yet again between the March and June elections of 2008), was sensitive to the need to respond to other lingering, 'developmental' aspirations, and the grounded livelihood practices of new farmers on resettled land.

And if the ruling party's response to these developmental aspirations recalled a specific period of Rhodesian 'high modernism' in the 1940s -50s - when Native Reserves were

centralised into agricultural fields, communal grazing areas, and maraini (linear settlements), native cattle herds were drastically destocked, many miles of contour ridges and storm drains, were coercively constructed - then it could be argued that the 'return' of the powers of the chiefs and 'traditional leaders' begun with the Traditional Leaders Act of 1998, and hastened with various amendments since, recalled the period in the 1960s when the Rhodesian state "rejected the high modernist goals of the NHLA [Native Land Husbandry Act] in favour of settling the maximum number of Africans in the reserves under the 'customary' authority of chiefs and headmen."¹⁰⁰ Like the incorporation of 'developmental technocracy' into fast track land reform, the 'return' of the powers of chiefs also illustrated how past (Rhodesian & Zimbabwean) attempts at state-making, have constantly reappeared in ongoing efforts to redefine the postcolonial state.

In "the ambiguity of state-society relations" it is, as Dorman has pointed out, the politics of both inclusion and exclusion which has been central to Zimbabwe's recent crisis.¹⁰¹ This has been one of the fundamental arguments of this paper, that however authoritarian, exclusive and indeed often violently intolerant the Zimbabwean state became since 2000, it also effectively managed to appeal, at times, to the unresolved, alternative, often overlapping, and sometimes highly localised aspirations of a variety of actors, including chiefs and autochthonous claimants, war veterans and government technocrats. This, I suggest, was reflected in the seemingly out of place optimism of new farmers, war veterans and government employees whom I encountered during fieldwork around Lake Mutirikwi during the rainy summer months of 2005/2006. It substantiates an argument put forward by Dean, and developed by Hammar, that "the exercise of government in all modern states entails the articulation of a form of pastoral care with one of sovereign power".¹⁰² It may be an obvious point, but no ruling elite can operate in a vacuum, relying solely on the use of force to maintain itself. Importantly, in the highly charged debates circulating about Zimbabwe's crisis, this paper is not intended to produce an apology for ZANU PF's authoritarianism, but rather to recognise, to put it at its simplest, that the aspirations of the thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of new farmers on resettled farms, matter, not just for academics, but for Zimbabwe's ruling elites. While the literature on power and resistance has often sought to find those spaces where people resist the overbearing machinations of a powerful state, this paper has situated itself deliberately in a growing discourse which emphasises the importance of the margins in the continual, ongoing construction of the state.¹⁰³ This attempts less to find the agency and resistance of a subaltern against the overbearing power of the state, but rather to seek the limits of state power.

Postscript

Since the fieldwork for this paper was done, and the first drafts drawn up, events in Zimbabwe have developed at an accelerated rate. With the deeply exacerbated economic crisis, and inflation topping an estimated (and astonishing) 350 000 percent, and worsening hunger and food shortages, confidence that ZANU PF and President Mugabe himself, were able to deliver on their promises profoundly weakened, undermining support even in 'loyal' rural areas, and among new farmers and war veterans (as well as within the higher echelons of the party itself) in the run up to the March 2008 elections. With a new kind of optimism, some

turned to the MDC opposition and others to the campaigns of former ZANU PF members, such as Simba Makoni, who stood as independents for the parliamentary and presidential elections. Importantly, the opposition seems to have finally unburdened itself of the charge that it would reverse land reform if it won the election, an accusation whose resonance had often been utilised with devastating effect by ZANU PF and President Mugabe in particular.¹⁰⁴ As events unfolded after the March elections, and leading up to the run off in June 2008, a new, devastating wave of violence was unleashed against MDC supporters and voters in previously ZANU PF-dominated rural areas across the north, east and south of the country, including around Lake Mutirikwi where the ethnographic fieldwork for this paper was carried out. While some well-known war veterans in the Masvingo area turned away from President Mugabe, other hardliners were involved in a new wave of farm occupations targeting the few remaining white farmers in the area.

In the wake of this violence, and under the auspices of not entirely impartial mediation by Thabo Mbeki on behalf of SADC after the one-sided run off election, began a long process of negotiated settlement between the ruling and opposition parties. Punctuated, between periods of long frustration and delay, by key moments such the Memorandum of Understanding on the 21 July 2008, the Global Political Agreement on the 15 September, and Tsvangirai's inauguration as Prime Minister on 11 February 2009, this troubled period witnessed continuing economic collapse, deepening, widespread hunger, sporadic state-orchestrated violence, failing infrastructure, and a devastating cholera epidemic. Amid mounting signs of power struggles within ZANU PF, and widespread concerns about its sincerity in the power-sharing process, a widespread scepticism about the prospects of a brokered Government of National Unity became increasing pervasive as 2008 turned into 2009. This scepticism amid Zimbabwe's deteriorating social and economic milieu led some commentators to suggest that the best alternative to political power-sharing was "an internationally sponsored, technocratically based transitional authority" to re-establish basic public services, and point the way forward to new, supervised elections in due course.¹⁰⁵ But it seems unlikely the 'technocratic' and the 'political' could be so easily isolated. As "Zimbabwe's fledgling power-sharing Government staggered into its fifth day" everything still seemed very much in the balance in mid February 2009.¹⁰⁶ What is clear, however, is that the entangled claims, aspirations, experiences and practices of new farmers and war veterans, chiefs and spirit mediums, administrators, technocrats, and others involved in the heavily localised contests of Zimbabwe's troubled politics of land, will, at least around Lake Mutirikwi, continue to be central to the ongoing and unfinished process of re-making the postcolonial state.

Notes

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2. Interview with Mafuma Mutsambwa, 19/12/05.

3. Interview with Joseph Munyani, Chief Lands Officer, Masvingo Province, 5/6/06
4. Interview with Nyasha Pambirei, Masvingo Provincial ARES Officer, 28/4/06.
5. For examples of NGO reports critical of 'fast track' land reform see UNDP, January 2002, Zimbabwe land reform and resettlement: assessment and suggested framework for the future Interim Mission Report www.undp.org/rba/pubs/landreform.pdf; Human Rights Watch Report, March 2002, *Zimbabwe: Fast Track Land Reform In Zimbabwe*, Vol.14, No. 1(A) www.hrw.org/reports/2002/zimbabwe/; International Peace Academy, *IPA Workshop Report: Democracy and Land Reform in Zimbabwe*, 25/2/2002, (www.ipacademy.org/PDFReports/REPORT_ZIMBABWE.pdf); C.Fraser, "Black Zimbabweans suffer in Land reform", 7/11/02 (); T.Lebert, "Background- Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe", 21/1/2003, (<http://www.landaction.org/display.php?article=61>). See also Derman and Hellum 2007; Sithole et al. 2003.
6. Raftopoulos 2003 and Alexander 2003, p.99. In August 2008 inflation rates reached an astonishing 350,000% ('Zimbabwe March inflation surges to 355,000%', *Independent says* 16/5/08 *Bloomberg*; see *ZWNEWS.com*). On Murambatsvina see UN Tibaijuka Report, 18/7/05 "*Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe*"; also Sokwanele Special Report, 18 June 2005, *Operation Murambatsvina: An Overview and Summary*, (<http://www.sokwanele.com>). On legislation see AIPPA (Access to information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2002); POSA (Public Order and Security Act, 2002); ZEC ACT (Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Act, 2004); and the NGO Act (Non Governmental Organisations Act) passed by the Zimbabwean Parliament in December 2004 (see Amnesty International Report, 10/5/2005, *Zimbabwe: Human rights defenders under siege*. In August 2007 the Interception of Communications Act was passed which allowed state security organizations to intercept email and telephone communications (see *Financial Times*' New Law allows Mugabe to eavesdrop' 5/8/07).
7. Exact figures are impossible to come by but in 2003 most estimates suggested that between 1000 and 3500 people were dying from Aids every week in Zimbabwe (see *Zimbabwe Standard* 23/3/2003, "Zimbabwe Aids Statistics in Shambles", http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/mar27a_2003.html). On cholera see the World Health Organisation news release, 30 January 2009, 'Global, national efforts must be urgently intensified to control Zimbabwe cholera outbreak', http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2009/cholera_zim_20090130/en/index.html).
8. See for example 'Dumiso Dabengwa quits Zanu PF (Mugabe Faction) for Zanu PF (Makoni Faction)?' 1/3/08 *Zimdaily.com* (<http://www.zimdaily.com/news/117/ARTICLE/2406/2008-03-01.html>); 'Mbudzi warns CIO against making Makoni target', *newzimbabwe.com*, (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/zanupf14.17700.html>); 'Zvinavashe concedes after recount, takes aim at Mugabe' 24/4/08 *newzimbabwe.com*, (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/electoral244.18100.html>); also 'General Vitalis Zvinavashe concedes defeat, blames Mugabe' *The Zimbabwean*, 24 April 2008, see

(<http://thezimbabwean.co.uk/index.php?option=comcontentandview=articleandid=12339:generalvitaliszvinavasheconcedesdefeatblamesmugabeandcatid=31:top%20zimbabwe%20storiesandItemid=66>).

9. Other scholars researching land reform in Masvingo Province have also indicated that some new farmers on former commercial farms were able to produce good crops during the successful rainy season of 2005/6; see for example Cousins 2009 and Scoones 2008. This was not the case everywhere however. *Zim Online* (24/7/06) reported that in the southern districts of Chiredzi, Chivi and Mwenezi, in Masvingo province, food shortages continued after poor harvests in March 2006. Reports also indicate that at a national level, there continued to be serious food shortages despite the good rainy season experienced in most of the country (see *Reuters*, "WFP says 1.4 mln in Zimbabwe will need food aid" 11/10/06; *Zim Online* "Zimbabwe runs out of Mealie-meal" 15/8/06; *Zim Online* "Zimbabwe Officials admit severe food deficits" 24/8/06).
10. Fieldnotes 19/12/05.
11. Ferguson 1999.
12. Fast track resettlement involves two models: A1 and A2. The former focuses on small holder farming, on a villagised basis with communal grazing, or within self-contained plots, while the latter, involving medium and large-scale farming, is aimed at those with access to more financial resources. On multiple farm ownership see Alexander 2006, pp.187-193.
13. Hammer and Raftopoulos have argued that these shifting polarities are based upon 'core discursive divides' which posit 'an anti-colonial, historicised and racialised assertion of land restitution and justice' against 'ahistorical, universalist and technocratic insistence on liberal notions of private property, "development", and "good governance"' (see 2003, p.17). Such dichotomies, they suggest, are the very sustenance of both the ruling party's hegemonic control, and of the 'counter-hegemonic moves of various opposition actors', and they state clearly that the aim of their volume is to undermine the 'misplaced concreteness' of these commonsense notions (2003, p.17).
14. See Mamdani's "Lessons of Zimbabwe" in the *London Review of Books*, 4 December 2008 (Vol. 30, NO. 23) and letters responding to it by R.W.Johnson, T.Ranger, and M.Tomczak published on 18th December (Vol. 30, No. 24) and by T. Scarnecchia et al. on 1st January 2009 (vol. 31, No.1). See also Patrick Bond, in *Links. International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, <http://links.org.au/node/815>, and Ben Cousins "Reply to Mamdani", unpublished. In contrast to common, and often shrill critiques of fast track land reform produced by some international commentators, more nuanced empirical research by Ian Scoones and others in Masvingo province has exposed some of the 'myths' associated with land reform, illustrating how, for example, livestock production and markets have remained vibrant despite the profound changes caused by the restructuring of authority over land. See Scoones 2008 and Mavedzenge et al 2008.
15. Interview with Robby Mtetwa, Fieldnotes 29/6/06.
16. Dinner with Ant and Helen Mitchel, Fieldnotes 9/1/06.
17. See Sithole et al. 2003.
18. Lambek 2002, pp. 37-8.

19. Alexander 2006, p.186.
20. Mbembe 2001.
21. Fontein 2006c.
22. Nyasha Pambirei, Provincial AREX Officer, Masvingo Province, Field notes 28/4/06.
23. For more on Oatlands and Longdale see FAO/SAFR 2000.
24. Fontein 2006a.
25. Fontein 2006a, chap. 2.
26. Fontein 2006b.
27. Spierenburg 2004.
28. These re-occupations of state land and old resettlements schemes have provoked difficult problems for technocrats and local government administrators who often try to reconcile these emotive relationships with the landscape with very different perspectives in which agricultural land use, soil erosion, river catchments and the siltation of Lake Mutirikwi are of central concern. Although these self-occupations have occurred regardless of distinctions between grazing and farming areas on resettlement schemes or fragile river catchments, I did get the sense that many re-occupiers were intensely aware of the finer concerns of land use planners, and some of the more articulate and indeed powerful (ie chiefs, and headmen) sited their own homesteads in accordance with both the technocratic perspectives and the necessities of their own 'history-scapes'.
29. An interesting point here is that although most of these areas were formerly granted or sold as farms between 1890 and 1910, many people remember losing their lands in the 1940s. This reflects the fact that although most farms had been formerly surveyed and acquired by white settlers by the end of the first decade of the 19th century, many of the African occupants were only evicted much later on, between the late 1930s and the 1950s, as a result changing colonial legislation on agriculture and land - most importantly the Land Apportionment Act (1930) and later the Native Land Husbandry Act (1951).
30. Fontein 2006a, chap. 3.
31. Ferguson 1999, p.24; Fabian 1983 and Appadurai 1988.
32. See Mamdani 1996, also Worby 1994. On African Purchase Areas see Shutt 1997.
33. Spierenburg 2004 and Alexander 2006, p.44.
34. Rukuni and Eicher 1994. This growth slackened in the late 1980s, and dramatically stalled in the 1990s with the combined effects of droughts, structural adjustment policies and general economic decline.
35. Kinsey 1999; Hoogeveen and Kinsey 2001.
36. Interview with Joseph Manyani, Provincial Lands Officer, Masvingo Province, 5/6/06. For an explanation of *zunde ramambo* see note 39.
37. This pressure on 'new farmers' to demonstrate productive occupation has striking resonances with concerns of the BSACo about absentee land ownership, which, from the late 1890s onwards, resulted in the formal requirement for settlers to demonstrate 'beneficial occupation' of their pegged and surveyed farms, in order to be issued with 'certificates of right' and ultimately title deeds (see *Rhodesian Herald* 15/9/1897). Similarly,

requirements of productivity were also a key feature of the wave of land appropriations and settlement by ex-servicemen that took place after World War II.

38. See *Financial Gazette*, 15/11/06 'Yet Another Land Audit' and *News24 (SA)* 4/11/06. All resettled land is officially owned by the state, which grants 'permits of occupation' to A1 farmers and '99 year leases' to A2 farmers. These leases and permits are supposed to provide enough security of tenure for new farmers to take out loans against. In June 2004 (*The Herald* 8/6/04) John Nkomo, Minister Responsible for Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement, announced that all land was to be nationalised, however this was hastily withdrawn a few days later by the Minister of Information Jonathon Moyo (*The Herald* 15/6/04). For now the 'nationalisation' of land only applies to resettled lands.
39. Bratton 1994, p.73.
40. *Zunde ramambo* refers to a pre-colonial 'customary' institution in which people worked communally in particular fields on behalf of chiefs and headmen. The produce from these fields would be set aside to help widows, the aged, orphans and others unable to grow their own food. Recently the concept has been formally re-instituted in communal areas (Kaseke 2006), and can be seen as part of a broader process of reformulating the authority and functions of chiefs.
41. Interview with Joseph Manyani, Chief Lands Officer, Masvingo Province, 5/6/06.
42. See Fontein 2006b and 2006c.
43. Interview with Pianos Kurasva, war veteran and new farmer, Desmondale farm, 17/4/06.
44. Interview with Vavarirai Chikwanda and Mafuma Mutsambwa, new farmers, Masvingo District, 12/1/06.
45. Chaumba et al. 2003b, p.601.
46. Interview with Solomon Makasva, Beza, Masvingo, 14/1/06.
47. Masvingo is well known for the intense factionalism of its local ZANU PF structures, which draws in complex alliances between chiefs, clans and spirit mediums, as well as bureaucrats, civil servants and competing war veteran groups.
48. Interview with Vavarirai Chikwanda and Mafuma Mutsambwa, new farmers, Masvingo District, 12/1/06.
49. Interview with Obediningo Chuma, war veteran and new farmer, Green Hills farm, Masvingo District, 12/6/06.
50. Interview with Pianos Kurasva, war veteran and new farmer, Desmondale farm, Masvingo District, 17/4/06.
51. Interview with James Mazvidza, District Administrator, Masvingo, 21/3/06. See also Mubvumba 2005.
52. Interview with Felix Chikovo, Provincial Administrator, Masvingo Province, 23/5/06.
53. Interview with Felix Chikovo, Provincial Administrator, Masvingo Province, 23/5/06.
54. Around Lake Mutirikwi this was exemplified by the complex, historical disputes that have emerged recently over the legitimacy, authority, sovereignty and territorial boundaries of Chief Chikwanda. During the colonial period that chieftaincy was famously removed by the authorities, after most of the land was taken for European farms. It was 'returned' after independence, albeit with very limited territory. The recent 'return' of the farms to chiefs has provoked very complex disputes over the legitimacy of

- different claimants to the position of Chief Chikwanda, as well as over the clan's historical/territorial relationship with other surrounding clans, headmen and chiefs.
55. Alexander 2006, p.10; Worby 1998, p.563; Chaumba et al. 2003b, p.604.
 56. Chaumba et al. 2003a, p.543-4; Alexander 2006, p.191.
 57. Ferguson 1999, p.14.
 58. Ibid p.13.
 59. For example see Bond and Manyanya 2003; Campbell 2003.
 60. Worby 2003:68.
 61. Chatterjee 1993, p.11 and 1996, p.222.
 62. Ranger 2004; Primorac 2005, p.2.
 63. On marginalisation of farm workers, women and others in fast track land reform see for example Rutherford 2001 and 2003, and Derman and Hellum 2007. For other histories of thwarted, localised aspirations for land between 1980 and 2000 see, for example, Alexander 2006, Moore 2005 and Hughes 2006.
 64. Mubvumba 2005. For across the region see Buur and Kyed 2006; also Engelbert 2002 and Oomen 2002.
 65. Moyo 2001; Moyo and Yeros 2005; also Marongwe 2003.
 66. Moyo 2001, see also Alexander 2003, p.99.
 67. See for example Marongwe 2003, p.174; also Fontein 2006b and 2006d. Ranger 1985. Moyo and Yeros 2005, p.195.
 68. I must credit this point to a deeply engaging conversation with historians at the University of Zimbabwe in June 2006 when I presented a working paper (2006d) on my ongoing research around Lake Mutirikwi.
 69. Knight 1999 and Marongwe 2003; Palmer 1990 and Alexander 2006.
 70. Marongwe 2003, p.186, see also Moore 2005.
 71. Alexander 2006, p.111.
 72. Manzungu 2004:66. For chiefs see for example, *The Herald* (3/12/00) which reported that the Council of Chiefs was considering taking the Commercial Farmer's Union to court of its "reluctance to relinquish some of the Land owned by its members". Interestingly the President of the Council was quoted as saying "The president does not own the land. The land belongs to the Chiefs. The white settlers took the land from the chiefs and not the president. So any court action by the union should directed at the chiefs." More recently, in May 2004, during the National Assembly of Chiefs held at Great Zimbabwe, the chiefs re-affirmed their support for the land reform programme (*The Herald*, 6/5/2004, 8/5/2004; *Zimbabwe Independent*, 14/5/2004; see also *The Masvingo Star* 23-29/7/2004). See also Mubvumba 2005.
 73. Interview with Obedingo Chuma, war veteran and new farmer, Green Hills Farm, Masvingo District 12/6/06.
 74. Alexander 2006, p.193; Derman and Hellum 2007, p.161.
 75. Manzungu 2004, p.54; Alexander 2006, p.186; Interview with VaMhike 26/6/01.
 76. See also Fontein 2006c.
 77. Interview with VaKanda, VaMadiri and VaMuchina, 16/03/01.
 78. Ranger 2004.

79. On National *Biras* See *Zimdaily* 28/9/05 "Govt Blows Unbudgeted \$95 billion On National *Biras*", (<http://www.zimdaily.com/news>; *Newsnet Zimbabwe*, 25/9/05 "National *Biras* gather momentum in various parts of the country" (www.newsnet.co.zw/). On the *zunde ramambo* project see Kaseke 2006. On the amendment of the Witchcraft Suppression Act see *The Herald* 10/05/06. On the reburials of liberation war dead see Fontein 2009.
80. This point is amplified by the way in which war veterans in parts of Matabeleland gave expression to local grievances against local governments structures through a 'politics of disruption which McGregor has described, see McGregor 2002.
81. Kriger 2003, p. 208. For another nuanced account of the complex relationship between war veterans, the state and the ruling party see also Sadomba and Andrew 2006.
82. For e.g., Ranger 1999; Maxwell 1999; Alexander 2006.
83. Chief Charumbira, is good example of local chief deeply involved in ruling party politics, and a key member of one of Masvingo's infamous ZANU PF factions. As Deputy Minister of Local Government he was able to facilitate the appointment of loyalists into key local government positions. More recently he was removed from his ministerial position in a move orchestrated, as some rumours would have it, by influential ZANU PF figures in Harare determined to cut back his rather grandiose ambitions. As the new President of the Council of Chiefs, he has been at the forefront of efforts to re-establish the authority of chiefs.
84. It is not clear how well spirit mediums have done out of recent reforms. Contrary to expectations at independence (Lan 1985, p.149), it has been chiefs and not spirit mediums who have been increasingly courted by the central government (Fontein 2006b and 2006c). Much as the Rhodesian state largely ignored spirit mediums, these recent reforms have tended to view spirit mediums as operating under chiefs, and some spirit mediums I have spoken to continue to feel marginalised from the state at local and national levels. I suspect this relates to the inherently ambiguous and ambivalent status of spirit mediums, and the difficulty of placing them in any kind of bureaucratic or administrative structure of governance. However, the potential political influence of spirit mediums does seem to have been recognised by the ruling party, much as the Rhodesian state belatedly did during the liberation struggle (Ranger 1982). Both my own recent fieldwork and the work of other scholars (Spierenburg 2004), suggests that the CIO [Central Intelligence Organisation] have been increasingly active in 'protecting', or 'managing' access to, spirit mediums.
85. Marongwe 2003, p.165.
86. Ibid. p.187. One problem with Marongwe's analysis is that it presumes that war veterans are simply a pliant arm of ZANU PF, but other studies (Kriger 2003; Fontein 2006c; Sadomba and Andrew 2006) suggest a more complex relationship that dates back to the struggle. Marongwe's broad characterisation of the post 2000 land occupations as war veteran led, in contrast to the 1998-9 occupations, also hides some of the localised complexities of post 2000 land reform such as in the Mutirikwi area, where the occupation of past resettlement schemes, national park and other state land occurred at the same time, and was much like the 1998-9 occupations he describes: led by particular members of local clans, and even some chiefs, claiming ancestral ties to the land.

87. Interview with Joseph Manyani, Chief Lands Officer, Masvingo Province, 5/6/06.
88. Worby 2003.
89. Alexander 2003, p.114.
90. Gable 2006.
91. Ferguson 1999, p.18.
92. Alexander 2006, p. 44-59; see also Drinkwater 1989 and Moore 2005.
93. Moore 2005, p.17.
94. Interview with Obediningo Chuma, war veteran and new farmer, Green Hills Farm, Masvingo District 12/6/06.
95. Interview with Joseph Munyani, Chief Lands Officer, Masvingo Province, 5/6/06.
96. Mugabe dishes out tractors, food, money to buy election votes' 7/3/08, *Afrik.com*, <http://en.afrik.com/article12763.html>.
97. Interview with Felix Chikovo, Provincial Administrator, 23/5/06.
98. Chaumba et al. 2003a.
99. Most recently Didymus Mutasa is alleged to have prevented the publication of the fourth 'audit' of the land reform programme, which highlights the systematic looting of prime farms by senior government officials, army generals and Zanu (PF) cronies' (See Mutasa suppresses damning land audit' *The Zimbabwean* 20/4/08).
100. Alexander 2006, p.63.
101. Dorman 2003, p.845.
102. Dean 2001, p.53; Hammar 2003, p.130-131.
103. Das and Poole 2004; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Tsing 1994.
104. See for example 'ZIMBABWE: Victory, "sweeter than a miracle!"' 3/4/08, *IRIN*, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=77600>; 'Opposition thugs seek to reverse land reform' *Sunday Mail*, No Date, <http://www.sundaymail.co.zw/inside.aspx?sectid=436andcat=1>. In fact the MDC has been refuting this accusation since 2004, but to little apparent avail, see 'We will not return farmers' land, says MDC', 4/4/04, *Sunday Tribune*, <http://www.sundaytribune.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=392387>.
105. See Mary Ndlovu "Zimbabwe on the edge of the precipice" *Pambazuka News* 17/12/2008. See also "INTERVIEW: 'We would've set up compact, technocratic govt' Lance Guma speaks to Dr Simba Makoni" <http://www.zimonline.co.za/>, 16/2/09.
106. "Robert Mugabe henchmen bent on sabotaging fragile partnership" <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/>, 16/2/09.

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