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'EVERY MAN MUST RESETTLE WHERE HE WANTS': THE POLITICS OF SETTLEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME IN BINGA, ZIMBABWE

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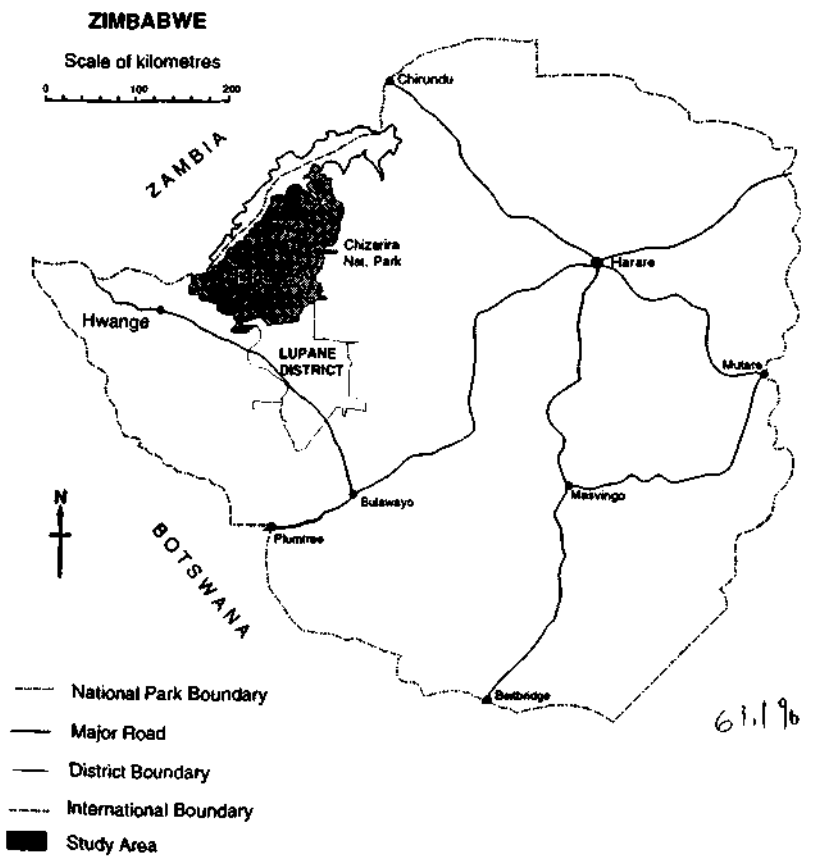
Abstract

Over the years there has been, in Southern Africa, a steady flow of populations from the overcrowded communal areas into those marginal zones which previously were sparsely populated. Usually it is post-independent leadership which encourages and facilitates settlement into these marginal areas currently occupied by minority ethnic groups which have failed to secure political representation since independence. The influx of people into these marginal areas affects the development of existing programmes aimed at sustainable utilisation of natural resources. This article shows how politicians in Zimbabwe facilitate the resettlement of people into the previously sparsely populated Zambezi Valley. In addition, it shows that the huge influx of people into the valley has tended to affect the development of a community-based natural resource management project which was starting to benefit the Tonga people.

IT IS FREQUENTLY the case that post-independent leadership instigates, for political reasons, the movement or migration of thousands of rural people from the dominant ethnic groups at the centre of the state into the formerly marginal frontier zones (Herbst, 1990, 70). In Zimbabwe, for example, perhaps as many as a million rural people have relocated from the overcrowded communal areas of southern and eastern Zimbabwe — what Beach (1994) has called the 'great crescent', in which the majority of Zimbabwe's people have lived for the last millennium — into the Zambezi Valley, Gokwe and Binga, which previously were sparsely populated. These areas were previously settled by a variety of small ethnic groups, mostly the Shangwe and Tonga people, who have failed to secure political representation since independence.

In recent years a new twist to this dynamic has emerged: CAMPFIRE (Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources), which is a form of commercial partnership between safari operators and rural communities in wilderness zones, has started to generate considerable incomes for these formerly marginalised people from sustainable and other tourism — as much as $11 000 000 between 1993–1994 (four districts with a population of 641 186 were involved in this income). Despite some teething difficulties and the long history of conflict between the state and

LOCATION OF RESEARCH AREA



these communities over wildlife, the indigenous communities of northern Zimbabwe came to welcome and identify with CAMPFIRE as a major source of income and a boost to their self-governance.

In recent articles, I have presented details of how migrants acquired land and how they embarked on lifestyles that were opposed to CAMPFIRE (Dzingirai, 1993, 167–175; Dzingirai and Madzudzo, 1995). In this article, I discuss how post-independent leadership encourages people from the dominant groups to settle in those marginal areas, already involved in wilderness management. I argue that community-based wilderness management, like any other rural development project, cannot succeed if it is seen by prominent countryside politicians to be opposing their interests.

THE CASE STUDY AREA: BINGA DISTRICT

The semi-arid Binga district of the Zambezi Valley is the focus of this study. Binga is historically mostly a wilderness area, with most of the local population of Tonga speakers resident along the Zambezi River and its tributaries until the construction of the Kariba Dam in the 1950s. Their riverine location was important for cultivation in an area with low rainfall. Even today nearly a third of the area is under state management as a national park and forest reserve, and it includes one of the country's largest parks, Chizarira. Due to low agro-ecological potential and the presence of tsetse fly, there was no allocation of land in Binga district to White colonial farmers.

Most of the population of Binga were forcibly resettled because of the Kariba Dam, and remain unable to sustain themselves through agriculture, due to the very limited riverine land in the interior, and the poor soils and low rainfall. Thus they eke out a living through combining gathering, fishing on the lake where and when government allows, and illegal hunting with what has become since independence almost continuous famine relief. In 1989, CAMPFIRE was introduced to the district, and by 1992/3 was disbursing to the local population of 87 000 people as much as Z$837 000 (US$130 000) per year in cash dividends. It thus contributed to local livelihoods. In addition and of greater political importance, it provided the local council with a significant source of revenue with which to undertake expansion of services and other development activities.

The district currently experiences an influx of cattle owners and cash crop farmers from the neighbouring Lupane area. The immigrants speak the Ndebele language and claim to be of Ndebele ancestry. It is more accurate to regard these immigrants, as Ranger (1995) has done, as a mixture of both Ndebele and other small minority groups previously found in the area.

The district is divided into 21 administrative units called wards, each represented by an elected councillor. Together with the executive staff, the councillors make up the rural district council. All the councillors are Tonga. At the village level, village chairmen are the leaders. The offices of councillor and village chairman are fairly recent institutions, created after independence. Before this, villages were led by village heads and chiefs assisted by an array of informal leaders. Traditional leadership is still powerful: chiefs and village heads still command respect from the people who sometimes give them gifts such as money, groceries and livestock. In practice, chiefs and village heads allocate land to the people (Dzingirai, 1994, 167–175), a function that legally belongs to the district council.

Also active in the district are 'big men'. They include two parliamentarians (because the district is divided into two constituencies), the Matabeleland provincial governor, the district chairman of the ZANU (PF) political party, as well as the provincial administrator. People say these men, particularly the governor and the parliamentarians, interact with the president of the country, and that this is one reason why they are feared and respected by the people. People also say that they fear and respect these big men because of their role in the liberation war.

With the exception of the district chairman, all the big politicians are located outside the district. The governor is based in the city of Bulawayo. The offices of the provincial administrator are located in Hwange. The parliamentarians oscillate between the district and the capital city of Harare. The provincial party chairman is resident in Lupane. Despite the fact that they are not resident in the district, these officials maintain regular contacts with the people of the district.

There are two further significant characteristics of all these politicians: they are members of the ruling ZANU (PF) party in good standing, and secondly, all claim to belong to the Ndebele ethnic group. Part of their support comes from the Ndebele immigrants whom they have encouraged to settle in Binga.

POLITICIANS AND THEIR SUPPORT FOR IMMIGRANTS

There are a number of reasons why these politicians, particularly those who are elected to office, actively encourage immigrants to settle in the Zambezi Valley and support them once they have settled. First, the politicians want political support in the elections. They are aware that many people are without good land and that they cannot provide jobs for the people. Giving people land is one of the ways politicians secure the support of the electorate. In addition, it is one of the tangible ways they can prove themselves in the eyes of the people, to be the true revolutionaries of the liberation war, in which land was a key issue

(Shamuyarira, 1984, 8). Politicians also say they give land because as 'kinsmen' of the Ndebele people, they are traditionally expected to do so. One politician[1] remarked at a meeting: 'If I do not provide you with where to build your home I would have failed my role as your father.'

To these big men, and politicians in general, land is as important as it is to the peasants. However, whereas peasants need land for survival, politicians see it as a strategic resource that forms the basis of their leadership. They can use the land to mobilise and remobilise the peasants to support them (Bratton, 1994, 80).

POLITICIANS' ACTIVITIES IN IMMIGRATION

Politicians do two related things. They tell people to migrate and settle into Binga. Secondly, they support immigrants against any threat by the council to evict them. Politicians have generally tended to rely on *misangano* (rallies) to maintain their standing in the district. These are gatherings held at a rural venue. Normally they start with prayers and the chanting of slogans — such activities do not admit dissent and are no doubt used to prepare people to accept the message of the politicians (see also Mararike, 1993, 60; Dzingirai, 1992; Bloch, 1977, 278–291). Usually there are also dances and other forms of entertainment, such as singing by choirs. Almost always there is food, which is given to the people after the meeting. The fact that the food is given after the meeting means that in order to enjoy the meal people must wait and listen to the political message even if they are not interested in it.

The politicians themselves do not directly call the mass rallies, partly because they do not have the resources to do so. The practice is to approach chiefs. The chiefs are well known people, who are obeyed and feared. If they call a meeting everybody must attend. Any person who does not attend is threatened with eviction from the land or with a fine. I heard from reliable informants of cases where people were expelled from the land for disobeying the chief's orders. During fieldwork I personally encountered three people who were fined for disobeying the chief's orders. The politicians also make use of the modern leadership such as the village chairman to call meetings. In return for mobilising people, the politicians accord high places to local leaders at these meetings. Secondly, local leaders get prime attention and service at these meetings, and this includes food and beer. Such preferential treatment supports their status in the district, and generally explains why they readily mobilise the people to attend meetings at which issues relating to land are discussed.

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[1] Owing to the sensitivity of the issues discussed in this article I have left the description of the politicians at a general level.

Sometimes the big men make use of the newspapers and the radio to spread messages about the land. Through the media they tell the people where to go if they need to settle. How they get newsmen and reporters to cover messages is difficult to say. In the run up to the 1995 parliamentary elections, there were numerous televised claims of 'vote-seeking' politicians paying small fees to journalists who agreed to report on, or broadcast, their political campaigns. It is possible that politicians in this study area use such practices to ensure that as many people as possible get the message of land availability in Binga. Although there are a few people who say that they personally read accounts of politicians urging them to migrate into Binga,[2] the majority of immigrants claimed that they heard of this from others who had radios.

The members of parliament are careful in the way they use the radio and newspapers to tell people where to settle. They are aware that certain lobby groups and opposition political parties would protest against such messages. Thus they rationalise their points by saying that immigrants who have a long history and experience in agriculture and animal husbandry would impart their skills to their Tonga counterparts upon settlement. They say that it is the national duty of the immigrants to teach those who had been neglected by colonial government. Politicians also say that once immigrants get land in Binga, they would boost agricultural exports from Zimbabwe. This would make the country the breadbasket of the region. Exports from Zimbabwe would 'glorify the name of the country', and many nations would hear about this. Thus politicians tactfully present immigration as a phenomenon that is in line with national goals of self-sufficiency and national identity.

In other instances, politicians claim that Ndebele immigration into Binga brings ethnic groups together, thus fostering genuine unity. At a meeting I attended early in 1995, a senior party official alleged that immigration into Binga would result in the Tonga and the Ndebele living side by side, in unity. The official added that living together pleased the fallen heroes who died for that ideal. In a sense, immigration is presented as a useful ideological tool in nation-building.

Such discourse legitimises the activities of the politicians. It makes protest appear to oppose national interest (see Kriger, 1995, 139–140). Two examples will help illustrate the point. When the district council resolved in 1994 to evict the immigrants in the interest of conserving the environment, the party chairman based in Lupane township, together with the provincial administrator, condemned the move as pursuing tribalistic policies. Such policies, it was said, did not fit in with the declared

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[2] In a sample of 121 people, 17 (14%) stated that they had been told to settle in Binga by politicians through both the radio and newspapers.

party ideology of nation-building. For fear of further victimisation the council stopped its plan (*Sunday News*, 1994, 3).

The second example, which I followed during fieldwork relates to a safari operator who was accused by the governor as well as the party chairman of trying to introduce colonialism when he insisted that the Ndebele immigrants were settling in safari hunting areas, thus jeopardising his and council's income base. The governor alleged that the White safari operator did not want tribes to live together. In addition, the safari operator was accused of having a hidden agenda of wanting to recolonise the rural areas with a view to placing his own animals. The political discourse employed in these two examples made it impossible for the Binga rural council to proceed with its plans without itself loosing credibility with the outside world.

FIELDS IN THE FORESTS: IMMIGRANTS' IMPACT ON CAMPFIRE

It has been argued by Rihoy (1992, 16) that settlement in the forests drives away the animals, which are the basis of CAMPFIRE. In this section, I examine the impact on CAMPFIRE of the preparation of fields by immigrants.

Once settled, immigrants start to clear large fields. The trees are burnt to the ground. Sometimes immigrants employ Tonga people to uproot trees so that ploughing becomes easier. Immigrants share the belief that a good farmer is one who leaves no tree standing in his field. They also share the belief that land must be cleared because the ancestral spirits and God intend it to be so. Some immigrants clear more land than they intend immediately to use in order to establish control over it for future use. According to immigrants, any land-seeker who sees cleared land knows that it belongs to somebody. This results in vast expanses of land being shorn of trees but not put under cultivation.

Unlike the Tonga people who are mainly subsistence farmers, the immigrants clear fields, putting them under cash crops such as maize, sunflower and cotton. Frequently the fields are enlarged, after initial settlement, and this is done by encroaching into unoccupied land. The immigrants also introduce cattle and donkeys to take advantage of the abundant free pasture (Reynolds, 1991, xxii; Murombedzi, 1991). The immigrants, unlike the Tonga people, keep cattle mainly for commercial purposes (Madzudzo and Dzingirai, 1995, 36). The introduction of cattle and donkeys adds competition for pastures, prompting fears that the fragile ecosystem of the valley will be destroyed (Rihoy, 1992, 16). Rihoy has shown that the competition for natural resources has led wildlife to retreat to the ecologically stressed Chizarira National Park.

Tylor (1991) argues that immigrants also threaten CAMPFIRE through their killing of wildlife. His point applies well to Binga, where immigrants

openly kill wildlife, which they allege to be destroying their crops. In 1993, immigrants openly killed two elephants worth $32 000 each. In 1994 immigrants shot down four elephants in one locality. Immigrants also trap small game such as impala, bushbuck, buffalo, hare and bush pigs. Immigrants say that they kill only those animals which enter their fields and damage their crops. In practice, they kill any animals that they come across. Many of the smaller animals are killed in the dry season, when there are no crops in the fields. At the time of research, immigrants selling meat frequently visited my campsite throughout the year.

The major reason immigrants cite for killing wildlife is that animals destroy crops, property and in some cases human life. In a sense this argument is quite tenable: immigrants, unlike Tonga people, do not get protection from wildlife. The safari operator who in the framework of CAMPFIRE protects villagers from wildlife, does not want to extend his services to immigrants, whom he claims are not interested in CAMPFIRE. It is against this background that immigrants shoot and kill wildlife. However, some of the targetted animals are not a threat to crops. These include the hare, the impala, the buffalo and bushbuck. When pressed as to why they kill small and 'innocent' animals, some say they kill smaller animals because these form a league with the big animals which create havoc in the area. One immigrant farmer remarked that 'the smaller animals must die for the sin of their menacing kin'.

Immigrants who kill wild animals share the meat with others or sell it. Almost always there is great joy among the immigrants when an animal, particularly an elephant, dies. Some people sing and dance round the carcass while others sit on it before finally skinning it. I would agree with Hasler (1994, 261) that elephant death seems to symbolize the triumph of man over nature's powerful and antagonising forces.

One of the four elephants that were killed was shot several times in the leg and at the back. Another was shot in the belly and legs. When immigrants fire at elephants, the aim is not just to kill but to induce death through pain. Indeed many people say that the shooting of legs is meant to convey to other remaining animals the dangers of interfering with immigrant property. As one immigrant farmer who mortally wounded an elephant said:

> Wounding elephants will make them come to have a glimpse of the pain they inflict on the people through damaging their property. The lucky elephants which see one of their members leaping because of pain say to themselves it is not safe to eat crops belonging to immigrants.

The practice of killing wildlife threatens the district's environmental initiative and deprives the district of valuable revenue to use in household and collective development. Without any tangible benefits, council claims it is not possible to convince locals to conserve wildlife. Secondly, the

killings also deprive the Tonga of meat. The Council claims, that since CAMPFIRE started it has never been able to harvest wildlife for the purposes of providing people with meat. Each year it has been forced to defer its intended cropping to a date in the future when there would be surplus wildlife. Whether rightly or wrongly, the council blames this failure on immigrants.

Today the Tonga people are loosing heart in CAMPFIRE and some frequently abscond from CAMPFIRE meetings (Madzudzo and Dzingirai, 1995). CAMPFIRE requires all people who receive benefits from wildlife to refrain from poaching, a point which Tonga people generally accepted in the early years of CAMPFIRE. Quite naturally, the Tonga now say that it makes very little sense to stop killing wildlife when immigrants do so rampantly. As one village leader lamented, 'These immigrants kill buffaloes, selecting the young ones for meat. Every day they eat roasted liver. We the Tonga people do not do that.' What is further insulting to the Tonga people is that these immigrants are not arrested and put in jail.

Immigrants often find that killing selected species is not sufficient to solve problems caused by wildlife. Elephants from the overpopulated national park and safari areas frequently make return trips for immigrants' maize crops. As an additional solution the immigrants start big fires which they let burn through the forest. During fieldwork I frequently came across these fires intended to drive animals away from the area. Another solution adopted by immigrants is to recruit new people from their area of origin, to whom they allocate land in the wilderness. Immigrants believe that wildlife do not like to see dense populations of humans. Some say that wildlife is scared by the sight of many people and that this causes them to retire into those areas that are without big numbers of humans. Apart from destroying the vegetation and the forests upon which wildlife depends, these practices occasionally interfere with the safari operation in the district as the evidence below suggests.

IMMIGRANTS AND SAFARI OPERATION

It is frequently the case that safari operators choose 'wild and uninhabited' areas for their hunting operations (IIED, 1994, 16). When the safari operator chose to operate in Binga, he was, like all safari hunters, attracted by its uninhabited forests and abundant wildlife. For the safari operator, Binga offered the overseas clients an opportunity to experience the 'wild and natural', something that no longer exists in the domesticated landscapes of most parts of the developed world. Good business for safari hunting would result in cash benefits for the district and this is the reason the council promised to create a 'good' hunting environment. In particular, the district would prohibit human settlement in safari hunting areas.

Immigration and the subsequent settlement of people in wildlife areas angered the safari operator who feared that his clients would no longer enjoy their hunts. At one stage he tried to deal with immigrants directly, serving them with notices of eviction from the concession area. Locals allege that he burnt immigrants' huts. The immigrants approached the politicians for support — first the administrator and later the governor. When told that the operator had issued eviction orders and had already started to burn homes belonging to those settled in the concession area, both big men were incensed. In their view the safari operator was racist because he wanted to take land away from Africans. They pointed out that in a free Zimbabwe, Whites have no right to remove people from their land. The two men not only promised that the immigrants would not be evicted; they also promised to 'discipline the recalcitrant White man'.

Having acquired the support of the big men, the immigrants went back to their homes. After some days, they were told by the safari operator and his men to vacate the land. When the safari operator threatened to use force, the immigrants went on a rampage. They destroyed the safari operator's camp located near their settlement and property worth half a million dollars. When council sent its own scouts, accompanied by a policemen, to identify and round up the culprits, these too were grabbed and beaten, because people said they were conspiring with the White man who wanted to take away their promised land. After these events, the council kept silent on the issue of immigrants. The safari operator accused the council of doing nothing against immigrants. For breach of contract the safari operator asked for $5 000 000 from the council as compensation. Because the council had no money it gave him another area in another part of the district to hunt, free of charge for the next five years.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this study area, the politicians' need for land is a common feature. The politicians in the countryside need land to give to the immigrants in exchange for their political support. In addition they give land for ethnic reasons: as representatives of their ethnic group, they feel obliged to provide for the needs of their fellow men.

The CAMPFIRE programme entails setting aside some land for safari hunting. Without doing so, the programme would not be able to generate revenue and other benefits to use as an incentive to stop the poaching of wildlife. CAMPFIRE's need for land, then, runs counter to the needs of the politicians. Consequently, politicians have opposed CAMPFIRE, or at least tried to control it.

The data from this case study confirms the point made by Mararike (1993, 31) that politicians generally tend to oppose those development

projects which undercut, or threaten to undercut, their political base. For rural development projects to survive, they must serve the interests of powerful politicians.

Projects based on communities' management of resources, such as CAMPFIRE, aim not just to develop rural people, but also to conserve natural resources. The material from this study shows that when such projects threaten the interests of politicians in the countryside, they are unlikely to succeed in achieving their goals.

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