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Land, graves and belonging: land reform and the politics of belonging in newly resettled farms in Gutu, 2000–2009

Joseph Mujere

The return to ancestral lands has been at the centre of the land reform rhetoric in Zimbabwe. This argument is premised on the fact that many communities were displaced from their ancestral lands during the colonial period hence they saw the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in 2000 as an opportunity for them to ‘return’ to their old homes. This article explores and analyses the issues surrounding land disputes in one village model A1 after the land reform programme and the role played by the regime of traditional authorities in determining how belonging is negotiated. It also analyses the conflicts between autochthons and migrants over the control of the new resettlement areas and over the authority of village heads and chiefs. Claims to land based on ancestral graves and autochthony are also analysed in view of the power of political authorities in land allocation. This paper offers an analysis of the intricacies of land reform in the newly resettled areas and examines the interface between politics and traditional authority on how belonging is negotiated in these contexts. The article is largely based on qualitative interviews with resettled farmers in Gutu, informal interactions as well as personal observations.

Keywords: land reform; restitution; graves; belonging; traditional authorities;

Introduction

Zimbabwe’s accelerated land reform and resettlement programme which is also known as the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) was launched in 2000 when war veterans and peasants invaded white owned commercial farms. The early phase of this land reform programme was chaotic and marked by a lot of violent displacement as war veterans and peasants occupied farms spontaneously. Studies of this land reform have thus emphasised the chaotic manner in which the process was carried out, the new forms of livelihoods it provided the landless peasants and also its impact on agricultural productivity and on the displaced former farm workers (Sachikonye 2004, Chaumba *et al.* 2003, Moyo 2000). Little attention has however been paid to institutional authority in the resettled farms, especially the regime of traditional authority. The redistributive nature of the land reform has brought new

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trajectories of belonging which need to be problematised. The newly resettled farms have seen the conflation of people from different areas and different traditional authorities which transformed the resettlement areas into some kind of a melting pot. Moreover, the influx of people from different areas into the newly resettled farms, especially in the more communal A1 Model has engendered new politics of belonging which have widened the division between those who see themselves as autochthons or the owners of the land and those they view as outsiders. Furthermore, chiefs and headmen have also sought to reconfigure their traditional boundaries and expand their authorities into these newly established resettlement areas which they consider to be their lost ancestral lands. Consequently, *matongo* (old homes), *mapa* (ancestral burials), rivers, mountains and other traditional markers of boundaries have assumed a new significance in the land reform aftermath. The land reform has thus brought with it not only new forms of livelihoods but also new and often contested forms of belonging as well as the intensification of boundary disputes.

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

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

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

Land reform and the politics of belonging: an overview

Belonging is a relational concept which entails among other things attachment to a group, place or other category. Local notions of belonging especially among peasants in Africa tend to revolve around religion, autochthony and ownership of land and among other local attachments. It is therefore about being locally embedded. Belonging also raises the question of access to resources such as land. The land and belonging nexus has thus seen the rise of debates over autochthony-based claims to land and the conflicts that arise from counter claims. It is therefore important to explore this nexus in the light of the land reform movements in Africa. According to Geschiere and Nyamnjoh (2000, 425) ethnicity and autochthony, 'are equally capable of arousing strong emotions regarding the defence of home and ancestral lands, but since their substance is not named they are both more elusive and more easily subject to political manipulation'. Leonhardt (2006, 70) contends that, 'autochthony is not a coherent body of principles on which rights are based. It is a mystification of ancestry, a method used for the purposes of magically extracting wealth from the state.' It is also based on the contestable claim of being the first comers and being the sons and daughters of the soil as opposed to strangers, aliens or late comers. Political elites thus use autochthony and narrow citizenship policies for political expedience.

It is all the more striking that in spite of it being seemingly embedded or primordial, autochthony is a very fluid form of identity. This makes the process of defining who is an autochthon and who is a stranger a very difficult task. Since identities are fluid, claims to autochthony are often met with counter claims. In the end autochthony is by no means cast in stone as 'strangers' can also claim autochthony thereby turning the former autochthons into strangers. It is in this light that Geschiere and Jackson (2006, 1) argue that, 'belonging turns out to be always relative: there is always the danger of being unmasked as "not really" belonging, or even of being a "fake" autochthon'.

The autochthon-stranger dialectic is largely played out on conflicts over control of natural resources such as land. Lentz (2007, 37) argues that land and land rights play an important role in the politics of belonging in Africa due to the fact that rights to land 'are intimately tied to membership in specific communities'. Hence the scarcity of land has the effect of increasing the need to identify those who 'really belong' and those who are late comers and therefore have limited rights to the land. Control over land therefore becomes a sign of the extent to which one belongs (Lentz 2006, 1). According to Lewis (2004), 'the vagaries of belonging(ness) are crafted in the context of formal rights and entitlements'. The scramble for resources and political manipulations have therefore led to the crystallisation of the divisions between autochthons and allochthons in Africa thereby crippling the processes through which immigrants could be integrated into a community and enjoy the same rights as the autochthons (see Kopytoff 1989).

Using the case of the Anglophone region of Cameroon, Konings (2001, 117) argues that, land was not the only reason for the development of antagonistic relations between autochthons and strangers. The latecomers' success in agriculture, trade and other entrepreneurial activities also contributed to the strained relations as the autochthons became jealous of the success of the immigrants. Politicians exploited these localised conflicts to further their own agendas of entrenching themselves. According to Lentz (2007, 47), 'in many cases, it is young men who

invoke powerful discourses on autochthony, much more so than their fathers, who continue to insist that well-intentioned strangers should not be refused land if they need it for subsistence'. This is often a result of petty jealousies over the success of the immigrants and also competition over resources.

Belonging also entails rootedness or being attached to a place. This involves an attachment to place, being an indigene or having roots in a certain place as opposed to being a stranger. Malkki (1992), however, suggests that the idea of being rooted needs to be problematised as it fails to appreciate people's ability to construct new notions of belonging when they get 'uprooted' or migrate. As she argues, 'there has emerged a new awareness of the global social fact that, now more than perhaps ever before, people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced, and invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases – not in situ, but through memories of, and claims on, places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit' (Malkki 1992, 24). This captures the need for scholars to escape the pitfalls of always attaching people to place and nations to territory.

Shipton (2009) used the case of the Luo in Kenya to show that African ideologies about land and attachment have often clashed with governments' land reform policies aimed at titling land and making it possible to use it as collateral in applying for agricultural loans. It is this Western model of land tenure and credit which Shipton sees as threatening the Luo people's attachment to their ancestral lands and the future of their belonging. Particularly important is the debate on the applicability of the concept of freehold tenure in Africa and whether land can be bought or pledged as collateral for a loan and consequently forfeited if the debtor defaults. Shipton (2009) asserts that the freehold-mortgage system of credit does not suit the Kenyan people and arguably many other rural African communities whose tenure is communal. As he puts it, the mortgage 'threatens to separate people in rural areas from home, from kith and kin, and from ancestral graves, with all that these mean' (Shipton 2009, ix). The nature of a number of African communities' attachment to land thus makes any land reform aimed at making formerly communal land freehold difficult to implement since this ultimately makes it possible to mortgage the land and by extension 'mortgag[e] the ancestors'.

In a recent study on land reform and land restitution in South Africa, Deborah James (2007) shows the salience of ancestral graves on people's claims to land and demands for restitution. The study illustrates the salience of graves and old homes in claims to land and negotiation of belonging in Africa. In her study, attachment to graves and old homes allows the Doornskop community to articulate their belonging and to reclaim their ancestral lands in the post apartheid land reform in South Africa (James 2007, 16). Land restitution is thus here based on 'claiming graves' and old homes. As she puts it, 'where stories of lives lived on the soil have been told or features of the landscape invoked to endorse claims to particular farms or clusters of territory, these tend to highlight moments in the experience of the claimants' or tellers' own childhoods or to emphasise the burial sites of their parents rather than stressing long-term occupancy of the land' (James 2007, 16). It is quite evident that James's study seeks to show that restitution is easier for those people with titled land. 'The most obvious beneficiaries of land reform', she argues, 'were to be former title-holding landowners who had been relocated to the homelands during apartheid's "Black Spots" removals. Their property rights have been clearer cut and rather easier to assert and retrieve through restitution than those of other claimants' (James 2007, 8). Those claims that are based on ancestral graves without backing of any

legal documents are however complicated by the fact that there are always counter claims by other communities who are also able to point to their own ancestral graves in the same areas claimed by others.

Just as in many African societies belonging in Zimbabwe, from the pre-colonial period, has often been about attachments to ancestral lands, graves and old homes (*matongo*). Spierenburg's (2004) work on migrations and land reforms in Zimbabwe examines the conflicts over land between autochthons and strangers (*vatorwa*) which emerged as a result of the government initiated and donor funded Mid Zambezi Rural Development Project in the Dande communal areas. The aim of the project was to redistribute land and ensure increased production (Spierenburg 2004). Spierenburg (2004) examines the Dande people's resistance to the government land reforms in the 1980s and 1990s and the role of the *Mhondoro* spirits (mediums of royal ancestral spirits) in the allocation of land and integration of the migrants in their spirit province. The *Mhondoro* spirits were in the forefront in expressing discontent with the land reforms. The mediums claimed that traditionally land belonged to the royal *Mhondoro* spirits and before any strangers could be allowed to settle they had to be presented to the *Mhondoro* spirit mediums. The *Mhondoro* would then do the rituals of accepting the immigrants and integrating them into the community. The owners of the land were thus the *Mhondoro* spirits whose mediums had the power of allocating it, a role which was now being usurped by the government technocrats imposing land reform. The land shortages generated by this land reform project led to conflicts between the autochthons and the migrants as the former saw the migrants as benefiting from the project at their expense and 'stealing' their land. These conflicts often spilled into witchcraft accusations or threats of use of witchcraft as the autochthons were often disgruntled with the strangers being allocated more land.

Traditional authorities and the FTLRP in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform Programme has attracted a lot of scholarly attention since its beginning in 2000. Much focus has however been on the *jambanja* (chaos) in which it was carried out: the violence, the massive displacements, and also the new livelihoods that it availed to the peasants (see Rutherford 2001, Chaumba *et al.* 2003, Sachikonye 2004).¹ There has however been little debate on people's claims to what they consider to be their lost ancestral lands. In a number of cases starting with that of Chief Svosve in Marondera District, traditional authorities have made attempts to re-establish their control over those lands from which they were alienated during the colonial period, in some instances even claiming restitution. As noted by Scoones *et al.* (2010,165) chiefs took advantage of the new areas of land being opened up by the land reform to 'exert control over these new territories, often claiming that past ancestors had occupied the areas and that the land reform had been a process of restitution, and that they, through evidence of burial sites and past settlement, along with religious sites where spirits resided, had new authority'. This has often led to land and boundary disputes between traditional authorities as claims and counter claims on particular pieces of land emerged.

¹The FTLRP in Zimbabwe has received greater scholarly attention elsewhere and it is not my intention to recount it here save to provide a nuance that has so far not been given much attention.

There has been a general assumption that the FTLRP has led to the marginalisation of traditional authorities as the management of the new resettlement areas has been the responsibility of village and district land committees as well as war veterans and 'Base commanders'.² This has meant that traditional authorities have been left out on the margins in as far as the management of the newly resettled farms is concerned. Be that as it may, some traditional authorities have been making efforts to recast their authority in the areas, renegotiate boundaries and reclaim alienated ancestral lands. The FTLRP has thus provided traditional authorities with the opportunity to pursue an agenda akin to land restitution as they have been making a number of claims both substantiated and unsubstantiated over the new resettlements which they view as their *matongo* (old homes). According to Marongwe (2003,174), 'despite the fact displacement of communities took place several decades ago, there was still an expectation that the government would facilitate their return to their original home areas under the current land reform programmes'. Thus the non-recognition of such historical land claims by the policymakers coupled with the communities' desire to return to their traditional land alienated during the colonial period was one of the major factors that fuelled land occupations (Marongwe 2003,171). The return to ancestral lands is arguably at the centre of most land reform programmes allowing restitution in Third World countries (see James 2007). Communities' claims to ancestral lands have thus shown the centrality of *matongo* and *mapa* (ancestral burial sites) in the Shona people's negotiation of belonging in the newly resettled farms. Mazarire (2008, 2009) has argued that the struggles over land in Chishanga in Masvingo Province in Zimbabwe have revolved over the people's return to their ancestral *gadzingo* (traditional headquarters). A *gadzingo* was at once a clan's traditional headquarters, a burial ground for important figures, a place of ancestral veneration as well as a stronghold and a place of refuge during attacks (Mazarire 2009,7). This thus made ancestral lands such as the *gadzingo* an important feature in Shona people's construction of their *nyika* (territory).

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

The FTLRP can also be argued to have led to the extension of the traditional authorities' power into the resettlement areas. Formerly, the government through the Ministry of Local Government Rural and Urban Development argued that the provisions of the Chiefs and Headmen Act (1982) stipulated that chiefs could only exercise authority in communal areas meaning that farms and resettlement areas were out of bounds for the traditional leaders (Mubvumba 2005, 46). However, the FTLRP brought a new trajectory to the role of traditional authorities in the resettlement areas providing chiefs and headmen with an opportunity to seek restitution, reclaim their ancestral lands or to recast their authority in these formerly alienated lands. It is also important to note that some traditional authorities fighting for restitution do so not because they wish to be productive on the land but because

²Base commanders were usually war veterans who led farm invasions and imposed a regime of control on the newly acquired farms.

of the fact that 'some people only wanted to get back land that belonged to their fore-fathers and not to necessarily commercially farm' (Matondi 2010, 7). Chakanyuka (2007) argues that the FTLRP provided the traditional authorities who are the custodians of cultural heritage sites with the opportunity to reclaim their lost ancestral lands and sacred places and in some instances demand restitution. As she puts it,

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

In some instances the land reform brought conflicts between those who view themselves as the autochthons and those they see as outsiders or strangers. Some settlers do not respect the traditional authorities in the area because they hail from different areas and therefore do not have a strong sense of belonging in the resettlement area. Such a scenario has brought the farmers who do not have a direct link with the former occupants of the land and therefore do not have any ancestral links with the land into a collision course with those who claim direct links with original owners of the area and thus feel they are custodians of the land, sacred places, and ancestral graves.

Village Committees and the marginalisation of traditional authorities in Gutu

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

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

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

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

Village committees, which are also known as 'seven member committees' because they are composed of seven office bearers, have been the mainstay of institutionalised management of the resettlement areas. These committees report to the District Lands Committee chaired by the District Administrator. The District Lands Committee has the responsibility of identifying 'vacant land' and allocating it to other beneficiaries. It also has the power to withdraw the offer letters given to plot holders in the event of a violation of the offer conditions or absenteeism from the plot. According to Scoones *et al.* (2010,165),

as people settled into their areas, the *jambanja* period institutions of base commander and committee of seven still had important roles to play. In addition to negotiating with technocratic authorities of the state around land-use planning, they increasingly had to articulate with other forms of 'traditional' authority – notably chiefs and their headmen, as well as spirit mediums, rain messengers, church leaders and others.

The legitimacy of all these new forms of authority was contested at various levels. While the village committees saw themselves as the institutions in charge of the resettlement areas because they represented the District Lands Committee, the traditional authorities challenged this based on the fact that they owned the land before the colonial land alienation.

The new village committees strongly resemble the Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) created in the early 1980s. According to Goebel (2005,106), 'VIDCOs were to be secular and democratic, a departure from the traditional local institutions, which were based on ancestral religion and lineage membership.' She further adds that it was quite easy to impose this new structure in the resettlements because the areas were composed of people from many different home areas and also because traditional authorities usually remained in the communal areas (Goebel 2005, 106). By the same token the government has used the same ideology in the management of the village models in the newly resettled areas. According to Goebel (2005, 107), 'the village chairman is elected by democratic vote and can be deposed if performance is unsatisfactory. The job of the chairman is to channel grievances or issues of dispute from the settlers to the resettlement officer and take information given by the resettlement officer back to the settlers.' These village committees however work with almost complete disregard for traditional authorities. A member of the Uitcom 1 Village Committee in Gutu explained the village committees' relationship with traditional authorities thus:

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

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

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

Similarly, Uitcom Farm is divided into three villages which are all managed by seven-member village committees which report to the District Lands Committee.

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

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

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

From as early as the 1980s traditional leaders were lobbying the government to be given more authority over land. This culminated in the enactments of the Traditional Leaders Act (25/1998). The Act 'granted chiefs and headmen and village leaders of development institutions below the council, control over land allocation in communal areas, and a greater role in that one-time bastion of state-directed modernisation, the resettlement areas' (Alexander 2006, 183). Section 5 of the Act, in particular, stipulates that the chief shall be responsible for taking traditional and related administrative matters in resettlement areas, including nominating persons for appointment as headmen by the minister (Traditional Leaders Act 25/1998). According to the Act, the minister is the one with the power to authorise a chief to exercise authority over a certain resettlement area provided that the declared area is a single resettlement ward and does not fall under the authority of more than one

chief (Traditional Leaders Act 25/1998). In spite of all these pronouncements traditional authorities have however continued to play second fiddle to village committees who are responsible for the day to day running of the resettlement areas and are answerable to the District Land Committees (Mubvumba 2005, 37). Hence, in spite of the government's moves towards strengthening the position of chiefs and headmen, 'authority over land remained the subject of heated contestation among a wide range of local and state institutions' (Alexander 2006, 183). Thus chiefs and headmen often find it difficult to assert their authority in resettlement areas and continue to agitate for the re-establishment of the traditional boundaries that existed prior to colonial land alienation.

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

By leaving out traditional authorities such as village heads, headmen and chiefs in the management of the resettlements the Land Ministry disempowered the traditional authorities, which are often portrayed as the 'conservative guard' of the old and unproductive system in the communal areas. This was also coupled with the enactment of legislation which took away chiefs' powers to redistribute land (Alexander 1994, 333). Such enactments have made chiefs feel like they have been left out in the management of resettlement areas and replaced by technocrats and democratic institutions such as village committees. It is quite clear that the government is not keen to involve traditional authorities in the agrarian reform. This explains the government's reluctance to allow the land reform to take a land restitution angle which would have allowed those people who could substantiate their claims to ancestral lands to be resettled in such lands (Mubvumba 2005, 18). By contrast the South African model allows for restitution when such claims can be substantiated (James 2007).

In spite of the seeming friction between different groups in the management of resettlement areas the differences between these groups are not always cut and dried. For example, a war veteran can also be an autochthon as well as a member of a

village committee, thus being in a position to articulate the views of one or the other group depending on the occasion. Hence it is quite difficult to separate these groups and make them clearly identifiable as members tend to straddle between groups making use of them to make claims to land, authority and resources. Arguably some people are able to articulate a particular kind of claim more strongly based on their positions as chiefs, members of the village committee, agricultural extension officers or councillors (J. Fontein, Personal Communication 8 December 2009). For instance, a chief or headman can effectively make claims to autochthony based on links to graves and old homes while a village chairperson is able to derive his/her authority from the fact that he/she is a democratically elected officer who represents the District Land Committee. However, this leaves out the common people who fall outside these high profile positions. The new settlers often have to fit into categories such as autochthon/stranger which at times makes little sense to them as some just identify themselves as simple farmers without the added baggage of being identified as either an autochthon or a stranger or being dragged into this belonging milieu.

Traditional authorities, disputed territories and belonging in Gutu

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

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

The much publicised case of Chief Svosve and his people's reoccupation of their ancestral lands in Marondera in 1998 shows the vital, yet neglected, trajectory of restitution and return to ancestral lands in the land reform discourse in Zimbabwe (see Alexander 2006, 184; Marongwe 2003). As Marongwe notes (2003, 184) 'restitution claims based disposessions, were a strong rallying point for participants in the [farm] occupations'. As a result, claims to ancestral lands such as the Tangwena people's claims over Kairezi in Manicaland (Moore 2005), Sekuru Mushore's claims over the Nharira Hills in Marondera, Mashonaland West; and the Ndau people's claims over Chirinda forests, among other historical claims, have been a major highlight in the FTLRP (Marongwe 2003, 186). These people who have historical claims to such lands often view other non-local farmers as 'foreigners' or 'strangers' with little if any claim to the land. This resonates with Lentz's (2007)

argument that scarcity of land tends to increase the need to identify those who are insiders and the strangers who have limited rights to land. Control over land therefore becomes a sign of the extent to which one belongs. It is important to note that though the land reform in Zimbabwe has not incorporated restitution, traditional authorities have continued to make efforts to regain control over their formerly alienated lands.

In 2001 Mr Jara Mudziwaniswa, the village head of the Mudziwaniswa Village in Headman Mawungwa's area, left his home together with other people from his village that included his two young brothers. Their intention was to return to their ancestral lands in Harawe area in Chief Chikwanda's area. They allocated each other pieces of land and began to engage in agriculture. Mr Mudziwaniswa and his brothers were already in the process of negotiating with Chief Chikwanda over the re-establishment of their village when they were told by the police to vacate the farm as it had not yet been gazetted as one of the farms to be reposed. Narrating their eviction from their ancestral lands Mr Jara Mudziwaniswa (Interview 17 September 2009) stated that:

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

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

Belonging is indeed contested and negotiated between and among different communities. It also involves negotiation over territorial boundaries and control of the land within the said boundaries. Lentz (2006, 2) sums up this argument by asserting that, 'if claims to land are linked to group membership, the reverse is also true: control over land has been and is still used as a way of defining belonging and ...' this places land at the centre of how belonging is contested and negotiated especially at the boundaries between communities. By the same token in the south-eastern parts of Gutu District in Zimbabwe the contestation over land and belonging has been a central feature in the boundary dispute between Chief Makore and Chief Chikwanda, which dates back to the colonial period. Colonial land alienations and the resultant re-configurations of reserves saw Chikwanda losing all his land and having to be accommodated by other traditional authorities. According to Mtetwa (1976, 313),

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

Thus the colonial land alienation which left Chikwanda with virtually no land for his people threw the Chikwanda people into perennial land disputes with other

traditional authorities, especially Makore who is to the north of Chikwanda in Gutu District.

Chief Makore's land claims present a very interesting dimension in traditional authorities' land reclamations and attempts to re-constitute their territories and reconfigure their traditional boundaries. Makore is a chief in Gutu District but belongs to the *Moyo Duma* clan and occupies the area to the south-west of Gutu District bordering the Masvingo and Ndanga Districts. He claims that his chiefdom used to stretch as far south as the Mbebvume River in Masvingo District prior to the colonial land alienations. However, he lost a large portion of his lands to white farms such as N. Richards, J. Bolland, Springfield, Wepener, Portgieter, Standmore, Dromore, Elands Kop, Bonair, Lynington, and Chidza, among others. These areas used to be occupied by people under Chief Makore before they were displaced to pave way for the creation of the white commercial farms. Makore also argues that mountains and sacred sites such as Musanawengwe, which is in Springfield Farm, together with Nyoni and Zishumbe Mountains are well known Makore ancestral *mapa* (royal burial sites). The Zishumbe *mapa* is actually where the Makore founding father Risipambi was interred after being dried according to the *Duma* customs. The Makore people are thus keen to regain custodianship of these important ancestral *mapa* (Interview with J. Tangemhare Councillor Ward 27, Makore, 21 August 2009).

The FTLRP has, however, seen Chief Chikwanda, who is also of the *Duma* clan, expanding his boundary into areas which formerly belonged to Chief Makore. This has been occasioned by issues which include the fact that Makore did not quickly make an attempt to repossess their ancestral lands in significant numbers when the FTLRP was in full swing in 2000 and 2001. On the contrary, Chief Chikwanda, who was facing serious land shortages, encouraged his people to occupy farms including those in the areas which formerly belonged to Makore. He also settled his representatives in the area and used that to claim the area and impose his authority. Makore's claims to these lost ancestral lands have also been further complicated by the fact that Makore's chiefdom is in Gutu District yet the contested areas are demarcated as belonging to Masvingo District in terms of the district administrative boundaries. Scoones *et al.* (2010,166) argue that Chief Chikwanda's people claim that the area belongs to Chikwanda because Chief Makore rules in Gutu administrative district while Chief Chikwanda rules in Masvingo District where the contested areas lie. Consequently, it has proved a very difficult task for Chief Makore, in spite of the availability of material evidence in forms of graves and ruined old homes supporting his case, to reclaim his ancestral lands which now fall in another district and are now being claimed by Chief Chikwanda. As a result of this, Chief Chikwanda managed to install his village heads and headmen in the areas contested by Chief Makore and expelled the headman who had been appointed by Chief Makore, thus effectively taking control of the disputed areas (Scoones *et al.* 2010, 166).

The settlement of people with little regard for the Makore ancestral lands around Zishumbe and other *mapa* has angered Chief Makore, who has blamed the constant droughts in his area on the desecration of these sensitive ancestral *mapa*. According to Fontein (2009a, 22), in 2006,

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

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

The simmering boundary dispute between Chief Makore and Chief Chikwanda has been raging since 1982 with Makore claiming that Chief Chikwanda is refusing to give him back his ancestral lands alienated during the colonial period. This boundary dispute reached new levels in July 2008 with some youths allegedly working for Chief Chikwanda assaulting acting Chief Makore (Phineas Makore) who was admitted at Gutu Mission Hospital after sustaining serious injuries. The case was reported to the police leading to the arrest of 12 villagers suspected to have participated in the assault (*Herald* 9 July 2008). The incident had been triggered by the fact that Chief Makore had installed village heads in areas which were also being claimed by Chief Chikwanda. Chikwanda argued that the area fell under his dominion while Makore was claiming it as his lost ancestral lands (*Herald* 9 July 2008). The situation between these two *Duma* Chiefs has been so tense that Chief Makore ended up asking for police protection, fearing similar attacks from Chief Chikwanda (*Herald* 9 July 2008). The long standing boundary dispute between the two chiefs illustrates the complex nature of the politics of belonging in the post FTLRP era and the challenges faced by traditional authorities in re-establishing traditional boundaries and reasserting their authority in their former white commercial farms. It also shows the limits of attempts to reclaim ancestral lands based on pointing to ancestral graves and old homes.

There have also been similar boundary disputes in the resettlements in Silverdale, Uitcom and Eastdale Estates. Chief Serima who is of the *Gushungo* clan claims to be the sole traditional authority in all the new resettlement areas to the north and north-west of the district. This area covers resettlements such as Eastdale, Silverdale, Lionsdale and Uitcom, among others. Mazarire's argument about the centrality of ancestral lands is especially useful in understanding various land claims that are being made by traditional authorities in Gutu (Mazarire 2009). Serima uses known Serima ancestral burial sites and *nhare* (strongholds) such as Chikwidzire, Gonwe and Songorera, all in Eastdale Farm, to substantiate his claims over the resettlement areas. The Songorera *nhare* and *mapa* features prominently in Serima oral traditions for it was the centre of Serima defence against the Mfecane invaders (Interview with Mr Chikanya, 15 August 2009). It is on the basis of the presence of such sacred sites in the Eastdale Estates that Chief Serima claims to be the sole traditional authority in the resettlement areas in the former Eastdale Estates. Chief Serima's claims are however contested by other traditional authorities such as Hwenga, Denhere, Makumire and Musarurwa.

Mr Nicros Makumbe of the Mudavarwe clan also claims the same area arguing that the area originally belonged to the Mudavarwe clan. He argues that Dhombo Mountain was a *mapa* for the Mudavarwe as it was used for the burial of important people in the clan (Interview with Mr N. Makumbe, 12 September 2009). He claims that when other people were driven out of the area to Chiguhune his family together with other members of the Mudavarwe clan decided to stay put and work for the white farmers who took over their land. Thus when the land occupations began in 2000, Mr. Makumbe chose to remain in his ancestral lands and thus took up land in Uitcom Village 1 in the vicinity of where his parents used to live. Though he was allocated a piece of land close to Chivake River in Uitcom Village 1 Mr Makumbe instead asked his nephew to run this plot on his behalf as he chose to stay in the area

designated for Chivake School arguing that ‘this is where my forefathers used to live’ (Interview with N. Makumbe, 12 September 2009). From his arguments, it is clear that Mr Makumbe belongs to a group of farmers whom Fontein (2009b) refers to as ‘new yet autochthonous farmers who easily relate to the “history-scapes” and real landscape features of the area such as graves, trees, springs, rivers, hills as well as *matongo* (old homes)’. Such farmers use their links with these areas which are their *matongo* to legitimise their occupation or re-occupation on the area. Such a position enable these ‘returning’ autochthons to articulate certain claims to the land and also to assert their authority as people who have direct, if not imagined, links with the original owners of the land. They can easily point to old homes as well as graves of their ancestors in legitimising their claims to autochthony. Yet it should be made clear that it is not only because of the simple ‘presence’ of graves, old homes, hills and springs, among other landscape features, that traditional authorities have been able to substantiate their claims to the land but it is more importantly about the materiality of such features (see Miller 2005, Fontein 2008). It is about the history and culture that these features are able to articulate and also about how such articulations impact on the people. These features thus impact on the imaginings of the local people in as much as the people make use of them to construct belonging. In other words it is as much about how local people use landscape features in laying their claims as it is about the affordances of these features.

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

Chief Chiriga of the Gumbo Madyirapazhe clan which is dominant in Gutu has also asserted his authority in Clare and Lonely farms arguing that the farms

belonged to his clan. According to Scoones *et al.* (2010, 165), 'his territorial control is enforced through kraal heads (*sabhukus*) and chief's aides. The chief also works together with coordinators (former war veterans) and committees of seven.' It is quite evident that the installation of village heads is one of the greatly contested issues in the land reform discourse as it has the effect of reconfiguring traditional boundaries as well determining who belongs where. This explains why the appointment of village heads has raised so much debate and so many disputes. The land reform in Zimbabwe has thus led to the emergence of new forms of authority in the resettlement areas which have often resulted in intense contestations over legitimacy and control (Scoones *et al.* 2010,160).

In some cases, funerals become theatres of struggle as boundary politics are often played in the resettlement areas. For instance, when somebody dies, the bereaved family has to inform the immediate traditional authority who is often a headman or chief before they can bury their relative in his *ivhu* (soil). In the case of Eastdale, Silverdale and Uitcom, people inform either Chief Serima or Headman Denhere depending on which traditional authority they fall under. The choice to inform one traditional leader over the other thus strongly suggests where one feels they belong and has serious consequences in boundary politics. In the event that representatives of both traditional authorities attend the same funeral in a disputed area, tension often arises over who has the authority to speak at the funeral as the traditional authority of the area (Interview with J. Mumanyi 15 August 2009). Funerals thus assume a very important position in the belonging matrix. In fact they become a sort of ritual for asserting belonging. In his recent publication, Chabal (2009) asserts that burials reinforce a collective sense of belonging and strengthen an individual's attachment to the community. As he argues, 'the link to the ancestors, wherever they are buried, is an integral part of the meaning of origin, and of the texture of identity, which cannot be disregarded' (Chabal 2009, 29). Belonging is here linked with attachment to a physical place which draws its meaning from people's attachments with the ancestral graves. A critical point noted by Chabal (2009) is that, 'a properly executed burial reinforces the collective sense of belonging, without which the person is not fully human and the community is not fully complete' (Chabal 2009,49).

Similarly, Geschiere and Nyamnjoh (2000, 435) argue that in Cameroon many Cameroonians consider burial locations as a very important criterion for belonging. In essence the basic test for one's belonging will be to ask them to show where their ancestors are buried. A failure to do so would be interpreted as meaning that the person belongs elsewhere, in this case where the bones of his/her ancestors are interred (see Geschiere 2009). This is the reason why among the Igbo in Nigeria, rural-urban migrants 'face powerful expectations to be buried at home in their ancestral villages and perform elaborate and expensive funeral ceremonies for their dead relatives' (Smith 2004, 569). The value of this is basically the maintenance of migrants' ties with their rural homes, each funeral they attend being a reminder of where they really belong. This also means those urban migrants in the end have dual or multiple notions of belonging. Hence funerals and graves have so much significance in the negotiation of belonging in Africa. Belonging is here linked with attachment to a physical place which draws its meaning from people's attachments to the ancestral graves. As Shipton (2009, 20) argues, 'graves are the symbolic focal points of human attachments to place: the living and dead, the social and the material, all connect here'. Graves also form the material evidence of who has been living on the land longer and therefore has historical links with the land.

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

Apart from contestations over boundaries and reclamation of lost ancestral lands the land reform has also brought about dual belonging as some of the new settlers straddle between communal and resettlement areas. Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo's (1992) ethnographic study of the conflicts surrounding the burial of SM, a prominent Luo Kenyan lawyer, illustrate the problems that emanate from dual belonging and the extent to which people can go to prove where one really belongs. In the case of Gutu this dual belonging or straddling between old homes and new ones is largely caused by the fact that some people see their positions in the resettlement areas as very insecure because of the unclear tenure system. For example Mr Matangi, who owns a plot in Eastdale, still maintains his old home in Guzha Village under Chief Nyamande. As he puts it, '*handina kusiya ndapisa musha wangu kwaGuzha*' (I did not burn my homestead when I left Guzha). I just left my eldest son to take care of the homestead as I am trying to improve my livelihood here in the farms' (Interview with A. Mutangi, 10 August 2009). Such farmers who continue to hop between communal areas and resettlement areas seem to be trying to use communal areas as a safety net in case they lose their plots in the resettlement areas. Some farmers however argue that they are content with the conditions in the resettlement areas and have cut ties with their old homes in communal areas. On the contrary, Manenji Murodhini who is the Farm Chairman of Silverdale, claims that he has cut ties with his old home in Headman Mazuru's area and now feels that he belongs to Silverdale, though he stills occasionally returns to his old home for funerals and other family gatherings (Interview, 12 September 2009). Manenji Murodhini's stance however seems to be influenced by the fact that he was among the first comers in Silverdale and is an important figure in the community, rendering dual residence or dual belonging difficult to maintain for him. The practice of straddling therefore seems to be less common among those farmers who consider themselves to be pioneers in their villages and are also

important figures in the community than among late comers who do not have a strong sense of belonging.

It is quite evident that though not widely acknowledged, ancestral claims to land have played a significant role in the politics of belonging in the newly resettled lands. As James (2007) has observed for South Africa and as the Gutu case discussed here has shown, though land restitution is an issue widely debated in land reform discourses it is very difficult to implement especially when it is not based on formal title. Claims for land restitution based on ancestral claims not aided by title deeds or any other formal ownership are often met with equally convincing counter claims. It is therefore vital to juxtapose Zimbabwe's redistributive land reform with other models such as the South African one which recognises the rights of those displaced during the Apartheid era and therefore allows for restitution.

It can also be argued that the FTLRP has also ensured gendered access to land as it has seen an increased number of women owning land and participating in the management of the village committees in the resettlement areas. Communal areas, with their emphasis on traditional institutions, limited women's access to land as they could only claim ownership of land through their husbands. This explains why in spite of some women leading village committees in the newly resettled lands their claims to land are seldom based on restitution as women's access to land does not fit comfortably with claims based on ancestral claims unless such a woman is possessed by an ancestral spirit.

It is a common practice to see the so-called new farmers straddling between both the newly resettled areas and their old homes as they are not yet sure of the security of tenure in their new pieces of land. The case of the Matangi family discussed above has shown these inherent fears within the new farmers regarding severing their ties with their former homes. They are afraid of being left homeless if for some reason they get evicted from the resettlement areas. The kinship ties that still exist between these new farmers and their relatives in the communal areas also demand that they continue to have contacts with them. Such people arguably have a dual sense of belonging as they have one foot in the new resettlement and another in their old homes.

Conclusion

What emerges here is that while for the government the land redistribution programme has been about taking land from the minority white farmers and giving it to the landless black majority, for the traditional authorities it has also meant a return to their ancestral lands. Traditional authorities in many parts of the country have seen this as an opportunity to reclaim lost ancestral lands, graves, mountains, and sacred places and also to re-establish their *nyika* boundaries which had been greatly altered during the colonial period. It is quite clear that although the Traditional Leaders Act gives chiefs and headmen authority over land in both communal and resettlement areas, there have continued to be some contestations between traditional authorities and democratic institutions such as village committees over control of land in resettlement areas. Without clarity on this matter there will continue to be contestations over which group has authority over land allocations and determining boundaries. It is therefore necessary for the government to come up with a clear policy position on institutional authority in resettlement areas to avoid these contestations.

The FTLRP has also brought new challenges for traditional authorities in Gutu who have continued to be locked in disputes over the re-alignment of their traditional boundaries. Any analysis of the politics of belonging in the resettlement areas must therefore appreciate and address issues surrounding reclamation of ancestral lands and boundary politics. For the Eastdale Estates, Silverdale and Uitcom, the boundary conflicts pitting Chief Serima against Headman Denhere are illustrative of the intricate and fluid nature of traditional boundaries and the centrality of graves, mountains, and rivers, among other features, in the negotiation of such boundaries. Makore's and Chikwanda's claims over resettlements to the south west of Gutu bordering Masvingo District are complicated by the fact that the area now falls in Masvingo District therefore making it quite difficult for Chief Makore to reclaim what he considers to be his ancestral lands. It is quite evident that the FTLRP has brought about new trajectories of belonging and also broached questions about disputed territories and contested boundaries. These claims and counter claims reveal the intricacies of land reclamation in the aftermath of the FTLRP and the importance of graves, old homes, mountains and rivers in traditional authorities' efforts to reclaim their ancestral lands and re-establish their authority. Hence, restoration of links with ancestral lands, re-establishment of boundaries and the re-assertion of traditional authority has remained at the heart of a number of local communities' conceptualisations of land reform in Zimbabwe.

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Traditional Leaders Act, 25/1998

Traditional Leaders Act, Chapter 29: 17 section 30 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2006)

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