Scholar Commons
USF University of South Florida

Journal of Ecological Anthropology

Volume 12
Issue 1 *Volume 12, Issue 1 (2008)*

Article 3

2008

Voices from the Past and Echoes of the Future: Management of Forest and Woodland Resources by Local Religious Institutions within the Mufurudzi Resettlement Scheme in Zimbabwe

Geoffrey Mukwada
University of the Western Cape

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jea

Recommended Citation
Mukwada, Geoffrey. "Voices from the Past and Echoes of the Future: Management of Forest and Woodland Resources by Local Religious Institutions within the Mufurudzi Resettlement Scheme in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Ecological Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (2008): 39-53.

Available at: https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol12/iss1/3

This Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthropology at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Ecological Anthropology by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

المنارة للاستشارات

www.manaraa.com

Voices from the Past and Echoes of the Future: Management of Forest and Woodland Resources by Local Religious Institutions within the Mufurudzi Resettlement Scheme in Zimbabwe

Geoffrey Mukwada

Abstract

The existing body of literature on community-based natural resource management suggests that local institutions are a mainstay, particularly for the management of plants and animals upon which communities depend for livelihood. However, evidence from the Mufurudzi resettlement scheme in Zimbabwe refutes this assertion. This paper examines the effectiveness of local religious institutions in the management of forest and woodland resources at the micro-level. In this setting, communities were "grafted;" that is, their members were arbitrarily selected for resettlement without consideration for the diversity of their cultural backgrounds or whether they were neighbors to one another prior to resettlement. Based on the analysis of the roles of these institutions, this study demonstrates that the effectiveness of the institutions is constrained by their waning legitimacy within the local community, by their geographic disjunction from the resource base, and by the impact of multiple stressors resulting from an unstable macro-economic climate. I conclude that these factors undermine the stewardship role of religious institutions and create opportunities for resource commercialization, thus in the process precipitating resource overexploitation and decline.

Introduction

Institutional arrangements are critical in shaping natural resource management at the community level. Institutional arrangements refer to the systems, procedures, organizations and legal frameworks that influence the way natural resources are used and managed in an area (Bradstock 2005). In southern Africa, the role of local religious institutions in natural resource conservation predates colonization (Fabricius 2004; Mukamuri 1995; Murphree and Cumming 1993; Ranger 2003; Von Maltitz and Shackleton 2004). This Edenic view has been questioned in recent research findings on community-based wildlife management in Zimbabwe—particularly the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (Duffy 2000; Hughes 2006; Igoe and Fortwangler 2007). Duffy (2000), for instance, argues that wildlife conservation in Africa has persistently been an area for heated political debate in the local, national and international political arenas while Hughes (2006) posits that in many cases projects in community-based natural resource management have merely served as a vehicle for extending state power and control deeper into the rural society, as a result of governments' reluctance to decentralize the responsibility of conservation to local communities (Igoe and Croucher 2007).

In Zimbabwe, debates on community-based natural resource management have tended to focus on communal areas where social controls have been known to traditionally exert considerable influence on patterns of natural resource use and conservation. Similar research has yet to yield conclusive results in older planned resettlement areas, where patterns of land administration, social organization and power configurations have changed since colonial times (Mukwada 2006). Unlike the communal areas where land is communally owned, land in resettlement areas is held under a permit system. Presently, there is a dearth of research on the forces that shape natural resource conservation

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

in resettlement areas, particularly those related to the management of forest and woodland resources by religious local institutions. In this regard, the objective of this paper is to fill the research gap by examining the nature and roles of the key religious institutions that have a stake in forest and woodland resource conservation at the local level.

Contextual Background

Past research has indicated that local religious leaders, including chiefs and spirit mediums, may have played a key role in natural resource conservation in Africa throughout the past. Referring to southern Africa in particular, Fabricius (2004) identifies three historical phases that characterized the development of community-based natural resource management. These include the pre-colonial era (that prevailed before the 17th century), the period of state-driven, top-down preservation, (which started in the early 1920s), and the era of democratization, which emerged in the mid 1980s. During the pre-colonial era, according to Fabricius, natural resource management was largely accomplished through informal traditional institutions such as chiefs, kings, headmen and traditional healers. Prior to the 17th century, ecological religion, that is the use of religious values as a basis for ecological conservation, was at the centre of the conservation ethos that local institutions relied on to effect judicious use of common property resources, especially communally owned forests and woodlands (Ranger 2003; Tyynelä 2002).

Common property in this research context is a term that refers to resources that belong to a legally recognized group of people (Bromley and Cernea 1989; Bruce 1999) who define the manner in which the resources are governed, used and managed (Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop 1975), in some cases using societal controls (Nhira and Fortmann 1993) that limit resource plundering by individuals (Forsyth and Leach 1998). Illustrating how local institutions influenced the conservation of forest and woodland resources, Nhira and Fortmann (1993) delineated the categories of controls through which these institutions exercised their power over the ownership of and access to forest resources, including sacred controls, pragmatic controls, civil contract, and the setting up of contemporary institutions and rules within local communities. Sacred controls are norms of control of tree use based on folklore or ecological religion and enforced by community sanction or traditional leaders (Nhira and Fortmann 1993). These controls have been widely reported throughout Zimbabwe (Ranger 2003). For instance, Moore (2005) demonstrated how power was exercised on the residents of Kaerezi in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe by institutions such as headmen, chiefs, the rainmaker and agents of the central government, all of whom sought to exercise authority by controlling access to land-based resources. Pragmatic controls refer to both long-standing and recently adopted norms designed to maintain a sustainable supply of essential forest products. Taboos that prohibit the cutting of fruit trees are an example of pragmatic controls (Nhira and Fortmann 1993). Civil contract is a collection of controls that are based on norms of civility. Such norms restrain individuals from cutting trees or collecting fruit or firewood from other people's homesteads without seeking prior permission from them (Nhira and Fortmann 1993). These norms regulate the daily conduct of individuals within the community, in which case acting in the contrary is considered as *contra bonos mores* (acting against the norm)(Mukwada 2006).

The main argument that was advanced by researchers on common property resources was that local level institutions were instrumental in directing the way resources are used and managed, in the process shaping the livelihood options that are available to people within the local community (Mortimore et al. 1994). It has been argued by some scholars that throughout southern Africa colonization led to the displacement and disfranchisement of traditional resource management systems (Murphree 1991).

Existing literature suggests that in Zimbabwe, community-based natural resource management structures were dismantled through the imposition of a type of land husbandry that was designed to displace both traditional institutions and practices that were viewed by the colonial state as backward and as a barrier to effective state control of land use (Mohamed-Katerere and Chenje 2002). In the process, lineage leaders such as chiefs and headmen, as well

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

as spirit mediums, were dethroned by the colonial government and confined to the communal areas during the process of land appropriation. Mataya et al. (2002:24) argue that:

> Right from the colonial era, the effect of alienation of land was loss of control and ownership of traditional land rights, which translated into erosion of institutional capacity to manage natural resources, including forests. Appropriation of indigenous land, whether for commercial or public amenities such as national parks and forest reserves also reduced the geographical jurisdiction and powers of the traditional authorities.

In the mid 1980s, in countries that had gained political independence, the process of democratization witnessed the emergence of formal, grassroots, community-based natural resource management structures (Fabricius 2004). In rural Zimbabwe, where forest and woodland resources are legally owned by the central government and have been managed by the Forestry Commission since the enactment of the Forest Act in 1949, the postcolonial formal grassroots structures that emerged include village development committees, ward development committees and elected councilors. Other formal institutions that have been noted include wildlife management committees and natural resource committees (Nhira and Fortmann 1993). This process has been accompanied by the evolution of new rules and knowledge systems relating to natural resource governance (Fabricius 2004). This concurs with the view that institutions are dynamic and capable of changing through time (Scoones and Matose 1993). Campbell et al. (1993:42) observed that in Zimbabwean communal areas traditional practices of tree use, including the collecting of herbal medicines, are in decline while local, informal taboos are less effective at preventing the cutting of sparse trees in cultivated fields.

Similarly, the retention of trees in cultivated fields, a widely used traditional conservation practice in Zimbabwean communal areas, is under threat, even though the practice had previously withstood attempts to eradicate it by government extension (Wilson 1988). Examples of trees that were normally selectively retained in fields include rain tree (*Albizia saman*), mobola plum (*Parinari curatellifolia*) and winter thorn (*Faidherbia albidia)*. These trees were seen as capable of improving yields or supplying fruit and herbal medicines (Campbell et al. 1993).

After the restructuring of local government administration in resettlement areas in 2000, there has been a resurgence of the influence of the local religious institutions that were displaced from all commercial farmland during land appropriation following the enactment of the Land Husbandry Act in 1951 (Mohamed-Katerere and Chenje 2002). The legacy of this historical process was the emergence of a two-tier, community-based natural resource management system, characterized by both the formal and informal community-management systems, with different power configurations (Turner 2004).

However, referring to the problem of the governance of common property natural resources in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, Lawry (1990:403) noted that poor natural resource management is often "attributed to obtrusive state policies which undercut local institutions" while incentives for individuals to effectively participate in the management of these resources are often non-existent. Nevertheless, the disagreements that exist on the exact influence that local institutions exert on natural resources make it a contentious subject worth researching (Bremner and Lu 2006). An important research question that needs attention is: If community-based natural resource management can neither be effectively driven by local institutions nor the state, how can the nature of these institutions and their stewardship role be better understood in terms of forest and woodland resources management in Zimbabwean resettlement areas where deforestation has been reported as widespread (United Nations Development Programme 2002)? Alternatively, if both state and local institutions are purported to have the capacity to wield power over ordinary people, why have they failed to use this power to control deforestation in Zimbabwean resettlement areas?

Earlier research has made attempts to address these questions. For example, Scoones and Matose (1993) explained deforestation in Zimbabwean resettlement areas as a lack of legitimate community-

https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol12/iss1/3 | DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/2162-4593.12.1.3
المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

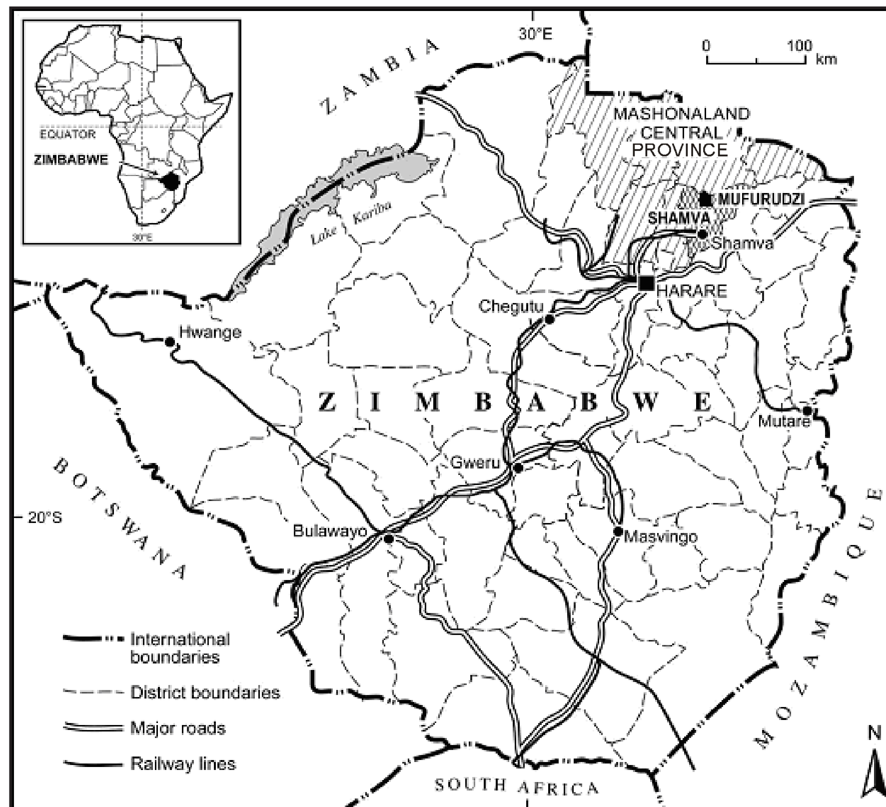

Figure 1. Location of the Mufurudzi resettlement scheme.

based natural resource management institutions and attributed this situation to three factors. First, most settler communities found it difficult to evolve strong local institutions since their membership is derived from diverse ethnic origins. Second, there exists a lack of strong leadership in settler communities, in part because most settlers are young. Third, it has been difficult to sanction resettled community members for collaborating with outsiders in the extraction of wood or grazing of cattle, due to difficulties in defining community membership, exclusion rules and controls.

Even though previous research in Zimbabwean resettlement areas has been revealing about the shortcomings of the local institutions that are involved in forest and woodland resource management, it has not given sufficient attention to the role of local religious institutions that have reasserted themselves in resettlement areas. It is this issue that constitutes the central purpose of this article. Using Mufurudzi as a case study, the key objective is to determine the effectiveness of local religious institutions in directing the use and management of forest and woodland resources in resettlement areas, by examining their stewardship role in an environment characterized by socio-political instability and the prevalence of multi-stressors associated with economic decline.

The Study Area and Methodology

A case study approach was employed in this research. The study area, Mufurudzi resettlement scheme, is a coalescence of 33 former commercial farms found along the Mufurudzi tributary of the Mazowe River, and is situated in the Shamva district of Mashonaland Central province in Zimbabwe (Figure 1). It is located about 100 km northeast of Harare in miombo woodlands (a type of savanna woodland

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

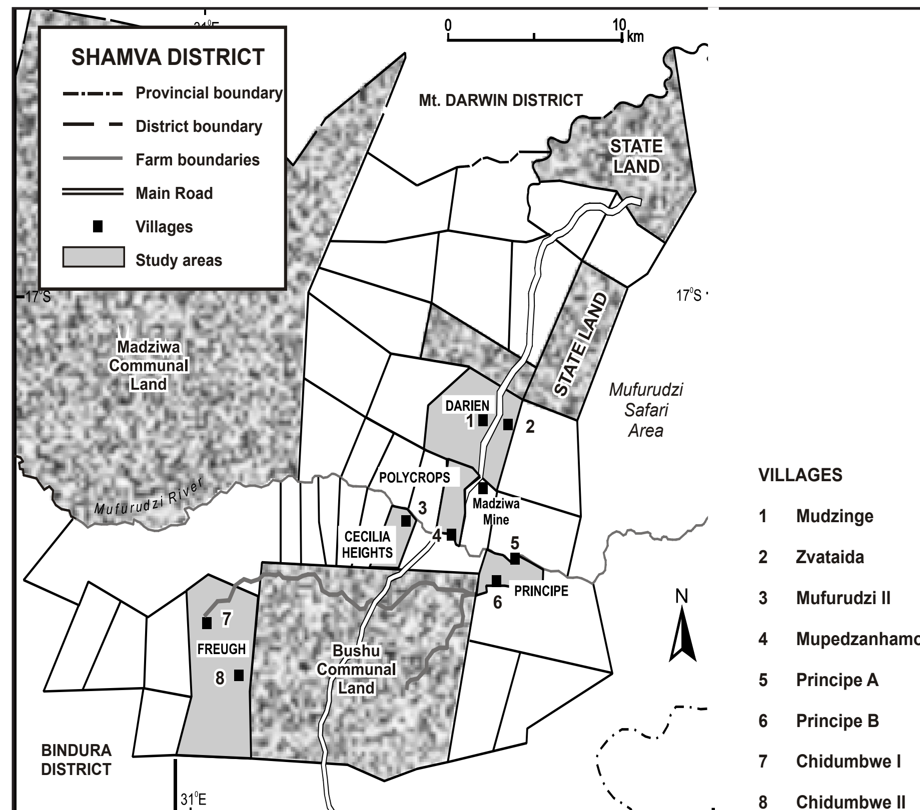

Figure 2. Location of study areas within the Mufurudzi resettlement scheme.

dominated by **musasa** (*Brachystegia spiciformis*) and **munondo** (*Julbernadia globiflora*) trees.

Mufurudzi is an intensive-planned resettlement scheme where 862 households were allocated arable landholdings on an individual basis using a permit system (Figure 2). Prior to resettlement, the main land uses that were prevalent in the area were commercial ranching and mixed farming, which were occasionally punctuated by irrigation-based crop farming. The scheme, which is approximately 82,595 ha in area, was set up in 1981 in line with the postcolonial government's willing-buyer-willing-seller land policy that was enshrined in the Lancaster House constitution that Zimbabwe adopted at independence. In line with this policy, the government would purchase any land meant for resettlement from willing commercial farmers. This British-funded land acquisition program enabled the government to resettle landless people from the crowded communal areas, as well as war-displaced refugees, former Rhodesian soldiers and veterans of the liberation war.

The fieldwork for this research was conducted between November 2003 and July 2005. Fieldwork involved the collection of qualitative data through literature surveying, informal interviews and group discussions. The surveyed literature covered the period between 1975 and 2007. This approach provided both snapshot and longitudinal analyses of the villages to determine which institutions currently exist in the resettlement scheme, how they evolved, what their current roles in the management of forest and woodland resources are and what constraints undermine these roles. Informal interviews were held with all the key categories of people who play religious roles and have a stake in forest and woodland resources in Mufurudzi, including village heads, headmen, chiefs' advisors (locally known as

https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol12/iss1/3 | DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/2162-4593.12.1.3
المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

makurukota) or their representatives, as well as councilors, former village development committee chairmen, ward development committee chairmen, and ethnopharmacists (locally known as **ng'angas**). Interviews were held with all eight village heads, two chiefs' advisors, two headmen, eight former village development committee chairmen, a ward development committee chairman and two ethnopharmacists.

Historical accounts were recorded from the eight villages during the group discussions. The groups that participated in group discussions consisted of key local decision makers and special interest groups in natural resource conservation. In each village, participants were drawn from traditional leadership, members of village development committees and members of special interest groups such as grazing and natural resource management committees (where they existed), as well as women and youths. Altogether, 120 voluntary participants were involved in the discussions, fifteen from each village, comprising five male adults, five women and five youths.

Formal interviews were held with officials from government departments and local authorities, including the District Development Fund, Chaminuka Rural District Council, Agricultural Research and Extension, Forestry Commission, Environmental Management Agency and former resettlement officers for corroborative purposes.

Results

Deforestation and Sustainability of Forest and Woodland Resources in Mufurudzi

In Mufurudzi, forest and woodland resources are critical to the livelihoods of the local community and are an important source of construction poles, firewood, food (bush meat, wax, latex, fruits and other edible non-timber forest products [NTFPs], such as insects like **nhowa** (*Anaphe panda*), **harati** (*Cirina forda),* **masinini** (*Lobobunaea* spp.) and **macimbi** (*Gonimbrasia belina*), as well as traditional medicines. Forests and woodlands in Mufurudzi also provide sacred groves and species from which traditional rituals and ceremonies are conducted. Oftentimes deforestation occurs when these resources are harvested. Informal interviews with community leaders in Mufurudzi indicated that deforestation is a widespread problem in the resettlement area. Moses,[1] the traditional healer-cum-herbalist from Chidumbwe I village stated that:

> When we first settled here in 1982 there was dense woodland cover and one could hardly see things a few meters away. By 1994 we started noticing that trees were getting depleted, especially due to brick burning and the repeated construction and repair of cribs, coups, rakes, granaries and livestock pens, which constantly need to be replaced…. Tobacco is a real environmental witch. Though tobacco is a profitable crop, it requires so much firewood to cure it and this causes deforestation. I have been noticing these changes because besides being a ng'anga I am also the chairman of the grazing committee and I am responsible for the conservation and monitoring of resources such as trees and soil. The trees that I require for my work as a traditional healer are now too few and it takes me far much more time to collect herbal medicines than I used to when we first arrived in this scheme. In many places the soil has been eroded and we now have gullies, especially in vleis.

Most villagers in Mufurudzi, including Moses, argue that the sustainability of forest and woodland resources in this resettlement scheme is questionable. Moses' concerns were echoed during the group discussions that were held in all the eight study villages. In Chidumbwe I and Mudzinge villages, the collection of herbal medicines was cited as the third major cause of deforestation after tobacco curing and brick burning. In some cases, trees are cut for firewood, most of which is sold in the abutting communal areas though in some cases the firewood is sold in nearby towns such as Bindura and Shamva. Similarly, destructive methods of fruit harvesting, involving the pummeling of branches by use of poles, especially from the **muzhanje tree** (wild loquat, *Uapaca kirkiana*), have been reported by the villagers as one of the major causes of loss of fruit trees in the scheme.

Contrary to the widely held view that local institutions, community by-laws, rules, taboos and regulations have the capacity to control the way tree resources are used (Forsyth and Leach 1998; Gumbo

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

1993; Nhira and Fortmann 1993), in some parts of Mufurudzi continual dependence on a declining tree resource base is largely necessitated by lack of alternative resources. This is particularly the case in older villages such as Mupedzanhamo, Mudzinge and Zvataida, where over-utilization of forest and woodland resources is more conspicuous. In these villages, tree resource use is a product of a matrix of choices that are weighed against both the short-term and long-term benefits derived from meeting the demands of immediate needs and those of conservation, simultaneously.

The Effectiveness of Local Religious Institutions as Agents of Community-based Forest and Woodland Management in Mufurudzi

In-depth informal interviews revealed that in Mufurudzi there are religious rules that were designed to minimize resource profligacy, even though the enforcement of these rules cannot always be assured. In-depth interviews with the community leaders in Mufurudzi revealed that the most widely held belief regarding the ownership of forest and woodland resources is that these resources belong to God and the ancestral spirits while their custodianship is under religious leaders, particularly spirit mediums and chiefs, as well as their lieutenants such as headmen and village heads. Such a belief indicates that ecological religion, which has been reported in Zimbabwean communal areas (Ranger 2003), also exists in resettlement areas. This is further supported by the existence of traditional shrines and sacred places where traditional ceremonies are still conducted within the scheme, though most of them are considered to have been desecrated through vegetation clearing, modernization and the introduction of Christianity. These shrines include burial grounds and sites where rainmaking ceremonies are performed.

However, informal interviews also unveiled two categories of religious institutions that sanction forest and woodland resource use in Mufurudzi resettlement scheme, namely endogenous and exogenous institutions. Endogenous institutions include ethnopharmacists, herbalists, and village heads, while exogenous institutions include chiefs, headmen and spirit mediums.

Endogenous Institutions

Ethnopharmacists and herbalists

Ethnopharmacists and herbalists, locally known as ng'angas, are an important institution in the Mufurudzi resettlement scheme. Oftentimes, due to the spiritual power they are purported to have ng'angas are held in awe by the local community. Some ng'angas play both divining roles as well as prescribe herbal medicines to their clients, who are mostly drawn from the local community. In both Chidumbwe I and Mudzinge villages, ng'angas have been incorporated into natural resource management committees, demonstrating that this institution wields considerable influence in village politics. Interviews with ng'angas provided some clues about the link between their practice and forest and woodland conservation. One belief that is held by ng'angas is that they are expected to consider conservation measures that are spiritually acceptable. Ng'angas are required to follow an unwritten code of conduct that governs the way they collect their medicines. Where medicines are derived from tree bark, herbalists protect the medicinal trees by scraping the bark only from the eastern and western sides of the trees, obviously avoiding ring barking. The generally held belief is that medicines that are extracted from a tree will be ineffectual unless due care is exercised to collect it from the eastern and western sides of the tree. There are also certain practices that must be observed when digging roots for medicinal purposes. When asked to explain pits left around some trees whose roots had been dug out for medicinal use, traditional healer Moses said:

> If we fill up the pits completely the medicines that we collect will not work, because the spirits of the forests will not approve. Similarly if you dig out a plant in such a way that you completely destroy it the medicine derived from it will not work because you will have angered the spirits. However, some people don't observe these rules anymore because they want to make money from herbs.

Though this traditional practice is based on tacit knowledge, it can only be inferred that by leaving half-filled pits around trees after root extraction, the damaged tree is allowed to recover through enhanced

المنارة للاستشارات
https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol12/iss1/3 | DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/2162-4593.12.1.3
www.manaraa.com

infiltration and percolation of water, thus ensuring its survival. In their code of practice, ng'angas are also not allowed to collect all their medicines from one place. These practices are also common among ordinary villagers who collect plant materials for self-medication. Local communities in Mufurudzi believe that the destruction of medicinal trees invokes bad omen and calamity from ancestral spirits. However, extensively debarked trees and tree root extraction were evident in some parts of Mufurudzi, especially in Chidumbwe I and Mudzinge villages. This serves as evidence to support the view that judicious use of woodland resources is often ignored where forest resources are commercialized. This situation can be explained in terms of the changes that are taking place within the prevailing macro-economic environment.

Villagers in Mufurudzi resettlement scheme have reported that they have not been spared by Zimbabwe's crumbling health delivery system, which is often characterized by a shortage of clinical drugs and personnel. Coupled with the high prevalence of the Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) pandemic and low household incomes, this situation has heightened the demand for herbal medicines, thus increasing the number of people who rely on ng'angas for treatment. Consequently, this leads to the over-exploitation and subsequent destruction of medicinal trees. Communities in Mufurudzi generally perceive herbal medicines as more affordable compared to clinical drugs. Such a situation is understandable where 57% of the households live on monthly incomes that are less than $10,000 Zimbabwean dollars (USD $1.92, at the exchange rate of Zimbabwean $5,200 per US dollar, which prevailed in March 2004), and also where the health delivery institutions are not adequately funded. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that health centers are sparsely located in Mufurudzi (Mukwada 2006). Besides collecting herbal medicines, enterprising villagers harvest fruit, make crafts, and extract dyes for sale while some extract natural oils, detergents and other products that they use as substitutes for more expensive market-based products, and in the process cushion their households from economic hardships.

Village heads

Another important endogenous institution is the village heads. In Mufurudzi, and other Zimbabwean resettlement areas as well, village heads were only appointed in 2000 with the view to improve the efficiency and capacity of local government administration. The village heads constitute the lowest level of government structures where they are the *de jure* chairmen of village development committees. In the process of conducting their religious duties, village heads take a leading role in directing events such as fertility rituals, rainmaking ceremonies (**mukwerera**) or determining rest days (**chisi**), which are usually followed under the instruction of chiefs and spirit mediums. Oftentimes these roles are extended to natural resource conservation, usually by disseminating the proclamations of the chiefs and spirit mediums. However, interviews with village heads in Mufurudzi revealed that this responsibility is considered cumbersome by them, even though it is legally defined in terms of the Traditional Leaders Act of 1998. The promulgation of the Traditional Leaders Act has left a number of political challenges in its wake, all of which have a bearing on the manner in which forest and woodland resources are governed and managed in resettlement schemes.

First, by discarding the system of 'elected village development committee chairmen,' new frontiers and arenas for power struggles have been opened. Those opposed to strict control of natural resource use have now formed alliances against strict village heads. Second, the legitimacy of those village heads whose lineages are different from the chiefs from the abutting communal areas is often challenged by some villagers. Legitimacy is critically important under circumstances where village heads are required to take a leading spiritual role in directing religious events such as fertility rituals, rainmaking ceremonies as well as the proclamation of rest days. Some village heads find themselves powerless and incapable of directing important social and religious events or enforcing traditional conservation rules. With limited power and authority, the influence of some village heads is usurped and compromised, rendering them ineffectual institutions and powerless custodians of natural resources.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Third, in Mufurudzi, when village heads were first appointed they had to contend with new structures of governance and legislation, and harmonizing their traditional roles with their new roles within modern local governance structures has been cumbersome. This observation supports what Matose and Wily (1996:201) noted about the harmonization of the roles of traditional institutions within local communities with those which they play within new local government structures, "as proscribed and prescribed by the dictates of national policy," a phenomenon that has become a hallmark of confusion throughout Africa.

Alluding to the complexity of the challenges that confront village heads as agents of forest and woodland resource conservation in Mufurudzi, Joseph, the village head of Chidumbwe II, stated:

> It would be difficult for us to strictly bar people who dwell in the surrounding communal areas from cutting down trees in our village without permission and still carry out any business in the communal areas without being victimized. For example, the nearest main business centre to us, Chakonda, is in Bushu communal area. It would be very difficult to visit such a place if you bar people from there from accessing forest and woodland products in our village.

Furthermore, all the interviewed village heads indicated they were not receiving sufficient backing from relevant government departments, a situation that severely weakens their position as local resource managers. A number of village heads narrated incidents where the culprits they had reported to authorities from both the Environmental Management Agency and Forestry Commission, for 'wanton' tree cutting, were never prosecuted, while nearly all village heads noted that they are vulnerable to victimization and ostracism if they were to strictly enforce government regulations or community by-laws. It is *fait accompli* that such a situation promotes loss of forest and woodland resources rather than effective community-based natural resource management. Interestingly, in Mupedzanhamo, Zvataida and Mudzinge villages it was the village heads who were accused by other villagers as the promoters of deforestation. In the first two villages, the village heads were engaged in tobacco farming while in Mudzinge the village head was known for felling the largest trees in search for raw materials for crafts and wooden artifacts, particularly mortars.

Exogenous Institutions

The displacement of lineage leaders such as chiefs and headmen, as well as spirit mediums, was viewed as an overall strategy for land expropriation during colonial times (Mataya et al. 2002). With respect to Mufurudzi, the lineage leaders who constitute exogenous religious leaders include chiefs such as Nyamaropa in the north, Madziwa in the west and Bushu in the south (Figure 2), who are heirs to displaced lineage leaders. In general, land reform beneficiaries in Mufurudzi regard chiefs and spirit mediums as the spiritually designated custodians of all the land based resources that they depend on for livelihood, including land, forest, and woodland resources. Most interviewed village heads concurred with the view that their ancestors owned land-based resources in Mufurudzi. One resettled villager even argued that the land in Mufurudzi traditionally belonged to the ancestral spirits but was annexed by the colonial state and used as fief to reward its World War II heroes.

Both lineage leaders and spirit mediums play religious roles and they are often consulted before agricultural calendars and chisi are decided or when fertility rituals, rainmaking ceremonies, and times of crop harvests are planned. In some cases, lineage leaders have to be consulted before non-timber forest products such as wild fruits are harvested, especially **muzhanje** (wild loquats, *U. kirkiana*).

Chiefs and Headmen

With the backing of the central government, the chiefdoms of the communal areas that are adjacent to resettlement areas have been extended to cover the resettlement areas. Within this new arrangement, village heads in the resettlement areas are supposed to serve as vassals and proxies for chiefdoms and are expected to arraign culprits reported for natural resource abuse before the traditional courts—a practice that obviously generates revenue for them, since restitution is demanded from all people "found

https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol12/iss1/3 | DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/2162-4593.12.1.3
المنارة للاستشارات www.manaraa.com

guilty." One important limitation, however, is that being *ex situ,* chiefs and headmen would not have the means to develop good stewardship over forest and woodland resources in resettlement areas since they can only manage these resources through proxies, that is, the village heads who are resident in these areas. In the process of management by proxies, the geographic disjunction of the exogenous religious institutions is the major limiting factor.

Spirit mediums

Like chiefs and headmen, spirit mediums, locally known as **svikiros** or **mhondoros** (lion spirits), are supposed to be consulted before important religious events are held, showing that even though they are not directly based in the resettlement scheme they still exert considerable influence on important events that take place within the scheme. If spirit mediums were resident in resettlement schemes, this influence would potentially yield benefits for natural resource conservation. Instead, all the authentic spirit mediums within the living memory of the resettled peasants (Table 1) have operated from the surrounding communal areas and their influence in resettlement areas has only started to resurge. Nyashava was the only surviving spirit medium when this research was conducted. Most mediums were renowned for enforcing traditional forest and woodland conservation practices. Apart from regarding forests and woodlands as travel routes and resting places of the ancestral spirits, where wanton tree destruction should be discouraged, most spirit mediums were renowned for enforcing conservation ethics, including the protection of 'keystone species,' which cushion people from hunger and starvation during times of drought.

Table 1. Spirit mediums considered to be authentic in Mufurudzi.

Spirit medium	Village(s) where medium is recognized	Status
Nyamaropa	Mudzinge	Deceased
Nyadumbu	Mudzinge	Deceased
Reza	Mudzinge	Deceased
Mhurumbe	Mufurudzi II, Principe A	Deceased
Nyashava	Principe A, Principe B	Alive when research was conducted
Chitengu	Chidumbwe I, Chidumbwe II	Deceased
Million	Chidumbwe II	Deceased
Mutambavhu	Zvataida	Deceased

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Recounting Chitengu's contribution, Peter, Chidumbwe I village head, said:

> Though there is no living spirit medium in our village at the moment, we used to have Chitengu, who forbade wanton destruction of trees. He warned that people who destroy trees would face the calamity of pest outbreaks and crop destruction by wild animals, which will be unleashed upon them by the living dead. Trees which received special protection from him include **mukute** (water berry, *Syzygium cordatum*), **muhacha** (mobola plum, *P. curatellifolia*), and **muzhanje** (wild loquat, *U. kirkiana*), keystone species that cushion people from hunger during times of drought.

Another medium that is well remembered for his stance on conservation is Mhurumbe, who regarded forests as the resting places for the ancestral spirits, and which can only be destroyed at one's peril as this could invoke anger and calamity from these spirits, including drought and attacks by wild animals like jackals and lions. Samson, the village head of Mufurudzi village II, chided:

> The medium's conservation stance on deforestation was meant to promote habitat protection, sustainable supply and provision of food during famine. The current generations, who call themselves modern, who in fact are the generation of the pill, have little respect for our traditions or values. They don't have respect for our ancestral spirits and mediums. This is why the destruction of forests has reached unprecedented levels.

However, Nyashava has not yet given any special instructions about forest and woodland resource conservation, although it has been reported that he forbids the killing of pangolin and python. In Mufurudzi, the system of values and beliefs regards the earth as one gigantic living organism whose preservation is the only means through which human survival can be ensured.

One village head referred to how fellow villagers ignored the warning that the spirit medium Mutambavhu gave when he proclaimed:

> When you move into the resettlement area you should not uncover the land which you found clothed with trees (as recalled by James, the former village head of Zvataida).

However, abundant evidence exists which suggests that even the keystone species have not been spared from destruction. The example of the destruction of muzhanje in Chidumbwe I and Chidumbwe II, which has been cited earlier, and the over-exploitation of trees from which herbal medicines are harvested, suggest that where common property resources are scarce, there can be considerable competition to harvest the resources for commercial purposes (Gumbo et al. 1990).

Currently in Mufurudzi, the role of ecoreligion in natural resource conservation is waning due to modernization and state influence. A considerable number of African independent churches and Christian sects have sprouted in different parts of Mufurudzi. The western beliefs and values that are propagated by these churches have generally undermined and weakened the influence of traditional institutions, including spirit mediums, the overall effect being the reduction of the potential of ecoreligion as a conservation strategy in the resettlement scheme. This strategy is further undermined by cultural diversity, which makes it difficult to adopt a common ecoreligious focus. This problem stems from the fact that resettled villagers are from different ethnic backgrounds, including the Zezurus, Kore-kores, Manyikas, and Karangas, while others are of Malawian or Mozambican descent. Furthermore, since different categories of households (in terms of ethnicity) hold different sets of religious customs, traditions, taboos, norms and values about different species of trees or resources derived from them, harmonizing the practices of these groups is no easy task. Thus, social stratification and lack of homogeneity make resettlement areas susceptible to loss of social cohesion. Campbell and Shackleton (2002) posit that highly stratified and differentiated communities are normally characterized by intra-community power struggles and conflicts. This description closely corresponds to the situation that prevails in the Mufurudzi resettlement scheme.

Elderly villagers throughout the Mufurudzi resettlement scheme deplored how the local community has lost respect for traditional authority, traditional conservation values and rules and regulations.

https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol12/iss1/3 | DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/2162-4593.12.1.3

للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

As one village elder from Mupedzanhamo recalls:

> While advising a fellow villager against wanton tree destruction, I was asked whether I was pregnant with trees when I was resettled here. By asking this question the arrogant individual was arguing that the trees that he was destroying did not belong to me, therefore I had no right to control the way he was using them.

The above quote brings to the fore the background against which the over utilization of forest and woodland resources mentioned earlier has occurred in some parts of the Mufurudzi resettlement scheme, a result of the erosion of traditional cultural values, loss of social cohesion and loss of the sense of collective social responsibility, all of which are rooted in the dynamics of the local political landscape. Individual values now precede and supersede collective and societal values, yet it is on the latter that principles of community-based natural resource management are premised. In elaboration, the village elder from Mupedzanhamo maintained that traditionally for community-based forest and woodland resource management to be effective, constructive advice from peers would normally be readily accepted since it was meant to serve the common good, particularly where the advice was meant to protect the environment through collective proprietorship. Under conditions where individual goals threaten those of collective responsibility, the success of societal controls as a measure of promoting forest and woodland resource conservation is doubtful, more so when they are exacerbated by the weakening of local religious institutions.

Conclusion

In Mufurudzi, forest and woodland resources serve purposes that are critical to the livelihoods of local communities, some of which are social, psychological (spiritual) and economic. Due to the widespread occurrence of deforestation in the resettlement area, I concur with the villagers' view that the sustainability of these resources is questionable. This situation has partly resulted from the heightened demands to meet the basic needs of the local population, including shelter and health, and also partly from commercialization. I conclude that in their current form, both endogenous and exogenous religious local institutions lack the capacity to effectively manage forest and woodland resources in Mufurudzi, especially in an environment where these resources are overdrawn to meet need driven and commercially driven demands against the background of a crumbling national macro-economy which is characterized by a failing health delivery system and food shortages.

Even though evidence gathered from existing literature portrays an edenic picture where local religious local institutions may have successfully directed how tree resources are used and managed, empirical evidence from Mufurudzi proves otherwise. Within the context of the debates on the role of local religious institutions as tree resource stewards, I conclude that even though these institutions may have successfully managed forest and woodland resources in the past, success is not guaranteed today. Without evidence to support that these institutions are effective in community-based forest and woodland resources, I also conclude that these debates may undoubtedly continue to be a fountain of conventional wisdom that will continue to inform policy on community-based forest and woodland resources and provide guidance on future research regarding the nexus between stewardship and environmental resources, though they will indeed remain a mingling of voices from the past and echoes from the future that no one can be certain about.

Geoffrey Mukwada, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of the Western Cape, 2881306@uwc.ac.za

Notes

1 Psuedonyms are used throughout this manuscript to respect the privacy of interviewees.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

References Cited

Bradstock, A.
2005 *Key experiences of land reform in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa*. London: FARM-Africa.

Bremner, J., and F. Lu.
2006 Common property among indigenous peoples of the Ecuadorian Amazon. *Conservation and Society* 4(4):499-521.

Bromley, D.W., and M.M. Cernea.
1989 *The management of common property natural resources: Some conceptual and operational fallacies*. World Bank Discussion Paper, No. 57. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Bruce, J.W.
1999 *Legal bases for management of forest resources as common property*, *Community Forestry Note No. 14*. Rome: FAO of the United Nations.

Campbell, B. M., I. Grundy, and F. Matose.
1993 "Tree and woodland resources – the technical practices of small-scale farmers," in *Living with trees: Policies for forestry management in Zimbabwe: World Bank Technical Paper No. 210*. Edited by P.N. Bradley and K. McNamara, pp. 29-62. Washington DC: World Bank.

Campbell, B., and S. Shackleton.
2002 Organizing for community-based natural resources management. *The Zimbabwe Science News* 36(1-2):5-12.

Ciriacy-Wantrup, S.V., and R. Bishop.
1975 Common property as a concept in natural resource policy. *Natural Resources Journal* 15:713-727.

Duffy, R.
2000 *Killing for conservation.* Oxford: James Currey Publishers.

Fabricius, C.
2004 "The fundamentals of community-based natural resource management," in *Rights, resources and rural development: community-based natural resource management in southern Africa.* Edited by C. Fabricius and E. Koch, pp. 2-43. London: Earthscan.

Forsyth, T., and M. Leach.
1998 Poverty and the environment: Priorities for research and policy-an overview study prepared for the United Nations Development Programme and European Commission. Brighton, UK: University of Sussex Institute of Development Studies .

Gumbo, D.J.
1993 "Is there traditional management of indigenous forest resources in the communal lands of Zimbabwe?" in *The ecology and management of indigenous forests in southern Africa: Proceedings of an international symposium.* Edited by G.D. Piearce and D.J. Gumbo, pp. 83-85. Victoria Falls: Zimbabwe Forestry Institute and SAREC.

Gumbo, D.J., B.B. Mukamuri, M.I. Muzondo, and I.C. Scoones.
1990 "Indigenous and exotic fruit trees: why do people want to grow them?" in *Agroforestry for Sustainable Production: Economic Implications*. Edited by R.T. Prinsley, pp. 185-214. London: Commonwealth Science Council.

Hughes, D.M.
2006 *From enslavement to environmentalism: Politics on a southern African frontier.* Seattle,WA: University of Washington Press.

https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol12/iss1/3 | DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/2162-4593.12.1.3

المنارة للاستشارات www.manaraa.com

Igoe, J., and B. Croucher.
2007 Conservation, commerce, and communities: The story of community-based wildlife management areas in Tanzania. *Conservation and Society* 5(4):534-561.

Igoe, J., and C. Fortwangler.
2007 Whither communities and conservation. *The International Journal of Biodiversity Science and Management* 3(2):65-76.

Lawry, S.W.
1990 Tenure policy toward common property natural resources in sub-Saharan Africa. *Natural Resources Journal* 30:403-422.

Mataya, C., P. Gondo, and G. Kowero.
2002 Evaluation of land policies and legislation in Malawi and Zimbabwe: Implications for forestry development. *The Zimbabwe Science News* 36(1-2):18-27.

Matose, F., and L. Wily.
1996 "Institutional arrangements governing the use and management of miombo woodlands and welfare in Africa," in *The Miombo transition: Woodlands and welfare in Africa*. Edited by B. Campbell, pp.7-22. Bogor, Java: CIFOR.

Mohamed-Katerere, J. C., and M. Chenje.
2002 *Environmental law and policy in Zimbabwe*. Harare: SARDC.

Moore, D.S.
2005 *Suffering for territory: Race, place and power in Zimbabwe.* London: Duke University Press.

Mortimore, M., M. Tiffen, and F. Gichuki.
1994 *More people, less erosion: Environmental recovery in Kenya*. Colchester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Mukamuri, B.
1995 Local environmental conservation strategies: Karanga religion, policies and environmental control. *Environment and History* 1:297-311.

Mukwada, G.
2006 Unlocking resources: The environmental impacts of land reform and their implications on the sustainability of forest and woodland resources and rural livelihoods – The case of Mufurudzi resettlement scheme in Zimbabwe. PhD. diss., University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Murphree, M.
1991 "Decentralizing proprietorship of wildlife resources in Zimbabwe's communal areas," CASS Occasional Paper Series. Harare: University of Zimbabwe.

Murphree, M.W., and D.H.M. Cumming.
1993 "Savanna land use: Policy and practice in Zimbabwe," in *The world's savannas: Economic driving forces, ecological constraints and policy options for sustainable land use*. Edited by M.D. Young and O.T. Solbrig, pp.139-178. Paris: UNESCO and The Parthenun Publishing Group.

Nhira, C., and L. Fortmann.
1993 "Local woodland management: Realities at the grassroots," in *Living with trees: Policies for forestry management in Zimbabwe: World Bank Technical Paper No. 210*. Edited by P.N. Bradley and K. McNamara, pp.139-155. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Ranger, T.
2003 "Women & environment in African religion," in *Social history & African environments*. Edited by W. Beinart and J. McGregor, pp. 72-86. Oxford: James Currey Publishers.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Scoones, I., and F. Matose.
1993 "Local woodland management: Constraints and opportunities for sustainable resource use," in *Living with trees: Policies for forestry management in Zimbabwe: World Bank Technical Paper No. 210*. Edited by P.N. Bradley and K. McNamara, pp.157-198. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Turner, S.
2004 "Community-based natural resource management and rural livelihoods," in *Rights, resources and rural development: Community-based natural resource management in southern Africa.* Edited by C. Fabricius and E. Koch, pp.44-65. London: Earthscan.

Tyynelä, T.
2002 "Local management of natural resources: Cases from Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Mozambique," Paper Presented at a Seminar at University of Joensuu. Joensuu, Finland.

United Nations Development Programme.
2002 *Land reform and resettlement: Assessment and suggested framework for the future – Interim mission report*. Retrieved January, 2002, from http:// www.undp.org/rba/pubs/landreform.pdf.

Von Maltitz, G.P., and S.E. Shackleton.
2004 "Use and management of forests and woodlands in South Africa: Stakeholders, institutions and processes from past to present," in *Indigenous forests and woodlands in South Africa: Policy people and practice*. Edited by M.J. Lawes, H.A. Eeley, C.M. Shackleton and B.G. Geach, pp. 109-135. Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Wilson, E.O.
1988 "The current state of biodiversity," in *Biodiversity*. Edited by E.O. Wilson, pp. 3-18. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol12/iss1/3 | DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/2162-4593.12.1.3

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com