

An Ethnography of Knowledge

**Knowledge production and dissemination in
land resettlement areas in Zimbabwe:
the case of Mupfurudzi**

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Resource Studies for Development

An Ethnography of Knowledge

Knowledge production and dissemination in land resettlement areas in Zimbabwe: the case of Mupfurudzi

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation
CIAT - International Centre for Tropical Agriculture
CIMMYT - International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre
ZANU (PF) - Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)
MDC - Movement for Democratic Change
AGRITEX - Agriculture and Extension
AFC - Agricultural Finance Cooperation
AGRIBANK- Agricultural Bank
VIDCO - Village Development Committee
IFPRI - International Food Policy Research Institute
ITK - Indigenous Technical Knowledge
TOT - Transfer of Technology
ANC - African National Congress
HYV - High Yielding Varieties of Maize
CAMPFIRE - Communal Areas Programme for indigenous Resources
COTTCO - Cotton Company of Zimbabwe
HIV - Human Immuno Virus
AIDS - Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
SEEDCO - Seed Company Zimbabwe
GMB - Grain Marketing Board
CMB - Cotton Marketing Board
ZTA - Zimbabwe Tobacco Association
DERUDE - Department of Rural Development
DA - District Administrator
PGR - Plant Genetic Resource Management
LSCF - Large Scale Commercial Farms

Authors Note

Through out the history of mankind people have been preoccupied with knowing. With knowledge also comes ignorance. Others are designated as the idiots whilst others become the wise Solomons. This is the story of this book. The story of knowledge and the quest for knowledge of how some become knowers and others become the idiots. This story which is neither my story nor the story of my sponsors but the story of the people I worked with for over two years and who made this work possible. My only hope is that I have been faithful to the story so that the people of Mudzingo and Muringamombe will recognise this story as theirs and not as an alien construct by some over enthusiastic academic. By default I have made this story mine and my sponsor's by virtue of being the producer of the final text.

Here then is the story of knowledge and practise. The journey has just began enjoy the ride.

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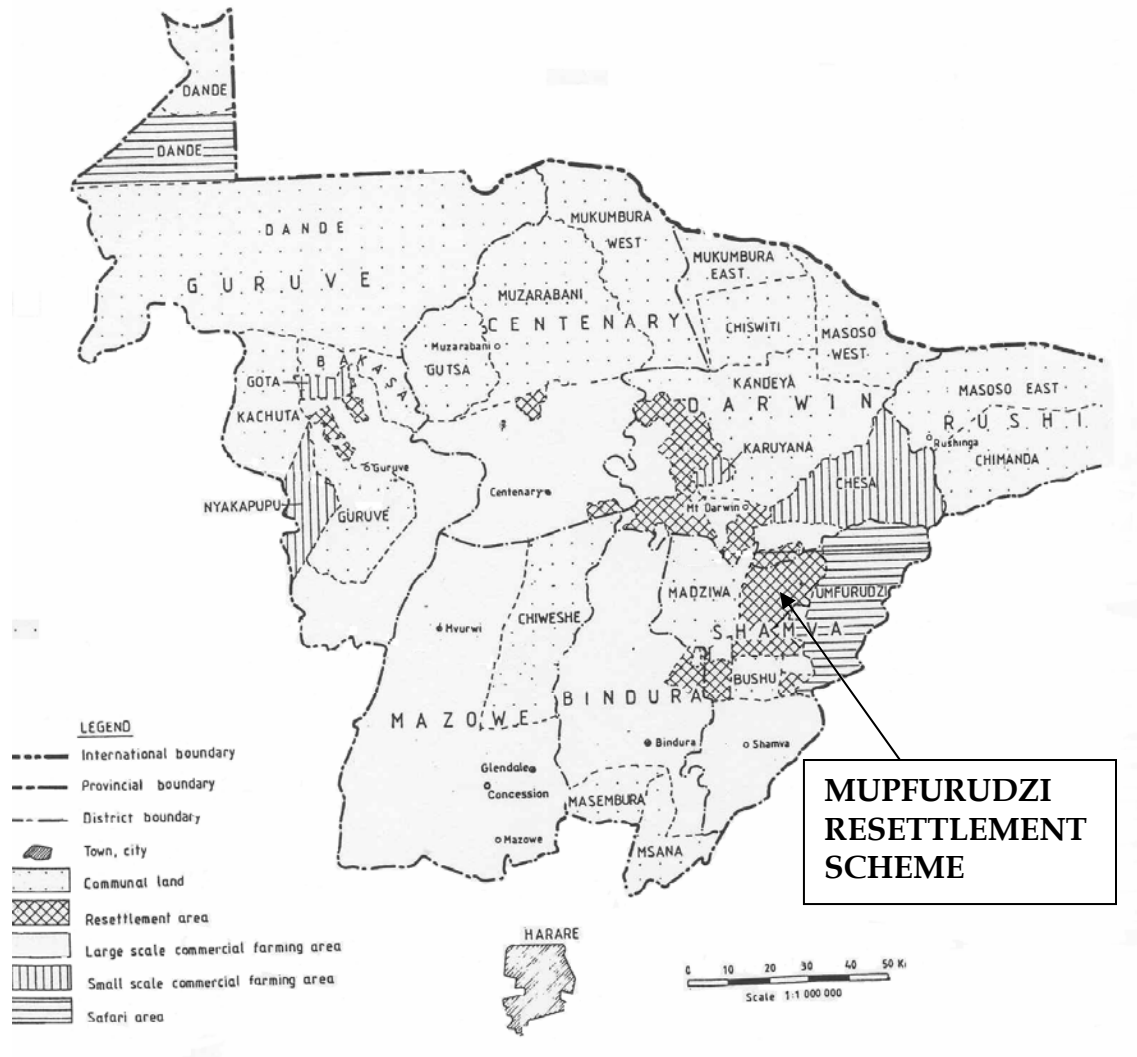
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Map 1: Zimbabwe locating Shamva



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1

Knowledge, Resettlement and Farming

Introduction

This book is based on an ethnographic study carried out among farmers in Shamva resettlement area in Zimbabwe. I spent a period of 30 months gathering data. In 2001, I was involved in an externally funded multi-disciplinary study on accessing the impact of agricultural research on poverty reduction with a particular focus on High Yielding Varieties (HYVs) of Maize in Zimbabwe (Bourdillon *et al.*, 2002). This multi-disciplinary study looked at the pathways of dissemination of knowledge about hybrid maize. The study took advantage of the huge data base on quantitative information that was available from previous studies in the same community. The research contained data on 424 households in three land resettlement areas in Zimbabwe. This panel study, unique for Africa, contained data for the years 1984, 1987, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997 and 2000 and covered aspects such as family composition, labour, agriculture, assets, institutional linkages, sources of income, nutritional status and anthropometrics. The database was then used as a reference point from which to select cases for further in-depth studies. As the study progressed and I was confronted with situations in the field, I decided that there was a need to go beyond this rather narrow angle of study to look at the production, growth and dissemination of knowledge about farming in general and not just focus on maize cultivation as a poverty reduction strategy.

This chapter, however, provides a brief introduction to the study, a discussion on the issue of resettlement in Zimbabwe (since the area I worked in was a land resettlement area) as well as a brief background to the study area. In the discussion on land reform, I will only discuss the early land reforms that occurred in the 1980s soon after independence from British colonial rule, and not the current fast track land redistribution. This is so because the study area is a result of the early resettlement and not the Fast Track Land Resettlement that is too recent for consideration in this study (for a discussion of the Fast Track Land Resettlement see Moyo, 2004).

Land reform in Zimbabwe represents a scientific field of great interest. The Zimbabwean government has implemented land reform from above since 1982 in the form of land resettlement. Recently the process of land redistribution gained a new momentum. The current phase of resettlement involves 'fast track' land resettlement or land invasions depending on whether one supports

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the process or not. A substantial body of knowledge about the process of land reform is already accumulated (Kinsey, 1999) – about asset accumulation, strategies for acquiring income, livelihoods, or on the effects of land reform on gender and economic empowerment (Gaidzanwa, 1995; Jacobs, 1993), as well as the social political and economic justifications for land resettlement in Zimbabwe (Zinyama, 1995:222). However, very little is known about the dynamic processes of acquisition, dissemination and socialisation of agricultural knowledge in the context of land resettlement whereby people move from one place to another, rather unknown, area in terms of agro-ecology infrastructure, institutions and culture.

The lack of academic literature on the issue of knowledge in resettlement areas is hardly surprising as post-independence academics were mostly interested in evaluating the relative success of resettlement schemes using the government's stated objectives as the yardstick. For example, there was an interest in whether self-reliance was increasing, jobs being created, incomes improved and food security achieved. Feminist scholars began to focus on issues related to women's livelihoods. In most cases knowledge production was not regarded as an integral component of resettlement since it was assumed that the resettled people were to be 'given' knowledge by the government employed extension workers and researchers were often concerned that the number of extension workers was insufficient to ensure the effective dissemination of knowledge to the 'ignorant' masses. Only recently in Zimbabwe has there been an attempt to study farmers' knowledge and to question the efficacy of highly standardised expert knowledge (Murwira and Hagmann, 1995:302; Matose and Mukamuri, 1993:28). For a long time there has been an unquestioning acceptance of 'expert knowledge' as the panacea to the problem of low production and poor and inefficient resource use among local farmers. The stress on the paramouncy of expert knowledge (as will be discussed in later chapters) has its roots in the colonial era. 'Official knowledge has a history of being considered as scientific and modern, developed as it was in European centres of knowledge during the colonial era. Farmers knowledge had little room in the scientifically tested and proven body of knowledge' (Matose and Makamuri, 1993:27) However, in contrast I focus on how farmers in resettlement areas produce as well as internalise knowledge and technology in their lives, and how these processes of internalisation and adaptation of knowledge transform their livelihoods. This study is in line with the growing international interest in farmers' knowledge¹. This interest arises

¹ Internationally the concern with everyday forms of knowledge started in the 1980s. Writers such as Knorr-Cetina (1981) were concerned with showing how expert and everyday forms of knowledge related to the production of scientific knowledge in scientific establishments.

because of the discovery that 'such knowledge is indispensable in view of the need to rebalance growth factors, increased recognition of the significance of diversity in agriculture and changed perceptions about the nature of innovations and the innovation process' (Stuiver *et al*, 2004:94).

The present study constitutes an attempt to emphasise the farmer as a knower, and therefore to distance myself from the transfer of technology approaches (TOT), which assume that farmers do not know and have to get knowledge from outside (Roth, 2001). I significantly depart from Barth's (2002:2) approach that emphasises that researchers should focus their scrutiny on the distribution of knowledge, especially its absence or presence in particular people and the processes affecting its distribution. From another angle Keesing (1987:166) maintains that sociology of knowledge must study the production as well as the distribution of knowledge. For him knowledge is diverse and differentiated into layers (162-163) where others can get to the inner most layers and others do not. The position of this thesis is that no one is completely without knowledge but rather that people may know different things depending on their social positioning and circumstances. There is also a two-way exchange of knowledge and information between those that were traditionally regarded as 'knowers' and those that had to be given knowledge.

I adopt the concept of the social production of knowledge (Woolgar 1983:244) as my central concept because the production of knowledge entails recognition that knowledge is not out there waiting to be used but, like most other commodities, it has to be produced. In several respects social circumstances mediate in the production of knowledge accounts. 'These accounts are to be understood as actively constructed accounts, rather than passively received reflections of an external world, and they are to be understood in terms of the social circumstances which shape their social construction....accounts are to be viewed as the end product of a process of construction' (Woolgar, 1983:244). Thus in this book there is an active attempt to show how local farmers are active in the production of knowledge. The notion of 'production' is limited however to the extent that it brings to mind the image of factory production where after the necessary steps are taken in the manufacturing process, the end result is a standardised product. On the other hand, as pointed out by Long (1992; 2001:170-171, 243), Long and Villarreal (1993), van der Ploeg (2003) and

Chambers (1983) and Richards (1985) picked up this interest in everyday forms of knowledge but took a different route from that taken by Knorr-Cetina who was studying the sociology of science. Chambers and Richards started to emphasise that the knowledge of ordinary people had to be studied and its useful elements used to enrich science. Warren *et al* (1995) discussed about the cultural dimensions of development in which they emphasised the importance of what they referred to as 'indigenous knowledge systems' in development. Some of the implications of these approaches and also on how these debates have been taken up in the 1990s and 2000s will be discussed in Chapter 2.

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Leeuwis (2004:101), knowledge can never be standardised, and can never be unitary and systematic since it is multi-layered and there are multiple realities (Leeuwis, 2004:101). Also its production entails the interaction of different kinds of actors (farmers, researchers, extension officers, NGOs etc) and is not linear. As Long and Villarreal maintain, there is no clear distinction between knowledge producers, disseminators and users.

By regarding knowledge as produced, there is also a strong realisation that 'empirical facts by themselves do not determine the facts of knowledge' (Harvey, 1981:95 cited in Woolgar, 1983:245). Farmers themselves select from an array of possibilities and shape their knowledge and practice according to what they think is proper, moral, and relevant to their needs. Thus what determines knowledge are not 'empirical facts' but how these 'facts' are understood and interpreted by the various actors.

There is also an obsession by experts to understand why farmers do not do as they are told. This obsession reflects, as I discuss in later chapters, a failure on the part of the experts to realise that knowledge is social and contextual. This failure to realise the social and contextual nature of knowledge is short-sighted because research that does not take into account farmer's perspectives, usually lacks relevance to farmers' needs, and its results are less likely to be adopted by farmers.

However, recently there has been an attempt by some research centres to include farmers' knowledge and practices when they carry out their research. For example, for international research centres such as CIMMIT² (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre) and CIAT (International Centre for Tropical Agriculture)³ research on farmer knowledge and practice is central to

² In Zimbabwe CIMMYT has started to research on Open Pollinated Varieties (OPVs) of maize, which are more relevant to the needs of resource poor farmers. As described in Bourdillon *et al* (2002) 'in this OPV-endavour CIMMYT constructs new networks than Seed Co does with regard to hybrid maize. While Seed Co's networks are entrenched in markets and money, CIMMYT looks for strategic alliances with farmers, the public sector, private seed companies, other elements of the private sector, such as distributors and retailers to select, breed and distribute OPV maize seed. The "Mother-Baby" trials in Zimbabwe and the leaflet "Farmer Voices Heard" are clear manifestations of this strategy'.

³ However, some international organisations have begun to realise this and as a result their research is more relevant to farmer's needs. For example, CIAT regards farmer knowledge and experiences as important when designing their technologies. For example, in their on line CIAT synthesis paper they state that when breeding seed they focus on species that are especially important to the poor people living in marginal environments. For instance, in Ethiopia they developed a bean variety that doubled crop yield even when acres under cultivation were reduced. This bean variety was suitable for conditions of low rainfall that prevail in most parts of Ethiopia, and suited local food preparation and had strong market appeal. This seed was very popular among farmers and the farmers named it Roba 'pouring rain' dispensing with its scientific name Line A176 (<http://www.ciat.cgiar.org>).

their applied research agendas. These centres involve farmers in their research processes, taking farmers' needs and perspectives seriously throughout. Results from such experiments are usually relevant to the needs of farmers.

A Brief Background on Land Resettlement

The land question is an issue of major economic and political importance in Zimbabwe. Moyo (1996) correctly points out that land 'underpins the economic social and political lives of the majority of Zimbabweans'. Thus the anger at the gross disparities in land ownership between blacks and whites became the rallying point during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. As the black population increased the blacks were no longer able to eke out a living on the generally poor soils, low rainfall and overcrowded conditions of the rural areas. This discontent with the question of land culminated in the liberation struggle from the early 1960s onwards resulting in independence in 1980 (Chitsike, 2003:2). Even during Zimbabwe Rhodesia under Muzorewa, it was realised that there was a great need for removing the racial division on land. The Muzorewa government however wanted only a limited redistribution of land between large commercial farms and the peasant areas (Bush and Cliffe, 1984:81), largely aimed at silencing or thwarting the liberation movement which was mobilised around the land issue. Only 2% of European land was proposed for redistribution during this era and this 2% was regarded as inadequate.

At independence, '74% of all peasant land was in areas where droughts are frequent and where even normal levels of rainfall are inadequate for intensive crop production' (Herbst, 1990:39). Although others, such as Mushunje (2001:2), discuss the issue of the skewed land distribution between the blacks and whites at independence in terms of the amount owned by each, it has long been pointed out by other authors such as Skalnes (1995:155) that inequalities in land ownership become even more apparent when quality of land is considered, especially taking into account that at independence almost one third of LSCF (Large Scale Commercial Farms) were located in Natural regions I and II characterised by high rainfall and good soils, whilst less than a tenth of communal area farms were in these areas.

On the other hand, 'two thirds of the country is relatively infertile and heavily drought prone (Natural regions IV and V). This is where almost all three quarters of communal farms are found' (Skalnes, 1995:155). As a result, after ZANU (PF) successfully used the land question to garner support from the masses when it came to power in 1980, the ZANU (PF) government saw it fit to immediately deliver some of its promises for equitable redistribution of land in post-independence Zimbabwe. The Mupfurudzi resettlement scheme was one of the earliest of such resettlement schemes set up by government in 1980. The vast majority of farmers in Mupfurudzi settled in 1981.

However, it is generally agreed that the government failed to meet its intended objective of resettling 162, 000 families in the first ten years of independence. For instance, Moyo (2004:7) claims that between 1980 and 1996 only 70, 000 families had been resettled which fell far short of the targeted 162 000 families for resettlement by 1990. Skalnes (1995:156) puts the figure of resettled families by 1993 as 55, 000 families. Land resettlement was fastest before 1985 when 38, 000 families were resettled by 1983 (Jacobs, 1990:170) but began to slow down after that as government began to focus on rural development initiatives in order to provide infrastructure in the Communal Areas which, it was assumed would reduce the need to acquire more land for redistribution. Thus the failure by government to deliver some of its promises on land led to land invasions of Large Scale Commercial Farms (LSCFs) in 2000 by peasants, villagers and war veterans who had fought in Zimbabwe's war for independence from the British.

Even before the land invasions of 2000, Matose (1997:69) was worried that 'the slow progress that has been made in land redistribution has driven some landless and poor people to resort to "squatting" as a means of gaining access to land for settlement and farming. Forest lands and state lands have been especially vulnerable to squatting and illegal resource use by neighbouring communities resulting in conflicts with forest managers.' The land reform had failed to substantially challenge the basic property regimes that had existed from the colonial era.

The resettlement of the early days was based on the 'willing buyer' / 'willing seller' concept. The black political parties, that is, ZANU (PF), ZAPU and ZANU Ndonga, as well as the British Government of Margaret Thatcher, had agreed at the Lancaster House conference to end the war. Thus farmers could be resettled as families on land that had been abandoned by white farmers during the war of liberation or on land that farmers were willing to sell. As noted by Moyo and Skalnes (1990), in the early years most farmers who were willing to sell were themselves living in marginal areas. They saw this as an opportunity to sell their land and buy farms in prime farming areas from some farmers that were leaving. Mutangadura (1997:18) also maintains that most of the land acquired for resettlement was of poor quality due to the fact that land was sold on a 'willing buyer' / 'willing seller' basis. Thus, in those early years of resettlement until 1989 when 'illegal' land occupations begun, Moyo (2004:7) states that 'Zimbabwe's land reform in terms of the amount, quality, location and cost of land acquired for redistribution was driven by landholders rather than the state or the beneficiaries in accordance with their needs and demands'. Although in 1985 the 'parliament passed a new Land Acquisition Act which allowed the government the right of first refusal on all Large Scale Commercial Farms put up for sale' (Chitsike, 2003:7), the government often lacked the resources to purchase those farms. As a result, the early resettlement farms

were located in marginal farming areas near communal areas. Thus the Madziva, Bushu, Chizanga and Nyamaropa communal lands surround the Mupfurudzi resettlement scheme where this study was carried out. Although Mupfurudzi receives high rainfall of between 750-1000 mm per year, in good years characteristic of region II it is usually classified as region IIb because of its poor soils. After the government in 2000 restored the powers of the traditional chiefs, the two villages of this research were placed under the jurisdiction of Chief Nyamaropa. Rukuni (1994) points out that at resettlement the government and some traditional leaders preferred the resettlement areas to be near the communal areas of the people they were resettling for minimum community disruption. However, things did not work out that way because in the resettlement area I worked in, there were not only resettled people from Madziwa communal areas, but also others from as far away as Chimanimani, Karoi, Mutare, and Murehwa.

Criteria for selection into these schemes included: being refugees or other persons displaced by war, including extra-territorial refugees, urban refugees and former inhabitants of protected villages; being unemployed; being a landless resident in a communal area or having insufficient land to maintain themselves and their families (Kinsey, 1982:92-113) or being a war veteran (Gunning, 2000:159). To qualify for resettlement a person had to be unemployed, or if he was then he had to be willing to give up his urban job and focus on farming full time (Bush and Cliffe, 1984:87, 88; see also Jacobs, 1993:45). At the time of settlement, the household heads were also supposed to be married or widowed, and aged between 25 to 50. Families selected for resettlement were assigned to these schemes and the consolidated villages within them, on a largely random basis. In this sample, 90% of households settled in the early 1980s had been adversely affected by the war for independence in some form or another. Before being resettled, most (66%) had been peasant farmers with the remainder being landless labourers on commercial farms, or refugees and workers in the rural and urban informal sectors.

Land resettlement was based on Models A, B, C and D. In Model A, resettled households were given 5 hectares of land to be farmed on an individual household basis. Model B involved the formation of cooperatives to manage farms on a cooperative basis. Model C was based on the nucleus of a commercial estate while households had their own individual plots but acted as out-growers. Model D was intended for low rainfall areas in natural regions IV and V which involved the use of ranches for grazing by communal communities. However, model A proved to be the most popular. Jacobs (1990:170) notes that of the 38, 000 families resettled by 1985, approximately 35, 000 were in Model A schemes, 2, 500 in model B and a small number of the other types. Mupfurudzi resettlement scheme fell under Model A.

Families settled on these schemes were required to renounce any claim to land elsewhere in Zimbabwe. They were not given ownership of the land on which they were settled, but instead were given permits covering residential and farm plots. In theory these permits could be withdrawn should settlers fail to follow the guidance of government appointed resettlement officers who acted to teach farmers how to farm and adjudicated in cases of conflict between resettled people. The resettlement officers had the legal power to evict settlers from land (Jacobs, 1991:522). Each household was allocated 5 hectares of arable land for cultivation, with the remaining area in each resettlement site being devoted to communal grazing. In return for this allocation of land, the Zimbabwean government expected male heads of households to rely exclusively on farming for their livelihoods. Until 1992, male household heads were not permitted to work elsewhere, nor could they migrate to cities, leaving their wives to work these plots. The then Deputy Minister of Lands had explained the government's position thus: 'We cannot give land to the employed since they will not have time to work that land. At the moment they have a lot of land belonging to the unemployed lying idle' (cited in Jacobs, 1983:45). This was a continuation of the colonial policy whereby the government wanted to separate peasant from proletariat. A person could either be a peasant or a proletariat but never both. However, as shown by the excerpt on the discussion with Snoia from Kamhopo village in chapter three, sometimes people flouted the government's rules and looked for employment leaving their wives to till the land while they worked in formal wage employment to supplement farm income or even to buy farm inputs and implements. Although this restriction has been relaxed, with male heads being allowed to work off farm (provided that household farm production is judged satisfactory by local government officials), in this sample agriculture continues to account for at least 80 per cent of household income in non-drought years. However, as will become apparent in later chapters, sometimes this government requirement that resettled people should stay on the land created problems because some of the resettled people were needy cases that did not have farm equipment, and could not hope to raise enough money to buy the equipment and other inputs since other avenues for generating income such as wage employment were blocked for them.

In addition to its political rationale, the government's other objective in resettling blacks was to improve the standards of living of the largest and poorest sector of the population of Zimbabwe while simultaneously indigenising the economy (Moyo, 1998). According to the Zimcord Conference Report of March 1980, the Minister of Lands and Agriculture declared that the land resettlement programme was the starting point towards improving the quality of life of the rural masses. According to the National Report of the Government of Zimbabwe in 1980, the land resettlement programme was also

meant to facilitate the entrance of blacks into the main stream economic activity of the country. Since agriculture was the backbone of the Zimbabwean economy, the government intended resettlement to create a rural farming community that would move from subsistence to commercial production. It worked to provide an enabling environment for sustainable economic growth in the resettlement areas. It provided appropriate infrastructure such as roads to ensure the successful marketing of produce: in Mupfurudzi, there are well-developed road networks. The government also provided housing units, clinics and schools in the resettlement villages to improve the quality of life. Initially, it provided widespread access to agricultural extension services, with virtually all resettled farmers being visited by AGRITEX staff in the early 1980s. However, this has changed since 1990 with pressures on government to cut costs by reducing the number of civil servants as well as lately by the demand of the fast track resettlement schemes for extension workers.

During the early years of resettlement, loan facilities were made available to farmers through the Agriculture Finance Corporation (AFC) through which they could access cattle, seed and fertiliser packs. However this again has changed as government has withdrawn from providing loans, and left this largely to private seed houses such as Seed Co., Agricom, Cargill, and Cottco.

Two further features of these resettlement areas must be underlined. The first phase of resettlement in the 1980s was criticised by social commentators for not being gender sensitive since it did not target women as a group (Rukuni, 1994; Jacobs, 1983). For example, Jacobs (1991:522) was disappointed that the land reform did not challenge gender relations since widowed or divorced women were normally not able to settle in their own right because they were not regarded as household heads. 'Despite the euphemism that the assigned land belongs to the household, settler women lose access to it upon divorce' (Jacobs, 1991:552). Moyo (2000:21-22) also recognises the gendered nature of access to land when he comments 'Patriarchal land tenure value systems among both the white and black community have consistently discriminated against women land owners. In principle therefore more women need to be provided access to redistributed land in order to achieve a greater gender balance in land ownership, the agrarian structure and in society at large'. It is the nature of resettlement that no women initially had plots registered in their names. Secondly the nature of the settlement pattern in these households deserves further comment. Unlike the homestead pattern of settlement found throughout much of rural Zimbabwe, households in these resettlement schemes live in clustered villages (of between 12-60 households), which are relatively far apart. The physical isolation of these villages has precluded the development of small markets in these localities. Indeed, a striking visual feature of these places is the absence of shops or trading areas. It was not profitable for shop owners to establish shops in these areas. The only shop in Muringamombe, one of the

villages in the study, was always well stocked with alcohol but did not offer any basic commodities, for which people had to travel about twenty kilometres to Madziwa Mine. To access medical services and markets, villagers had to go to Zvomanyanga or Chakonda, a great distance from most villages.

Study villages

Shamva is located to the North of Harare and falls under natural region 2b characterised by high rainfall. According to Blick (1972) 'Shamva is a Mashona term indicating wetness from the fact that if you climb the hill (Shamva hill) during the rain season you cannot leave it and avoid a drenching' (also see Logan, 1985:17 for another translation, i.e. 'place of washing').

The major crop in Shamva from the days of the first white settlers was maize. According to Blicks (1972:49) cotton was first cultivated in Shamva in the 1920s by the Moubrays. Other farmers took this up spasmodically but they soon dropped it since they did not get good yields because insects destroyed most of the crop. Later cotton became a major crop in the area after federation when insecticides were introduced and spraying started between 1965-1969. Hence cotton is of particularly recent introduction in the area as compared with maize. And tobacco is very recent with some villages in the resettlement scheme having started cultivating tobacco only in the past two to three years (2001-2003).

The soil types in the Mupfurdzi resettlement scheme (located in Shamva) vary from village to village. There are two main soil types recognised by the villagers. *Shapa* (sandy soil) and *Hova/Chimbangu* (red loam). *Shapa* is said to be good for tobacco whilst *Hova* is good for cotton and maize. That, in effect, explains why some villages focus mostly on tobacco while others mainly on cotton and maize.

Although villagers acknowledge that these resettlement villages are located in a better agro-ecological region than where they previously lived, some farmers maintain that, whilst they are grateful they would have preferred to be settled elsewhere where they could obtain more land and better soils.

Muringamombe another study village, is located 2.5 km from the main road and is composed of 28 plot holders, though the number has risen to almost double the original number due to the fragmentation of land within families. The level of education in this village is very low with four out of the seven respondents (in the original sample) unable to read and write. Most young people received only basic compulsory education and very few went on to 'O' level.

On the other hand, Mudzingo (popularly known as Chingerengere) is located about 2 km from Madziwa Mine. This village is composed of 33 original plot holders but like Muringamombe subdivision, has meant that the number of people who lay claim to stands has more than doubled. Six out of the seven

respondents (original sample) in this village were able to read and write. Even though resettlement rules stipulated that in order to be resettled people had to renounce wage work, some of the people in this village continued to work at Madziva mine until they were forced out of work when the company closed down. A large number of youth in Mudzinge attended secondary school. This might be related to the levels of education of the first generation of settlers or to its proximity to Madziva Mine and its urbanising influences.

In 2001, there was a mass exodus of young men and older single women from the villages to the fast track resettlement farms⁴. However, by the end of 2002 most of these young man and women had come back to the villages amid allegations of corruption in the system of land allocation. Although these resettlement villages were started in 1981, some people arrived as late as 1983. The time of arrival had an effect on the location of fields with the exception of those who had, for one reason or another, to relocate their fields. Those who arrived early have fields close to the village, whilst the late comers have fields much further away.

When they first arrived in these villages, the villagers were poor and needed assistance from government. The government provided help through the provision of loans by the Agriculture Finance Corporation and technical expertise through the department of Agriculture. Now there is Agribank, a bank that gives loans to farmers, although at the time of the research none of the farmers in the area had accessed any. Ever since, people have depended on the provision of loans by the various loaning organisations that now exist in the area. Although some people could manage without loans, such loans are regarded as good sense financially or a hedge against climatic risk.

Although these villages have always been dependent on government, they have also managed to initiate some home-grown projects. In Muringamombe, there was a gum tree community project and a paddock project⁵. In Mudzinge,

⁴ All the women and a very few young men I knew who went to settle at the farms at the height of farm invasions came back amid allegations that some (mostly male) self-appointed leaders were demanding bribes to allocate people land. As these people could not afford such bribes they had no option but to return home and again live with their brothers or parents. However, a few lucky ones have managed to stay on at the new farms. In addition, some of those who came back managed to acquire land by applying for the 'fast track' land through government channels. Moyo (2004:23) claims that women benefited more from fast track resettlement than under the earlier resettlement schemes. 'Women who have been traditionally marginalised in most development programmes, fared somewhat better in A1 land allocations, gaining as individuals an average of between 12 and 24% of the land allocated under the scheme across provinces. In the A2 scheme, women as individuals accessed an average of 5 and 21% of A2 land allocated across the provinces' (Moyo, 2004:23)

⁵ At the beginning of the study, people talked about the paddock project which they needed to protect their grazing areas from use by nearby villages. Up to now this project has not yet

there was a community garden and a field for producing food for the crèche. They also built the crèche, which unfortunately later collapsed because of excessive rains. However, corruption within these projects has threatened their survival.

The history of farming in Mudzingo and Muringamombe

In the first year of resettlement, the government cleared and ploughed an acre of land freely for each farmer. Farmers also received maize seed and fertilisers for their ploughed acre. In offering assistance, the government emphasised maize as the food crop. However, people also received groundnut seed. This history of settlement differs slightly from household to household depending on when they joined the scheme. Those who arrived a year or two after resettlement received none of this free aid.

Even in the early years people planted some crops such as groundnuts, cow peas, beans, sweet potatoes and soya beans. However, AGRITEX focused mainly on advising people on cotton and sometimes maize. This emphasis has not changed, although recently there has been an observable shift to tobacco

People focused mainly on maize to achieve household food self-sufficiency and, also as one household head in Muringamombe pointed out, 'to feed the nation'. On the other hand cotton was stressed as a cash crop to enable people to participate in the cash economy. As a result, throughout the history of resettlement, maize has been cultivated primarily as a food crop, though any surplus could be sold for cash to the GMB. One respondent commented that,

...when we plant our maize we are very happy when we sell it to the GMB because we know we will be feeding a lot of people. Even if there is a drought we know that our national granaries will be full, so that we will not have to beg from other countries...Those are the important aims we consider when planting maize. Therefore, we don't plant maize only for the consumption of the family but for selling. If I get money after selling the maize, that's good on my side, selling maize is also good for the other person because he will have access to food.

Thus in Mupfurudzi maize, tobacco and cotton can be regarded as the major crops. People still cultivate crops such groundnuts, cow-peas, sweet potatoes, round nuts and beans but these are regarded as lesser crops or women's crops that are cultivated to augment the family's food needs. However, it has to be noted that the domestic market for these crops is flourishing and pays well and sometimes pays far above the official market prices. Women also control the domestic marketing of these crops. The history of marketing in this area indicates a shift from subsistence to commercial crop farming.

materialised amid allegations of misappropriation of project funds by the leaders. Villagers had contributed money for the purchase of the fence for the paddock but no fence has yet been bought and the money cannot be accounted for.

As shown in Fig 1 and table 1 below, where maize is concerned there has also been a shift from the old High Yielding Varieties (HYVs) of maize to second generation HYV maize. However, what the tables do not highlight is that people still depend on open pollinated varieties of maize such as Hickory King

Table 1: Percentage of land sown to new varieties by type of new variety by year, Mupfurudzi

Year	SC40x	SC50x	Sc60x
1994/95	4.0%	94.0%	2.0%
1995/96	11.9	83.6	4.5
1996/97	18.8	73.8	7.5
1997/98	20.8	69.5	9.7
1998/99	28.5	57.1	14.4
1999/00	26.8	55.4	17.8
1998/99	28.5	57.1	14.4
1999/00	26.8	55.4	17.8

Source: Bourdillon *et al.*, 2002

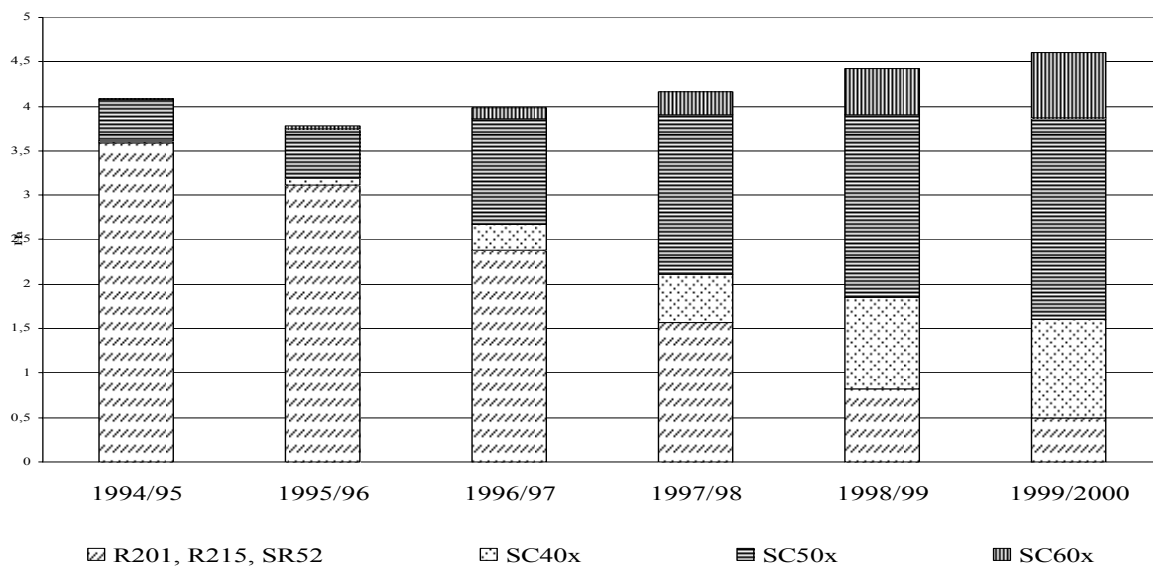


Figure 1: Acreage planted to maize, Mupfurudzi

Source: Adapted from Bourdillon *et al.*, 2002

as well as make use of saved seed. Thus, when asked about the variety of seed they cultivated, even those people who planted saved seed would mention the original variety thus giving a false impression.

For the fig above the numbers R201, R215, SR52 refers to maize varieties. SC40x, SC50x and SC60x indicate the series of the maize variety. For instance, for the SC40x series there are many varieties that include the SC401, SC403, SC405 and SC407. Figure 1 and Table 1, both adapted from Bourdillon *et al.* (2002), indicate that people have adopted the new varieties of maize in a wholesale manner and the portion devoted to the old varieties has decreased. The shift to these new High Yielding Varieties of maize is mostly because the old varieties that people prefer can no longer be found in the shops (see Bourdillon *et al.*, 2002).

Governance

Following resettlement the Government of Zimbabwe appointed resettlement officers and set up elected Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) to take over the functions of the older, inherited and appointed headmen. A year ago, the government re-introduced the position of headman. Hence in Mupfurudzi, the villages reverted to the institution of headmen, with a separate party structure. That is the power structure of these villages changed around 2000 with the shift from the VIDCOs (Village Development Committees), which were part of the ruling political party ZANU (PF), to traditional *Sabhukus* (Headmen). The major reason for this change was that local people complained that the VIDCOs were headed by people who had come from other areas and did not know enough about local traditions and religion and did not respect them. The local people who complained were mostly local chiefs who were not necessarily in the resettlement schemes but who were now becoming increasingly politically powerful. They maintained that the elected VIDCOs could not communicate with the spiritual guardians of the land, which was seen as causing pestilence and hunger in the land. However, some political commentators, including the political opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), claim that the move from VIDCOs to Chiefs and village headman was undertaken for political reasons since the ruling party wanted to use the traditional authorities for its campaigns.

Nevertheless farmers remain loyal to the governing ZANU (PF) party, which is seen to have helped them in the past. For example, when the government distributed seed packs, fertilisers and provided loans for building houses following resettlement, these actions were credited to ZANU (PF) and the President. Likewise the party has successfully used local government, chiefs, credit loans and local extension services as a way of extending its control over rural areas. This pattern of crediting the party and not the government is found in other domains. For instance, Natal Common (a groundnut variety) is popularly known as *kaMugabe*, to indicate that they obtained this seed from Mugabe. Members of communities also support the invasion of commercial farms and have themselves participated in land invasions, although as

mentioned earlier some were disillusioned by their failure to secure land in the fast track resettlements.

The ruling party, then, is a visible actor in the resettlement villages. The party imposes strict rules that control the behaviour and activities of other institutions and their personnel in the area. Agricultural extension officers, teachers and nurses are supposed to support the party views. For instance, in the case of a political party meeting during school hours the school is required by the local party leaders to send a teacher or two to represent all the other teachers at the meeting.

Organisation of the book

This book is arranged into ten chapters. Chapter 1 has shown the diverse backgrounds of people who ended up in the resettlement schemes. Whilst some resettled people had been urban workers, others had worked in Commercial Farming areas and yet others had been landless peasants in the communal areas. Also because these people came from diverse backgrounds, they also came with differing expectations of what resettlement had to achieve for them, different kinds of knowledge that had to be adapted to the new circumstances in which they found themselves, and at the same time they had to forge new friendships and alliances. Tracing resettlement and looking at the context within which people were resettled, sets the tone of this book. Its main purpose is to understand knowledge within context. To understand what people know, the actors have to be situated. Moreover the notion that knowledge is socially constructed requires understanding the social context within which such construction takes place. The purpose of the present chapter has been to appraise the reader of the context with which the various knowledge discourses operate. I have also sought to highlight the political context of resettlement. Resettlement was, and still is, associated with the ruling party ZANU (PF). This has affected a variety of relationships especially where knowledge is concerned. It will become apparent that because of its history knowledge in Mupfurudzi is highly political in nature.

Chapter 2 discusses theories and concepts relevant to the study, and positions this study in relation to theory. The third chapter discusses the methodology used in the study and explains how the methodology has impacted on the information sought and how, in turn the latter is interpreted. In this chapter I position myself as the researcher in relation to this particular research.

The fourth chapter provides background to the institutions operating in the area and describes the sample households. This chapter sets the tone of this book by exploring the context.

The fifth chapter deals with the history of the official approach to knowledge from the colonial era to the post-independence era. This chapter is aptly titled 'Knowledge we all got it but...'. It traces the continuities and discontinuities of

the approach to knowledge exhibited by various knowledge experts and government. The chapter discusses the fact that officials and lay people understand knowledge differently and that the growth of knowledge emanating from the scientific experts has conversely resulted in the growth of specialised ignorance among the farmers.

Chapter six, titled 'Seeing is believing: Experimentation, Observation and Popular Narratives', discusses how the role of experimentation, observation and popular beliefs shapes the production of knowledge. This chapter recognises that farmers take an active part in the production of knowledge and do not leave everything to the experts. Experimentation does not always end at the factory gate. Farmers' experiments can be assisted by calling on the expertise of the scientist or other knowledge 'experts' or they can be experiments that are carried out by the farmer alone using his or her own resources. Observation as a central aspect to learning is discussed in this chapter. However, observation and experimentation as well as knowledge are embedded in the social processes that are prevalent in the localities within which they take place. Because of this it is important to analyse popular narratives. The gendered nature of knowledge is also discussed, as well as the innovation and creativity of farmers in their encounters with adverse conditions. The chapter unravels the thinking behind the concept of the 'ignorant farmer'. Is the farmer ignorant or does he use different eyes from those of the scientist for perceiving things? In this way, this chapter brings to fore the social construction of knowledge.

Chapter seven, titled 'Magic, Witchcraft, Religion and Knowledge', deals with magic, witchcraft and religion and how they affect the production and dissemination of knowledge and information. Concerning religion the focus is not only on how the different religions facilitate or impede the adoption of certain kinds of knowledge but also on how the different religious and magical beliefs affect the social understanding of received information and knowledge, and how this knowledge and information is applied. Not all knowledge received is regarded as fact, but it is analysed and understood in the context of other knowledge. Beliefs *per se* do not impede the adoption of knowledge but affect how people view certain actions and situations. Beliefs in magic and witchcraft are also gendered, with people choosing to behave and act in different ways commensurate with their gender roles. The chapter discusses the knowledge and power axis where sometimes religion can be empowering and sometimes disempowering in situations where knowledge is contested. The chapter also discusses why knowledge sometimes seems self-contradictory in situations where people may believe different things.

In Chapter eight, 'Field days: Knowledge Dissemination and Entertainment', I discuss field days as events where knowledge and information are disseminated in a relaxed atmosphere. There are differing perceptions of field

days by 'experts' and farmers, and people attend field days for very diverse reasons, some of which might have little or nothing to do with the official reason, that is, the dissemination of knowledge from the experts to the farmers. Field days are also social occasions wherein people are entertained, gossip, and solve disputes, and where power is contested and social hierarchies reinforced. Women, men and children attend field days but they play different roles.

In Chapter nine, 'Knowledge and Practice: Men, Women and Children', I bring to the fore why households can never be discussed as units but as heterogeneous entities wherein people may sometimes know different things and engage in practice differently. I look at how men, women, and children use different communication channels and hence know differently. I also situate men, women, and children in their different cultural domains in order to understand what they know and what they practice. Decision-making is also analysed in this chapter for understanding the situated selections that families make that eventually impact on their agricultural practices.

Chapter ten provides a conclusion. Here I offer a general overview of key issues that have been raised in this book

2

Investigating knowledge

Introduction

The production and exchange of agricultural knowledge is an area that has attracted much research now and in the past. The debate on the sociology of knowledge embraced – and distinguished between – the concept of modern scientific and local (or localised forms of) knowledge (Warren *et al.*, 1985; Scoones and Thompson, 1993; Richards, 1985). It is stressed that both forms and bodies of knowledge represent different, but sometimes overlapping social networks or technological regimes (Wiskerke and Van de Ploeg, 2004), and are embedded in different strategic discourses and practices. More recently knowledge has been studied in the framework of modernity, and more specifically as a hybrid phenomenon, expressing the perception that knowledge is neither global nor universal, nor purely local. Long (1996:47) aptly put this when he wrote that patterns of agricultural development are ‘subject to the combined effects of globalisation and localisation: that is local institutions are transformed by becoming part of wider “global” arenas and processes, while “global” dimensions are made meaningful in relation to specific “local” conditions and through the understandings and strategies of local actors’. This leads to the theoretical positioning that knowledge needs to be perceived as a social construct that is, as a social relationship (Long, 2001) rather than as an artefact or resource that is commoditised and scale- and culture-neutral. For Hebinck and Mango (2004:286-287) technological packages introduced and favoured by scientists may fail because they ‘misunderstand (or misread) and therefore bypass... culturally embedded notions about agriculture and how to farm’. This perspective of considering knowledge as a social construct positions the approach of this book vis-a-vis, for instance, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Carney, 1998; Ellis, 2000), the ITK (Indigenous Technical Knowledge) and the Transfer Of Technology approaches (TOT) that perceive knowledge as an element of human capital and thus as an asset. This book posits knowledge as the outcome of the interaction between local strategies that people devise to eke out a living and the political strategies of bureaucratic institutions.

As an essential component to understanding the production of knowledge, it is important as a starting point to reflect on some approaches that have been used to understand knowledge. There are many and often conflicting but

notable among these are modernisation, constructivist, Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK), and Farmer First and Beyond Farmer First approaches. Mostly because of the different basic assumptions adopted by these approaches, they give rise to different ways of looking at knowledge.

The modernisation perspective gave rise to the transfer of technology model (TOT) in which knowledge was viewed as only that which could be transferred from scientists to farmers. The major tenet of the modernisation school was that modernisation tendencies would trickle down from the centre to the periphery. The more the periphery was linked with the centre the more knowledgeable it became. At the centre were the experts, the scientists who came up with the knowledge to solve the problems of the layman and the layman who had nothing worthwhile in terms of knowledge to offer the expert. This is the approach to knowledge that both the colonial and post-colonial governments in Zimbabwe have adhered to, as discussed in the fifth chapter of this book. The implications of this approach to knowledge production and dissemination and its limitations are themes that will emerge both explicitly and implicitly in the course of this study.

Approaches to knowledge

There are different approaches to the study of knowledge in the social sciences. However for the purposes of this book in this section I will only discuss what Long refers to as 'constructivism' in 1996 and as 'constructionism' in 2001. Long (1996:57) regarded the constructivist perspective as a robust perspective 'which provides fresh insights into how "expert" and everyday forms of knowledge relate to development processes. Such a perspective takes full cognizance of social actors, their values and understandings in the construction of knowledge...'. Thus constructivism involves an approach to knowledge that focuses on how knowledge is produced. There is a strong recognition that knowledge is 'socially constructed' (Besbah, 2003:54). However later in 2001 Long (2001:244f) prefers the term constructionism. He emphasises that certain types of constructivism tend to emphasise the cognitive and linguistic aspects of knowledge (e.g. Piagetian theory and other perceptual and linguistic theories common in Psychology) to the detriment of the social interactional components. Long's use of the term constructionism instead of constructivism distances him from constructivist theories in psychology or other perceptual theories that are primarily concerned with cognition and linguistic practices not more broadly social practices. Long (2001:3-4) goes on to state that 'An actor oriented type of social constructionism, then, requires that we throw our net high and wide. We must encompass not only everyday social practice and language games, but also larger scale institutional frameworks, resource fields, networks of communication and support, collective ideologies, socio-political arenas of

struggle and the beliefs and cosmologies that may shape the actors' improvisations, coping behaviours and planned social actions'.

For Mulkay and Knorr-Cetina (1981:9) an approach to knowledge that is constructivist in nature is 'characterised by a concern for the processes by which outcomes are brought about through the mundane transactions of participants. It entails the assumption that outcomes are the result of the participant's interactive and interpretative work. Within this perspective, the sociology of knowledge question of the "social and existential conditioning of thought" is analysed with a view to the social processes which are constitutive of the production and acceptance of knowledge claims'. Mulkay and Knorr-Cetina's (1981) interaction and interpretation are similar to Long's (2001) practice and interpretation. Constructivism and/ constructionism all recognise that knowledge is socially constructed and this book takes the same approach. For the purposes of this book the distinction between constructivism and constructionism is not emphasised and the terms constructivism and constructionism are not used. There is however a consistent attempt throughout the book to bring together, analyse and understand practice and interpretation.

Constructivism of the Mulkay/Knorr-Cetina genre arose as an attempt to study 'scientific' knowledge and how science was practiced. For sociologists who were not studying how science was made and produced in laboratories constructivism became a critique of the modernisation school. Constructivist approaches focus not on how facts are preserved but on how knowledge (scientific objects) is produced (Knorr-Cetina, 1983). This approach is a result of the realisation that the same thing can be interpreted differently by different actors resulting in different understanding (Woolgar, 1983; for similar arguments see also Cortese, 1995). For Arce and Long (1992:211) 'Knowledge is constructive in the sense that it is the result of a great number of decisions and selective incorporation of previous ideas , beliefs and images, but at the same time destructive of other possible frames of conceptualization and understanding. Thus it is not an accumulation of facts but involves ways of construing the world'.

To understand knowledge, the attention is on the social context in which knowledge is created and also the processes by which knowledge claims are formulated and strategically asserted. Thus to understand the knowledge of both farmers and experts we must investigate the social circumstances out of which selection arises and the resultant knowledge produced. For example, Spierenburg (2003:5-6) shows how a whole body of knowledge was created during the colonial era in Zimbabwe to define the situation in rural areas using a land degradation narrative, thus relegating the shortage of land in the communal areas to a technical problem rather than a political one and therefore justify not redistributing the land to blacks. In the early years of independence,

the government rescinded this approach and a whole body of literature came into being which argued that the whole problem was not technical but instead a lack of land which led to the resettlement initiative. After a few years of independence, the post-independence government returned to the degradation narrative in order to limit the demands of blacks on white land. Thus the aim of this study is not to show how facts are preserved in scientific statements about nature (Knorr-Cetina, 1983:19) but rather how these facts are construed and read by both 'experts' and farmers to give rise to specific forms of knowledge and knowledge claims.

The main thrust of this book therefore is that knowledge should be understood in its 'social dimension' (Golinsky, 1997:7⁶). The main argument is that there are no objective facts since all facts are painstakingly constructed through a series of selections. Implied in this approach is a critic of classical modernisation approaches, which regarded modern knowledge as made of facts and not contaminated by the social. If we are to follow Latour's (1993) neatly laid out argument science itself is not value neutral but constructed given the fact that people have never been completely able to separate nature from society. In all societies instead of purifying tendencies in which nature and society are clearly demarcated there is instead mediation. There is now a growing realisation that neither nature nor science can be understood independent of each other (Latour, 1992, 1993; Drinkwater, 1994). Thus in this book there is a strong suggestion that farming knowledge should not be separated from its social and political context.

Reflections

A constructivist approach has wide implications for the discussions in this book as well as the actor-oriented approach that was adopted to gather and analyse data. The actor-oriented perspective embodies within it a realisation that knowledge is largely socially produced, based on socially situated selections and network linkages with other local and external actors. This is a very significant theme in this book since we cannot assume rigid divisions between nature/science and culture/social and thus neither nature nor culture can be understood without the other. As Van der Ploeg (2003:26) maintains, 'generalised knowledge as offered by applied science and standardised technologies supplied by agribusiness, both require new forms of local knowledge for their application. As a result, new specific knowledge systems, of a strictly localised character, emerge'. From this perspective the study maps out how knowledge- 'scientific' or otherwise- percolates through to the field

⁶ Golinsky (1997) has a big review (and some criticism) of constructivist approaches to science and technology.

and practical level of farming involving both men and women, adults and children, and how scientific knowledge becomes localised and welded with local knowledge.

If we work with the proposition that knowledge is socially constructed and situated in a field of social relations and social life (Knorr-Cetina, 1983:127, 6), then it emerges that at times outcomes are often not consciously calculated or even intended by anyone. This puts to shame rational choice theorists who maintain that the individual is always calculating the costs and benefits of taking certain actions vis-à-vis others. Thus this book does not, in the end get bogged down in trying to find the 'rational' behind every knowledge claim. Instead, it engages with the more fruitful issue of investigating the ways in which knowledge itself is produced through the various strategies of inter-linking and distancing between actors. This approach also enables me to investigate other social actors who might not be present in face-to-face interactions with the farmers but who are also implicated in knowledge dissemination and production. This is congruent with adopting the position that social life is negotiated and knowledge entails social relationships. However this does not mean that explanations involving interests and other factors which are not part of the actors' firsthand experiences must be relegated to the dustbin.

Throughout I attempt to analyse the social processes and social conditions under which individuals act and make certain decisions. Social structures have a constraining and enabling effect on individual behaviour (Giddens, 1976). Individuals might take up what appears to be the most reasonable choice but not because they are always consciously carrying out objective evaluations of the available choices and choosing the most profitable one as rational choice theory would have it. The 'objective' conditions of the social world may set limitations on what is possible and what is not possible. And in this way, the most improbable practices are excluded as unthinkable since what is possible is already known (Bourdieu, 1990:54; also see Berger, 1971 on the social construction of reality and his discussion of typifications). Like wise for Long (1992:21) it is essential to recognise that some individual choices are shaped by larger frames of meaning and action (cultural dispositions or Bourdieu's habitus or embodied history) as well as by the distribution of power and resources in the wider arena. For instance, the knowledge of new hybrid seed in Mupfurudzi (though also subject to subjective conditions) was objectified in institutions such as loan organisations (for example The Grain Marketing Board - GMB). This meant that in spite of individual dispositions people ended up adopting the new varieties and even acknowledged the positive aspects of the new varieties they had not acknowledged when they still had access to the old varieties.

The position of modernisation perspectives (TOT), in which there is a belief in the presence of knowledge in some people, and its absence in others, who needed to be schooled, is not tenable so far as this book is concerned. People are not regarded as having no knowledge but as possessing maybe different sorts of knowledge. 'Knowledge does not have only one way of expressing itself, but manifests itself in a variety of ways' (Haverkort, 2003:12)

As a result of globalisation and post-modernist tendencies in academic debate and research circles, it has become even more difficult to maintain a dichotomy between local knowledge and scientific/ 'universal' knowledge. For instance, local knowledge is often seen as culture-specific and difficult to apply beyond a particular time and setting; while on the other hand, western scientific knowledge is universally valid. This is clearly demonstrated in Schultz's (1964) thesis, where he maintained that institutions to spread relevant knowledge to farmers had to be built. For him farmers' knowledge might be relevant but it was poor, not very productive and could not be applied beyond its specific local contexts. Thus, following this kind of reasoning, in Zimbabwe schools were set up to train extension workers who, in turn, were tasked to train farmers and even enforce legislation to ensure that farmers adopted good farming and conservation methods.

However, attempts to implement western technically-oriented solutions failed because these solutions did not take cognisance of the imperatives entailed by different socio-cultural contexts, a factor which led to a widespread disenchantment with modernisation perspectives (Hulme and Turner, 1990). By implication, therefore, it is 'likely that the so-called technical solutions are as anchored in a specific milieu as any other system of knowledge' (Agrawal, 1995:3; see also Sillitoe, 1998 for a similar argument). As shown elsewhere (Sadomba, 1992; Bolding, 2004), some technologies that were advocated to improve African farming and conservation in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), such as contour ridges imported from the American model and destumping (Matose and Mukamuri, 1993:38) led to environmental degradation. It follows from this that if scientific knowledge cannot itself be universalised then the distinction between local knowledge and scientific knowledge is blurred.

In response to the above Long and van der Ploeg (2001) have coined the concepts of 'localisation' and 'relocalisation' in which local forms of knowledge are reworked in interaction with changing external and internal conditions. Similarly, Latour (1983:145) neatly captures the interplay between the internal and external when he talks of 'translation'. According to him, Pasteur and his assistants learned from field conditions 'by translating each item of veterinary science into their own terms so that working on their terms is also working on the field. For instance spore of the bacillus is the translation through which a dormant field can suddenly become infectious even after many years. The

“spore phase” is the translation of the infected field in the farmer’s language’. The concepts of localisation and relocalisation are very useful in that they refute the assumption that local knowledge is static/ traditional and resistant to change. The concepts indicate the dynamism of knowledge as people blend the old and the new, resulting in knowledge mixes or knowledge hybrids⁷. Thus knowledge is neither purely local nor purely global which has led others to use the term ‘glocalisation’ (Featherstone, 1990) or the concept of ‘knowledge hybrids’ (Hannerz, 1990). For Hebinck and Bourdillon (2001:6), ‘knowledge can be perceived as a hybrid phenomenon, neither global nor local. Knowledge becomes localised through a process of redesigning and re-working’.

Knowledge in Context

It would be self defeating to investigate social actors and celebrate their heterogeneous knowledge without ever coming to a conclusion as to how some consensus is formed or at least on how certain forms of knowledge are assimilated by other actors. This indeed has been the weakness of earlier actor oriented approaches which were criticised for adopting an extreme form of methodological individualism (Long, 1992:21⁸). For post-structuralists (Foucault, 1967) epistemological breaks usher in new eras of knowledge that consequently result in change, yet for others such as Berger (1971) it is the crisis of legitimation that ushers in new knowledge. For Berger, legitimation is the process of explaining and justifying what one knows to others. ‘Legitimation not only tells the individual why he should perform not only one action and not another it also tells him why things are what they are’. The process of legitimation is an exercise of power since it determines what constitutes knowledge and why, at the same time designating those people who are

⁷ Parkin (1995), cited in Arce and Long (2000:8) in his study of the intertwining of religious and medical knowledge and practice (Islamic and non-Islamic) writes of the rebounding effects of knowledge which he says ‘shed light on the complex ways in which specific knowledge practices are constructed and re-transposed or re-accentuated both within and outside the patient/doctor consultation that takes place....Unlike structural models of knowledge construction which sees this process as an outcome of the interaction between culturally distinct knowledge categories or systems, Parkin (1995) highlights the blending together and the relocation of the origins of belief and behaviour’. Parkin here brings out the different meanings attributed to and the different understandings of the healing process by both doctors and patients. He is also interested in how these meanings are reinterpreted both within and outside of the patient/doctor consultation that takes place. This blends in well with the approach taken in this book that knowledge is not static, that it is subject to interpretation and re-interpretation, an approach that rejects the simple distinction between nature and social. And, as will become apparent later agricultural knowledge is intertwined with religious beliefs, magic, witchcraft, technology, health etc.

⁸ Long’s (1989, 1992, 1996, 2001) actor- oriented approach points to the need for some kind of interface analysis of knowledge generation.

supposed to know. If those in power are no longer able to justify their knowledge it is because they are challenged. The disruptions, which result from these challenges, lead to the advancement of knowledge as new ideas are incorporated into people's knowledge frameworks. Though the concept of legitimation itself is a useful theoretical tool, it too falls short in that it does not give a proper exegesis of the social actions that lead to old knowledge being challenged and how new knowledge is produced in its place except to say that when old knowledge no longer applies then it is delegitimated.

In order to understand the process of change and consensus formation, Bourdieu (1990) introduced the concept of *habitus* (embodied history) where one cannot predict action from past and present conditions but from the continued restructuring of new experience. For Bourdieu (1990:60-61), *habitus* tends to ensure its constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes on new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information if exposed to it accidentally or by force and especially by avoiding exposure to such information. Although this concept of *habitus* is important in understanding why and how people can cling to old ways, which may or may not be ill adapted to current conditions, the concept is not user friendly when it comes to understanding how new knowledge (even if it contradicts the already known resulting in a problematic situation) is integrated into everyday life.

For this purpose Barnes' (1996:17) concept of interpretation is useful. More important is the way in which this interpretation is regarded as locally specific and contextual. That is, before people can adopt any new changes they should find the changes both acceptable and useful. "The local theoretical tradition enters into the identification of genuine facts/ genuine phenomenon as distinct from mere artefacts" (Barnes, 1996:28). Arguing in the same vein, Schutz (1964: xli-xlii) speaks of 'provinces of meaning' because for him it is the 'meaning of our experiences and not the ontological structure of the objects which constitutes reality'. An important area discussed in my analysis is how new knowledge (even if it contradicts what is already known, resulting in a problematic situation) is integrated into everyday life focusing also on how people attach meanings to certain behaviours and practices.

Barnes (1996) also makes a very astute observation, which is a theoretical pointer in our study and informs some of the analysis in this book. For him, there is no valid pathway from theory T works to theory T is true, since false theories can make true predictions and false premises can yield true conclusions. During the course of the research, even during the period of writing up, no attempt was made to discard any theories that could be said to be false according to scientific rationality. Even such false theories were often pointers to behaviour that had implications for knowledge and its production. In his study of Baktaman cultivators, Barth (2002:8) notes that they piled leaves

and uprooted vegetation around taro plants because they thought taro liked the smell of rotting vegetation. This is a very interesting case because, even though it could be said that the Baktaman theory was based on a false premise, the actions it produced had real practical implications for knowledge and the cultivation of taro.

Although local farmer knowledge can also be technical not all local agricultural knowledge is, and not all local farmer perceptions are technical: some knowledge is symbolic. Technical knowledge focuses on the rational logical aspects of knowledge and symbols refer to things in the human mind which can not simply be reduced to rational encyclopaedic thought or which cannot simply be changed by logical argument (Bourdillon, 1990:343; see also Sperber, 1970). In some instances, the symbolic can also reduce the technical to the symbolic. For example, some people may use technical fertilisers not because they result in bumper crops but because they are a symbol of modern farming although magic and religion might still be regarded as more important than fertilisers. Bourdieu (1990:54) talks about symbolic capital, maintaining that even scientific knowledge might need it to be accepted. This symbolic capital is dependent on associations. For example, the acceptance of knowledge might depend on how the knowledge bearer is perceived. Does he symbolise the government at the local level or is he regarded as symbolising something else? Thus, as shown in the following chapters, the book focuses on both the objective reality of technical knowledge and the agents' perception of this reality.

The relationship between knowledge and power is central. As a way of distancing themselves from the modernisation school other schools of thought, beginning with the dependency school in the 1960s, came to realise that in most cases knowledge and power are embedded into each other. However, the dependency approach fell short in that it portrayed poor farmers as helpless victims and sidelined their knowledge not because it was unscientific and traditional but because it was a view of the powerless (Sillitoe, 2002:3). There was a need to go beyond the limitations imposed on our world view by the dependency school. It does not need much persuasion to realise that knowledge and power are always potentially part of each other. Yet despite this realisation, there is no agreement among sociologists on how the knowledge and power axis should be treated. For Parkin (1985:49) knowledge is not always power whilst on the other hand Foucault (Hirst, 1985:182) maintains that knowledge produces power (see also Long and Villareal, 1994). For Strathern (1985:65-66) power enters into the dialogues and struggles between persons but it is attached and detached in very different ways.

Although a hasty approach might regard these approaches as different because they seem to point to different conclusions, they are essentially similar in the sense that they all recognise that power is not necessarily centred in

certain institutions and certain bodies. For Foucault, (Hirst, 1985: 174) power has no simple centre 'but it is diffused throughout the whole social body in complex networks and diverse relations.' Turner (1985:193) accuses Foucault of failing to analyse institutional networks within which discourses are situated. In my view, this is a limited application of Foucault since analysing the actions of individuals (the smallest social unit) we may also gain access to the understanding of institutional networks within which discourses are situated since these institutional networks are a result of individual displacement and extension. Foucault's approach has important implications for this thesis because it recognises that knowledge is always contested and that knowledge is in fact a problematic concept. Thus it can be contested between agents of intervention as well as between agents and other social actors (e.g. NGOs, researchers, agricultural extensionists etc.). This book demonstrates that the model of state/peasant relationships characterised by a powerful and dominant state on one hand and a powerless dependent peasantry on the other is defunct. Power is always contested and negotiated and not owned.

The status of different forms of knowledge can also be affected by a variety of social relationships between bureaucrats and actors in the periphery and also by the general political situation. Bratton (1980) points out that in Zambia the impact of state intervention in rural areas is not comprehensible without reference to what he described as the politics of rural development. Knowledge can be regarded as politically sensitive. This is particularly applicable in the volatile political arena currently in Zimbabwe. In the past in Mupfurudzi, the seed companies (that is in the 1980s and early 1990s) were regarded as credible sources of hybrid seeds and technology. However, in the ensuing political tensions precipitated by the 2001 elections these companies were seen as representing the interests of whites, white commercial farmers and the opposition political party (Movement for Democratic Change) who were bent on discrediting the government. Thus the politically powerful people were left to define what knowledge was and as long as it came from these 'suspicious' sources it had to be treated with caution. To adequately address the power/knowledge axis the thesis analyses how knowledge is situated in social contexts by looking at individuals within their times-settings. The status of knowledge is always in a flux, and the situation at any one time determines who is more knowledgeable and powerful. The question of the knowledge and power axis is therefore not primarily a question of the use and misuse of knowledge but of how it functions within the system assigning power to some people but not to others (Foucault, 1967).

The actor-oriented approach that is used here offers a way out of most of the problems suffered by theories of knowledge. The actor-oriented approach as advanced by Long (2001, 1993, 1992 and 1989) does not distinguish evaluatively between different forms of knowledge but regards knowledge as an 'outcome

of interaction, negotiations, interfaces and negotiations that take place between different actors and their lifeworlds'. In a subtle way the hybridity of knowledge is recognised. Its explanation of knowledge production and exchange and transformation adopts a dialectic principle whereby the interface is characterised by discontinuity and a critical lack of communication. At the interface conflict might arise as a result of differential and often incompatible interests, and on the other hand, interaction, negotiations and strategic accommodations may take place as individual actors try to recruit others into their own 'projects'.

The actor-oriented approach to understanding knowledge is congruent with some post modernist approaches which regard knowledge as fragmentary and partial (see Jackson, 1989; Pool, 1995:25). According to Long (2001) (see also Long and Arce, 1992:212), knowledge is fragmentary, partial and provisional in nature and people work with a multiplicity of understandings, beliefs and commitments. Implied in this is the fact that knowledge is multi-faceted and contextual. People who believe in one thing in one context may not necessarily believe in the same thing in a different context. By its very nature knowledge is contradictory. Thus also in the chapters that follow I aim at analysing and assessing the implications of variations in knowledge, social positions, and contexts in local populations. I also investigate how the nature of knowledge itself can facilitate change and the continued production of new knowledge and also how new knowledge can lead to change (e.g. social differentiation).

Knowledge is also tied to beliefs such as beliefs in witchcraft. Recently, there has been a growing body of literature on witchcraft and magic in Africa or what is referred to as the 'occult' in relation to questions of 'modernity' (Geschiere, 1997; Niehaus, 2001; Andersson, 2002; Ciekawy and Geschiere, 1998). Most of this literature is concerned to show how increases in witchcraft practise and accusations constitutes an attempt by Africans to deal with modernity and situate the practice of witchcraft and religion strictly within politics (Geschiere, 1997: viii-ix). Niehaus (2001) links the witchhunts that occurred in Green Valley, South Africa, with larger political issues linked to the marginalisation of youths from formal politics since these witchhunts were led by ANC (African National Congress) youths known then as 'Comrades'. Niehaus (1998:23) explicitly makes this link by stating that 'by staging witch finding rituals, having witches expelled from the villages and by exposing various immoralities the comrades have sought to compensate for their lack of influence in formal political processes'. With the project of modernism in mind, Dolan (2002:559) chronicles how in a district in Kenya, where contract farming of French beans is highly contested between men and women, witchcraft provided 'a vehicle through gendered struggles over contracts are articulated and contested, and through which the social costs of agrarian transition become apparent'.

Many other authors on the modernity of witchcraft have adopted Geschiere's (1997) view of regarding witchcraft as having both levelling and accumulative tendencies. On the one hand, witchcraft 'provides indispensable support for the dominant to accumulate greater wealth and influence. On the other hand witchcraft is a weapon of the weak enabling the poor to sever inequalities'. Thus the rich are denounced as having access to their riches through witchcraft, whilst on the other hand, the poor and weak can use witchcraft or threats of witchcraft to gain access to certain resources. However, this approach does not totally explain those cases where the poor who are regarded as witches, are excluded from access to resources by both poor and rich people because of their perceived witchcraft powers. As discussed in Chapter 6, at one time there was a general panic that some mysterious poor old woman was going around causing havoc and mischief and that the only way to guard against such a woman was for people to no longer help old women asking for assistance of any kind. As a result some women were beaten up by complete strangers for being suspected of being the evil old witch. Thus being labelled a witch sometimes operates as a discourse of exclusion rather than as a levelling mechanism. The latter views also do not explain why it is that not all rich people or all poor people are accused of witchcraft. Although it is not possible to completely reject the levelling or accumulation hypothesis, there is need to go beyond this and recognise that people consider all kinds of evidence before a person is labelled a witch, regardless of his or her wealth or lack of it. Hence one needs to take account of the ongoing dynamics and differential interpretations of the significance of witchcraft, not simply the issue of wealth differences or politics and strategies of exclusion. The latter types of interpretation seem to seek a structural rather than a situational and multiple-meanings explanation, which actor-oriented approaches would stress and which I adopt for analytical purposes.

In the attempt to link witchcraft with modernity there is a desperate attempt to escape from Evans-Pritchard's (1937) view of witchcraft as 'traditional'. But in so doing proponents of this school also fall into the same trap as Evans-Pritchard in explaining witchcraft by reference to its perceived functions which are now regarded as serving modern and not traditional processes. Thus despite all the seemingly advanced terminologies used to link witchcraft to modernity, the approach simply inverts Evans-Pritchard's original thesis. In this attempt there is an underlying theme that refuses to go away, namely that witchcraft beliefs are 'false beliefs' that need to be explained. Rutherford (1999:92) is also unhappy with an approach that considers witchcraft in relation to modernity and capitalism because it replicates anthropological attempts to know the native 'in terms of western rationality'. In my approach to problems I do not attempt to analyse witchcraft by using modern conceptualisations that relegate beliefs to falsehoods. In fact I do not argue as to the 'falsehoods' or the 'truths' of particular beliefs but rather I approach these belief systems from the

point of view of those who believe in them as a reality whether false or not, that affects various social relationships and the acquisition and generation of knowledge. A recurrent theme in this book is that matters should be understood in their contexts. 'To provide a 'telling' interpretation the ethnographer must find appropriate contexts for elucidating the phenomenon under study. The idea is that in their local contexts matters can be made intelligible, even when they at first glance appear outlandish, exotic, or simply opaque to people encountering them in other times and places' (Rosaldo Jrn 1997:31).

Whereas Geschiere (1997: 13-14) splits hairs trying to justify his use of the term 'occult', maintaining that witchcraft and sorcery are moralising terminologies concerned with distinguishing good and evil, I do not suffer the same dilemma. Geschiere uses the term 'occult' to leave open the question of whether witchcraft and sorcery are 'good' or 'bad'. In contrast I have no qualms about using the term witchcraft in the society I studied where witchcraft was considered inherently evil. There was never a time when witchcraft, or what was regarded as witchcraft, was said to be good, and for the people involved witchcraft was also surely a question of morality. However, I introduce the concept of magic into my analysis. I differentiate magic from witchcraft because as shown in chapter 7, there was a greater ambivalence over whether magic was good or bad.

For Malinowski (cited in Tambiah, 1990:72) 'Magic begins where technology ends'. My analysis of the data indicates that this statement should be refuted emphatically. Magic and technology are not separable and are practised jointly. There is no disjuncture between technologies and magic such that one can pinpoint exactly where technology ends and magic starts. For most farmers in my area they are embedded in each other. Hence I will not attempt to discuss and explore the possibilities offered by discourses of witchcraft, magic and religion to gain control over modern changes since even before colonisation and its modernisation discourse agriculture was imbued with witchcraft, magic and religion - much to the dismay of most colonial administrators (Sadomba 1999a; Bolding 2004). To show the interconnectedness of religion and agriculture in the pre-colonial days, Sadomba (1999b:34-36) writes of African agro-religion in Zimbabwe. Borrowing from Geertz (1998:1), 'The illusion that ethnography is a matter of sorting strange and irregular facts into familiar and orderly categories - this is magic, that is technology- has long since been exploded'.

Magic is a complex issue since, as I observed, some people who denied the existence of magic or at least doubted its ability to work, sometimes still took measures to protect their fields from people with bad magic. Even when the wife was the one looking for magic to protect the field, it was impossible to tell exactly whether the men were simply humouring their wives by allowing them to use magic or whether they somehow believed in magic but were loathe to

admit to it. In the sample, one male household⁹ head took measures to protect his field from people with bad magic. He himself had been accused of using bad magic and it is interesting to note that the object he had chosen to protect his field (*nyengerezi* – a seashell) is associated with making babies sick. Usually men left the duty to their wives, who obtained holy water from prophets and priests. All female-headed households except one had taken measures to protect their crops. Thus, to understand the gendered nature of some knowledge I include a discussion of local beliefs and knowledge in an attempt to unravel their gendered aspects.

Sometimes people's knowledge is based on associations. This is evidenced by the fact that people are not consistent when it comes to knowledge and its application. As a result there is a conscious attempt in this book to understand the context in which people make statements and believe these statements to be correct. For example, one village head in Mupfurudzi maintained that people should use fertilisers to get good crops. Yet, on other occasions, he emphasised the power of ancestors to ensure good crops. He was disappointed that some villages had opted out of the rain making ceremonies and other rituals in honour of the ancestors to ensure bumper harvests. He was convinced that the ancestors would take their revenge on these recalcitrant villages. This person was subscribing to two different seemingly contradictory explanations, depending on the context. In the first context, the village head was a farmer who was struggling with the practical need to ensure good crops and hence subscribed to the scientific theory. In the second, he was acting as the person who interceded between the people and the spirits. If people took recourse to scientific knowledge only, his power based on his ritual capacities was challenged. Thus knowledge can be regarded as impartial, indeterminate, and sometimes even self-contradicting. It is contextual.

The research and the book

The book looks at the dissemination of various types of knowledge and technologies introduced from 'outside': starter packages of hybrid maize seed and fertiliser, recent introductions of new hybrid maize seed such as Sc501, 502,

⁹ I realise that the use of the concept of household is debated and there is disagreement as to what exactly a household should look like. In this book, the concept of household is used loosely to refer to people who live on the same plot of land (allocated to the original plot holder) and who also work in the same field regardless of whether they eat from the same pot or not and regardless also of whether the field has been subdivided or not. This is so because the concept of *musha wangu* (my household) for local farmers included everyone who resided on their plot of land. The people who make *musha wangu* span children, siblings and other relatives of the original plot holder. For a discussion of the debates surrounding the use of the concept of household, see Verdon (1998), Robertson (1991) and Rooser and Harris (1983).

and other related technological agricultural advice provided by outside agents such as extension officers and other interested organisations. These are not viewed as distinct bodies of knowledge separate from local knowledge and theoretical frameworks but as knowledge that is localised and re-localised into the locally specific contexts of individuals and communities. Consideration is given not only to how these new technologies are adopted but also to how people rework them and give them new meanings, which may or may not have been intended at the initial dissemination. As noted in later chapters, farmers employ various linking and de-linking strategies when they come into contact with various agents of change. These behaviours by farmers affect the production and reproduction of agricultural knowledge in general. Thus the book attempts to unravel the struggles, negotiations, contestations and accommodations that take place between actors during the production of knowledge – a production which is primarily social.

There is a growing realisation in the forthcoming chapters that the social appropriation of new technology may result in the technology having meanings, which are different or contradictory to the meanings or intentions of the inventors. 'Words can travel, they can be transferred to new social contexts with new meanings and intentions attached to them which have nothing to do with the old semantics' (Probst, 1999:123; see also Korovikin, 1986 on the different meanings accorded to the birth control pill in a southern Italian community and how these meanings influence the use and non-use of the pill¹⁰). The social appropriation of newly disseminated technologies can sometimes hinder or enhance the adoption of new technologies. Thus, as discussed in Chapter 5 knowledge can be regarded by its supposed beneficiaries as oppressive and therefore to be resisted.

A further issue to be discussed is the dissemination of new knowledge across generations, both formally through the school system and informally through socialisation in agricultural work. The research explored the lack of coherence

¹⁰ Korovikin (1986) carried out the study in Monteburro Italy. He noted that the pill was interpreted differently by different people in the community. Unmarried men associated the pill with sexual freedom, so supported its use. Married men associated the pill with sexual freedom and 'were therefore against it, perceived it as undermining any sense of security derived from membership in the family'. For unmarried women, 'to use the pill means to be civilised', thus they used the pill not to prevent pregnancy but to show that they were moving with the times. Thus the pill could be taken occasionally whilst in the company of friends but its effectiveness in preventing pregnancy was doubted. Korovikin maintains that because of their Catholic background some married women sometimes felt guilty about taking the pill which was compensated by increasing their participation in the church and confessing their new found sin to 'our lady of immaculate conception' - supporting their husbands when they pointed out that they should not take the pill because the pill was not good for the health of these women - whilst at the same time taking the pill.

between these two systems in relation to agricultural knowledge and practice. Related to this is the need for a rigorous analysis of communication. 'Culture... is a series of communicative acts, and differences in the mode of communication are often as important as differences in the mode of production, for they involve developments in the storing, analysis and creation of human knowledge as well as relationships between individuals involved' (Goody, 1977:37). Here Goody is interested in accounting for the differences between literate and illiterate societies in terms of development and ideas. The present study in contrast, is not concerned with outlining the differences between literate and non-literate societies but with how knowledge is accumulated and passed down to the next generation within society (for more on communication issues see also Mundy and Compton, 1995). Communication leads to the continuity and spread of knowledge within a society. But do the differences in the knowledge that people have in the same society have much to do with the communication channels that they use or even with levels of literacy? For example, as explored in Chapter 9, the young preferred the written word while the old and women preferred oral communication from a trusted friend or knowledge acquired in a practical manner. Mombeshora (1994) documents how the spread of literacy led to the abandonment of traditional beliefs on fertility. Change was mixed with continuity whereby, although literate people were able to articulate their scepticism and denounce witches and lineage rituals, they remained afraid of curses. This raises the question of whether this is merely a result of literacy or vindicates Jackson's (1989) assertion that indigenous knowledge is grounded in certain cultural assumptions. Thus, in looking at how knowledge is fabricated and accounting for differences in knowledge across gender or even intergenerational differences, these things need to be looked at critically.

The study also focuses on local knowledge, including belief systems that impact on agricultural practices. It has been suggested that the best way for development is through reliance on traditional spirituality and cultural knowledge (Chivaura and Mararike, 1998). Past fieldwork experiences in the research area have encountered incidents of traditional beliefs in witchcraft affecting a variety of relationships. The focus on spirituality and cultural knowledge was necessitated by Fairhead's (1993:199) astute observation that 'the focus on technical knowledge isolates agriculture from the social context, or put another way the farmer from the person. Researchers who are permitted to examine agriculture in terms of agricultural knowledge can maintain themselves in ignorance of the multitude of non-agricultural influences which inform agricultural practices'. Chapter 7 discusses how witchcraft and other traditional beliefs impact on agricultural practices and thereby inadvertently on agricultural knowledge. For example, in Mupfurudzi there were incidents of traditional beliefs in witchcraft affecting a variety of relationships and activities.

Although anyone could be accused of witchcraft, the people who were accused of having this magic were usually those people who were regarded as 'good' farmers. Focus was not on the falsity or truth of these beliefs but on how they impacted on agricultural knowledge and informed agricultural practice in general. Given the fact that 'traditions' are not static, there is a recurrent theme concerning how these traditions were continuously invented and reinvented and how this inevitably impacted on knowledge.

The third area addressed is the interplay between practical experience and the cultural and localised meanings of knowledge. This entails bridging the gap between 'outside' and 'local' modes of knowledge. Farmer knowledge is dynamic. As noted by Fairhead (1993:193), nobody locally is in a position to say what is right or what is wrong and to turn a farmer's hypothesis into truth. For him 'local knowledge lies as much in its methods, in its lack of overbearing authority and in its fluidity as in what is known'. Linked to this is the issue of how farmers develop the confidence to follow their own initiatives and come up with 'new' forms of knowledge. The book offers an attempt to understanding how farming and farming knowledge is embedded in the social and political life of the actors. Linked to this is an analysis of the networks that actors utilise and how they impact on their own interpretations and understandings. This theme is thoroughly discussed in Chapter 6, although, like other themes, it is also touched upon at various junctures in other chapters.

I adopt a critical stance towards local knowledge because such knowledge cannot be a panacea for the problems of agricultural development. A close reading of the coming chapters will show that one cannot conflate local knowledge with good farming practices and neither should one attempt to judge local people as ignorant because of the knowledge frames they adopt. Apparently, even farmers are 'objectivists' in the last instance because knowledge has to deliver and farmers judge it as to its efficacy. Hence I look closely at the role of experimentation and local observation in the acceptance, rejection or adaptation of new technologies. The issue of adaptation or reworking of new technologies has recently attracted the attention of agricultural scientists. 'Adaptation' and 'reworking' have recently been understood as the production of (often hidden) novelties (Wiskerke and Van de Ploeg, 2004). For technical knowledge, there is room for the correction of error through experimentation and reworking of knowledge to suit conditions.

The book, however, also looks for associative factors that count in favour of or against accepting these technologies. These factors include particular experiences (*habitus*) that affect a person's willingness to accept new knowledge. Although all knowledge derives to some extent from experience, cognition depends on mental or culturally embedded symbolic associations as well as on direct material observations. A bad experience with debt repayments, for example, may result in a farmer refusing to look seriously at

innovative technologies; alternatively, the association of a technology with a politically dominant group or with an established cultural repertoire may favour its acceptance. Another associative factor in the acceptance of knowledge is its political and cultural status. Thus, the relationship between knowledge and formal systems of training, both for adults and children, needs also to be explored.

Focusing on the status of knowledge, I provide an examination of interface encounters involving resettled farmers and outside institutions and agents, since these encounters may have a bearing on how certain knowledge is perceived. Some agents might have symbolic capital (such as the backing of the state, or networks created at the local level) to make themselves heard and believed, while others might lack this symbolic capital and are not believed even if what they say is correct.

Related to this is also to examine knowledge as a discourse and of knowledge discourses. Long (2004:27) defines discourse as a 'set of meanings embodied in metaphors, representations, images, narratives and statements that advance a particular version of "the truth" about objects, persons, events and relations between them'. The prevailing discourses at a given time can determine what is regarded as knowledge and what is not. On the other hand when analysing discourse this book will not only consider its verbal content since 'discourse is never dependent solely on verbalisation of text, everyday talk or public rhetoric. It is equally manifest in non-verbal behaviour, bodily expression and feelings as well as in how people relate to specific goods, artefacts and technologies that come, as it were, already endowed with particular social meanings and valuations' (Long, 2001:3). Knowledge then can be a discourse employed by different actors to cover or hide different kinds of relationships. Thus, for example, Chapter 5 unravels how various socioeconomic and political constellations impact on knowledge discourses of the various actors. The chapter also discusses how the knowledge discourses of the various actors, in turn shape, what they regard as knowledge. It also focuses on how the various discourses impact on how the different actors involved attempt to influence the socioeconomic and political spheres.

The main **research question** that informs this book is then: how knowledge is produced, reproduced, socialised and reworked in farming areas and how locally existing conditions filter themselves into the new practices. Hence the book aims to accomplish three aims: (1) to analyse how social processes impact on the adoption, adaptation and dissemination of knowledge and technology; (2) To investigate how differences between actors (e.g. based on age, gender, social and economic standing, institutional affiliation, and the knowledge networks used by various actors) can impact on knowledge dissemination and appropriation; (3) To explore how existing knowledge frameworks affect

knowledge analysis and acceptance and how people bridge the gap between 'outside' and 'local' forms of knowledge.

Concepts

Access to wealth and power

Power is defined by Weber as 'The probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests' (Barbalet, 1985:532). On the other hand Scott regards power as the 'extent to which elites are able to impose their own image of a just social order, not simply on the behaviour of non-elites but on their consciousness as well (Mitchell, 1990:548). Weber's view of power is linked to the use of force, especially where the exercise of power is met with resistance, whilst Scott's view of power is linked to the ability and capacity of the elites to control and call upon the support of 'subordinates'¹¹ Although these two views on power may be applicable under certain circumstances, they proved problematic in this study. The reason for this is that they focus more on what people can do to show power and what they cannot do to show powerlessness and fail to recognise that sometimes power is not a resource intrinsic to the elite but power is relational and refers to a relationship. Regarding power as a relationship entails recognition that power is not an intrinsic quality of certain beings and guards us from regarding other people as victims of power since power is attached and detached in very different ways. As noted earlier, power is not necessarily centred in certain institutions and bodies.

All people in the sample maintained that there was no relationship between power and wealth. They gave the impression that all people have equal opportunities of accessing positions of power in the village, and that, all those occupying positions did not do so because they were rich nor were rich because of their positions. For example, in one of the villages, people claimed that the village headman was the poorest person in the village. Nevertheless, whenever we referred to power, the issue of wealth came into the equation. For example, at the *dare* (village court) the people who dominate the discussions, or whose views merit serious consideration are the wealthy people regardless of whether they occupy a position or not.

¹¹ Scott's view here follows closely the Gramscian approach to hegemony that emphasises the cultural and ideological aspects of hegemony, where subject people comply with their subordination. Gramsci's theory of hegemony focuses on 'the entire practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class (or dominant actors) not only justifies its dominance, but manages to win active consent of those over whom it rules' (Gramsci 1971, cited by Long, forthcoming)

Although the Village Headmen in the two villages have institutional power, they lack influence in the villages they are supposed to head. For example, at a meeting in Muringamombe village to discuss the policy that had been introduced by government requiring farmers to brand their cattle, most people did not pay attention to anything the village headman was saying. Every time the village headmen addressed the people, the people would start talking amongst themselves. In Mudzingo, the village headman did not have any influence apart from leading traditional ceremonies and the people looked down on him because he was poor. The most influential people in both villages were usually the richer people or the more successful farmers and -especially just before the highly contested Presidential elections of March 2002 - those with political office. However it is reasonable to say that in the two villages people usually deferred to those with wealth.

People claimed that everyone had equal opportunities and equal chances of being elected into office. But in practice, the rich occupied the more powerful positions whilst the majority were more often than not foot soldiers, unless they had an exceptional ability to talk or were willing to leave their fields unattended whilst they attended meetings.

However, it should be noted that in some cases people considered the character of a person before voting him/her into any position of authority. A man in Mudzingo had been banned from occupying any position of authority in the village because, although he was rich and regarded as a good farmer, he had an undesirable tendency to look down upon people. However, when he was removed from his position, the position went to another rich man in the village who was regarded to be of a better disposition. Although the rich may have occupied the powerful positions, they could be removed from these by local farmers, thus indicating that power was not centred in certain individuals.

It would not be wrong to link being a *hurudza* (an exceptionally good farmer who is usually very wealthy due to his or her farming endeavours) and being a powerful member of society. Although people failed or simply refused to recognise this association, most of those who occupied the most powerful positions were at the same time also good farmers. Indeed, people claimed to consider qualities such as demeanour, but, except in rare cases, it would seem that such good qualities were found only among the good farmers.

If power is also defined as the ability to have influence on how other people organise their lives and the ability to instil fear into others, then other forms of power were also prevalent in the villages. If one possessed a spiritual standing in the village, as a spiritual leader, a witch or traditional healer, then one had an element of power in the village. However, different degrees of power could be accorded to these different categories of spiritual people. A spiritual leader did not have power outside of his spiritual office, that of leading spiritual rituals. A suspected witch could instil fear into people but people had their own means of

neutralising the power of the witch. A traditional healer gained the respect of his or her clients. Yet the power and influence born of being a good farmer was more enduring than all the other forms of power and influence as long as the power holder knew how to use his power appropriately.

Wealth and Poverty

At resettlement all poor households had no cattle while only two of the households in the medium wealth rank did not possess them. Those who had a few resources (such as cattle or ploughs) to their name managed to get a head start over other villagers who had to depend on manual labour or borrow cattle from others. Ownership of cattle alone, however, can not wholly explain the social differentiation that has occurred in the two villages since the 1980s. This can be understood when we take into cognisance that, at resettlement, people could receive two oxen on loan from the Agricultural Finance Corporation. Some of the households in the sample including one household in the very poor category had access to this facility. What is important at this point is to understand why some people who were poor (i.e. did not own any cattle or ploughs) at the time of resettlement managed to improve, while others remained poor.¹²

In their concern for how definitions of poverty affect the results of the extent of poverty in eight industrialised countries, Hagenaars and Vos (1988: 212-213) advance three categories or definitions of poverty '(A) Poverty is having less than objectively defined absolute minimum [absolute poverty], (B) Poverty is having less than others in society [relative poverty], (C) Poverty is feeling you do not have enough to get along [subjective poverty]. For the ranking scale we adopted the absolute poverty approach. As will soon become apparent, category A and category B tallied with farmers' perceptions of poverty since for them poverty was relative and subjective. However, in order to measure wealth and poverty it was not proper to rely only on farmers' perceptions since farmers, who apparently suffered extreme deprivation, did not regard themselves as poor even though sometimes they had to work for food in the fields of better-off farmers. On the other hand, those farmers who had access to good food, cash, and better lives than others sometimes regarded themselves as poor for some other reasons such as lack of relatives (discussed later in this chapter in the section on the concept of good farmer). Thus there was need for other objectively identifiable indicators based on local farmers' answers to certain questions. Farmers were asked to identify what made a person a good

¹² Note that, although some households have remained poor according to the arbitrary scale of wealth ranking we applied, this does not mean however that there has been no marked improvement in the life of these people. It also should be noted that some of the medium wealthy households might be slipping into the poor category.

farmer, what distinguished a good farmer from other farmers, who in the village did they think were rich and who were poor and why; and what kinds of lifestyle in the villages were associated with poverty and which were associated with wealth. It emerged during these discussions that, although farmers were sometimes not willing to refer to themselves as poor or rich, on a general discussion on wealth and poverty certain recurrent themes emerged which then allowed us to rank households within the sample according to wealth.

Taking into consideration farmers' perceptions of poverty and wealth, in order to assess the wealth of households, we developed an index as follows:

Table 2: Calculation of wealth

Cattle Ownership	0=0; 1-2=1; 3-5=2; 5-9=3; 10+=4	0-4 Points
Ownership Of Equipment	Ploughs, Scotch Carts, Cultivator, Harrow, Tractor	0-4 Points
House	Cement, Plastered Floor, And Windows Of Main House, Roof Of Extension	0-4 Points
Other Investments	Grinding Mill, Rental House In Town, Solar Panel, Other Significant Livestock, Etc	0-4 Points
Maximum Range		0-16 Points

Using this arbitrary wealth ranking scale, it emerged that in the sample, 2 households were very poor (0-1), 5 were poor (2-6), and 7 were medium (7-11) and none were in the very wealthy category.

Elsewhere Poulton *et al* (2000:5) have characterised poor households as follows: 'Poor households tend to be characterised by the following features: large household size, high dependency ratio, older or very young household heads, small land holdings and low levels of education...Poor households tend to be food crop farmers...Livestock holdings are a key indicator of wealth (and a critical production asset) amongst small holder households'. However, as will soon become apparent, although other households were large and poor, others were also large and rich and sometimes smaller households could be very poor and depended on food purchases, Poulton *et al*, (2000) characterisation of poor households generally holds true for the poor households in the study sample.

Although one of the households that improved from the very poor category to the medium wealth rank had sixteen people, eleven of whom provided labour, one of the very poor households had one individual who received no outside help. As a result, although the availability of labour seems like one obvious variable we are loath to attribute all the wealth differences to the availability of labour. One of the reasons for this is that at resettlement most of

the families were still very young with young children who could not be expected to do a day's work. On the other hand, at the time of fieldwork one of the poor households had fourteen members all of whom provided labour whilst one of the medium rank households had three members who also provided all the labour requirements and sometimes hired one or two people to assist.

One variable that clearly distinguished the poor and very poor households from the medium wealth households was that the former did not have regular access to seed and fertiliser loans. When they could access these loans, they usually obtained very few inputs since at times the amount of a farmer's loan depended on his/her previous harvest and the quantity of crops the farmer had delivered to the loan bodies for sale in the previous year. As a result, in most cases, these poor households had poor yields since they resorted to the use of saved seed and little or no fertilisers. Access to loan facilities acquires a larger meaning if it is sufficiently realised that much farming in these villages was dependent on access to these loans. On being asked why they were very poor, when her husband was still alive, one woman maintained that,

This is so because we are now getting more fertiliser on loan from the GMB. Without fertiliser, there is not much anyone can do. Before my husband died he bought 3 cattle that we now use for ploughing now we have got draught power. When my husband was alive, we could not get credit from GMB because we did not have cattle to use as collateral. When borrowing fertilisers and seed packs from the GMB they want to know if you have cattle, scotch carts, ploughs, and any other farming equipment.

Whilst most of the poor households were denied loans because they were bad debtors, two of the medium wealth households sometimes chose not to take out any loans because they could access all the required inputs on their own. A third household had not taken out seed and fertiliser loans at one time due to AIDS and HIV related problems.

Poverty levels might also have something to do with why people decided to join the resettlement schemes. Most of the better off households defined their core business in the resettlement scheme as farming. They had migrated from their original home areas because they were very much interested in farming so had been interested in these areas with good soils and rainfall. On the other hand, three of the very poor people had migrated from their areas as a way of avoiding conflicts and running away from witchcraft which they said was being practised on them by their relatives. These people were not much concerned with farming and were mostly satisfied with their lot since they said that in the resettlement areas they now enjoyed peace of mind. As long as they obtain enough to feed their families, they were not concerned with many things.

When asked to describe a 'good farmer' most respondents, regardless of their wealth status maintained that good farmers were good because they planned their things on time, while on the other hand, those who were not good began to run around trying to secure seed after the rains had started. Even if he got

seed and fertiliser loans on time, one of the very poor household heads in the sample sold the fertilisers and seed very cheaply to other farmers in the area. He even slaughtered the cattle he had received on loan and sold the beef. Even though at one time this man had two wives and six children who could provide the required labour, this household was always short of food and had to purchase supplementary food. Also, as in one of the polygynous households in the sample, the wives also withdrew labour if they thought the other co-wife was foot dragging.

Judging by its decreasing herd of cattle and quality of life, one household maintained that they were becoming worse off than they were prior to resettlement. The wife of the respondent explained that it was because they had been bewitched by their husband's relatives just before resettlement, which also had influenced their decision to apply for resettlement. The difference between this household and the other households in the medium category was that the household head was of an advanced age (80 years old). He was different from other households in that his field had been broken up into plots to accommodate his married sons and unmarried daughters with families. The fragmentation had meant that the area of land available to him for food and cash-crop production had drastically reduced and was instead mostly concentrating on food production. The fragmentation had come at a time when he was saddled with the burden of looking after very young children after the death of his two children from AIDS. Worse still he had not managed to farm properly and to secure any loans when his two daughters fell sick. His daughters' illness had meant that available labour had been reduced since the daughters needed constant attention. Thus although there maybe other factors to account for why some families are regressing and fragmenting their fields, such as the stage reached in the household cycle, illnesses within a family can reverse the fortunes of people.

Access to enough land might also be a necessary factor in explaining poverty (see the table below, which shows the number of acres the different households own by category of wealth).

Table 3: Land available to various social categories (in acres)

Acres available	0-5	6-9	10-12	13-25
Very Poor	1	1	1	-
Poor	-	2	2	-
Medium	-	1	2	4

More than half of the successful farmers managed to expand their fields, while some of the poor farmers have diminishing their acres. Sometimes, although the

poor have access to fewer acres, they are not able to cultivate all their land because of a lack of labour and other resources. Sometimes poor farmers with an average 12 acre field would rent out part of their field to more successful farmers, or to teachers and other business people in return for bags of fertiliser to use in the part of the field they are utilising.¹³

Gender

Waterhouse and Vijfhuizen (2001:7-8) maintain that gender concerns the social-cultural construction of women and men. According to them, 'it is necessary to realize that these processes of construction are both reproduced and transformed, by both women and men. Hence analysing gender relations means getting to grips with these processes. It must be emphasised that both men and women are involved in constructing gender, by their actions (practices), assigning meanings and reproducing norms and values. From this perspective women are seen as strategic actors and not passive victims of patriarchal and matriarchal structures'. This section will briefly look at the social construction and reconstruction of gender roles by men and women in the resettlement villages I studied.

In these villages, women were not resettled in their own right (Jacobs, 1990; Gaidzanwa, 1995; Rukuni, 1994). This is not an experience unique to Zimbabwe but as noted by ILO (1995:26, 27) 'Reforms have almost always defined beneficiaries of land titles and of any concomitant support services to be the male head of the household. This proved to be disastrous for women who had enjoyed customary use rights and for female heads of households...Women's access to agricultural land in resettlement areas..., has not always been secured. First, schemes often grant land titles or leases to male heads of household. Second, where land acquisition or allocation is open to everyone, men or women, a number of socio-cultural and economic factors prevent women from enjoying or exercising this equal right'¹⁴. In Mudzingo, one woman managed to obtain a plot permit on her own when the husband, who had been the initial receiver of the land, ran away with another woman and did not turn up to

¹³ In her study of resettlement areas Jacobs (1990:173) also found similar trends. She noted that those farmers who lacked drought power or equipment with which to cultivate often rented out land and thus in her study 5% of resettled farmers were utilizing between 14-37 acres of land instead of the designated 12 acres only.

¹⁴ Commenting on land tenure commissions (which were led by Rukuni) in Zimbabwe, Mbiba (1999:316, 322) points out that 'they marginalise the majority of peasants and exclude any radical submissions from the affected people as became clear in handling of the gender issues by Zimbabwe's Land tenure Commission (1993-1994). Women comprehensively called for gender equity in land resource use through allocation of land to women.... Yet in the commission's 300 pages report evidence from women on this score was ignored in preference to maintenance of the male-Chief status quo'

claim the land. Other women in the sample became plot owners and *de facto* household heads at the demise of their husbands. In Muringamombe, both women in the sample became heads after the death of their husbands. Considering the large number of women in the area, particularly after taking into account that some men have more than one wife, there is a gender imbalance in the ownership of stands.

Even in those households where the woman is the head, she remains household head only in as far as her name appears in the official documents. Most of the decisions on farming are taken out of the hands of women. Thus, simply counting the number of female household heads versus the number of male household heads tells us little about gender politics in the area. Where there are older sons, the mother who is the official household head defers most of the important decisions to the grown up ones. These decisions may be related to land use or the commercial crop varieties the family ends up cultivating.

The household structure is such that men make most of the decisions, even those related to the disposition of produce and how the proceeds are to be distributed within the household. This unequal distribution of power in the domestic sphere might also be the cause of the many domestic disputes which frequently call for the intervention of the village *dare*: women are contesting inequality in their homes because most agriculturally demanding tasks are undertaken by women¹⁵. These gender inequalities are not only limited to the domestic sphere but to public power domains as well. Men occupy most public positions that are regarded as powerful.

Despite these gender differentials, it seems that both men and women have access to the same kinds of information. The differences that arise concern how this information is processed and used. Some women do not take loans or, if they do, they only take small loans because of the belief that taking loans is men's business (*zvinotoda varume*). Moreover, the socialised belief that men are more capable than women has meant that women do not have confidence in their own capacities.

Men are also able to command much labour. For example, there is a general sentiment among male stand holders that it is the women who are labourers. Some villagers equated having many wives with the ability to farm the whole

¹⁵ Note that in her study of the Nso in the Cameroon Grassfields, Goheen (1996:73) highlights the importance of women in performing agricultural tasks: 'While doubting women's capacity to reason, men continue to acknowledge women's farm labor as the most critical factor of production. Women are believed to be naturally endowed with the capacity to do farm work. When questioned about food crops or indeed about farming in general, men would often say "you will have to ask the women. It is they who are being the farmers, and it is they who know about farming"over 90% of the food is grown by women'.

12 acres or at least most of it.¹⁶ In her study of resettlement areas in Zimbabwe, Jacobs (1990:173) notes that 'some men may hope to pursue polygyny, as a strategy for accumulating capital through accumulation of wives...small capitalist farmers who were polygynists treated wives (especially younger ones) virtually as labourers'. Similarly in the two villages I studied, a man was usually said to have married the right woman if the woman was able to work very hard. Marriage for any other reason was viewed to be an error of judgement. I talked to one female trader who remarked that men oppress women since they do not allow their women to use the maize to get what they want, despite the fact that women do most of the fieldwork. The ability of men to marry labour gave them an edge over women whereas, on the other hand, women depended on their children's labour, which they could lose at any time if their children married and moved out.

Household conflicts over resource sharing indicate that proceeds from farming are not distributed equitably within the household. Thus, the same resource can impact differently on different people within the household. In one of the households in the sample, the wife had to take her husband to the village court because she felt that the proceeds from farming were not being distributed fairly. According to her, the husband was always buying cattle, which, culturally are not regarded as a woman's property and can be taken over by her husband's relatives upon his death. Discussing development and state policies from a gender perspective, Parpart and Staudt (1990:1) express misgivings that, 'Women's seemingly personal, everyday experiences are structured by policies, most of which are apparently "gender neutral". But these policies are in fact, experienced very differently by men and women. We have been struck by the absence of attention to women and the state in several different bodies of knowledge.'

In another case, a man who was married to a female stand holder (not in the sample) took his wife to court because he felt that she was controlling all the income from their farming ventures. The wife, on the other hand, argued that she was investing the money in family assets and that her husband was mentally disturbed and could not be trusted with any household money. Thus, even in cases where there is an observable increase in the asset base of individual families, it does not necessarily lead to the improvement of the livelihoods of everyone in the family. Although Kinsey (1999) points to the positive effects of resettlement shown by certain economic indicators on

¹⁶ Cheater A (1984) found a similar kind of perception among Purchase area farmers in Msengezi where she talks of 'marrying labour' when men married several wives so that they could get cheap labour to work their farms. In another study, Weinrich (1983) documented that 47% of the families in Purchase Areas in southern Zimbabwe were polygynous.

household poverty levels, he fails to notice that these perceived increases in household wealth could be experienced quite differently by different people¹⁷. Thus sometimes, although a household can be positively ranked in terms of wealth available to it, it does not necessarily follow that the members of that household enjoy the fruits of that wealth in equal measure. A focus on gender thus enables us to keep in mind that people within the same household often experience phenomena differently.

There were also cases where husbands beat up their wives for exchanging all the maize for clothes and other utensils with the traders popularly known as *madhaiza* who exchange their wares for maize and sometimes cash. Men deplored this practise as they say it threatens the family's food security and at times men have chased away these *madhaiza* traders from their homes. Some women, on the other hand see this as fair practise since men use all the money from their cash crops to buy manly things or even to purchase things, which the women could not call theirs. So buying from *madhaiza*, women could purchase things for the whole family and, on top of that, utensils that they could claim ownership over.

Sometimes conflicts also occurred between parents and their adult children. In some cases, adult children ended up beating or threatening to beat up their parents because of frustration over the way resources were being shared in the household. Even in those households that were regarded as well off and whose household head was seen as someone who invested wisely, these conflicts could occur.

The concept of 'good farmer'

For officials the concept of 'good farmer' was associated with people who achieve higher yields than most people do in the village, yet farmers talked of '*hurudza*'. Whereas the concept of, 'good farmer' registers success in agricultural activities, the concept of *hurudza* was associated with lifestyle. *Hurudzas* were taken to be those farmers possessing status goods such as solar panels, television sets, radios and other household items like lounge suites. Consequently, for local farmers a person could be regarded as a good farmer but not a *hurudza*. Those who were regarded as good farmers by the 'experts' and not as *hurudzas* by local farmers were usually suspected of practising magic. This was so because villagers maintain that money from magic could not buy anything. Everyone was agreed that a *hurudza* should have status goods such as solar panels, televisions, and sometimes a car and production goods

¹⁷ This brings to fore, Sen's (1981:1) disenchantment with the focus on food availability because for him it blurs the important issue of access and control over food. According to him 'scarcity is the characteristic of people not having enough...it is not a characteristic of there not being enough....While the latter can be the cause of the former, it is one of the many causes'.

such as cattle as well as the ability to hire labour. And some people went even further to claim that a *hurudza* also had to have good clothes and good food which was identified by the variety of food stuff that he could access. Therefore the concept of *hurudza* is not only associated with the ability to achieve high yields but also with decisions taken on disposable income.

Hence, while good farmers were those who obtained higher yields than most people in the village, households of good (*hurudzas*) farmers were those with enough food throughout the year:

It does not help to get 100 bags of maize and not buy anything of value. Can you call a person hurudza because he gets very high yields but does not have anything on his homestead? If you go to their houses in the morning, you find them eating sadza, in the afternoon sadza, at night sadza. What kind of hurudza is that? If you are a hurudza, you have everything to eat. If you want mutakura, mangai anything you just get it from your granary. A hurudza never runs out.

Good farmers were taken to be those with adequate draught power, implements and the ability to employ other people.

Farmers who had big yields, but used loans, were not considered good farmers. The general belief was that good farmers should have their own independent sources of income. They were supposed to finance their own agricultural activities rather than work as contract farmers for credit organisations.

Furthermore the concepts of 'good farmer' and 'poor farmer' were not seen as exact opposites. Although three farmers thought that the concept of poor farmer could be used interchangeably with the word laziness, the remainder of the people in the sample felt that poverty was not always due to this. Thus, one respondent said,

I don't believe that, because no person will fail to weed their field if they are able to spend the whole day at maricho (working in other people's fields). I think lack of access to the relevant resources is the thing that leads to poverty.

Therefore, just as the good farmer was associated with access to adequate resources, so the poor farmer was associated with lack of access.

The major resource that was mentioned regardless of gender or economic status was access to cattle. Lack of cattle was felt to be the major cause of poverty since it meant that a person always planted crops late and consequently received poor harvests. Poor yields reinforced poverty within the household since it meant a lack of food and cash to buy agricultural inputs or other household essentials.

Sometimes poverty was not related to farming ability. Three people in the total sample pointed out that if a person was disabled or did not have any relatives then that person was poor regardless of the amount of crops he harvested. One respondent maintained that everyone was poor.

I think everyone is poor. For example, usually I have enough to eat but I am poor because none of my relatives ever comes to visit me. If you have enough food but no relatives, you are poor.

Consequently, poverty was not always related to farming ability. And, on the other hand, some people categorically denied that they were poor, even though they fell into the 'poor' category according to our wealth ranking criteria.

Conclusion

This chapter has positioned the study in relation to various theoretical considerations and has argued why knowledge have to be studied and understood in context. There was also a concerted effort to define concepts such as wealth, poverty, power and 'good farmers' as they are defined by the various actors (i.e. experts and farmers) involved.

I also explored why knowledge experts and farmers tend to approach phenomena differently giving rise to different perspectives on knowledge. For example, we find important differences in ways in which 'experts' and 'lay farmers' defined the notion of 'good farmers'. Moreover, sometimes these discrepancies led to situations wherein farmers expressed disappointment with the pronouncements made by experts, not because the latter were intrinsically wrong but because they violated certain strongly held farmer assumptions.

This chapter has also made it abundantly clear that programmes and policies are not experienced in the same way by different people. For instance, policies that claimed to be gender neutral were in fact experienced and perceived differently by men and women. This highlighted the central dimension of this book, namely the need to consider households and local farming categories as composed of actors who have both common and divergent interests.

3

Ethnography and the ethnographic experience

Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this study is an extension of an earlier interdisciplinary study on poverty reduction and high yielding varieties of maize. For the earlier study, a sample of fourteen households was used. Purposive stratified sampling was adopted to select the sample. Using existing data from a twenty-year panel study by Kinsey and others, we were able to identify households and group them according to certain social characteristics that at the time were thought to be important to accessing some of the different characteristics in the sample population. We¹⁸ grouped the households according to their wealth ranking (using Kinsey's data on household size, cattle ownership and maize yield), family size, sex and age of household head, and then selected the households from the resultant sub-groups. This was to ensure that the various characteristics within the sample population were represented in the final sample.

The continued use of the original quantitatively selected sample for the qualitative study that I later pursued is not meant to be a pretension to scientism. The present study was in every sense of the word an extension of research work that had already been carried out in these resettlement schemes. The use of the sample of the 14 households we had used in the study on HYV maize, allowed for continuity since I could also draw upon some of the data we had already gathered in the HYV maize study. Furthermore, I managed to create close relationships with these families and/households and was reluctant to start with new ones altogether. Choosing the initial sample from a pre-existing data set also was a time saver.

However I am convinced that had I not gone into the research situation with a pre-selected sample, villagers would have made every effort to influence my choice of families, since when I arrived in the research area some villagers expressed surprise as to why some well known witches were part of my sample and strongly advised me to drop them. In some cases, villagers argued that I should not interview this person because he was not well behaved, or because he saw things in a way that was not tolerated by others in the village, or simply

¹⁸ 'We' refers to the people who were part of the research team of the IFPRI-funded interdisciplinary research project.

because that person was suspected of belonging to the political opposition. Thus although some criticisms may arise as to why I decided, in what was largely a qualitative study, to use quantitative data from the earlier study to select my sample, this procedure protected me from talking only to people who were regarded as socially and politically correct, since I could claim (of course less truthfully) to the villagers that there was nothing I could do about it because the computer had selected the households for me.

Off course, some of the problems I faced were a result of circumstances beyond my control. The approach used by Bill Kinsey since he started researching in the area was to give households 'tokens of appreciation' for taking part in the study. These tokens involved giving the participating household packets of sugar or tea leaves. For the IFPRI-funded research, it was initially agreed that each participating family would be given a goat as appreciation of their agreement to participate in the study. However, this 'gifted' goat would only be mentioned after the household head had already agreed to participate so that their agreeing to participate in the study would not be based on the goat. Later on, because it was difficult for me and the other field researchers involved in the project to buy the goats and transport them to the individual families, it was decided that each participating family receive \$Z 1 500 (equivalent to US\$27 in 2001). Those who were not in the sample claimed that this money was being given to these people as a way of buying them to vote for the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change). Most people grumbled loudly as to why they had also been left out of the sample especially since being in the sample meant being paid for just talking to the researcher. Thus political problems were directly linked to the material rewards promised to those participating in the study.

Due to such political difficulties experienced during the preliminary research period, particularly in Mudzingo village, I had decided later to incorporate four of the politically powerful households in the area, primarily for my own and my assistants' protection. However, after talking to influential people in the village as well as to the District Administrator (DA), I finally decided not to drop any households from my sample or to include any new households. The reason for this was that I now had letters from the DA and the chief explaining what I was doing in the area which I could present to anyone querying my presence in the villages. Before I could get the letter from the DA, the DA had requested I first present to him a letter from the University of Zimbabwe explaining what I was researching. He explained that he needed this letter for his files. He cautioned me not to become involved in opposition politics whilst in the area, and said he would continue to check on me to see if I was following

his orders. He then gave me a letter to take to Chief Bushu¹⁹. In this letter the DA explained that I was a student and wanted to do research on agricultural knowledge in Mudzinge and Muringamombe. I took this letter to Chief Bushu who turned out not to be there at the time but attending Parliament in Harare. As a result the acting chief (who was the Chief's young brother) gave me a stamped and signed letter informing whoever was interested that I had passed through the Chiefs office and had permission to do research on agricultural knowledge in the area. I was again cautioned not to be involved in any activities that were beyond my stated objective, that of studying agricultural knowledge and practices. The acting Chief requested a copy of the letter from the DA which I provided. I then took the DAs letter and the letter from the Chief to the village heads in my research villages. The village head of Mudzinge village insisted that I give him copies of the letters which he said he needed for his files. The village head in Muringamombe made no such demands although he read the letters I had brought with me. The Mudzinge village head then told me I could now start my work. At the same time he advised me to carry the letters from the DA and the Chief with me all the time, in case I faced problems and had to explain who I was and what I was doing. The letters from the Chief and the DA would prove to anyone that I was who I claimed to be since the government knew of my presence in the area.

In spite of the decision to stick to my original sample, I would on occasions also pay visits to the politically powerful people in the village to greet them or ask them certain questions related to the study. This was not because I felt that they had anything different to contribute to the study but simply so that I remained in their good graces. The people in the sample households from Mudzinge village (where I had faced problems with some people not in the sample, who would not understand the research and accused me of being a member of MDC) insisted also on seeing the letter from the DA and the Chief before they could talk to me again. Although they knew what I was doing and knew for certain that I had never discussed politics with them, they wanted to make sure that my presence in the area was legitimate and that they would not get into trouble from talking to me. The sample, however, remained relatively open so as to allow the researchers to follow interesting issues as and when

¹⁹ Mudzinge and Muringamombe were under Chief Nyamaropa. However, they had not had a chief for two years prior to my research because the Chief had been sent to prison on charges of bribery and corruption. The people under Chief Nyamaropa were awaiting the appointment of a new chief. When asked which of the nearby chiefs they wanted to be their chief until another Nyamaropa Chief could be installed, they voted for Chief Bushu. Chief Bushu had a reputation of being a just Chief. People loved him because they said that he was not corrupt and was a very intelligent man. People maintained that he was very fair when adjudicating all court cases that were brought before him for judgement.

they arose in the course of fieldwork. Hence conversations we had with people from the village or other villages that were not part of the sample were regarded as valid research data.

Of the total sample of fourteen households, half fell in the medium wealth category, while the rest came from the poor or very poor categories. Only four households were female headed.

Methodology

The main research method employed in this study was the ethnographic method with a focus on case studies. Before I proceed however, I wish to explain what I would mean by ethnography, viewed not only as a data collection method but also as a methodology. Various writers have described ethnography differently. Brewer (2000:6) regards ethnography as the method of field work. For him ethnography is the study of 'people in naturally occurring settings or fields by methods of data collection which capture their social meaning and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally' (see also Hammersley (1998:8) on ethnography and naturalism). Thus Brewer places ethnography squarely in the lap of field work. However there are others who do not regard field work as ethnography *per se* but 'ethnography [as] the interpretation of culture' (Clifford, 1988:39). Clifford is concerned more with writing culture, that is, with how people translate what they observe in the field into text. This textualisation then isolates and contextualises facts and the producers of the text claim to represent discrete meaningful worlds. For me then, ethnography refers to both the doing of field work and the process of writing. In the field the adoption of the ethnographic approach influenced my methods of data collection and the kinds of questions I was interested in. However, the way I also represented my field data to a wider audience was also central to the method of leading to Clifford's assertion of ethnography as the production of texts. Although Brewer is concerned more with field work and Clifford more with writing both their approaches raise issues of reflexivity, representation and realism in the method of ethnography.

The case studies were based on detailed observation of the families throughout the year. I spent thirty-months in the field, covering two agricultural cycles. The principal research technique was participant observation focusing on the collection of extended case studies and life histories (Van Velsen, 1967; Mitchell, 1983) derived from the Manchester School (Werbner, 1984). Participant observation was employed because it emphasises everyday interactions and observations rather than dependence on direct inquiries (through interviews) into specific behaviours (Dewalt *et al.*, 1998:260). This stress on the understanding of social situations through case methods has

been important to the study since in some cases people cannot put what they know into words and much knowledge is grounded in praxis. In this respect, participant observation helped to investigate properly what people regarded as important and served as a measure for directing any further observations and inquiries without it the research would have been the project of the researcher with little relevance to the lived experiences of the farmers.

In-depth interviews, observation and participation constituted, therefore, the main data gathering process. During the early days I had in-depth discussions with various members of the households in the sample, depending on who was available at that moment. At times I had to make special requests to speak to other members of the household, such as women and children. Although I made it a point to talk to the household member who was available at the time I arrived at particular homesteads, I also made an effort to go through the same things with other members of the household in order to verify my data and access the views of different household members on certain issues. Sometimes I would visit families and join in agricultural activities such as planting, weeding and harvesting of crops. I would also take part in other activities not directly related to focus such as fetching water from the borehole with women of the household or helping with other domestic chores. I also came across people not as researcher but simply as someone they could talk to. In this way I was able to appreciate and talk about what was important in the lives of farmers and their families. For instance, although seed variety and availability of fertilisers were important factors for farmers, equally important were issues of magic in explaining success or failure. Field work, I presume, was critical in revealing this since during the early days of the research people talked only of fertiliser and seed as the determinants of good yields. Only later did they begin to refer to magic and witchcraft also as important determinates of agricultural excellence. Clearly people will tell you sometimes what they think you want to hear or what is socially correct but methods of detailed fieldwork will make it difficult for them to sustain a 'lie'. Because fieldwork usually entails prolonged contact, it usually makes telling untruths a stressful business and there are also ways of verifying what people say relative to what they do and in this way seek clarification on any discrepancies. This does not mean that the so-called 'untruths' cease to be data as soon as one gets to the 'truth' but rather acknowledges that these 'untruths' can give an approximation of what villagers regard as the ideal type of behaviour and how they perceive certain kinds of behaviour.

Living with people and participating in their day-to-day activities also enabled me to catch onto hot gossip and current news that sometimes fed into my research interests and could be pursued later. I had constructed a research guide of roughly what I needed to go over with every household to ensure that I had a reasonable complete set of data for every household that made up my

sample. However, this guide was not rigid since other elements could be slotted in later if deemed relevant.

Ethnographic interviews (which were largely unstructured and extensive) were important for data gathering especially when looking at household dynamics in respect of the process of knowledge formation. This technique enabled me to go back in time, though this was often limited by the capacities of recall of the particular informant. These detailed cases enabled me to delve into the past and present conditions as well as to trace knowledge networks providing a reasonable picture the total context under which knowledge was disseminated and appropriated.

Issues relevant to the research were constantly discussed with members of the local community, both individually and in groups, regardless of whether the people were in the sample or not²⁰. With some members of the community (who might not be in the sample but nevertheless important key informants, e.g. agricultural extension workers and other important actors) person-centred interviews²¹ were carried out. Thus the interviewee was regarded as the informant and a respondent at the same time by observing the interviewee in the interview situation. This informant/respondent mode enables the researcher to illuminate the spaces, conflicts, coherence and transformations between the respondent's perception of what he knows and his or her

²⁰ Seur (1992), in a restudy of Norman Long's (1968) study in Zambia's Serenje District explains how snowballing enabled him to reach other contrasting or intriguing cases. For example, based on a conversation he had with a young Jehovah's Witness couple, he decided to include in his sample farms or households of both Witnesses and non-Witnesses where husband and wife had separate fields and incomes (Suer, 1992:123). He also used local farmers' comparisons and classifications to identify new cases and reformulate his research themes. In my case,, although I did not collect a complete data set from members of the community who were not part of my original sample, I would interview these people whenever an issue arose and when they were the relevant people to talk to regarding a specific issue. In the course of discussions, if issues other than those related to my original focus cropped up, then I pursued them and included the data in the study. Suer also developed a method whereby he discussed with the farmers the way Long had interpreted his data in the earlier study. Following a similar approach, I asked people to reflect on the interpretations of certain events by fellow villagers.

²¹ For Levy and Hollan (1998:335-336) to the extent that the person-centred interview engages the interviewee as an informant, that is as a knowledgeable person who can tell the anthropologist-interviewer about culture and behaviour in a particular locale, these interviews are similar to other interview methods discussed in social science literature. But Levy and Hollan claim that person-centred interviews also engages the interviewee as a 'respondent' as an object of systematic study and observation in him or herself. The interviewer observes and studies the interviewee as he or she behaves in the interview setting as she or he reacts or responds to various problems, questions and topics. It is the balanced combination of informant and respondent modes of interviewing that is characteristic of person-centred interviews and that distinguish them from most other type of interviews. It is the balanced combination of informant/respondent.

understanding of the prevailing external context. These detailed discussions and case studies helped to establish the various knowledge networks and linkages at local level that impact on the dissemination and adoption of new technology and knowledge.

Detailed case studies (involving interviewing and observation) also helped me to investigate the issue of communication and the different sources of information that people rely on. This helped to understand and explain the divergent knowledge frameworks existing between different people men women, old and the young.

It was the original aim to analyse the content of information disseminated by the different communication channels and why they appeal to certain kinds of audience. There also existed gender and age biases in the choice of medium, with youth, men and women often preferring different modes of dissemination. However, this was later dropped for logistical concerns. The problem was that not many people in the village had access to newspapers, and if so only occasionally. In the run up to the 2001 elections, many newspapers were regarded as opposition papers and were banned by the villagers. At the same, time even if villagers could gain access to all the papers, during the election period the only agricultural issue that dominated discussion was the fast track resettlement scheme. On this issue, there existed a deep cleavage among the papers with some opposing it vehemently and the government-owned papers supporting it. No technical information on agriculture was being passed on to the reader at the time. In addition, very few villagers had access to television and radio because batteries had become unaffordable. I tried approaching Radio Zimbabwe in order to access the programmes they had broadcast on agriculture over the past two years prior to 2004, but they said that they did not archive these since they used the tape to record other programmes. Hence content analysis was out of the question.

Since the research project aimed to focus on interface situations that is how different actors interact with each other and how they transcend the boundaries that seal them off from other actors a field based case study method was suitable. Case studies would provide data on how people interact with each other, negotiating conflict and reworking their ideas. They provide a deeper understanding of the workings of society and of how individuals deal with threats, and make use of different social networks in the acquisition and adoption of new knowledge and technology. Social networks are important because on them are superimposed knowledge networks and flows. For example, in Mupfurudzi as compared to other social situations, family ties were not so important for facilitating information flows as relationships based on friendship.

On the issues of knowledge/power, households like all other social units consist of individuals with common and divergent interests. As Foucault

suggests 'all power start in the smallest elements of the social body, the family, sexual relations, residential relations, neighbourhoods...power works then from the bottom up and must be studied that way' (Wickham, 1986). Thus in the coming chapters, I attempt in interviews and observational data to include most household members in each case so as to highlight their many diverging interests. This brings to the fore the contradictions and convergence of values and interests within particular families. Village court cases highlighting agricultural conflicts within and between families elucidate similar incompatibilities.

A short discussion on research practice

Now, because of a rise in the number of African and other so-called 'developing countries' scholars providing ethnographies of their own cultures ethnography is no longer, contrary to Rosaldo Jnr (1997:33), 'a tool [through] which people,... can come to know the depth of differences separating them, grasp the precise nature of these differences, and construct a [public] vocabulary through which they can seriously talk to one another'. Anthropology is also now about understanding the 'self'²². Unlike a situation where western researchers study non-western cultures to understand why 'others' believe in the things they believe in and then dismiss these beliefs as 'falsehoods,' non-western researchers studying their own cultures are denied such luxury. For example, Ashforth (1998) tried to follow the story of an angry snake that was supposed to be going to wreak havoc for the inhabitants of Soweto. He claims that, although he could afford to make jokes about this snake, his friends who were helping him to look for the data (although one of the friends was studying towards a law degree and another had recently abandoned his university studies due to family problems) believed in the existence of such a snake. Although they accepted that there could be some scientific explanation for the havoc that the angry snake was supposed to unleash, they still maintained that the tornadoes that sometimes occurred in the area were a result of the snake (*Inkosi ya manzi*/the king of the waters). They could not be explained simply as tornadoes (Ashforth, 1998:53). This is the dilemma that some African Anthropologists²³

²² Enlightened scholars are now advocating the exploration of the social and cultural character of the researcher's own society or social group in order to understand how this impacts on the research and interpretation of research material (Pool, 1994; Jackson, 1989; Clifford, 1988). This interest is not only limited to anthropologists. Chabal (1996:36) a historian maintains that 'it has always been true that the West's vision of Africa has been the product of its own imagination rather than of a serious interest in what actually happens on the continent'.

²³ Note that here I am not claiming that all African anthropologists and indeed all Africans believe in the existence of snake gods, witchcraft and ancestors. As shown in later chapters, my research assistant did not believe in these things. So here I am only talking about those who believe such mystical realities exist yet are forced, through their analysis and their need to be

may find themselves in. Being trained in western academic institutions, they are likely to do violence to their beliefs when they write about such phenomena, since try they may to offer western critic to non-western ideas. Because non-western researchers are afraid of being condemned as representing the voice of someone always confined to being 'native' and 'traditional', they adopt western discourse that is acceptable in academic circles. And when they try to turn away from the western standpoint, they never really succeed and the ambivalence of their position remains transparent in their work. This is illustrated by Chavhunduka (1980; 1986) who shows how ambivalence, especially where witchcraft is concerned, has played a part in national debates on witchcraft and the Witchcraft suppression act in Zimbabwe. The non-western anthropologist is torn between two worlds²⁴. The ambivalence is transparent where I, as an African researcher, am torn between relegating beliefs in witchcraft as nothing more than attempts to understand the modern world as advanced by authors like Geschiere, 1997; Ciekawy and Geschiere, 1998; Dolan, 1997; Niehaus, 2001, 1998 or as 'real' phenomena out there that need to be explained without recourse to western modernist discourses. I believe that instead of African and other non-western anthropologists adopting wholesale western approaches to understanding, they should make themselves more seriously aware of the historical situatedness of anthropological projects and adopt a critical stance that gives humanity back to their subjects. Such a standpoint depicts non-western actors as proactive in their approach to life not as condemned to reacting to outside forces.

As a way not of exonerating myself from any wrong doing, I provide below some excerpts of interviews and discussions I had with three different people on five different occasions. These interviews are the best way to illustrate some of the problems of doing ethnography and to show how my own beliefs impinged on the study.

Interviews

Thursday 14 June 2001-Mandirozva

I arrived at Mandirozva at 8.00am. When I arrived she was about to go to "Maricho" (working in people's fields for money and other things like salt and

accepted into and recognized by academic communities, to dismiss and expunge them from their public discourse. It may also be true that some western anthropologists studying their own societies are affected by their own religious or political beliefs.

²⁴ However, it has to be noted that this does not only apply to African researchers but also to non-African researchers who may likewise be torn between different cultural worlds and belief systems. For example, when it comes to debates over metaphysics and the paranormal (even in western countries) no amount of academic research and debate can prove one way or the other who is right. All anthropology, regardless of where the anthropologist comes from impinges, on beliefs. However this becomes especially acute when studying cultures that are denigrated by those in power that is, by those who dominate the academic circles.

matches) at Petros' She told me I was lucky to find her in however she was not going to stay long. I gave her money she had used to pay for the pictures of her that I had requested and she thanked me. I also asked her about the pictures. The photographer had told me Mandirozva collected the photographs after paying the remainder of the money.

'I stole ambuya's money. This is the money I used to pay for the photographs' She said after I paid her the money she had given the photographer. I was rather puzzled because I had not seen any old woman at Mandirozva's homestead. So I just thanked her and bid her to return the money before ambuya found out. She just laughed then asked me to come and see her house.

I thought she wanted to show me something in her bedroom so I walked in the direction of her bedroom then she said to me *'No! No! That's not where we are going. We are going to that room.'* She said pointing to another room which I had never seen opened. The room was just a single room standing separately from the others. I was at first a little apprehensive for I had on several occasions asked myself why the door to that room was never open.

She opened the door and went in ahead of me. The room was full of traditional things of ancestors (*zvinhu zvemudzimu*), cow hide drums, *makano* (very small hand axes commonly used by mediums), *machira eretso* (pieces of traditional cloth associated with the spirits), *chuma* (traditional necklaces), a reed mat, a few pillows and other things). She asked me to sit down on an earth bench on which there was a newspaper. By now (being a very superstitious person myself) I was beginning to get scared because I was not sure what I had got myself into. I wanted to just up and go but I could not without jeopardizing my future encounters with her so I decided to sit and see why she had invited me in. The room was also a little dark. I did not check it out, but I think it was windowless.

'I am a traditional healer,' she began, *'But I do not want a lot of people to know that I am a traditional healer'*.

But you don't look like a traditional healer. I did not know you were one. Some traditional healers dress differently from other people.

I do sometimes but not everyday. Sometimes I put on my traditional gear if they want me to put on the clothing --- they the owners. Those are my certificates from ZINATHA (ZINATHA was the Zimbabwean National Traditional Healers Association). They were 3 certificates on the wall each having a picture of a much younger Mandirozva. They were framed.

It's like they have been attacked by ants.

They were attacked when I went to see my mother in Rusape. My nephew and his wife do not want to touch my things. They say I am a heathen. They are Christians they go to Bongezi. I do not see anything wrong with healing people.

When I was a little girl I just dreamt the medicines and my mother went with me to a prophet. The prophet told my mother to make a bag of red and blue cloths which I use even up to now to carry my medicines when I go to the bush to look for my medicine. (She left me alone in the room whilst she went to her bedroom to collect the bag and she came back). This is the bag. My mother made it with her own hands. When I have to go deep into the forest where I might meet wild animals like lions I take this "gano" with me (The head of the gano (small axe) was tied up with retso cloth and the gano was

hanging on the wall.) *I also have this bakatwa (a small knife in a sheath) I remarked that my father had one like that only it was bigger to which she answered, Yaah mine is smaller because that is what they want*

So you are possessed by a spirit medium.

No! The spirits are within me but they don't come out like hau hau as some of the possessed people do. They do not speak through me but they just give me dreams of medicines. Look in this plate (wooden) what do you see.

I see bute (snuff) and two papers (khaki) on which are written two names).

Yaah those people came from Shamva. They are husband and wife and they are suffering from a Sexually Transmitted Disease (siki) which gives them sores. So I asked them to write down their names, which I put in this plate and sprinkle some bute snuff on top. When I go to sleep, they will show me what kind of medicines I should give to the person. You see that pillow over there and the reed mat; I use those for women who want me to inspect their wombs. Seri muSena (Seri is the name of one of her spirits and Musena an ethnic group from Mozambique) is the one who inspect women's wombs. He puts his hand inside the woman and if the womb is dirty he either gives the woman medicine to cleanse the womb or tells her to go to the doctors in Shamva.

You use bare hands. You insert your bare hands into people.

I used to do that in the past but the doctors in Shamva told me at one of the n'angas (traditional healers) doctors meeting not to do that anymore because they are now a lot of diseases around. Now I use plastic gloves I get from Shamva. (There was a plastic bag, which was hanging in the house. Now I was getting used to the darkness. I had not seen the plastic before). The gloves are in that plastic (That is also when I saw the condoms)

How do you use the gloves?

I just use the gloves to protect myself until they are torn then I throw them away. You see this black cloth. This belongs to ambuya (a female spirit given the respectful title of grandmother). Some men come with sores all over their penises, so I tie this black cloth over their eyes, and then squeeze all the puss out of the sores then put medicine in.

There are also condoms in that plastic.

The men who come to me for treatment of their siki (STDs), I give them condoms if they want. Some men from this village can come and get condoms if they want. However nowadays people are no longer coming to get the condoms. I get them from Shamva clinic. I also sell vhuka vhuka (aphrodisiac) to the men. R is my Sahuwira, so I used to prepare the portion and give it to him to sell at Madziva Mine beer hall. I used to come back home at 12 midnight from Madziva Mine drinking beer but vana ambuya (the grandmothers) told me to stop doing it. So now I am no longer selling vhuka vhuka.*

Why don't you just give it to R*? He used to sell the vhuka vhuka for you in the past.

People do not want to buy if I am not there. If I am there, they will know that they are buying the real thing. But if I am not there they are not sure. (A long silence followed then she showed me a reed hat on which was tied the retso cloth). You see this hat, it belongs to Seri. Seri does not want dirty. He wants to be smart all the time.

I can see the hat is beautiful. (I said stretching the truth a little too far) So you are from Mozambique.

No.

But Seri is from Mozambique. So how come Seri akagara pamuri (Literal translation-Seri sits on you. It can be understood as how come Seri possesses you). *You see that picture on the wall* (she said pointing to a picture of a fashion model – modelling dresses similar to those that are now popularly known as African attire – from a Sunday Mail magazine). *When you see that picture you might admire it not knowing that the spirit of the person in the picture sits there. If you admire it the spirit comes into you. That is what I did. I admired guru rehangwa (type of traditional clothes with spots like the feathers of a guinea fowl) in an Indian shop in town. I then bought the cloths. That is where Seri was sitting and he came into me.*

(There was a silence. For me it was based on incredulity because I had never heard that a person could get possessed by admiring a clothing item. Since the silence remained unbroken whilst I digested what I had been told I decided to leave). Aah I enjoyed your company. But you said you wanted to go and work for money in Chenjera's field, I am sorry I made you late. So maybe I should be leaving. I want to go and talk to Mr. S. I told him I was going to come and see him today.

No, you did not make me late because I am the one who called you. But if you come tomorrow early in the morning I will be able to talk to you before I go.

When I made as if to leave she said,

Wait, I want to show you something. This, (she said), is the medicine which my ancestors (vadzimu vangu) gave me in a dream last week. They told me it cures bilharzia and I was told to go and give it to Matika an orderly in Shamva so that he can have it analysed.

Do you know this Matika?

No I don't, but I was told to go and give him the medicine. I will find him. (Maybe she knows Matika because she told me they sometimes hold meetings with doctors in Shamva. I feel she is deliberately lying to me.) When I dreamt about this medicine it was early in the morning so I woke up and took the plant. It was here on the homestead all along and I never knew it could treat bilharzia. There was also another plant at my field. I don't know how that could happen- to have the plant both at home and in the field. I went back to sleep after putting the medicine in the paper and they told me to wake up and taste it. The medicine is bitter. Take a little and taste. (My heart began to beat faster. I did not want to taste her medicine. What if the medicine killed me? What if she did not know the plant was poisonous herself. I was beginning to think she was a witch because I had never heard of anyone who just goes around asking people to taste her medicine if the people have not asked for the medicine. If I refused again she would or might think I was accusing her of witchcraft. Time stood still as I watched her take the medicine from the plastic bag and hand it to me. I was scared. It was like I was watching the last minutes of my life ebbing away. Then it just occurred to me that my ancestors would not send me to just die like that. I felt as if my ancestors were looking over me at least that's what they are supposed to do. I chewed the muti making sure I did not swallow any more juice than was absolutely unavoidable. The muti was bitter like Norolon tablets and this gave me an excuse to spit it out.

Yah it's true, I said, "This medicine is bitter. So do you grow any of your medicines?"

I cure a lot of diseases like TB. For TB I use a tree which has fallen on its own. I also treat Asthma and a lot of other diseases. But I do not plant any trees except for other shrubs

which I mix with other trees for treatment of STDs. That one in that plate (it was a piece of broken earthenware) is used for treating period pain in women taste it.

This time I had to find a way to refuse or I would spend the rest of the day tasting all her medicines so I said. "Does it taste as bitter as what you gave me?)

It is also bitter.

Then I can't taste that one too. Because if it's as bitter as what you gave me its terrible. I have to take your word for it. (She did not push me. Lucky escape I thought). Then I went on "Imi woye, pane vamwe hapabviwi. Chiregai ndichienda paVaArumando apo ndingazovawana vasipo". (It is always difficult to leave when you are enjoying the company of people you are with. Let me go, I have to talk to Mr. Arumando, and if I am late he might decide to leave.) This time she did not implore me to stay but told me that she also ought to go since she was becoming late for her work.

That medicine was too strong for me. I spent the whole day my mouth producing a lot of saliva that I spent the whole day spitting. When I went to Mr. Arumando's it was a little hot and I could not spit on the ground all the time I began to spit on my sweater. I pretended to wipe sweat on my face every time I wanted to spit. I don't know if they noticed it but if they did they never commented.

When I commented later to other people (Mudavanhu) that I had not known that Mandirozva was a n'anga, Mudavanhu (who claimed that Mandirozva was her Sahwira) told me that most people in the village do not go to her. If people are ill they go to mai Mavhinga instead. Mandirozva claims that Mrs. Mavhinga is not a traditional healer because she does not have papers from ZINATHA. But everyone still goes to Mrs. Mavhinga's. Some people even come from afar with cars to ask Mrs. Mavhinga to help them at their homes but no one has ever come to take Mandirozva.

When I went to Madziva Mine I was showing Frank Banda (works in personnel and Mr. Chidembo (Personnel Officer staying at the guest house) and Jack Mwale (also at the guest house) the maize pictures and another picture of Mrs. Mandirozva, Chidembo and Banda started laughing saying 'we know this woman'. Then Banda said, 'It is Mandirozva. She once came here screaming that she had seen a woman hanging from a tree. People went to the place where she claimed to have seen the victim, no one was there. People wanted to beat her up. But in the end they never did.

When I went back to the other village I told the woman I was staying with that some traditional healer of sorts had asked me to taste her medicine. She started to laugh then said 'Mandirozva'.

I was surprised, so I asked 'how did you know?'

In that village there is no one who does such things except for Mandirozva. We go to Church together. She is a Roman Catholic but these days she is not coming to church. If your husband gets ill and goes to Mandirozva for treatment that is the last time you will see your husband because he will become Mandirozva's husband. Everyone at Madziva Mine knows about Mandirozva. What can you tell me about Mandirozva (meaning I know everything about her).

Mrs. Mudavanhu had told me earlier on that when Mandirozva first came to the village she did not have any husband but had a series of young lovers. One of the men had died in 1999. Now she had another who was young enough to be his son, Mr. Virimayi (Mandirozva's classificatory brother) shared the same sentiment. It was rumoured that her current

husband abandoned his young wife for Mandirozva. He was now paying maintenance for his children. This man was an electrician at a nearby school. Some say he had been recently retrenched and was now doing part time jobs.

Friday 15 June 2001-Mandirozva

I was at Mr. Mangoma's house and was making my goodbyes when Mandirozva passed through with her gano and young muzukuru (niece), going to the bush to look for medicines. I told her since we had an appointment for that day I would go and see other people and then wait for her at her home until she returned. She then told me she did not know the time she was going to come back so maybe it was a good idea if I went to her and talked to her at that moment. She could put off her work and then go to the bush after we talked. As a result when I left Mangoma's, I was with Mandirozva. We were walking in a single line file. She was ahead of us. I was in the middle and Natalie the niece, whom she takes almost everywhere she goes, was behind me. She held her axe (*gano*) and red and blue bag and Natalie had a big cup and I had my bag. When we arrived at her home she unlocked her kitchen door and offered to light some fire to warm up the place. I assured her that I was okay and then we proceeded to talk.

Last time we said we would discuss about mixing crops in the field.

I do not mix any crops. I put a little groundnuts on its own. I grow very small quantities for my own consumption. I grow these things in the same field/acre but separately. What I will do is that in the middle of the maize I might put one line of pumpkins from end to end. Like this year I put three lines of nyemba in the middle of the acre of maize.

Why do you do that?

If you mix you will get a poor harvest. Everything should be on its own so that everything grows happy, healthy and strong.

In the past did you mix your crops?

Yes.

Why did you stop?

In the past when I first came here I used to mix my crops, then I discovered I was not getting a good harvest then I changed. The AGRITEX officers when we came here also told us not to mix crops.

You once told me that you would not rent a field from anyone because after you put manure and make sure the soil is fertile the owner might chase you away. But do you also rent your field since you use only 3 acres of it?

No I do not rent my field because it won't help me. If you leave your field fallow your field will stay new. But if you rent it out to someone it will become old such that by the time you decide you want to use your field, it will be already very old and infertile.

How can you tell that your field is no longer fertile?

If your crops no longer grow very well then your soil is no longer fertile. I once experienced this when I was still young at my mother's field.

What about now is your field old or is it still young and fertile.

My field is not yet old.

(Because of her role as a (professed) traditional healer, I decided to ask her about the traditional way of making soil fertile). In other parts of the country the owners of the land (*varidzi venzvimbo*) also play a role in ensuring the fertility of the soil.

We used to do that here. When the planting date grew near we would take (each family head) a sample of all the crops we wanted to grow and send them to the Sabhuku (village head). The village head, he is Nyamaropa. He belongs to the family of Nyamaropa the owners of this land. He would then ask Nyamaropa to bless the crops.

Why did you stop?

A lot of people complained that they went to church. They were Christians and did not want their crops to be offered to the ancestors.

What do you do now?

Now I get holy water from the 'fata' (Roman Catholic Priest). I then sprinkle the water on all my seeds before planting them.

Do you find the holy water helpful?

Yes, it is because crops will grow healthy.

What about when you sent your crops to the Sabhuku.

I did not sent my crops to the Sabhuku. I do not want to lie to you. (Why? I could hardly hide my surprise because I thought as a traditional healer she would be at the forefront of sending her crops to the Sabhuku).

Because I used to get holy water from the priest. When I was a child my mother told me that if I wanted to use anything for my field the holy water was the only answer. (I was taking down notes of what she was saying then she said, Here they also brew rain beer. In 1991 the village head asked me to brew beer to ask for rain from the ancestors. He asked me because I am an old woman and also because I am his Sahwira (ritual friendships based on people's lineage groupings and totems).

Why and where did you brew the beer?

The rain was late in coming. We brewed the beer in the bush at Rata Ply (another resettlement village) The Sabhuku is the Nyamaropa so he is the one who offers beer to the ancestors (vanoomberera)

Did it work?

Because this is not my country, I do not know. But those who belong here say it works.

What about where you come from?

In my home in Rusape where I come from we brew the beer under a muhacha tree and the rain usually comes after we brew beer so I think in my area it works.

Some people told me that fertiliser kills the soil. Is it true?

If you use fertilizer properly it does not kill soil. If you use the spoons in the pack your soil is not destroyed. The problem with us is that we abandon the spoons and start spreading the fertilizer using our hands. And then we start saying fertilizer is killing the soil when it is not so.

Apart from applying fertilizer do you use any other means to enhance the fertility of your soil?

When I was still living at my rural home I used to put manure and anthill soil. But now I am lazy to do all that digging. Furthermore when I came here no one else was doing it.

Did you find manure and anthill soil helpful.

It was very helpful. Because the soil becomes strong (rinokora/ thick). Its like helping the fertilizer.

Others claim that cow manure is not good because it increases weeds in the field.

Its true. If you put cow manure your field will be filled by zvibonogwe zvitsvuku (name of grass). There is also soramombe and goche which will not die no matter how much you weed. There is nothing you can do except to weed.

If a drought is forecasted what maize variety do you grow?

The choice of maize variety is not affected by a drought. We just grow a lot of mapfunde (millet). Our parents used to grow mapfunde and zviyo to survive in a drought.

What if pests which attack maize are forecasted?

I have forgotten the year, but I was already living here. Worms attacked our maize so instead of planting maize to replace that which had been eaten I grew mapfunde instead.

Did you grow Mapfunde this year?

No I did not. My nephew did everything slowly like he did not want to plough the field. By the time we finished planting maize it was already too late to grow mapfunde. In the other years I also grow Sunflowers and I sell between five to six gallons.

Where do you sell the sunflowers?

I sell to some man in Makaki who has got a machine to extract oil from sunflowers. He bought at \$30 a gallon. This year I did not grow sunflowers. My nephew's wife refused to go to the field. Last year we only grew very few sunflowers to use as chicken feed. (I could have pursued the question of the conflicts that she experienced with her nephew and his wife but I was uncomfortable. I remembered a popular saying among our people that you must gossip about the king if you are sitting on an anthill where you can see everyone. We were sitting inside her hut and I did not want her nephew to overhear us because I also wanted to talk to him at some point. I would pursue this later when I was sure we would not be overheard. So I changed the conversation.)

Some people's say that there are people who steal other people's crops using magic such that even if they plant only a small portion they get a lot of crops at harvest time. (Even when I asked this question I knew she was going to say there were there since she belonged to ZINATHA. However, I wanted to know the variety of ways in which people use to steal maize from people's fields. However this was thwarted by the muzukuru who came and started opposing everything said by Mandirozva to such an extent that Mandirozva minimised her contribution to the discussion).

A long time ago people had medicine they used to steal from people's field. For example if I borrow maize seed from you which you have treated with the medicine, if I mix your treated seeds with mine and plant them, your treated seeds will take all my maize back to your field.

Nephew: (intervened) *If you are not a good farmer you always accuse others of using bad medicine. If you are lazy you won't get anything. It does not have anything to do with medicine.*

Mandirozva: *There are others who are just good farmers but others use medicine. For example, when we came here Mapango bought a lot of fertilizer and had a good harvest. Even up to now he always get very good harvests and people are always accusing him of using mushonga to steal maize from other people. I always tell people that it's because he gets everything that makes a person a good farmer. This belief in magic make some people go and take (dumwa) medicine so as to be liked by murungu (whiteman/boss), when you do not know how to work (ungatore dumwa rekuti udiwe nemurungu iwe usingashande.)*

Hamenno! (I don't know)

Nephew: This is what I have been saying all along. If you do not have bad medicine yourself, another's medicine will not work on you.

But you said there is not such thing as bad medicine.

Nephew: That's what I am saying. If you go and take the medicine from the same person (mukaromba mishonga yenyu pamwechete), or if you both use mushonga, the medicines will start fighting each other to see who is big.

Mandirozva: Our elders used to tell us that minda inoparwa nenzara dzagwerekwete (fields are scratched by nails of gwerekwete.)

What is Chigwerekwete

Mandirozva: Chigwerekwete is also known as hweru. (My conclusion was that chigwerekwete is some kind of animal)

So you just go to someone's field and scratch their field with a nail from Chigwerekwete.

Mandirozva: (She starts to laugh then says) It's not that simple, you need to have the medicine that you mix with the nail from the Gwerekwete before you go to scratch people's fields.

Can you do anything to protect your field from people with such bad medicines?

Mandirozva: You can take medicines to protect your field. For example, you can take hoko (a peg treated with medicine) and peg it in the middle of your field or you can sprinkle medicine on your seeds before you plant them. That will protect them from people who steal maize.

What about medicines to make others work for you in their sleep?

Mandirozva: The medicines are there.

Nephew: There is no such thing.

Mandirozva: The medicines are there. Some people in this village have got them (she refused to mention names). You wake up extremely tired in the morning and you know someone has been using you in your sleep.

Nephew: There is nothing like that. If you have bad medicine yourself that's when their medicine will work on you.

Mandirozva: (Referring the question to her nephew), What about kwa Dadaya dende raitaura? (What about that speaking gourd at Dadaya?). Medicines are there.

Nephew: (Dende racho rainyepa) The gourd told lies. We asked it to tell us the sex of the child when Wonder's mother was pregnant. It told us the child was going to be a girl and she gave birth to a boy. If you all have bad muti it will work. Mheni to Mheni inoshanda. (Lightning to lightning it will work).

So it means no one has ever stolen maize from you using 'muti' (I asked looking directly at the muzukuru)

How can they steal from me when I do not grow anything?

What about you I asked Mandirozva.

I can't say they have stolen from my field but on some days I find foot prints in my field. The person walks across the field with a dog following behind. Then you begin to think why is this person walking through my field not his?. That is how others steal from people's fields by walking across the field before the seeds germinate. After they do so all the crops will follow their footsteps back to their fields.

At that moment Mrs Mudavanhu came to Mrs Mandirozva's house. She had come to see Mrs Mandirozva. I asked her whether they had been given good news at the school meeting. They then started discussing how money was being stolen from Madziva Mines School and Mudzinge School. Mudavanhu commented that Mrs. Mandirozva had nice onions, so could she borrow some. Mrs. Mandirozva told her that she wanted to use the onions to prepare a portion to cure *mhuka* (high blood pressure/nose bleeds) for someone who had requested the portion. She told Mudavanhu that she wanted to go and pick cotton at Petros field. They started to discuss the payments for working for *maricho*. I decided to leave. But when I told them of my intention, Mandirozva asked me to wait for her so that we could leave together.

On our way out she stopped when we got out of the yard (at the cattle kraals) and started saying, "You see young people interfering in our conversation (referring to nephew). He is very angry because I did not give them any money. The money you gave me. Why should I when they do not want to farm. I want to use that money to buy cotton seeds"

We discussed this a little more then we said our goodbyes again and I turned and went into Virimayi's yard.

1 August 2002- Virimayi' daughter-in-law

Whilst Christine (my research assistant) was talking to Mr Virimayi, I was chatting to his daughter-in-law and our conversation shifted to Rudo's death. Rudo was Virimayi's daughter. She told me Rudo had been married again to some man in Mberengwa at a mine. She had been bewitched by her next door neighbour (at the mining compound). Someone also living at the same compound had told her and she was told she was going to die. The witch was jealous of Rudo since she had married her lover when she had thought she was the one going to get married. According to her, Rudo was strong and fit when she came back (contradicting other people's assessments).

When she came back she had sought Mandirozva's assistance. Because of the witchcraft she had not had her periods for at least five months and she was not pregnant. She wanted Mandirozva to help her with this. The brother and his wife were against it and advised her to go to Madziva clinic to have the doctors wash her womb. Rudo and her father however, insisted on seeking assistance from Mandirozva.

Mandirozva gave Rudo some medicine and instead of getting better she got worse. Mandirozva forbade her to go to the hospital and was against it when Rudo's sister-in-law decided to give Rudo some milk because she claimed milk was not good for the stomach.

As time went on Rudo became even worse and they were convinced that Mandirozva had a hand in it since she was behaving in a weird way.

One night an owl came and Tendayi (Rudo's brother) scolded it and it went away. Rudo became better and Mandirozva was so angry that she did not come to see her the following day. The conclusion was that it was her owl and she was angry that they had scolded it.

The day Rudo got worse and spoiled the sheets Mandirozva went to collect gloves from the village health worker claiming she wanted to clean up her patient who had soiled the sheets. When the sister-in-law went to collect the gloves she was told that Mandirozva had already done so. They were all surprised as to how Mandirozva could have known since she had not come to their house that day. Towards the afternoon they went to ask her why she had not come to see her patient (they already knew that she was angry because her owl had been discovered). They also asked her how she knew about the soiled sheets. She answered that she knew Rudo was going to soil the sheets because that is how the womb cleaning medicines

worked. Mandirozva came and washed the soiled sheets. Rudo began to see visions of a girl named Nancy and she insisted she be taken to hospital even against Mandirozva's wishes because if she died Mandirozva would lose nothing. Because Mandirozva was not one of their relatives she would not feel any loss if Rudo died.

The sister-in-law, brother and Mandirozva took Rudo to Shamva hospital. She died that same day in the evening when the brother and his wife had left for home. Mandirozva was the person with her at the hospital. They do not know what she did to her.

Mandirozva suffered from the same disease that Rudo suffered from and died exactly a month later on the same day that people were holding a memorial service for Rudo.

As demanded by custom they went to a traditional healer. The nánga told Virimayi that the person whom they were not related to and had asked to treat their daughter had caused their daughter's death. The daughter-in-law thinks her aunt had been bewitched in Mberengwa at the mine but Mandirozva thought she could get a free meal. As a result she had given Rudo medicines to make her worse instead of to cure her. That is why Mandirozva had died.

Villager's Verdict- The two died of AIDS.

Monday 5 August 2002-Virimayi' daughter-in-law

The daughter-in-law told us that Mandirozva had died of AIDS (when she was taking us half way), because Mandirozva was a prostitute. Two of her husbands had died and the current one (at the time of her death) looked terribly ill. She was also sure that her Aunt Rudo had died of AIDS. On the other hand, Mandirozva's nephew's wife does not say it out loud but from what she says she believes Mandirozva died of AIDS.

Snoia (Kamhopo)

31 July 2002

From the Chief's home in Bushu we dropped off at Kamhopo village so that we could look for councillor Vambe and make our presence and our intention known to the councillor. We met Snoia (in his thirties) who told us that the councillor was not there and that he had gone to Muunganirwa's store at Madziva. He accompanied us to the main road and he mentioned that he knew me from my previous stay at Madziva mine when I was doing my research and he was working and staying there. To get something to talk a bit I asked him about the rain.

Did you get any rains this year?

No we had very poor rains. A lot of people did not get anything. Very few people managed to get anything to eat.

In nearby Bushu people had huge harvests. At least you have somewhere near where you can go for food.

Jah. In Bushu they got very good yields because their soil is shapa (sandy) and it only needs a little water. Ours is clay loamy soils (ivhu gobvu) and it needs a lot of water to get any reasonable yield. However, if there is a lot of rain we get very good harvests and they get poor ones because their soils become water logged.

So it's good that you are neighbours, you can always buy from each other.

People especially this year do not want to sell their maize to other people.

Why? Is it because they fear that the drought will worsen?

No its because now maize is fetching a lot of money.

Jah that's true. I heard that maize now sell at 28, 000 dollars per tonne at the GMB so it might be profitable to sell there.

Yes they increased the money but that is not enough. There is that white commercial farmer near Shamva who breeds pigs and has got a fish dam. He is buying at \$36, 000 per tonne and you don't pay for transport or bags. He brings his own bags and collects the maize from your house. A lot of people are selling to him and he also gives you the money right there after weighing your maize.

Is that not illegal?

It is illegal because the government is saying that all the maize should be sold to the GMB so that the maize will be taken and sent to those areas that do not have food. However people are just cruel. They just think of themselves not of others. The white farmer also buys cotton at \$76 per kg while Cottco is buying at \$45 per kg.

By selling to him people are making a lot of profit.

Some people however can sell you out. For example someone in Zvomanyanga lost a lorry full of maize. The police impounded it because someone reported that he was selling maize to other buyers not the GMB.

But at \$76/ kg and Cottco buying at \$45 how does he make a profit?

He sells straight to the ginnery that is how he makes profit. This year there is a new company that is based at Chakonda that bought cotton from farmers. It was buying at \$65/kg and all the people ran away from Cottco, which was buying at \$45/kg. Up to now the depot of that company is still full and they are still transporting the cotton to Harare.

What is the name of that company?

I have forgotten its name but it is based at Chakonda.

Is it Farmers' World?

I do not think so. Farmers' World relocated to Madziva Mine and Bindura.

What about Cargill how much was it buying at?

It is still there but I do not know how much it was buying at.

What is the Cotton Company saying about all this since it is well known for giving loans to farmers?

They are complaining that farmers are taking loans from them but when it comes to selling they are going elsewhere. We had a meeting with them last weekend they were proposing that one has to sell at least half of what one produces to them and they do not mind if you sell the other half elsewhere. For example, if you get a loan that might give you at least six bales of cotton, they will require you to sell at least three bales to them. However, people can always claim that due to unforeseen circumstances they got four bales and end up selling two to Cottco. Those who did not sell to Cottco this year are not going to get loans. Did you at one time live at Madziva mine?

Yes in 2000. I was doing the same thing that I am doing now.

I saw you there. I was working at Madziva Mine together with my young brother. I got retrenched and my brother is now at Trojan Nickel mine.

You got a very nice package when you were retrenched. You are still enjoying your money.

One can say that, at least for those who were able to use the money wisely. For example, some bought cattle and built houses. However we hear that most of those of Malawian origin who went back to Malawi died on arrival.

Christine – How did they die?

Witchcraft. Do you not know that if you are away from home for a long time, when you go back people will want to know what you came back with in terms of supernatural witchcraft powers? You will be put on trial. They will bewitch you and if you are not strong you will die.

You say you were working at Madziva Mine, do you have your own stand in Kamhopo?

Yes. I inherited from my Father.

But people in the resettlement schemes were not allowed to work if they owned stands (he starts to laugh).

How will the government know that you are not working? My young brother and I decided that we were not getting much from farming because we did not have enough resources. We decided to work and buy our own things instead of always working for loan organisations. We bought our seeds and fifty bags of fertiliser and from then on we have never depended on loans but now because of the drought we might have to take loans since most of the money we had saved is going towards the purchase of food.

Do you know about Agricom?

That is a new organisation that wants to give loans to farmers. Councillor Vambe told us about it at a meeting yesterday but nothing has been finalised yet.

The conversation took place when we were going to the bus stop. At this point the bus we had been waiting for came so our conversation was abruptly cut short.

As I became situated and implicated in my research I found that certain of my character and, what I thought I believed in, was being challenged. For instance, my beliefs in witchcraft were always peripheral, there being no reason why they should be called into question. It was something at the back of my mind something that I often scoffed at in the company of other 'enlightened' people 'like me'. When I am offered medicine to taste in the spirit of science and scientific discovery, my first thought concerns the scientific quality of that medicine, as to whether it is poisonous or not. My thoughts quickly jump from the issue of poison to witchcraft but at the end I resolve to taste the medicine since my ancestors would not have brought me all this way to taste poisonous medicine or to be bewitched by anyone. So, finally, I agree to taste the medicine not because my ancestors are stronger than poison but because they are stronger than witches. They would have prevented the old woman from asking me to taste her medicine had it been poisonous. Such is the theme of this book, namely the articulation between 'science' and 'tradition'; wherein traditional healers do not abandon their medicines but pick up new ways such as putting on gloves to guard against diseases. Or, as will be discussed in later chapters, people adopt 'modern' crop varieties but do not simultaneously abandon their beliefs and rituals designed to make agriculture a profitable venture, where folk medicines are revived to cure 'modern animal diseases', and where school knowledge is valued just as much as oral knowledge is passed down from generations to generation.

As graphically shown in the above excerpts, ethnography is not just an act of going to people and asking them questions that you as researcher are interested in. Sometimes people just invited me to talk about what interested them. At first I merely humoured people by listening and jotting down notes or even taping the conversation but later I realised that although these discussions might not have been directly related to what I was interested in, they in fact gave me some pointers for future discussions and data analysis. For example, the issue of dreams came up again and again in conversations with different people, especially related to the issue of identifying who was bewitching them, or stealing their crops and livestock. I also kept all the little tit-bits of information I obtained on people in my sample so that I could build a holistic picture of the person and not only what he or she told me she stood for or did.

Throughout the research, I would sometimes fall back on my prior knowledge of the area under discussion to discuss certain issues or to probe further. For example, I knew from my understanding of Shona custom that no one could be possessed by the spirit of a stranger and call it a spirit ancestor (*mudzimu*) but they could designate it *shave* (stranger spirit). My prior knowledge did not only relate to the knowledge I had before coming to the field but also depended on information that I had gathered from other villagers pertaining to the issue in hand. As explored in the coming chapters, villagers often understood and interpreted events that happened in their villages very differently. Thus, when a person told me something that was totally outrageous and unlike anything I had heard before, I would be quick to recognise this and not just accept or reject it. Instead I was in a position to ask more probing questions and to understand their different or radical views.

The issue of conflict between people in the same household that was highlighted in the above discussion with Mandirozva and then *vis-à-vis* her nephew was not unique to this situation. As we will see in other chapters, this tension often had implications for the responses I got from different actors. In cases where members of the households did not agree with certain knowledge claims they would argue amongst themselves and hardly ever arrive at a consensus. Thus, I found it helpful at times to talk to the different members of the households at different times in order to get each individual's views. Occasionally too one could observe family dynamics in the presence of members of the household committed to strikingly different points of view. Furthermore, interview situations were not always under my control as often people would decide to join in without being invited. On the other hand, silence would not have been regarded as politically correct, so at times I would choose to discuss innocuous topics. For example, during the tense situation prior to the 2002 presidential elections, when my presence in the area was being questioned by some politically powerful people in the area, silence after someone arrived

when I was interviewing would have been akin to admitting that I was involved in shoddy, underhand and undercover work.

The interview with Mandirozva and her nephew also dramatically opened me up to the need to struggle to understand the meanings of what people were saying. Frequently, in seeking to understand people's meanings and strategies one risks being regarded as stupid. As described above, at first I thought the nephew was denying the existence of farming magic when he said it was an excuse employed by poor farmers to explain their poor yields. But, as the discussion progressed, it became clear that it was not that he denied the existence of such magic but rather the ability of such magic to work, and then if it did, it would work to the detriment of those people who possessed such magic. The discussion with Virimayi's daughter-in-law indicated how easily a person could be turned from hero to villain, as people shifted from one point of explanation to another depending on the situation and their interests at the particular moment in time. The fluidity and indeterminacy of such beliefs will become transparent in later chapters.

The discussion I had with Snoia from Kamhopo serves here to balance the equation to show that the issues are not so much about witchcraft but rather knowledge and agriculture. This excerpt situates the farmer as an actor who strategise to meet his/her own needs. The farmers do not have ideas imposed on them from above, since ultimately farming is not about the legalities and illegalities of certain situations but about profit. Farming is not fundamentally about the bewitching subject of witches and magic but about getting good yields. Furthermore, farming knowledge is not only about the practice of farming but also about the knowledge of politics, resistance, economics, and how to resolve conflicts.



Behind the two women is Mr Karidza's gota where maize is kept to dry before shelling.



Mr Tembo/Mademo's tobacco barns



Delivering Cotton bales to the Cotton Company's Depot

4

The research context

Introduction

This chapter serves the purpose of situating the reader in the research setting. It provides a picture of the agricultural servicing institutions in the area, a brief discussion of the significance of kinship and religious affiliation and an overview of the sample households.

Institutions²⁵

AREX (Agricultural Research and Extension)

AREX is a department that emerged from the merging of the Department of Research and Specialist Services (DR&SS) with the extension and cropping part of AGRITEX,²⁶ following the dismantling of AGRITEX in 2002. AREX was briefly known as DAREX; in 2001 then it was re-christened AREX²⁷. Although it underwent all these changes its main focus was still on research and extension. Asked whether the change from AGRITEX to Darex had affected their operations, an AREX officer pointed out that,

Danda (the then deputy director technical of AGRITEX in charge of the reorganisation of AGRITEX in collaboration with a German consultant by the name of Conoley) caused those changes. At that time, we began to work as teams. Each group was composed of five to six people and the group leadership was rotational. He encouraged specialisation: for example, we had a grain specialist, tobacco specialist, livestock specialist (pen fattening) and horticultural specialist. One person would operate over a very large area focussing on his or her area of specialisation. The way we operated became very different. I was now operating from the resettlement areas to Bushu. My area of operation ended at Chevakadzi School. When Danda died, we went back to the old system. Maybe he had observed the system somewhere in Europe where he usually visited but that system was not working here.

You said you used to work here with other officers but now you are all alone: what happened to the others?

²⁵ Note that the categories of people patronising any one institution are not exclusive.

²⁶ For an explanation of the formation of AGRITEX in 1981 see Zawe (2000) and Bolding (2004)

²⁷ Because of the confusing change of names sometimes I will refer to AREX as AGRITEX because during the first year of my research the AREX was still known as the AGRITEX. Thus use of name will just indicate the time when the data was collected.

AREX is suffering from a critical shortage of staff. Most of the officers went to the fast track resettlement because there is need for trained people to educate the new farmers. I also wanted to go to the fast track resettlement but then I realised that I would face accommodation problems.

So the recruitment of retired agricultural officers did not ease the shortage?

They recruited retired AGRITEX Officers as well as the new recruits who had the qualifications but had gone into teaching because of lack jobs. All those who joined opted to go to the fast tracks as well as to be deployed near towns.

Why did not the government just deploy them where it wanted them to go?

The government asked people to choose where they wanted to be deployed so that it could deal with the accommodation problem, as people would operate from their homes. In the advertisements the government had given a list of the areas where it wanted officers. So people had to choose where they wanted to work from the list.

The government still depends on trained extension workers as a way of disseminating agricultural information to farmers.

Bolding (2004:82) points out that the overall objective of AGRITEX was 'to implement the agricultural policy of government through the provision of agricultural technical and extension services, which stimulates the adoption of proven agricultural practices leading to increased, sustained and profitable production' (See also Mutangadura 1997:34). True to its stated mission, AREX (AGRITEX) has been an important mechanism through which technical information regarding agriculture is passed onto farmers. AGRITEX staff played an important role in the dissemination of hybrid maize in the immediate post-Independence period. The role of AGRITEX was to teach farmers to adopt the results of research from agricultural research institutions into their farming practices. Mutangadura (1997:35) says that, in 1989 AGRITEX had a staff component of 2500, of which 1600 were extension workers whilst Murwira *et al* (2001:302) puts the staff component of AGRITEX as of 2001 to 2000, although they do not make it clear how many of these 2000 people were doing the actual extension work.

According to the AREX officers, the role of extension officers has not shifted much with the renaming of the department as AREX²⁸. Mr Nyamaharo, an officer in the department of AREX, briefly explained the role of the organisation as follows:

Mostly we play the advisory role. We assist farmers with their operations. For example, we help them in choosing crops, general crop management. We also provide services like soil conservation, water conservation pegging of dams. In general I can say we are into extension.

However, Mr Zawe the Chief Irrigation engineer in the department of irrigation (formerly the irrigation division of AGRITEX but now operating as a

²⁸ For a description of the new roles and functions of AREX and the several departments emanating from the dismantling of the AGRITEX, see Zawe (forthcoming).

department on its own) maintains that this is misunderstanding on the part of AREX officers. The change from AGRITEX to AREX was more than just a name change. According to him, the operations of AREX are now limited to research and extension but the practical side of agriculture has to be left to the various practitioners. For example, the pegging of contours which were performed by AGRITEX is now no longer under AREX but should be done by the Department of Agricultural engineering (formerly the division of soil and water under AGRITEX). The AREX officer can only inform the relevant department of the need for contours in a certain field but does not peg the contour itself. For him the confusion is caused by the fact that,

After the dismantling of AGRITEX the ground staff did not change from the District level downwards. They did not have workshops to tell the extension workers of the changes. That is the source of the problem. At the moment there is no department that is well established at the district level like AREX. AREX is more prominent on the ground. Some people in the AREX department still think that things are going to go back to the way they were before AGRITEX was dismantled but that is not going to happen. The changes are advanced but AREX officers can still not understand that someone can just take on their roles, that is, the roles they used to perform when AGRITEX still existed.

AREX is central to the dissemination of knowledge and information in the area. However, as seen later, AREX is withdrawing from the farmers and the farmers do not see AREX presently playing an important role in the dissemination of knowledge and information. There is also a strong realisation among AREX officers that they do not have anything new to offer farmers.

For the government, agricultural extension officers are an essential component to rural agriculture since they are the ones who are in the field to advise the farmers. AREX is different from all the other institutions in the area because its function is not to make profits but rather to advise and assist where possible. The officers are also always in contact with most of the other institutions in the area because, in order to advise appropriately, they need to know what seed varieties are on the market.

The AREX also holds classes where it instructs people on farming issues. These classes are usually held at Ponesai Vanhu Technical College where other interested parties such as the Forestry Commission and CAMPFIRE also come to teach farmers about soil, tree and animal conservation.

AGRITEX and farmers

Agricultural extension officers employed by AGRITEX perform a number of roles including running periodic courses (including those leading to a Master Farmers' Certificate), holding field days prior to the planting period, visiting farmers' fields, and, as described above, liaising with institutions such as Seed Co.

AGRITEX officers impart general knowledge on agriculture through periodic courses of formal lessons for master farmers' certificates and through field days.

Women, whether household heads or wives of male heads usually do not attend the courses because of their high illiteracy rate: none in Mupfurudzi had ever attended the lessons offered by AGRITEX officers. Female household heads do, however, occasionally send their adult sons to attend these courses and pass on the knowledge to their mothers. Also women may informally acquire the information from friends whose husbands had attended.

The relationship between AGRITEX and farmers in these resettlement areas is complex and, at times, contested. Many farmers complain that they can only access the AGRITEX officers at village mass meetings. The major grievance against AGRITEX officers is that they do not offer personal attention to individual farmers and they are thought to offer attention only to the rich farmers, particularly to farmers who grow cash crops. While the poor are convinced that AGRITEX officers only visit the rich farmers, the better off farmers were also worried that AGRITEX officers were not doing their job properly. Of the better-off farmers in the Mupfurudzi qualitative sample, only one had contacted the AGRITEX officer on an individual basis in the previous year and it was because he had taken trouble to invite the officer to his field. Furthermore, officers discourage farmers from saving seed and using open-pollinated varieties, although they do advise farmers on saved seed when they cannot afford to buy genuine hybrid seed.

Mrs Tapfumaneyi said that there is no policy governing the activities of field extension officers. There is no stipulated number of times that extension officers are supposed to visit farmers in a day, week, month or year. She said that officers are usually supplied with motorbikes but with very little money for fuel. Some officers use their own fuel with a view to claiming their expenses back but this is such a cumbersome process that many do not bother to do so. Because of lack of policy, there is no way to judge the performance or non-performance of extension workers. This might lead to some lazy officers not attending to their duties properly. She said that it was left to individual officers to come up with their own strategies suited to their area of operation. This is somewhat different from the colonial approach to extension staff. Bolding (2004) documents that there was close supervision of extension staff during the colonial era such that any extension worker who was not seen to be doing his work properly or who failed to hold a successful field day would be fired or moved to another area, depending on the circumstances.

On the contentious issue of whether AGRITEX had a deliberate policy of concentrating on the good or rich farmers or those growing cash crops, Mrs Tapfumaneyi said that recently that has been the case. She said that in the 1980s, the objective of AGRITEX was to bring everyone on board. But it emerged that there were some farmers who had an attitude against adopting practices that came with the whites: instead they preferred the traditional way of doing things. These farmers resisted recommendations and stuck to the open

pollinated varieties, cattle manure and little crop spacing. The opposition of some farmers was strengthened by isolated cases of extension officers having relationships with married women. On the other hand, other farmers embraced extension recommendations and did very well by way of higher yields, increased livestock and better farming practices. Naturally, a good relationship was established between such farmers and AGRITEX. It also happened that these are the kind of farmers who attended farmer-training programmes, field days and field observation trials run by AGRITEX. Because of their knowledge about what was going on the market, these farmers did well and ended up with more income than others.

The strategy now is that farmers growing cash crops are AGRITEX's first priority. This is reflected in the manner in which the field officers are being deployed. Specialists in paprika, for example, are deployed in areas where the crop is grown or can be grown. The same goes for specialists in tobacco, cotton or grain. The new strategy of prioritising cash-croppers comes in the wake of the realisation by government that smallholder commercial crop production has been neglected over the years. So, indeed, cash-croppers are now considered AGRITEX's first priority. But even impoverished farmers who are willing to improve themselves are very much part of AGRITEX's plans. Here 'willing to improve themselves' means willing to adopt the 'expert' recommended technology packs.

This shift in AGRITEX priorities, together with the fact that AGRITEX predicted drought in the 1999/2000 season, when in fact there were heavy rains in January and February and the current political climate has led to an increasingly mistrustful atmosphere. Some Mupfurudzi farmers view the phasing out of the older 'more reliable' varieties and replacing them with the newer 'less reliable' varieties as a conspiracy between AGRITEX officers, whites and Seed Co to discredit the government²⁹. While not everyone trusts AGRITEX officers, regarding seed choices, their expertise is often acknowledged in the case of crop diseases and their control. It is easy to treat a disease when you apply the right chemicals and the results are immediately visible and attributable to the medicine. On the other hand, the climate is unpredictable and could spell disaster for people if the choice of variety was based on an erroneous prediction.

Other factors affecting the ability of AGRITEX to disseminate information include ongoing re-organisation, demands placed upon it as a result of fast-track land reform, and HIV/AIDS that has resulted in a very high rate of mortality amongst field extension officers. AGRITEX takes the view that it is

²⁹ This should be viewed in the present context of political uncertainty.

time to pay more attention to open-pollinated varieties, and this is part of a government committee addressing this issue.

Seed Co-operative Zimbabwe (Seed Co) and AREX³⁰

Seed Co is the dominant institution involved in the production and marketing of maize seed in Zimbabwe. Its seeds were widely used in the study villages. Seed Co works with AGRITEX. Seed Co is Zimbabwe's largest seed producer. It was formed in 1932 and has been in seed production since 1940 (Seedco, 2004). They started with manufacturing an open pollinated variety in the 1940s and in the 1960s they produced their first hybrid SR52. Seed Co is mainly involved in research such as seed breeding and it sees its role as producing quality seeds for farmers. Although when it started it focused mainly on maize which was becoming the fastest growing food and cash crop of the time, Seed Co later moved on to researching other crops such as Soya beans, Wheat, Barley, Groundnuts and Sorghum.

Mrs Tapfumaneyi, the Acting Chief of Crops for AGRITEX³¹, was very clear on the links between her agency, Seed Co and other seed companies. Information relating to new seed varieties is passed on from seed companies to AGRITEX, whose field officers in turn disseminate the information to the farmers, by word of mouth through field days. The Seed Co-operative informs AGRITEX that a new variety has been bred. Appraised of the basic features or characteristics to expect from a crop grown from that seed, AGRITEX carries out "field observation trials". The trials are not carried out at a plot owned by AGRITEX; nor are they conducted prior to marketing the new varieties to the farmers. Field officers run the trials on a piece of land owned by one of the farmers in the community. These on-farm assessments are meant to benefit not only AGRITEX, but also farmers. These trials are used to make area specific recommendations. For example, where the maize breeders recommend a particular fertiliser, AGRITEX may end up recommending manure from cow dung or dried tree leaves (*mupfudze*). A late maturing variety in a drought prone area may lead to AGRITEX recommending early planting. A variety that is prone to grain borers such as R201 may lead to AGRITEX recommending the use or non-use of crop rotation. Efforts are made to adapt the new seed technologies to local use, otherwise according to Mrs Tapfumaneyi "no farmer is going to make use of such technology". AGRITEX usually relayed some feedback to the seed companies but no collaborative research activities are

³⁰ Apart from seed companies, AGRITEX also interacts with chemical and fertiliser companies. The nature of interaction varies. With fertiliser companies, it is usually to get a price list for fertilisers.

³¹ The interview was carried out by Pedzisayi Mangezvo in 2001 for the International Food Policy Research Institute project before AGRITEX was dismantled.

underway or envisaged. The relationship between farmers, AGRITEX and the Seed Co-operative of Zimbabwe indicates that farmers are not consulted on anything but are expected to adopt wholesale the products of research.

While seed companies look at the general characteristics of varieties – taste, drought tolerance, storage qualities, trade value, drying rate after harvest, etc, it is the role of AGRITEX to adapt the new seed technologies to local use or to point out to farmers the varieties that are most suitable in different instances. Mrs Tapfumaneyi gave an example of SC501 and SC513. SC501 is susceptible to grey leaf and the variety is being worked on to address that weakness which accounts for the development of SC513. Field extension officers are therefore expected to explain to farmers that SC513 is just an improvement of SC501. If one is in an area where grey leaf is not a problem, then one can grow SC501. If one lives in the same area but has a plot with deficiencies that culminate in the grey leaf, then SC513 will be the variety to plant.

Seed availability was not determined by AGRITEX and seed companies do their own marketing through various promotions. Mrs Tapfumaneyi said that agro-climatic factors account for certain maize varieties being available or not in certain areas. AGRITEX, however, had no particular policy on availability of seed in different areas. Mrs Tapfumaneyi commented that AGRITEX has no policy governing open pollinated varieties (OPV), old varieties and saved seed. She reiterated that the discretion lay with the farmer to pick on a variety best suited to his/her plot. In Mupfurudzi, some farmers claimed that that AGRITEX was conniving with seed companies to market “bad” seed, an allegation denied by Mrs Tapfumaneyi.

GMB (Grain Marketing Board)

In this section, I do not consider the various criticisms of the failures of the grain marketing board nor do I discuss its successes. I consider the GMB in relation to how the farmers in my area interacted with the organisation. Jones (1987:375) correctly points out that in tropical Africa agricultural marketing boards are ‘heirlooms of the great depression and World War II, when colonial governments found their principal sources of revenue severely reduced and both European and African populations financially distressed’. In this vein, the Grain Marketing Board in Southern Rhodesia was established in 1931 in response to the 1930 World Recession. It has a mandate from the days of its inception to ensure food security in Zimbabwe with particular reference to staple food products, namely, maize and wheat. It also has to ensure the orderly marketing of agricultural products, mainly grains, oilseeds, edible beans, and coffee, within Zimbabwe. The GMB buys grains from farmers and sells them to the domestic agro-processing industry in addition to exporting these products to regional and international markets. In cases of food shortage, the GMB has

the mandate to import from other regional and international markets (www.dexelzim.co.zw).

In the research area the GMB is located at Tafuna, on the road to Bindura from Shamva, although recently it has opened a depot in Muringamombe. GMB offers marketing services as well as loans to farmers. It offers a higher price than the other buyers in the market. This price incentive, however, is eroded because people have to pay transport costs, they have to pay for the use of the bags and payments are delayed. For example, in the 2000-2001 season, farmers were paid their money after the 2001-2002 season had started. In the Murimi Wanhasi (Today's Farmers/The New Farmer) Programme on Television (22 January 2004), the farmer of the week complained that, although the new farmers had sold all their maize to the GMB in the previous season, they had not yet received their payments.

GMB was very popular among farmers because of its seed and fertiliser loans scheme for farmers. Although the GMB did not hold any classes for the farmers, it was very central to the dissemination of knowledge and technology among the farmers. For instance, some farmers justified the amount of fertilisers they used per acre by using the amount of fertilisers they got from the GMB as a standard measure. This is what Mr Chari, a farmer in Muringamombe, had to say when asked about fertiliser application:

How many bags of fertiliser do you apply per acre?

5 bags of fertiliser per acre. 2 bags top and 3 bags D.

Why do you use these measurements?

Those are the correct measurements per acre. That is the amount of fertiliser that is recommended. Even when we get loans from the GMB that is the amount of fertilisers we are given for every acre.

The GMB was also important for the dissemination and adoption of new hybrid varieties where maize was concerned. Especially for farmers who depend on the GMB for their seed and fertiliser needs, they plant any maize variety that the GMB provides for them. Thus it is hardly surprising that often farmers were not happy with the maize variety given to them but they were powerless to do anything about it. Baba Peter, a poor farmer in Muringamombe, was one such person:

Some of us get (on loan) seeds from GMB. However last year, GMB took its time before giving us seeds. GMB supplied the seeds late. So most of us, planted maize around the 15th of December. GMB went on to slap us in the face by giving us Sc735, which is a long maturing variety. This maize is rotting all over the place so that everyone who got Sc 735 is very disappointed. Everyone is crying foul. Cotton Company is better than GMB because it delivers its goods on time.

In the same vein, although farmers still wanted the old maize varieties, they had to adopt the new maize varieties because those were the ones they were getting on loan from the GMB. Another farmer commented that:

401 is useless. No matter how much fertiliser you apply, the maize cob is small. When selling, it is very difficult to get a grade A for 401. We want R215 but we can't find it in the shops...R215 is a very good seed. Even if you plant late, you will get something unlike these new varieties. However, we are getting 401 from the GMB. What else can we do?

Thus, sometimes new knowledge and technology is imposed on the farmers and they have to do the best they can.

The marketing strategies of the GMB have also shaped the adoption of new and the abandoning of old technology and ways of doing things:

We also used to grow Mapfunde (millet) but we stopped because we had difficulties in accessing the market. In 1987, we got 36 bags of mapfunde and it was fetching \$500/tonne and maize was \$250/tonne. However, only a few of us grew mapfunde so it became expensive for individuals to transport it to the GMB. The other obstacle was that the market for mapfunde opened up after the maize had been sold. By the time the market opened, most of the millet would have been lost to weevils. As a result, we shifted from mapfunde to maize.

During field work no household in the sample cultivated millet, although most households maintained that they cultivated millet before they were resettled.

The Cotton Company of Zimbabwe (Cottco)

Cottco's mission statement is to 'facilitate the most profitable and efficient growing, processing and marketing of agro-industrial products to the benefit of all stakeholders' (Cottco, 2004). As well as marketing, Cottco provides farmers with agronomic and financial support at every stage of the production process. Cottco is an off-shoot of the Cotton Marketing Board, which was formed in 1969 to oversee the handling, marketing and processing of cotton. In 1994, Cottco was incorporated and then finally privatized in 1997. Now it is run as a commercial company and it has also acquired 34.75% of shares in Seed Co. Cottco is not only a major player nationally, but is also a major institutional player in the area of the research. In Mupfuruzi, Cottco buys cotton and offers seed and fertiliser loans. Its current competitors are Cargill³² and Farmers' World. It employs a grading system for people loans with people in the gold group (those reaping more than 3000 kgs of cotton in a season) obtaining as much as they want, while those who reap less have to receive group. Farmers also use fertiliser from cotton loans in their maize fields. Seven people were involved with Cottco.

Although Cottco is primarily concerned with marketing, it is an important knowledge disseminator for cotton farming. Cottco sponsors field days for farmers where farmers learn about cotton farming. Cottco selects capable farmers and provides them with some inputs. After the crop has done well, they hold a field day, to which all farmers are invited, to observe the crop and

³² In 1996 it sold its Tafuna ginnery in Shamva to Cargill and hence farmers who want to sell their cotton to Cottco have to go to Bindura about 60 kilometres away.

hear what the farmer had done to produce such a good crop. This is what Mr Mushayi Mapeto the Cottco Collection Point Supervisor (CCPS) had to say when asked about the role of Cottco on knowledge dissemination:

How do you disseminate information to farmers?

I usually hold field days and work closely with AGRITEX, as I am the only officer here. I have 300 farmers to deal with. This work is not idle for a lazy person. I usually have to be in contact with a lot of people including the group leaders. Farmers are saying since I came here things have changed and some of those who had gone elsewhere are coming back to Cottco. I also have the role of teaching farmers how to take care of their crop. For example, we do not just use the same chemical every year to treat red spider mite. We rotate the chemicals every two years to guard against resistance. Farmers have to know that they should not go into a cotton field if they are coming from a tomato garden. They have to wash and change their clothes before entering a cotton field to guard against transporting the red spider mite from the tomatoes. Especially now that chemicals are becoming expensive farmers should not take unnecessary risks. The chemicals now cost around \$7000 for each hectare.

Are there other things that you encourage farmers to do to guard against diseases?

They should destroy cotton stalks so as to halt the multiplication of ball-worm, which becomes a problem from February onwards. We also tell them to rotate cotton and other crops so that the cotton yield does not go down.

Do farmers listen?

Sometimes but there are also other farmers who are short tempered and do not take kindly to being told what to do.

The cotton company has linkages with AREX and so AREX officers were invited to all the field days I attended and were called upon to participate actively in the proceedings.

Apart from field days, Cottco officials were more proactive in their dealings with farmers. Cottco gives fertiliser and seed loans to farmers with the aim of making profits. They can only obtain these profits if farmers are able to farm productively. As a result they have to carry out field visits to examine crops and advise the farmers wherever possible. The discussion continued:

Some farmers said that they use some of the fertiliser for cotton in their maize fields. Are you able to identify such problems and how do you deal with them?

Cotton speaks for itself. If a farmer uses the fertiliser for other things I will know when I go for field assessments because the cotton plant will show that it lacks fertiliser. On top of that farmers who do so cheat themselves because cotton is a very jealous crop. If one diverts the fertiliser, the yield will not be very good. To make a profit from one hectare one should get between 12 to 15 bales and above. Below twelve there is no profit. If you do not apply 5x 50kgs of compound L per hectare the cotton flowers and balls will fall off. If one gets 20 or 15 balls per plant then that means a terrible loss. One should get between 60- 150 balls per plant.

You are always talking about going to the farmers' fields and assessing things for your self but farmers maintained that they never met the Cottco official except at field days and some rare village meetings.

That is true because I came here only last year. I worked in Mary Mount. The former representative who is no longer here had no time to visit the farmers and address their concerns. One has to go around the fields to make sure that the cotton is not being attacked by diseases and appropriately advise farmers. If farmers do not use the proper amount of fertilisers the cotton also does not weigh much which will result in the farmer getting less for his cotton. When you leave remind me to give you a cotton handbook that explains cotton diseases.

Although field assessments were not very popular among farmers who diverted fertiliser meant for cotton to maize, the field assessments gave them more time to learn more about cotton on a one-to-one basis with the Cotton experts.

Cargill Zimbabwe

Cargill is an international seed company operating in 59 countries. In Zimbabwe it owns three cotton ginneries, one of which is located in Shamva at Tafuna. Cargill processes 30% of Zimbabwean Cotton (Cargill, 2004).

Cargill is the Cotton Company's major competitor. However, apart from buying cotton Cargill also buys maize from farmers. When it comes to marketing Cargill is preferred because it gives people cheques 4 hours after the initial sale, while with Cottco there is a 24 hour delay. Its only disadvantage is that it does not offer any loans or back pays (bonus cheques) like Cottco. Two people had dealings with Cargill, though I have reason to think that maybe this number is not correct since a lot of people came to obtain Cargill cotton bales from Mr Karidza, the Cargill representative, when I was interviewing him.

Although Cargill does not offer any loans to farmers it also plays a major role in disseminating information to farmers. When asked about demonstration plots the AREX officer Mr Nyamaharo mentioned Cargill as one of the companies that sponsored field days.

FSI Agricom

FSI Agricom is an indigenously owned company, which became fully operational at the end of 2001, and couched its objectives in highly political terms. Its CEO was quoted in Newsweek (2002) as saying: 'The perception outside is that whites are the ones who make Zimbabwe tick...we are creating a centre of excellence to demonstrate what is possible'. Thus FSI Agricom intended to give the new farmers (under the Fast Track Land Resettlement programme) seed, ploughs and other inputs and equipment on loan and it would then market the resultant crops. However, the scope of operation of FSI Agricom has not been limited to the 'new farmers' but also to others in communal and early resettlement areas. The FSI Agricom also had its own farms, where it intended to carry out its own farming activities and ventured into agro-processing. However, in 2004 four of its farms, totalling 4 300 hectares, were listed for acquisition by the government under the Land

Acquisition Act. When this happened its focus shifted slightly to cotton procurement and the sponsoring of out-growers (Sunday Mirror 25 July 2004). Agricom opened its field offices in Shamva in 2002. Agricom is a national organisation with offices in Shamva, Bindura, Darwin and Kamutsenzere in Dande and several other places mostly in Mashonaland Central. Their headquarters is in Harare. At the time of the research, they were still trying to establish themselves in the resettlement areas and although they had been to Mudzingwe they had not visited Muringamombe village.

They were still in the process of selecting village representatives and in Mudzingwe they had selected Mr Chitabura to represent them at village level. The purpose of these representatives will be to work with the farmers and to vet them for loans at the village level so as to avoid accumulating a lot of bad debts. Thus in Mudzingwe Agricom was popularly referred to as 'Chitabura's people'. Agricom offered loans to farmers specifically for cotton and maize and, in return, farmers had to sell their crops to them to clear the loans.

Before they could get fully established in the area the Agricom representative had to have written permission from the DA to allow them to start operations. In 2002, to operate successfully in the area, any company had to have the backing of the political leadership as well as the top leadership in government. Agricom promised the District Administrator (DA) that they wanted to buy 22 tractors to provide tillage for farmers (for hire) and they wanted the DA to source the tractors for them. However, according to Mr Chinyani from Agricom, these tractors would only till the land for those farmers who had bought more than 10kgs of seed from them.

Although Agricom was similar to Cottco in many respects there were also some differences:

(A car passed by and Tavengwa a member of one of the research households remarked that it was a Cottco vehicle. He went on to say that Agricom had better cars than Cottco).

So you also know about Agricom?

Tavengwa: Yes they held a meeting at Madziva Mines and they told us that they would give us loans.

Is there any difference between the way Cottco and Agricom do business?

Mrs Mushaniga: Cottco does not give people ploughs.

Agricom gives you ploughs (I asked my surprise showing)?

Tavengwa: They give you anything you want, ploughs, building material. They give us loans for houses, scotch carts, wheelbarrows.

What are their terms of payment?

Mushaniga (Son): They will deduct the money from cotton sales.

Do they demand a one off payment?

Mushaniga (Son): For the building material they take their money in instalments from your cotton over a number of years.

Tavengwa: They do not give you any cash. They give you whatever you want but not cash. They know that if they give people cash sometimes people will use this cash for other things. For houses, they give you all the building material.

If you fail to pay back the loan what do they do?

Tavengwa: They will impound your cattle if you fail to pay.

Comparing between Agricom and Cottco, which is better?

Tavengwa: Agricom is good. They pay a good price for our cotton. We also do not pay for transport. When they bring us fertilisers they bring them free of charge and when they pick up our cotton the transport is also for free...

Who owns the company Agricom?

Tavengwa: I do not know who the owners of the company are but I know the people at the top. There is Zizhou and Chirume. These people are now better off than when they were working for Cottco. They are driving very nice cars now, those high riders not the run down pickups they drove at Cottco.

Agricom was therefore promising to be a major player in the dissemination of technology in terms of farming equipment such as wheelbarrows, ploughs and scotch-carts. Like other organisations, it is central to the dissemination of technology.

Zimbabwe Tobacco Association (ZTA)

ZTA focuses on tobacco production. Most of the information from ZTA concerns forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, the growing of gum trees. Tobacco curing in Zimbabwe still depends on trees instead of coal. As a result most of ZTA advice focused on growing of gum trees for tobacco curing in order to prevent the cutting down of indigenous forests. Mr Mavheneke Chikerema, a tobacco farmer in Muringamombe who had attended ZTA lessons, had a gum tree woodlot that he was managing. Asked about the operations of ZTA, Mr Mavheneke Chikerema replied:

I cannot say they just focus on tobacco because they look at a lot of things. For instance, they are also concerned with the prevention of veldt fires. They do not like the destruction of grass or of trees in the environment. They say that they focus on tobacco but they really deal with the farmer in general. For instance, they look at issues concerning the farmer such as how to deal with pest and diseases. How to prevent aphids and how in general to control pests. All that knowledge is given by ZTA. (thinks a little then says...) 'Crop rotation' they teach us about that. They say tobacco can not be planted twice consecutively in the same field so that we have to rotate the crop. One year you have tobacco, the next year you plant maize in that field and the third year you can leave the field fallow rather than cultivate it.

ZTA also works in conjunction with AREX. All 'good' tobacco farmers were said to be good because of their association with ZTA and AREX.

Agriculture Finance Corporation (AFC)

Although it is now officially known as Agribank, farmers still refer to this organisation by its old abbreviated name, AFC. During the colonial era AFC was known as the Land Bank. The Land Bank had its Headquarters in

Bulawayo and was operated by the British South Africa Company to provide credit to farmers. When self rule was introduced to Southern Rhodesia a bill was introduced authorising the government to raise one million dollars to take over this bank and establish its own with a capital of six million dollars. In 1971, the Land Bank was officially changed to the Agriculture Finance Corporation (see Smith, 1985 for a history of the AFC.)

The Mugabe government, after introducing the Fast Track Land resettlement programme, wanted to extend lines of credit to the new farmers, who more often than not did not have collateral. As a result, the AFC was restructured to become the Agribank which could extend loans to farmers without the strict requirements of the provision of collateral. There was a strong realisation within Agribank and government circles of the importance of extending loan facilities to aspiring farmers to enable these farmers to implement their farming activities successfully (Chakwera, 2002). In the 2003-2004 season, the government committed \$Z15 000 000 000 to this bank for this purpose. In the past people got loans to buy fertilisers, seeds and cattle from the AFC. However, now Agribank focuses only on tobacco farmers, though the tobacco farmers may also use this money to buy maize inputs. In the sample, only one person, a tobacco farmer, had any dealings with the AFC.

Farmers' World

Farmers' World is a privately-owned organisation that came into existence as a result of trade liberalisation. It has been in operation in the area for two years. It mostly specialises in the buying of cotton and maize from farmers at competitive rates as well as providing seed and fertiliser loans. Individual farmers are supposed to pay back their loans by selling their crops to Farmers World. From the crop delivered by each farmer, Farmers' World deducts the amount of crop equivalent to recover the loan. The individual farmer is paid for the remainder of the crops after the necessary deduction. This is viewed by many farmers as a kind of 'contract farming'. However, individuals need to pay a fee of \$Z250 to be considered for the loans scheme. Four people had done business with Farmers' World. At the start of the selling season, it usually pays more than the GMB rates.

Purity

Purity is a milling company located at Madziva Mine. It is solely a trading company owned by an indigenous business person. Purity specialises in buying maize from farmers at competitive rates. Although it pays \$1000 (quoting 2001 prices) lower than the GMB price for grade A maize, Purity is an advantage for the less confident farmers in that the maize is not graded and all maize therefore fetches the same price. Purity has a further advantage in that people do not have to foot transport costs since they can deliver the maize themselves

using scotch carts. About six people admitted to having sold their maize to Purity.

Purity provides no other services besides marketing and milling of maize. It does not offer any loans. Some farmers sold their maize to purity as a way of evading loan repayment to the GMB, Cargill, Agricom or Farmers' World. Furthermore, usually it is the women and very poor farmers who sell to Purity. The rich farmers generally, sell to Purity only when they urgently need money.

*Marriage and Kinship*³³

The Shona society is highly patrilineal and its marriage patterns based on virilocality. Kinship and affinal relations involve social rights and obligations that people have towards specific others in the community and beyond. The following discussion focuses on the two villages in which qualitative fieldwork was undertaken.

A prominent feature of social relations in Mupfurudzi, is the intricate pattern of affinal ties indicating inter-marriages between people from different kin or lineage groups. In addition, sibling and other cognatic kin bonds play a central role in everyday social life. A similar pattern pertains for the two villages. Other relationships are based on joking relationships that do not follow descent lines or affinity but are a result of friendship pacts between people, usually household heads.

Eleven marriages connect households in Mudzingo (including two in the sample) and seventeen marriages in Muringamombe (including six in the sample). However, during discussions, sample households did not mention these marriage relationships at all except for one household head who was bitter against his son-in-law for causing the death of his two daughters through AIDS. When asked to state sources of information, none mentioned their in-laws as sources of information on maize and agriculture, except one who mentioned an in-law living in another village.

The reason for this reticence to emphasise such marriage bonds seems related to the social rights and obligations that people have towards their in-laws. To minimise conflict between in-laws, and as a sign of respect, in-laws are expected to maintain social distance. Contact between in-laws is limited and they must maintain an air of aloofness. Although intermarriages are functional to the extent that they may further social cohesion, they can also restrict the flow of information within the community.

When some people were asked why they had to go out to access information on agriculture instead of asking for advice in the village, they pointed out that

³³ Some of the information on kinship is drawn from notes by Marlene Dekker, an economic anthropologist who also worked in these resettlement areas.

people in the village were jealous or suspicious and were often stingy with their information. Even when it came to working in other people's fields in return for money or maize, they preferred to seek work outside the village. It is highly plausible that these elements could be explained by the normally tense relations between in-laws.

In Mudzingo, three household heads had their siblings living in other households in the village. On being questioned, one of the respondents did not even allude to this relationship, as there was little contact and communication between the families except in cases of emergency. The other respondent had two brothers living in the village but he maintained little contact with them as he himself lived at his field. The third sibling relationship was characterised by open conflict as they spread malicious rumours about each other to the extent of reporting each other to the resettlement officer. In Muringamombe no such relationship existed in the sample households.

Moreover, although some people mentioned relatives as a source of information about the new hybrid seeds, they hardly ever mentioned siblings as a source of information. However, two people in the sample admitted to accessing agricultural information from their brothers who lived in other villages.

Relationships that seemed to be most enduring and enabled the exchange of information are those based on *usahwira* – formal joking friendships. These are institutionalised friendships, formally relating to funeral services between families, and involving much exchange of services and gifts (Bourdillon, 1987:61 f.). Out of the seven people in the sample in Muringamombe, six were involved in such relationships. These relationships are relaxed and it was mostly through these relationships that information was spread, advice passed and resources distributed within these communities. Such joking relationships are taken up by choice (rather than through kinship, which is ascribed) and provide a system of support and security in times of need, which in other societies are often attributed to kinship.

Kinship bonds were fraught with difficulty because of jealous and suspicions of jealous. Among the Shona it is also believed that only your relatives can kill you through witchcraft means. Strangers are not able to do that. Thus, one can never trust one's own kin. This could explain why kinship bonds were not strong.

Karidza, Chinakidzwa and Chapinduka had the same totem, but their relationships were based more on joking friendships. Karidza maintained that he depended on help and advice from Chinakidzwa and Chapinduka. When asked to mention sources of information on new hybrids people tended to mention joking relationships both outside and within the village more than any marriage or affine bonds.

Religion

There are two dominant religions in the area based on Shona and Christian beliefs. I am loathe to calling Shona religion 'traditional' since this does not capture its essence. As shown in chapter 6, various interpretations of *Chisi* point to the fact that Shona religion is indeed more fluid, less determined and hierarchical than the word traditional might suggest. The second religion is that of the Christian faith. Although these religions differ in their beliefs and practices it is of course possible for persons to follow the teachings of both or select various attributes of each religion that make sense to him or her.

Shona Religion

There is no one coherent religion among the Shona people. The Shona consist of five major groupings: the Karanga, Ndau, Manyika, Zezuru, and Korekore peoples. Despite the socio-religious variations among the Shona there are also commonalities. Since I worked in a resettlement area made up of people from different regions of Zimbabwe, it is impossible to adopt the concept of 'local' or 'indigenous' religion. In this section then I identify the similarities and major variations in the religion of Shona people. However, the resettlement area I worked fell under the Korekore people of the Nyamaropa Clan whose totem is the eland (*Shava nematombo*). Hence any display of Shona religion in the public sphere at the community level was guided by beliefs associated with the Korekore of the Nyamaropa *shava nematombo* clan.

Another reservation against using the term 'Shona religion' is that it brings into question whether Christianity is not also Shona religion. Johanne Marange and Johanne Masowe started their Christian churches in 1932, and over the years Christianity has come to play crucial role in Shona everyday practices and in this sense is thoroughly Shona. Nevertheless I wish heuristically to separate Shona religion and Christianity. Firstly I differentiate between these two religions on the basis that Shona religion was the norm among the Shona before the coming of the white man. Thus, although Christian values have been internalized by many Shona people, from this angle Christian religion is relatively foreign to Shona people. Secondly, although Christianity has also been Africanised there continue to exist differences between Shona religious beliefs and those espoused by Africanised versions of Christianity. The third reason for making this distinction is based on the fact that the people themselves distinguish between *chivanhu chedu* (our religion) and *chikristu* (Christianity).

Shona religion can be understood at both the family and community level and is characterized by honouring the dead either as *vadzimu* (family ancestral

spirits) or *Mhondoro* (lion spirits/clan spirits); at the apex is *Mwari*³⁴ (God), *Musikavanhu* (The creator of people), and *Nyadenga* (The owner of the skies) depending on which group of the Shona people one is referring to. The Karanga and the Zezuru, and the Manyika do not talk of *Mwari* but of *Nyadenga* (The owner of the skies) and the Korekore speak of *Dedza* (The rain giver) or *Musikavanhu* (the creator of people) whilst for the Manyika *Musikavanhu* is the name of a powerful ancestral spirit. Other names that are used by the Shona to refer to God include *Matangakugara* (the one who was there first), *Samasimba* (The all powerful one) and *Zame*. The common trait among the Shona is that people do not pray to the ancestors but ask them to mediate between them and the Supreme Being who is referred to by the various names just alluded to. The names simply refer to the various attributes of God and the name used depends on the subject under discussion. For example, when talking to God as the giver of rain people refer to God as *Dedza* (The rain giver). When talking of the power of God people refer to God as *Samasimba*. Difference arises only in the style of worship since each group has its own ancestral spirits that mediate between them and God. These ancestral spirits can demand to be honoured in a variety of different ways. At the base there is God's creations including people and animals; between God and the living there is the country of spirits (*Nyikadzimu*) where all the spirits of our dead ancestors and relatives reside. Mararike points out that, 'Shona religion is divided into three departments. The first department is that of God (*Mwari*). The second is the department of spirits (*mudzimu*) and the third department is that of the living people'. The problem with this conception is that it gives the impression of clearly demarcated boundaries between the living, the dead and God when in reality boundaries are often blurred. The following quotation from a villager cited in Mararike (1998:160) highlights why I have reservations:

The dead are dead but alive. They do not see but they see. They do not hear but they hear. They do not walk but they travel long distances. The dead are away but with us. The dead protect us but need us. We need the dead but the dead need us. Without us the dead are really dead and without the dead the living are in the jaws of death. The dead are our most valuable assets. They give us all other assets'

³⁴ Daneel (1971: 81) defines *Mwari* as a High-God who seems perhaps less directly involved in people's individual lives, as compared to the ancestors, but one who could be consulted in matters of national importance. As a result on their individual problem-solving at the family level, people in African religions depend mostly on their ancestors instead of *Mwari*. *Mwari* is responsible for the fertility of crops and, 'as the God of the fertility of crops, *Mwari* is first and foremost regarded as the rain giver' (Daneel 1971:81); however *Mwari* can be approached only indirectly through senior lineage ancestors. Now among the Shona in Zimbabwe, whether they are Christian or not and regardless of their ethnic group, everyone now uses the term *Mwari* to refer to God.

Hence departmentalisation suggests a clinical neatness and leads to compartmentalization of phenomena that are multiplex. Relationships between the living and the dead and God are so intimately enmeshed and intertwined that they defy departmentalisation and compartmentalisation. Maybe it is more apt to talk of levels in one big whole, where at the top we have *Mwari*, in the middle *midzimu*, and at the bottom the living and those who are yet to be born.

After death people aspire to live with their relatives in *Nyikadzimu*. However, although this is desirable it is not possible for everyone. All those who have died unhappy or had strong grievances³⁵ against some living persons, or who were murdered or whose death rituals were not properly followed, form a 'community of wanderers'. All those who still have grievances against the living or who did not die a 'proper death' (natural) will have to come back to haunt the living until their grievances are addressed. Only then can they claim their place in *Nyikadzimu*. Those who were murdered will come back to haunt the families of the murderer causing havoc, death and untold suffering. The avenging spirit is normally referred to as *Ngozi*.³⁶ This spirit can rest only when the family of the murderer pays reparation to the family of the murdered person. After the reparation is paid the relatives of the murdered person in *Nyikadzimu* can then welcome their relative to the other world.

God and *Mhondoro* are relevant at the community level. A common trait among the Shona is that their religion is not composed of constant prayer and supplication to God and the ancestors. But people only offer supplication and prayer occasionally, which are usually accompanied by the brewing of beer. People brew *doro remusha* (the beer of the family), then drink, dance to traditional music, and perform rituals. This *doro remusha* is functions to celebrate and thank the ancestors for their blessings. There is also *doro regoho* (the beer of harvest), when people thank the ancestors following a good harvest. During the *doro regoho* festivities the *Shona* take token quantities of their crop harvest to the *mhondoro* or other spirits of the land to show the spirits that they had a bounty harvest and to thank them. If things go bad the *Shona* pray to God and/or carry out rituals to appease the ancestors so that whatever was wrong can be righted. Thus, when there is drought among the *Korekore* they

³⁵ An example of a grievance that would cause a person to come back as an avenging spirit could be a mother who was beaten or ill-treated by her children when she was alive. The spirit can cause death or children and grandchildren to be generally unlucky. For example, it can result in a failure of the children and grandchildren to get married or, when they do, to have unsuccessful marriages.

³⁶ However it should be noted that the term *ngozi* is used differently by different cultural groups in Zimbabwe. Bourdillon (1987:268) points out that among the *Korekore* and the *Tonga* *ngozi* can refer to friendly family ancestors that possess mediums. In his study of livelihoods in *Buhera*, Mararike (1998:160) uses the term *ngozi* to refer to 'angry spirits'.

appeal to the *Mhondoro*. However, the *mhondoro* is not the rain giver as such but rather the intermediary between *Musikavanhu* (God the creator) or *Dedza* (The rain giver) and the people. Likewise at family level, for example, when children are not getting married as they should, or there are a lot of mysterious, unexplained deaths, people ask *midzimu* (family ancestral spirits) to intervene.

As Mararike (1999:72-73) points out, among the Shona, 'before the introduction of Christianity and other foreign religions, there was no separation between religion and other human activities. The relationship between the living, the dead and God, was intertwined...the natural world, the human world and the spiritual world are closely intertwined'. But my view goes somewhat beyond this assertion, since, as shown in Chapter 7, religious beliefs and practices are also embedded in technology and agricultural activities

Generally in *shona* religion at the family level, totems are important and should be recognised since they demarcate one group of people from another. Totems involve taboos concerning sex and eating. If these taboos are not observed or if the wishes of the dead are not honoured, the spirits of the dead can easily become angered and exact their vengeance on the living. This is illustrated from the excerpt below:

You said you do not have friends here. What about in other villages?

My best friend is Zadzamukombe from Makhakhi (Chitepo Village). I used to ask him a lot of things but then he fell ill. He was my very close friend.

What did he suffer from?

He just started to suffer from his hands and legs. He even had some mental problems. He could not use his legs and hands.

What caused this?

It was a cultural thing. It was not a good thing at all. Very bad. Very bad spirits. His mother first married a man of the Nzou totem, divorced him and then married a man whose totem was Murehwa. While married to a Murehwa his mother gave birth to Mupini who is Zadzamukombe's half brother. At resettlement they were resettled in the same village. Mupini later died but before he died he had said he wanted to be buried at his 'stand' (homestead).

But that is not allowed.

That is not allowed so the officers did not permit it. Nzou (Zadzamukombe) witnessed everything and agreed that Murehwa (Mupini) could not be buried on his stand. Ndiye akazotemera Murehwa rukarwa. That is where the disease came from.

How could Nzou cut rukarwa³⁷ for Murehwa?. Did he not know that they were not related?

He knew that but just thought that as he was the half brother there would be no problems. Murehwa's son was the first to sicken and die then Nzou got sick. They went to traditional

³⁷ If a shona person dies he/she should be buried by her relatives. The procedure is that the person relatives those who share the same totem with the dead person should mark the site for the grave and dig first before strangers can start to help with the digging. This process is known as *kutema rukarwa*.

healers to understand why all these tragedies were happening is such a short space of time. They were told that the dead man was angry because they had not buried him where he wanted to be buried. They went to the chief to ask for permission to dig him up which permission was granted. After that they went to the District Administrator. That time I was present and we were asked to write three affidavits and sign them.

You had been invited?

The chief had instructed me as Nyamaropa to dig up the grave. The man had been buried for twenty-eight days. We invited Murehwa's burial - friends those of the Nzou totem. We did our rituals: clapping hands informing him that we were digging him up to place him in the final resting place he had chosen for himself. When we dug him up he was not rotten, not smelly but looked like someone who had just been sleeping. Only his skin was dry and whitish as if all he needed was an oiling. We were putting on gloves facemasks and gumboots.

What happened? (I asked as if I did not know what would come next. He had told me this story the first time I talked to him but I wanted to see if the story would remain unchanged).

We told the wife not to see her dead husband again but she refused to listen to us.

This man must have been very angry (Shungu) for him to look as if he was sleeping after 28 days in the grave.

I think he had some bad magic. We asked for a cow and \$500 as payment for the work we had done digging up the dead man. We were paid. The wife refused to listen came to see her husband and fainted on the spot. We had to carry her back home with the body of her dead husband in front and she following closely behind. She died two or three days later.

She was very unlucky.

Everyone blamed her. Why did she want to see her husband who had been buried for twenty-eight days again? Being buried is not the same thing, as going on a journey where people know you will come back. We had said only those people especially the relatives from Maramba who had not seen him lying in state should see him but not his wife.

Thus the most important thing at the family level among the *Shona* is to live in harmony with one's ancestors as well as other dead members of the family. This can be achieved through honouring their wishes and brewing beer once in a while to appease them. Following death rituals properly is also one of the ways that harmony can be maintained between the living and the dead.

Christianity

There are many different Christian denominations in the area but the most dominant are those of the Apostolic Faith especially the Johanne Masowe weChishanu Apostolic Church and the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church.

Here I provide a brief account of one independent church, that of Johanne Masowe (John of the wilderness) Apostolic Church and mention Johanne Marange Apostolic Church only in passing. These two churches had the largest number of followers and their teachings and doctrines had much more impact on knowledge than all the other churches. However, I concentrate on Johanne Masowe Apostolic Church since the majority of my informants claimed to belong to it. There was only one member of Johanne Marange Church in my sample.

On the other hand, for the missionary churches there was only the Roman Catholic Church. Membership in this church was mostly limited to Madziva Mines but when the mine closed the church ceased functioning. Jehovah's Witness and the Apostolic Faith Mission were also centred on the mine and did not have an impact on the thought processes of villagers. During the 2002 elections, the Jehovah's Witness did not find favour with villagers since they refused to buy party cards as well as vote in the elections. Referring to the Jehovah's Witnesses, one respondent showed his disapproval of their doctrines:

These chitawara (watch tower) people - I am not sure whether their religion is about arguing with others only. They do not like to work together with other people but they want land. Jews and Israelites are very religious people but they still unite to fight for their land. What kind of people are they? They even say they are not allowed to vote!

Johanne Marange started the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church in 1932 after being called by God. On July 17 1932 Johanne heard a voice,

You are John the Baptist, an Apostle. Go forth and do my work. Go to every country [and] preach and convert people. Command them not to commit adultery, steal or become angry. Baptise people and observe the Sabbath. (Daneel, 1987:56).

Marange rejected ancestral worship and the use of traditional medicines. However, unlike Johanne Masowe, Johanne Marange also rejected the use of modern medicine to cure illnesses among his followers, since he believed that only God could cure illnesses.

*Johanne Masowe*³⁸

A man named Shonhiwa Masedza Tandi Moyo started Johanne Masowe during the colonial era. The Johanne Masowe church started in 1932 in Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia). He received visions and dreams from God, which pointed to his ministry as John the Baptist. After being arrested by the colonial authorities for 'walking' without identification papers and brought before the Chief Native Commissioner Shonhiwa said

I really do believe that I have been sent from heaven to carry out religious work among the natives. I think that I am 'John the Baptist' as a voice told me so. No human being has guided me in my teachings. I am only guided by the voice that I heard when I was staying on the hill for forty days. I have heard the voice in my dreams. The voice came to me through a bush that was burning quite near me. When the voice ceased the fire would go out...I no longer suffer from pains in the head. (Dillone-Malone 1978:12)

This Shonhiwa claimed to have been attacked by mysterious illnesses and to have risen from the dead once after he had died of a mysterious illness. It was after one of his illnesses and some mysterious occurrences that God revealed himself to Shonhiwa and told him that he wanted him to do his work. God instructed him to take on a new name - that of Johanne as he was John the Baptist who had come to Africa to preach the word of God to Africans. The

³⁸ For a detailed understanding of Johanne Masowe's origins, see D-Malone 1978.

church of Johanne Masowe has branches in several countries in Africa. Johanne Masowe had a firm conviction that he was chosen by God to lead the African people to salvation and his followers were also filled with the same conviction. The followers believed that the spirit of John the Baptist had taken hold of Johanne Masowe.

The Johanne Masowe church believed in ritual purity of sisters who were completely dedicated to God as his wives. The Johanne Masowe Church observed its Sabbath day from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.

Johanne Masowe later died in Zambia in 1973 and there was a succession dispute that resulted in the church splitting into several factions. The different congregations tended to congregate around the different powerful leaders in their localities. The leader of the Johanne Masowe's Church in Shamva and Mount Darwin is Wimbow such that some people referred to their church as Johanne Masowe Yamadzibaba Wimbow (Father Wimbow's Johanne Masowe).

The church is also constantly changing to suit changing circumstances. When it was formed it dealt with problems of powerlessness in mission churches where blacks rarely got to positions of high authority. Now the church also tackles issues of AIDS and health as shown in the conversation below,

In this area when a man and a woman fall in love and they want to marry, they can go to Wimbow. If Wimbow shakes their hand, that is all.

Christine- It will mean they are okay and God is giving them their blessing?

No. It will be a final farewell. If he shakes your hand you will know that you will die. You have AIDS.

Does Wimbow himself tell them this?

He does not say anything but as long as he shakes your hand you will know that you have AIDS and you will die.

A Brief background of the individual households in the sample³⁹

Mr Karidza

Mr Karidza was 63 years old and had one wife. Including him and his wife, seven people lived at his homestead; but of these seven only five were old enough to provide agricultural labour. Karidza was also the village leader for Cargill: people who wanted to get loans from Cargill or to get empty cotton bales from Cargill had to register with him. Although he also had adult married sons these had moved out and had settled elsewhere therefore his field had not been subdivided yet. Of the five children who still lived with him the eldest was 19 and still attending secondary school whilst the youngest was his daughter's son who was two years old. In total, his field had seventeen acres.

³⁹ In this section I give the real family names of the people I talked to. However, for ethical reasons in most instances I use pseudonyms. Mandirozva and Virimayi cited in Chapter 3 are also pseudonyms.

Although the standard field at resettlement was twelve acres, people had been give the option to expand their fields if they so wished. In the 2002-2003 season, he planted 6 ¼ acres of maize, 5 acres cotton, and then round nuts, groundnuts, sweet potatoes on a small patch each. Of the 6 ¼ acres of maize, he planted an acre of Sc513 and 5 acres of Sc513 and only a ¼ of an acre of Open Pollinated Varieties (OPVs).

Mr Karidza's homestead was composed of one modern house (4 rooms) well plastered with cement and a round thatched hut, which served as the kitchen. They had a round cement plastered kitchen which was well equipped with many kitchen utensils. There was also the usual *gota* (a structure built of wood and thatch where unshelled maize is kept to dry) but his was large which indicated that he usually obtained a huge harvest of maize. Mr Karidza's wife was the village health worker and also attended master farmer training courses. They cultivated commercial maize varieties and some open pollinated varieties in the family garden for family consumption. Before he was resettled Mr Karidza only had one plough and 13 cattle. The number of their cattle grew to 27 at one time although because they slaughtered some and some died of disease, they now possess only 19. Since coming to the resettlement village, he has managed to buy another plough, a scotch cart, and several other cattle.

Mr Karidza was not poor: he could afford to buy certified seed, achieve good harvests, and had enough cattle and equipment to farm successfully. All his children attended school. In the 2002-2003 season, he sold twelve tons of maize to Purity and was left with enough for his family's consumption. However, he did not own certain goods such as televisions and solar panels that were regarded with high esteem in the village. Mr Karidza's household could be classified as a medium wealth household.

Mr Gwati

Mr Gwati was a very old man in his eighties, who lived with his wife and grown-up children. He was partially blind and could not do a lot of work in the fields because of his disability. However, before he lost his sight (around the year 2000), he was a skilful builder. Fifteen people lived with him and of these only 10 were old enough and healthy enough to provide agricultural labour. He was not educated and neither were his children. All his children had attended primary school and none had gone to secondary school. In 2002-2003 season, he claimed that he planted 5 ½ acres of maize. He obtained certified seed on loan from the Grain Marketing Board and he planted only 2 ½ under certified seed (Sc501) and 3 acres under open pollinated varieties of maize. He did not apply any fertilisers because he could not afford them. He also had 3 acres of Rapoko (finger millet) and small patches of groundnuts, round nuts and some rice. He harvested 800 kg of maize, and did not sell anything. His children and grandchildren had to go to *maricho* (to work for food). In the 2003-2004 season,

he did not cultivate any commercial maize seed variety since he had failed to repay the previous year's loan and was thus not eligible for any more loans from GMB. There was no *gota* for storing his maize, since the little he got could be put into sacks and stored in the bedroom. He had grown up children and his field had been subdivided to accommodate them and their families

He built the home he lived in with his family. His homestead was composed of one round hut and a modern four-roomed house made of burnt bricks with roofing of asbestos sheets. However, neither the four-roomed house nor the round hut had cement floors. The four-roomed house was of similar make to most of the houses in the village (built with loans provided by government when people first settled in the area). However, his house had not been plastered with cement or painted like other houses. Although the kitchen had a cement floor, it was not furnished with many utensils. The kitchen was bare.

He had fifteen children living with him. Five out of the fifteen children were his widowed daughter's children. After her husband died, Mr Gwati gave his daughter a place to build her house where she could stay with her children. He also stayed with a daughter, who had recently been divorced, to whom he had also given a piece of farmland. He looked after a terminally ill daughter, who passed away in 2002. He lived with his youngest son. He had further subdivided his stand to accommodate his two sons who were now married and had children of their own. The children received two acres of land each to grow their own food. The subdivision of the plot took place in the 1999-2000 season. After the subdivision, Mr Gwati stopped cultivating cotton. He now concentrated on maize because it was a food crop. However, his youngest son cultivated cotton only on his 2 acres.

The homestead did not have a toilet and instead used the public toilet at the shops, which are located nearby. However they had built a grass bathroom inside the compound, close to which there were banana trees from which the family harvested bananas for sale at Z\$1 each (in 2001). In the bathroom, there was murky black water whose pungent smell attacked your nostrils as soon as you set foot in the confines of the bathroom. This black murky water was composed of urine and bath water, which was used to water the bananas. Although he owned eleven cattle, and a plough, Gwati's household seemed like a poor household judging by the standards of the village and they were always wearing very worn out clothes.

Mr Chari

Mr Chari is 43 years old and his household consists of eight people. He had only managed to clear nine acres of his 12-acre field, which had not yet been subdivided since he did not have any adult children. In the 2002-2003 season, 6 acres were under maize, 2 acres under cotton and 1 acre under groundnuts. Of the 6 acres of maize 5 acres were planted with commercial variety CG4141,

whilst 1 acre was under Sc501 seeds obtained from the GMB loan. He applied 3 bags of fertiliser per acre. In the 2002-2003 season, he reaped 5 tons of maize, of which 3 were used to repay the GMB loan leaving 2 tons for family consumption. However, in the 2003-2004 season, he also cultivated 3 acres of tobacco no cotton, and cleared another acre of land. He had six children living with him. The eldest child, who was sixteen years old at the time, was at secondary school studying for his junior certificate, three were in primary school and two were not yet of school going age. Because his children were relatively young and were at school most of the time, only Mr Chari and his wife laboured in his field. So occasionally they had to hire a few people – not more than four – to help them in return for maize. Sometimes Mr Chari's wife worked in other people's fields for consumption items such as soap or salt.

Mr Chari stayed at the field to guard his crops against attacks by wild animals especially the kudu antelopes. At his homestead there was one round hut and one 4 roomed modern house which was not plastered. He was also one of the few villagers with very good toilets.

My first impression of this household was not very favourable: the modern house built with government finance, was built using bricks and mortar. Imagine my surprise when later it turned out that Mr Chari was a builder by profession, after his occupation as a farmer. The round kitchen did not have a lot of kitchen utensils, but I grant it was better equipped than some of the kitchens I had visited.

When I first went to their house, Mr Chari, his wife, and children were wearing very good clothes, but this may have been attributable to the fact that they were going on a journey. He owned a plough, a cultivator, two oxen which he used for draught power, two cows and 2 calves, and a scotch-cart that he had bought recently.

He believed that some people used bad magic to steal crops from others or to make other people's farming ventures fail. Mr Chari had basic literacy.

Chenjera

Mr Chenjera was 49 years old. His household consisted of seven people including himself and his wife. He and his wife and very young children stayed in the field to guard crops against attacks by wild animals, especially Nhoro (Kudu). Most of the family stayed there during the rainy season but returned to live in the village after the harvest. His wife came home every weekend to wash clothes and check on the house. Two of Mr Chenjera's sons from his first wife preferred to stay at home, and Mrs Chenjera had to check on them occasionally – hence her frequent visits to the village. At his homestead there was one round hut and one four-roomed modern house which was not plastered. In the sitting room, there were some worn out sofas and a side-board. There was no *gota* at the homestead because everything was done in the field and they would only

come home after they had already shelled and stored their maize in sacks. The harvest was usually not large enough to warrant separate storage, and so it could be stored in one of the rooms. Chenjera was also one of the few villagers with very good toilets.

He had a twelve-acre field, which he had managed to clear. Of these 12 acres, 2 were under maize cultivation, 5 under cotton, rapoko (finger millet), round nuts and groundnuts were allocated a $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre each. In the 2002-2003 season, they cultivated Pioneer maize seed variety, which they had bought from the local shops. They had left four acres of their field to fallow and in the 2003-2004 season, they planted tobacco but only 2 acres. In the 2002-2003 season, they harvested 1 ton of maize: they did not sell any as this was barely enough for family consumption for the whole year. Of the seven household members, only three contributed labour. They also did not have resources to hire labour and so his wife sometimes worked for *maricho* to augment the household income.

For draught power the Chenjeras had two cows only. These two cows had recently given birth to one calf each.

They did not apply any Compound D fertiliser to their maize crop because they said the soil was still good. They only used 1 bag of Ammonium nitrate fertiliser instead of the two bags they said were recommended. The fields had not been subdivided although they were considering subdivision so that Chenjera's older sons from his first marriage could farm on their own since they were said to be old enough.

Mrs Chenjera had gone to secondary school for two years and Mr Chenjera said he had attended school but did not wish to divulge the educational level he had reached.

Mrs Jumbi

During his lifetime, Mr. Jumbi had 4 wives but two passed away after he died. There were now seven different households living at the same homestead who had divided the 12 acre plot amongst themselves and Mrs. Jumbi Senior also had a plot of her own, which she farmed with the help her niece who was also her co-wife.

Mrs. Jumbi's homestead had six round huts and the roof of a seventh had collapsed so no one used it. There was also the usual government loan house, which was roofed with asbestos, plastered and painted. In addition, there was a small house with cement and asbestos sheets. It belonged to Baba B., Mr Jumbi's son who worked in Harare. Because they were all crowded onto a small piece of land, they could not produce enough food to eat; nor could they rent fields from other people because that required cash they did not possess.

They owned no cattle. However, their husband's younger brother, who worked in Mutare, had entrusted two cattle to them to look after and use. These were not so useful since they had to be rotated amongst the seven households.

The Jumbis used saved seed and did not apply fertiliser to their crops. They had never attended any field days or any agricultural lessons. None of the children, not even the grown-up children, in the households had been educated beyond grade seven. I talked to Mrs Jumbi junior. She had 4 acres of land in which she cultivated saved seed of maize varieties, sweet potatoes, rice, pumpkin, and groundnuts. Her household consisted of 7 people: her aunt, Mrs Jumbi Senior who was around 85 years old, her teenage son who did not attend school, another son who attended primary school, an infant daughter, and her divorced daughter who also had a son living with them. In the 2002-2003 season, they managed to reap only 250 kgs of maize and had to work for *maricho* to raise food for the household. Mrs Jumbi senior could not go to *maricho* because of her very advanced age. All the different households on this homestead were very poor and had to supplement their food needs by working for other farmers in return for maize. None of the young men and women at this homestead had gone beyond primary school and neither of the Mrs Jumbis could read and write.

They did not have a good toilet and Mrs Jumbi junior's kitchen was dilapidated - despite her attempts to decorate her kitchen using mud and ash. The kitchen also had no good kitchen utensils. They possessed no radio or television and neither did they have any sofas. They owned some small stools and people could sit on the earth benches in the kitchen or on reed mats.

Mr Maronje

Mr Maronje has 18 children and 2 wives. A daughter who had been living in the homestead died in 2001 after a very protracted illness. There were also his daughters-in-law living at the homestead. Out of the remaining 17 children, 3 daughters were married and living with their husbands. He also has 3 married sons. He subdivided his residential stand to give two of his married sons a place to build a house. The third married son was not helped in this way because he did not live in the village, but in Gweru where he worked. Some of his sons worked as garden boys at Madziva mine, but they helped him in the fields every weekend. They also provided him with money to service his farming loans. The number of people who lived with him in his household totalled eleven.

He maintained that of the eleven only 6 people provided agricultural labour (When I accompanied him to the fields he constantly stressed that the fields were very large, to the extent that if you only have one wife you would not be able to farm successfully).

Mr Maronje reached standard 5 at school (he remarked that at school, he attended the same class with Wilson Sandura of the Sandura Commission). His wives only studied to sub-B (second grade of primary school). Out of his sons, 6 reached grade 7 (the last grade in primary school), one reached form 3 and one

reached form 4. His three married daughters did not finish grade 7. Of those who are continuing at school, two girls are in grade 2, a boy in grade 3 and another girl in grade 7. On the issue of education, Mr Maronje remarked,

Chikoro chakanaka asi kuvasikana kosi huru kuroorwa. (*School is good but for girls the greatest qualification of all is marriage*).

In 2001, Mr Maronje planted 3½ acres cotton, 2½ acres maize ¼ acre groundnuts and a ¼ acre of round nuts and put *mbambaira* (sweet potatoes) at the edge of the field. Of the 2 ½ acres he put under maize, 2 acres were under saved seed. He gave 1½ acres to his son who grew 1 acre cotton and ½ acre of maize. He gave 2 acres to his other son who planted cotton only. This son went on to rent 5 acres from another farmer in the area and planted maize. They left the other acres fallow. However, this was not intentional since they had already ploughed the area, but because they received maize seeds from the GMB late, they had decided not to plant any maize.

Mr Maronje does not have any cattle or other livestock, not even chickens. He does not have any sofas, no bed, no solar panel, no radio and no television. He augments his income by making reed mats. He also believes that although there are some good farmers with knowledge, some people use bad magic to get good crops at the expense of others. He did not attend agricultural training lessons.

Mr Mavheneke Chikerema

Mavheneke Chikerema was 58 years of age. He had been elected a ZANU (PF) councillor for his ward. His homestead was composed of one round kitchen (thatched) and a modern 5-roomed house with asbestos sheets and a cemented floor. He had no *gota* but had built round hut especially to store his harvested food crops. His house was built differently from the other houses in the area. He had a solar panel, a television set and a very big radio. All the bedrooms had beds and there were sofas in his dining room. Outside this house were tins full of elephant ear flowers covering the veranda. The plants were very tall that most of them were about to reach the roof of the veranda, under which they were kept. His homestead was fenced with strands of barbed wire and surrounded by pink bougainvillea flowers, which were an outstanding feature in the village. He also had plenty of fruit trees on his homestead, among which mango trees and mexican apples dominated. He had also started planting gum trees which he intended to use after they matured as firewood to cure his tobacco. He was also starting to construct some tobacco barns on his homestead but at a distance from the main house. On the veranda, there was also a dead water engine for the small irrigation pump they operated at their garden. The engine had stopped working in 2001, but he hoped to get it repaired in 2002 after selling his produce.

There were only 3 people in Mr. Mavheneke Chikerema's household and they all contributed labour. They consisted of Mr Mavheneke Chikerema, his wife* and their last-born child, a son. Mr Mavheneke Chikerema and his wife had achieved standard 6 at school whilst all his children attained an 'O' level educations (except his only daughter who left school before completing primary education). Two of his children did 'A' levels and even went to college. One finished with a teaching diploma and the other went to an agricultural college. All his children were in employment except for his first born who had been retrenched from Trojan mine and was now leasing a house and a field in a nearby resettlement village called Banana in Mupfurudzi resettlement scheme. On the issue of knowledge and farming Mr Mavheneke Chikerema was of the opinion that *Pane education ndipo panorimwa*. (Where there is education there is farming).

Prior to 1995, he used to hire a tractor but he maintained that tractors had become scarce so he now used draught power instead. He owns one plough, one cultivator, one harrow and three cows. He maintained that the cultivator made life easier for them during weeding time. Usually, he did not hire labour but used the cultivator to make the lines then the harrow to cover the seeds with soil.

He cultivated commercial maize varieties. In 2001 he cultivated 5 acres cotton, 5 acres maize 2 acres beans and some groundnuts and roundnuts. In the previous year he had sold 16 bales of cotton and 5 tonnes of maize. He blamed these low sales on the erratic rains of that year. In a good year, he maintained that they would usually sell 8-10 tonnes of maize. He maintained that he usually got 40 bags of unshelled groundnuts, 10 bags of beans (shelled), and a few bags of round nuts.

He attended master farmer training school that was conducted by AGRITEX. In 2003, he was the only one in Muringamombe village who had attended the Zimbabwe Tobacco Association training school in Trelwane. Soon after attending the school he started cultivating tobacco. He had a close working relationship with AREX and he also received some of the information he needed from the television and radio.

*Mrs Mupandasekwa**

Mupandasekwa was around 60 years old. 6 people lived in her homestead; herself, her nephew, his wife, and their three young children. Although they had separate kitchens, they worked together at the field. Mrs Mupandasekwa was unhappy with this arrangement and at the time of her death, was planning to subdivide the field so that she could work on her own. Mrs. Mupandasekwa's homestead was composed of one modern house similar to all houses built on government loans in the village. However her house had not been plastered with cement and did not have a cement floor. Neither did it have

any window panes or window frames. There were also two thatched round huts on opposite ends of the courtyard. One was her kitchen and the other the kitchen of her nephew and his wife. She denied owning any cattle. However, when it was pointed out that, according to Bill Kinsey's data, she owned 3 cattle, she told me that she owned donkeys only and the cattle that were listed as hers were not her cattle but her nephew's.

Her *gota* was very small compared to the *gota* of other nearby homesteads. Even before I asked her about her yields, I knew that she probably grew just enough maize to feed herself and her family and none for sale. In the 2001-2002 season, she managed to reap 250 kg of maize and there was none for sale. She also worked in other people's fields in return for soap, maize, salt and other food items.

She had a 12-acre field but she only utilised three acres. On these 3 acres, she cultivated maize, groundnuts, pumpkins, round nuts, and cow peas. Of the maize varieties she usually cultivated open pollinated varieties such *Matiki* and *Mukadzi usaende* that had been passed on to her by her mother. She sometimes cultivated certified seed, however, since her nephew who worked in Harare as a security guard would buy her some, or she receive them on loan from the GMB. She also cultivated sorghum and millet.

Although she was poor (she dressed shabbily, her house was not plastered, she had no radio, no TV, no cattle no scotch-cart, and the plates, pots and pans in her kitchen were old and full of holes, etc.). Most young men and women came to check on her, to make small talk, and she commanded much respect from fellow villagers. They called her 'ambuya' (grandmother) even if they were not related to her. She helped girls prepare for their adult roles initiating them as adults, and giving them appropriate medicines. She also prepared *vhuka vhuka* (aphrodisiacs) for the young men. Although she was not a 'hurudza', she gained her respect by being an 'ambuya' of the village.

The stand where she now stayed initially belonged to her husband but he never came to stay there. By the time these were allocated he had run away with a neighbour's wife because Mupandasekwa was not able to bear children. When she first came to settle, other villagers did not want a single woman whose husband had run away to stay in the village. They suspected her of questionable morals. The AGRITEX Officer (*Mudhumeni*) gave her a 3 year trial period. The condition was that if she stayed in the village for three years without having affairs with the married men in the village then the stand could be hers. That is how she came to own the stand where she now lives.

She always attended field days where she got most of the information she had on farming. She had never attended the training schools. If she really needed to know something, she would ask other farmers in the village.

Mrs Mushaniga

Mrs Mushaniga was 59 years old. On her homestead was the usual house built with a government loan: hers was plastered, had a cement floor that was cracking up and, in addition, its windows had window panes. She also had one round hut that acted as a kitchen, a huge *gota* plus a goat's pen and a small fowl run. The Mushanigas also owned a dog.

Mrs. Mushaniga had 5 children and 3 grandchildren who were staying with her. Emily, the mother of her 3 grandchildren, came back to stay with Mrs. Mushaniga when her husband died in 2000. However, at the time of the research she had just left to look for work in Shamva. Out of the ten people in the household, seven were able to offer a good day's work at the fields. On the issue of labour Mrs Mushaniga said *In this household anyone who is ten years and above should be able to provide work as hard as any other adult, that is if working in the field.*

Mrs Mushaniga attended school up to standard 2 (grade 4 of primary school). Emily (born in 1972) up to form 2 (junior secondary school), Mushaniga (1974) up to form 3, Nobert (1977) form 3, Tavengwa (1980) form 1, and Coaster (1984) grade seven. They never finished school because their father died. Her three grand children were all in primary school. In 2001, none of her children were in employment except for Nobert who worked as a gardener at Madziva Mine and received Z\$500 (about US\$10 at the time) per month, which they used to buy food and other things.

Mrs Mushaniga had 3 cattle, a scotch cart, a plough and a cultivator. They also herded eight more cattle from another woman in the village who had no grown up sons to look after the cattle for her. Mrs Mushaniga cultivated Sc501, R215, groundnuts, nyemba (cow peas), round nuts, pumpkins, and cotton. Although like other families they were originally given 12 acres of land, they lost 3 acres to the road and the dam.

They did not cultivate maize for sale, only for consumption. Occasionally though, they could sell a bucket of maize to buy soap. In the 2000-2001 season, however, they managed to sell half a ton of maize. Cotton was the only crop they cultivated specifically for sale. In the 2000-2001 season, they sold six bales of cotton.

In the 2001-2002 season, they cultivated 3-acres of maize. Of these three acres, 1 acre was under an open pollinated variety referred to as Hacli King and 2 acres were under a commercial variety Sc501 which they had obtained on loan from the GMB. They also had 4 acres of cotton. They claimed that they had reaped 3 tons of maize, 2 tons of which they had used to repay the GMB loan, leaving the rest for consumption and occasional sales to Purity.

Although they owned some chairs, they did not own any sofa, they had no television and no solar panel. However, they owned a very small radio that they sometimes listened to if it had batteries.

She used to attend village meetings when she first came to Mupfurudzi, and that is where she learnt about the new crops and seed varieties they were expected to cultivate in the resettlement areas. Although the AGRITEX Officers also came regularly, she could not say she learnt anything worthwhile from them, but rather more from the radio. She had never attended a field day or training lessons and neither had any of her children: most of what they knew they had learnt from school or the radio. However, when her husband was still alive he used to attend field days.

Mrs Mutyavaviri

Mrs Mutyavaviri was a widow aged 72. She was not very educated but had basic literacy. She could read and write. She lived with her daughter-in-law on the same homestead although they had subdivided the field and they used separate kitchens. She also took care of her four orphaned grandchildren, all of whom were still in primary school. Mrs Mutyavaviri's homestead had a modern 4-roomed house with asbestos sheets, not plastered and no cement floor. She smeared cow dung on the floor of the four-roomed house to keep out dust. However, her round kitchen had a cement floor. There were also, two round thatched huts, which served as kitchens for the two families who lived at her homestead. That was her kitchen and her daughter-in-law's kitchen. There were also two separate *gota* or *daras*. The bigger one belonged to Mutyavaviri and the smaller one to her daughter-in-law. She also had a traditional granary.

There was also a collapsed kitchen, which, as it turned out later, belonged to her deceased co-wife. There was also a small goat's pen adjacent to Mutyavaviri's kitchen and a chicken run adjacent to Mutyavaviri's daughter-in-law's kitchen. On the homestead, there were a variety of fruit trees, among which were a mango tree, a guava tree, lemon tree, musawu tree and some other indigenous trees I had never seen before

In the 2001-2002 season, she cultivated 3 acres of maize. On the first two and half acres, she planted the CG4141 seed she had bought from the shops and, on the remaining half acre, she planted saved seed that was given to her by her daughter. She also cultivated half an acre of groundnuts, half an acre of soya beans, and a quarter of an acre of *nyimo* (round nuts). She inter-cropped cowpeas with maize. She applied three bags of Amonium Nitrate fertiliser and four bags of Compound D to her three acres of maize. During this season, she reaped 550 kg of maize but she had none for sale. She does not hire labour. Her four grandchildren are still too young to provide meaningful labour, in addition to which they are at school most of the time except for weekends and holidays. She and her daughter-in-law combine labour and take it in turns to work in each other's field.

The family owned ten cattle. These had been given to her daughter at the marriage of her father's sister's children. Because her aunt was deceased, she

was acting the role of the mother to her aunt's children and so was given the cattle. However, neither Mrs Mutyavaviri nor her daughter had control over the cattle because, when Mr Mutyavaviri and her second wife were still alive, Mrs Mutyavaviri was denied the use of these cattle in her field. Her husband and the second wife used the cattle in their field. After the death of her husband she could now use the cattle in her field and even let them out to others who did not have cattle. But now her grandson who lives at DERUDE (Department of Rural Development) a nearby resettlement irrigation scheme, controls the cattle. He has to make sure they are not sick, that they have a good herdsman, and during the rain season, he usually takes some of them to use in his field.

She had never attended field days or agricultural lessons. Most of the things she knew she learnt from her parents. Sometimes she asked for advice on agriculture from Amai Chisvo or some other women in the village.

Mrs Mutyavaviri did not own any prestige items such as a radio or television. However, she owned an old bed.

Mr Ngorima

July Ngorima was a disabled old man. According to him he was disabled in 1978 in a freak accident caused by jealous work mates. He also believed that, if he also had used bad 'muti,' the accident would have killed him but he survived because he was clean. However, he lost a leg (now has a wooden leg) and lost the use of the other leg which was not amputated. He had to use a crutch to walk.

Sycamore (Makonje) and a fence typical of all the other houses in Mupfurudzi resettlement scheme surrounded Ngorima's house. The difference between Ngorima's homestead and other homesteads was that he had a very big tree orchard consisting of paw-paws, mangoes, oranges, lemons, guavas: there were also gum trees, bamboo.

At the edge of the courtyard near the main gate, was a very large cemented grave, which belonged to his late wife. In 2003 his daughter passed away after an illness and another grave was added. For him both his daughter and wife had died mysteriously and he strongly suspected witchcraft.

The house was the same as the other houses. However, it was plastered with cement and painted with what was originally a purple colour but had been bleached by the sun. There were also, two round kitchens the bigger one belonging to the late wife. This kitchen was for a time used by Ngorima's daughter* (recently divorced). When the daughter passed away in 2003 the kitchen passed on to his son who had recently married. The smaller kitchen was built in 2000 for the wife who Mr. Ngorima married after the death of his wife. However, the wife ran away with another man in 2003, after which the kitchen was not used.

They usually did not cultivate more than three acres of land. For example in the 2001-2002 season, they cultivated two acres of maize crop, which they inter-cropped with cow-peas and pumpkin. They also cultivated a patch of groundnuts. They cultivated Katsoko and Kambizi, which, they had bought from the shops, but did not apply any fertiliser because they said their soil was still good. At that time, his young wife and divorced daughter were the only ones who provide labour because his son had not yet married and lived in Harare where he was employed. Mr Ngorima could also not afford to hire labour. After the death of his first wife, Mr Ngorima said they had never managed to get surplus crops for sale. However, the family did not go to *maricho* to work for food because Mr Ngorima still received his disability pension (which he was entitled to under the Social Welfare Act because of the disability he had suffered in the freak accident mentioned earlier) from the government in addition to which he had a house in the capital city that he was renting out. So every month, he received income from elsewhere, income which he would use to supplement his family's food needs.

Mr Ngorima had four cattle, one scotch cart and one plough. He used to have 11 cattle but lost most of the cattle when his wife died as all the cattle were given to the in-laws to pay up his marriage dues as well as to appease the spirit of his dead wife for the good of his children.

Mr Ngorima was educated up to standard 1, his young wife up to form 3, 3 of his children to form 4 and one up to form 2.

Mr Seda

When I arrived at Mr Seda's home, I was impressed by what I saw. I think he had one of the nicest homesteads in the village. On the homestead there was the 4-roomed house built with a government loan which was nicely plastered with a generous layer of cement. The house looked different from the other houses: it had a very big veranda. When I commented about that they told me that the house was not different from the other houses but that they were in the process of extending it. This incomplete extension I thought was a huge veranda. There was also another one-roomed house roofed with asbestos sheets facing the main house. As one entered the courtyard, there was also another 2-roomed house built with red bricks and cement, roofed with asbestos sheets. I was told this belonged to Mr Seda's eldest son⁴⁰. There were also two round kitchens (thatched), one belonging to Mrs Seda and the other to her daughter-in-law. I was also informed that they were in the process of trying to build a 3rd kitchen.

⁴⁰ However, in 2004 Mr Seda's eldest son and his wife moved out to settle at the new lines that were mentioned earlier in chapter 1.

Although he was Mupostori wekwaMarange and his church doctrines did not allow him to own a television set, since it was claimed that television corrupted the mind, he nevertheless owned a television set. He also owned a solar panel. However, as it later turned out, his children had a choice as to whether or not to attend the church. Some were mapostori ekwaMarange, others were not. He explained that he had made a conscious decision to attend that church when all his children were dying mysteriously. He wanted the help of God to stop these deaths and he sought help from the apostles of Marange. That was then that he became a convert. Ever since then he has not faced many problems, since God has been on his side. He wanted his children to make their own similar choices. Furthermore, he did not believe television would necessarily corrupt morals since one could learn new farming techniques and other helpful things from the television.

There were also a few fruit trees dotted over the homestead. There was one musawu tree near the cattle kraal, one mango tree, and one banana tree (not yet bearing fruit). There was also one paw-paw tree near the daughter in law's two-roomed house and one other tree (at the centre of the courtyard) they had bought from Mudzingo Primary School.

Mr Seda is of Mozambican origin. He and his wife were not educated. Both were illiterate. However, their children attended school and some had finished their 'O' levels.

Seda had eight cattle, a plough and a scotch-cart. 16 people lived at the homestead. Mr Seda had given pieces of land to his two sons who were now married, whilst the third married son went to the fast-track settlements. Of these 16, eleven people provided agricultural labour. The rest were too young and he himself was getting old and could not work as hard as he used to. His role was more and more supervisory.

Mr Seda's field is 25 acres but he said he still intends to expand. He extended his field from the original 12 acres a long time ago. In the 2001-2002 season, Mr Seda planted 5 acres of maize inter-cropped with cow-peas, and has a separate acre of groundnuts, and 20 acres of cotton. He had planted commercial seed maize varieties Pannar and Sc401. He was very bitter about these seeds because he claimed that he had not managed to obtain good crops during the 2001-2002 season, and he blamed the seed varieties he had used. However, he managed to sell 5 tons of maize to the GMB and was left with 3 tons of maize for family consumption.

Mr Tembo/Mademo

Mr Mademo was a very prominent farmer in the village and aged 67. His field was between 18-20 acres because he had extended it from the original 12 acres. He cultivated tobacco, maize, and cotton.

21 people lived on his homestead. These included his sister and her 5 children and 3 grandchildren. He gave his sister a piece of land to build a house and a field to farm so that she could look after her large family. His sister also took care of his mother and two very young children from a wife that he divorced two years ago. He himself looked after 10 children.

Of the twelve people in his household (excluding his sister's), seven people were able to provide agricultural labour, and the other five were still very young. He did not hire labour and he always had enough to eat such that his family did not have to work at *maricho*.

In the 2001-2002 season, he cultivated 4 acres of maize, and 6 acres of tobacco. He had planted Kambizi and, Sc501 seed varieties. He managed to sell three tons of maize to individuals within the resettlement scheme and left two tons for his own consumption. He met most of his cash needs from tobacco sales.

He owned a plough, a cultivator, and 9 cattle. Although he owned a radio, television, and solar panel, his house did not have a cemented floor. He owned some chairs and a bed but did not have any sofas.

He studied up to standard 3, but his wife never received any education. Out of his two sons who had left school one continued to form 5 (the first year of pre-university 'A' level studies that take two years to complete) *achibwa atizirwa* (but was forced to marry his pregnant girlfriend). He had left school but was at Harare Polytechnic, although Mr Mademo did not know exactly what he was doing (I later learnt from his son that none of his children went to college or to form five). The other son went up to form two and then decided to quit school.

He was a good tobacco farmer and he and his wife attended field days, although they had never taken any agricultural courses offered by AREX. Mr Mademo said that he had learnt most of the things he needed to become a good farmer at the white man's farms he worked before being resettled. He had three large tobacco barns at his homestead and, in the 2003-2004 season, he had been unlucky in that one of the barns had caught fire during curing and he had lost a huge amount of tobacco.

He was also a blacksmith hence his nickname Mademo, which means the 'axe man'. However, he now suffered from painful swollen legs and, although he had been to hospital had yet to see any improvement.

Mr Karuru

Mr Karuru was a 68-year -old polygamist. He had two wives and 11 children. There were fourteen people in his household. He made reed mats and was a skilled blacksmith. He specialised in making spears, axes and hoes. He also made reed mats for sale. He liked to hunt and he said that he was possessed by some hunting spirits and baboon spirits that did not want him to use bad magic. He believed that it was possible for people with bad magic to steal your crops or to make your cattle listless. People had to protect their fields. His eldest

wife is a traditional healer specialising in children's illnesses. His wives also panned for gold to supplement the family's income. He and his wives belonged to a traditional dance group, which was available for hire to perform at different functions. The money they raised from this dance group was usually kept by their leader. If there was a lump sum, they would buy some maize and share it equally among the members. For Mr Karuru this was a good arrangement for, apart from enjoying the dancing, he could also bring food to the table.

Mr Karuru's homestead was not very different from the other homes in the area. He had subdivided his stand giving his married eldest son a place to build his own home. His own home was composed of 2 round and thatched kitchens (one for each of his wives) and then the modern house built with loans from government. However, the house did not have a cement floor. Judging by his *gota* he was not a *hurudza* because his *gota* was small, implying that he only reaped very little maize at harvest time. Mr Karuru lived at his field during the agricultural season to protect his maize from Nhoru (Kudu). He only came home after the harvest. When I first arrived at his homestead, I noticed three very thin dogs, which were all lying down listlessly on the courtyard. Later I discovered that one of the dogs had a limp and a sore on its leg. Fleas were following this dog. These were his hunting dogs.

All his children were old enough to work in the fields. None of his children had finished 'O' level.

He did not own any prestige goods. He had no bed, no sofas, no radio, and no solar panel. He had not extended his field so he only had the twelve acres that he initially received from government. In the 2001-2002 season, he had cultivated 4 acres of maize and 5 acres of cotton. For maize he had cultivated the certified seed he had received from the GMB on loan. He applied two bags of fertilisers per acre of maize and managed to reap two tons of maize. He gave one ton of maize to GMB to repay the loan and was left with another for family consumption. His cotton did not do well. He also cultivates patches of rapoko (finger millet), groundnuts, and round nuts. Food was never enough for his household such that often his children and wives had to go to *maricho*.

Concluding Remarks

The foregoing discussion makes it clear that the different official organisations - private or government - usually see themselves as disseminators of knowledge whilst farmers, who are hardly ever consulted, are expected to adopt wholesale the recommendations from these centres of 'knowledge,' seeking clarification only on how best to use the technological packages offered.

In addition this chapter has underlined that it is not only at the local farmer level that development discourse is couched in political terms: as demonstrated by the case of FSI Agricom even corporations can resort to playing the political

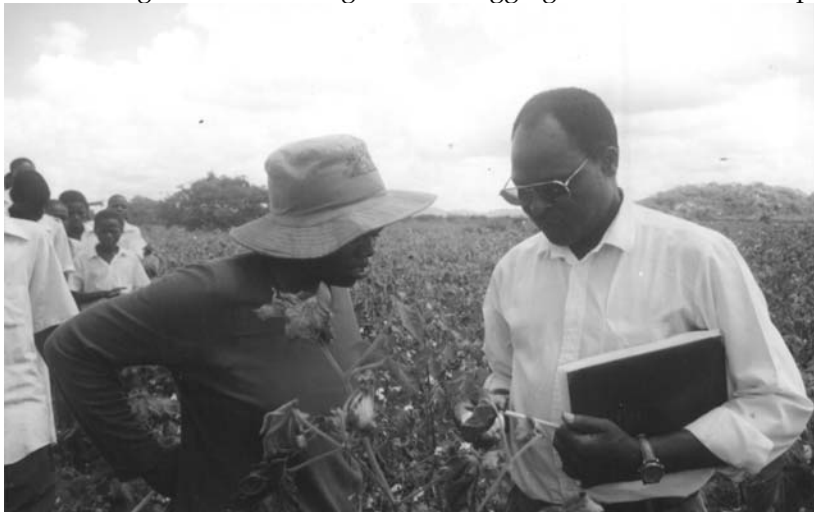
knowledge game in the interests of profit making. Thus, to understand certain knowledge discourses, the background and context that give emergence to specific discourses has to be critically understood.

It is important to note that even, after resettlement, households do not attain the same economic level. Resettlement does not therefore have a levelling influence on social and economic differentiation. While poverty increases for some households, others manage to strengthen their economic positions by acquiring more items of wealth than they had prior to resettlement. As will be discussed in later chapters, sometimes these levels of relative wealth and poverty influence who experiments with what and when. In this way, then, overall household position can influence the vantage points from which farmers view, consider and analyse different methods of farming, farming knowledge and behavioural consequences.

The importance of friendships in information dissemination has been highlighted. Also highlighted, but to be discussed in later chapters, is the relationship between agriculture and religion.



The village head of Muringamombe digging manure from cattle pen.



Mr Mushayi Mapeto explaining cotton diseases to field day participant. Students in the background. Picture by Ellen Luka



Mr Karuru (a blacksmith) and his friend

5

'Knowledge: we have all got it but ...'

Introduction

Most writers on agricultural knowledge have focused on whether farmers are originators, innovators, adopters or rejecters of knowledge and technology (Scoones and Thompson, 1994; Rhoades, 1990; Maurya, 1990). Others such as Richards (1985) have focused on the extraction of those elements of local knowledge that can be used in science because for them that is the only way local knowledge can be legitimate and relevant. This is not the concern of this chapter. Rather this chapter is going to show how different people can have different perceptions of knowledge.

Although I show that official knowledge is regarded by 'experts' as superior to farmers' or villagers' knowledge it will also become apparent that farmers use aspects of both 'local' and 'official' knowledge in their farming activities. No amount of neglect in the formal communication channels can expunge farmers' knowledge from local farmers' discourses. As noted by Scoones and Thompson (1993), 'rural people's knowledge may be hidden or muted, affected by differential access to and control over public discourse' but it is never completely lost. Local knowledge can be banished from public discourse but this does not mean that in their private lives farmers ignore this knowledge as well. Regardless of the fact that in Zimbabwe local knowledge has been expunged from official discourses some aspects of it are resilient and still play an important part in local farmer practices and farming decisions.

There is a strong recognition in this chapter that knowledge is not static, neither is it a process whereby one moves from a point of ignorance to knowledge or from less knowledge to more knowledge. Knowledge is always contested and might go through cycles of legitimation and delegitimation depending on the constellation of various social, economic and political forces that impact on knowledge discourses. 'It is important therefore to unravel the discourses utilised in specific arenas of struggle. Discourses are not separate from social practice and may co-exist and intersect with each other.... More often bits and pieces of discursive texts are brought together in innovative ways or in strange combinations in particular situations in order to negotiate or contest certain shifting points of view' (Long, forthcoming).

To avoid getting bogged down in the translations or mistranslations of the concept of knowledge we will try to understand what the various people

involved in development discourse understand by the concept of knowledge. Discussing the importance of local knowledge on farmers' decisions, Besbah (2003:55) states that, 'Farmers have their own way of perceiving things in their farm and community. As they perceive they shape their practices using their evaluative frames of reference. The way farmers perceive the agricultural landscape, its problems and solutions sometimes differs and at times conflicts, with that of outsiders such as scientists and policy makers'. This shows that the different participants to development can have different knowledge which sometimes conflict, run parallel or is accommodative of each other's knowledge views. The understanding of what really it is that the different actors regard as knowledge will help in understanding of how the different actors negotiate with each other at knowledge interfaces. This chapter will show how the different narratives and representations employed by different actors can have impact on the production of knowledge.

Knowledge during the colonial era: Official Approach

During the colonial period, the government was not very much concerned with increasing the productivity of African farmers. But, according to Jacobs, (1991:34), among the Shona prior to 1904 'European agriculture was insignificant and the African peasantry provided the bulk of the food stuffs'. Palmer (1977:227) describes the 1890 to 1908 period as the era of peasant prosperity in Southern Rhodesia. In the same vein to show the prosperity of African agriculture during this same period, Phimister (1977:25) maintains that a report at the turn of the century described Africans as 'agriculturalists.... who do not view the prospect of becoming miners with any enthusiasm. Their present occupation ...pays better and is a more pleasant life'. This, however, was viewed with displeasure by the rising white capitalists who wanted cheap labour to work in the mines and industries and the white farmers who did not want to face competition from black farmers.

Zinyama (1992:37) notes that as African agriculture improved, the government put into place legislation that restricted African agriculture, so that whites would not face competition from black cultivators. In 1930, the Land Apportionment Act had successfully divided the land into racial blocks with whites controlling most of the prime land and blacks for the most part given marginally productive land, which later became known as the 'native reserves'. In 1931, the Grain Marketing and Maize Control Act (1931) was passed. This Act discriminated against black farmers by facilitating a two-tier pricing policy, which favoured the whites and offered subsidies to white farmers. The major aim of these discriminatory policies was to supply cheap labour to white farms, mines and industries, by making farming non-profitable for blacks. Hence the peasant sector became a producer of labour power rather than of agricultural commodities (Bush and Cliffe, 1984). Even at the level of resources set aside to

develop agriculture African farming was neglected. Palmer (1977:244) states that in 1940-1 Africans received £ 14, 107 for the development of agric in native areas and reserves whilst £ 208, 207 was provided for European agriculture. 1945-6 and 1953-4 £ 2 million was spent on African agriculture whilst £ 12 million was spent on European agric. These discriminatory policies led to the slump in African agricultural production.

In spite of the various limitations and restrictions faced by Africans, the colonial government regarded African agriculture as conservative, destructive and wasteful. The rural poor were viewed as backward, uncivilised, and consequently unknowledgeable (Matose and Mukamuri, 1993:27) As a way of stemming environmental degradation in the African areas and stopping urban migration, the government introduced agricultural colleges for the training of the native agricultural extension officers. In 1926, Alvord, an American missionary, was made the agriculturalist for the instruction of the native. Alvord was interested in converting people to Christianity through changing their agricultural practices. He wanted to prove to Africans that their agriculture was not effective because of the marriage between African beliefs and agriculture, whereas for Alvord agriculture was practical and not spiritual. Describing his view on Alvord's agricultural policies (in relation to some African religious practices on rain making ceremonies in an interview by Sadomba in 1998), Chavhunduka who had been an extension officer during the time of Alvord had this to say:

But he (Alvord) couldn't see the relationship between this ritual, -which can in fact helps to bring production-and production, which I now see. Let's take one ceremony.... We have come to pray for the rains... Alvord might say 'Rains won't come because of that'. And I would say 'I agree with you. But that's not the only function of that ritual. It's not the only function. The other function is to bring the people together to bring unity, which we will need in farming. Once there are all these people, all the villages are now together. They are now going to operate and work as a unit, lending each other cattle, helping each other... It comes from this ritual.' So it has a number of other functions besides rain. If you prove to me that it does not bring rain so what? We still need it for other reasons which will benefit us in agriculture.. that meeting there. There shall come up those Nhimbe (work feasts) because they didn't have employed workers for farming. They depended on that community, so that that unity that came from the rain ceremony would be used. It is the one you would find when they come to help each other when weeding or harvesting or whatever. So don't discourage them from meeting, saying they are wasting time, it shall help them next time. That's how I saw it' (Sadomba, 1999a:42).

The first serious attempt to Europeanise African agriculture started with Alvord and, we will see in the next section, his policies and visions have survived the transition from the colonial era to the independence era. Under Alvord two native schools for agricultural demonstrators were set up in Domboshava and Tsholotsho (see Alvord 1958, unpublished). By 1973 Southern Rhodesia had one

agricultural college that trained Africans for the post of agricultural extension officers (Weinrich, 1973)⁴¹.

These agricultural extension officers were responsible for enforcing laws to protect the environment, such as those requiring people to construct water channels and contour ridges, which were said to protect the soil from erosion as well as leading to land consolidation. From their duties, the extension officers became popularly known as *Anamadhunduru/ Madhumeni* after the madhunduru (contour ridges) they were forcing people to construct. Musoni (1999) maintains that these policies failed to achieve the desired results as people were afraid that these measures were being made to improve tax collection by the government, therefore they resisted the moves. 'Colonial conservation policy in Southern Africa often fuelled rural anti-state sentiments, provoking peasant resistance' (Moore, 1998:381). According to Yudelman (1964:116), from 1941 the government began to use legal sanction - compulsion rather than persuasion - as a means of improving production methods through the creation of the Natural Resource Board. At the same time, farmers resisted the contour ridges that had been adopted from the American model of soil conservation. Their argument was that poorly constructed contour ridges were more susceptible to bursting and concentrated erosion at the end of the contour. This could accelerate gully erosion to levels exceeding those of land that was not protected in this way.

These native extension officers were also responsible for training African Master Farmers. In the early days successful farmers would be identified and given master farmer badges, but from the 1960s onwards emphasis shifted to Master Farmer training, where farmers would attend lessons and sit for examinations. In 1960 there were an estimated 9, 000 (Daneel, 1971:62) master farmers in the country and in 1980, this number had risen to 40, 000 (Bolding, 2004:84). These figures included those who had received certificates after training on experimental farms or who had demonstrated their ability to farm well under the agricultural demonstrators. Thus the emphasis was no longer on the practise of agriculture but on the ability to demonstrate theoretical farming knowledge through taking exams either oral or written and answering questions to the satisfaction of the extension officer. The Land Apportionment Act led to the creation of Native Purchase areas where a Master Farmer could

⁴¹ The agricultural demonstrator was someone who, after training, went back to the rural areas to work on his land. His field would be like a demonstration plot for other Africans to see that good agriculture had nothing to do with the use of magic but with the adoption of effective modern agricultural methods. An agricultural extension worker is a government worker who goes around as agricultural advisor advising farmers on better methods and showing them how to farm properly but not actually working any land himself like a demonstrator

purchase up to 200 acres of land. Thus those farmers who gained master farmer certificates by attending courses offered by the extension officers could be eligible for purchasing farms in the Native Purchase Areas. The purchase areas were meant to compensate Africans for loss of their right to purchase land anywhere in the country. In the 1970s, writers like Weinrich, who did research among Africans in the Guruswa purchase areas in Masvingo wrote of having had meetings with *master farmers and their wives* (my emphasis). Indeed, in the purchase areas women were excluded from owning land as it was mostly men who received the master farmer training that was a prerequisite to accessing land in the purchase areas.

Despite the rigorous training the master farmers received, in earlier publications Weinrich indicated that the Master Farmers were not performing any better than other farmers whom they had left in the native areas. Shutt (1997:555) maintains that the low productivity was a result of the fact that much of the purchase area land was of poor quality often in isolated areas of the country far removed from transportation lines and the market. However, most writers who wrote about African colonial agriculture associated knowledge and good farming with the acquisition of modern methods of farming such that any perceived failure in African farming was explained in terms of lack of knowledge. Trying to explain low productivity of farmers, Daneel (1971:62) concluded that, 'in 1960 it was estimated that about 70% of the African producers had not yet made use of improved agricultural techniques, a factors which contributes towards the low yields per acre'. Indeed, it was not only the colonial writers but even the governments of the day who believed that the acquisition of modern technology made possible by getting the Master Farmer certificate was the end of African farming ignorance and the solution to the problem of low productivity.

The colonial government viewed farmers as children who had to undergo intensive farmer training programmes for them to achieve the status of adulthood. For example, in their discussion of the collapse of the Nyamaropa irrigation scheme, Manzungu *et al* (1996) argue that there was a break down of communication between the state and farmers. They maintained that the government started to interfere in the management of the crops. First, the plot holders were forced to grow cash crops, and then to practise compulsory crop rotation. The irrigation staff appointed by government dictated what plants to plant, planting dates and type of seed. Farmers complained and resisted.

As suggested earlier, the official approach during the colonial era varied from period to period. During the early days of colonialism up to about 1920s, African agriculture was left to develop on its own accord. After 1908, the white government took measures to develop white agriculture and simply neglected African Agriculture. European farmers wooed from Britain and South Africa were offered agricultural training, received bank loans to establish themselves

firmly in agriculture and could easily access extension services while African farmers did not get any assistance from the government (Palmer, 1977: 243). The Department of Native Agriculture was established in 1926 and E.D Alvord an American Methodist Missionary was appointed the agriculturalist for the instruction of the natives. Later the government felt the need to curb African agriculture through restrictive legislation.

In the 1930s, agricultural extension officers were to instruct farmers on conservation-oriented agriculture. The government also introduced compulsory de-stocking. At the time the white government found it in their best interest to blame the collapse of African agriculture on the ignorance of the African and did not regard its policies as a contributory factor. Palmer (1971:244) neatly summarises the effects of the discriminatory policies on agriculture in Southern Rhodesia by stressing that European prosperity of post 1945 'was achieved ...as a direct result of African poverty'. In the 1950s, the chief native commissioners were charged with the development of native reserves so as to increase their carrying capacity to reduce the need for acquiring more land for native occupation. According to the government, all these were policies aimed to inculcate in people a sense of responsibility. However, the success of such policies was limited since people resisted. As noted by Vivian (1994:181), 'rural anti-colonial struggles coincided with the period of the government's heightened commitment to agricultural development'. Thus as the population pressure increased in the rural areas, the colonial government felt compelled to improve agricultural performance among the natives by teaching them good farming practices. 'The dominant theme of Rhodesian Agricultural history is surely the triumph of European over African farmers' (Palmer, 1971:221).

Key elements of the official approach to knowledge during the colonial era can be summarised thus: legislative measures to protect white farmers against black competition, and a strong reliance on government trained extension officers to equip farmers with knowledge and a barrage of legislation to force farmers to comply. In theory this policy was contradictory because, on one hand, the white government realised the need to improve African agriculture, whilst on the other hand, it imposed more restrictions on the African farmer. However, if this is viewed as part of colonial discourse in which the problems of African productivity were viewed as due to an embarrassingly excessive lack of farming knowledge instead of a glaring outcome of the unequal distribution of resources, the contradiction disappears.

Post-Independence era: Official Approach

After independence, the first priority of the post-independence government was to remove all legislation that was felt to be restrictive of the development of black agriculture. Apart from a paper policy shift and an attempt by government to resettle people into better agricultural zones, nothing much

changed. The post-independence government continued with colonial models. Official knowledge was still considered superior to farmers', or villagers', knowledge (Matose and Mukamuri, 1993:37). For example, it continued with the rationalisation of land use. Also the dissemination of knowledge to the largely illiterate rural masses was still seen as the role of government through its department of Agricultural Extension Services (AGRITEX) now Agricultural Research and Extension (AREX). Indeed one of the prides of the Post-Independence government was its increase in the ratio of extension worker-to-people from 1:1600 during the colonial period to 1:800 after independence (SAFIRE, 2002:4), and Mutangadura (1997:35) puts the post independence ratio of extension officer to farmer at 1:758.

Many agricultural colleges were established for the training of Agricultural Extension workers to enable extensive coverage. Zimbabwe now has six agricultural training institutions of which two train students up to diploma level, four up to certificate of agriculture level, two technical colleges and fourteen major youth training centres that provide agricultural training. The University of Zimbabwe as well as Africa University (a privately funded University) offers agricultural degrees. Since under this model knowledge is still regarded as that which emerges from 'scientific' approaches, AREX does not have within it mechanisms to initiate or to assist innovative farmers since scientific institutions are regarded as the most important originators of knowledge and AREX the most important disseminator because it is AREX that has to deal with the farmer directly. Thus discussing the case of an innovative farmer, Murwira *et al* (2001:302) show how a farmer in Zvishavane (Zimbabwe) who started his own practices to reduce soil erosion and improve moisture conservation was regarded as a 'mad person whose ideas should never be emulated by anyone sane'.

The political context in which post-independence discourses on knowledge took shape have to be understood. Official knowledge discourses are still highly linked to the politics of land. Spierenburg (2004: 5) correctly points out that, 'overtime, a specific narrative has been constructed to guide and justify land reforms or "rationalisation" of local land use practices: the "land degradation narrative". This narrative has its roots in the colonial period and in Rhodesia/ Zimbabwe served to redefine a political problem - the shortage of land in the Tribal Trust Lands or Communal Areas- as a technical problem, i.e. the lack of knowledge of local farmers concerning "proper", "scientific" farming methods'. So, in 1980, the government redefined the problem of low productivity among black farmers not as a result of lack of knowledge but lack of access to quality land and supporting infrastructure and embarked on land resettlement programmes at the same time that it continued investing in scientifically-trained extension workers.

However, by the mid 1980s the government started debating (Werner *et al*, 1985:252) whether or not to 'leave the predominantly white large scale farms relatively untouched as it was argued that government land reform would have a negative impact on national farm output and marketable surpluses'. The government had also realised that it could not meet its target of resettling 162, 000 in the time frame it had set for itself, and so it started to pursue 'a dual strategy of stimulating peasant production whilst maintaining the productive capacity of the commercial sector' (Bratton, 1985:181). It was also at this time that peasant farmers began to be regarded as ignorant such that they had to be taught farming knowledge by government officers. There was a growing belief that white land was efficiently used both in terms of area used and yield per unit of land and that because blacks lacked specialised skills required in the cultivation of crops such as tobacco production would decline if land was redistributed (Moyo, 2000:7, 14). Thus the political problem of lack of access to land was turned once again into the technical problem of lacking access to relevant knowledge.

In the current Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme, government has managed to turn the issues around and explain low productivity of peasant farmers in terms of lack of access to land since these farmers are generally regarded as having the knowledge to farm and those who do not have relevant farming knowledge will be taught. Thus, even in the resettlement schemes discussed in Chapter 1, in theory, farmers who did not follow the advice and guidance of government resettlement officers could have their resettlement land repossessed and given to someone else. Moreover, when discussing knowledge farmers may also adopt the official discourses and point out that knowledge agents such as AGRITEX were the most important source of agricultural knowledge and information. This was the case with Mandirozva, although it emerged in the course of the discussion that other forms of knowledge were equally important to her for achieving successful agriculture. Indeed when asked why he thought one of the study villages was better than another, one man maintained that it was because the villagers had more master farmers. For him that denoted a wealth of knowledge in the village.

Just as during the colonial era, the acquisition of knowledge in the post independence era is then still associated with the acquisition of the master farmer certificate. Between 1981-1994, AGRITEX had managed to train 42, 000 ordinary and 8, 500 advanced master farmers (Bolding, 2004:84) which is an extraordinary feat given the fact that up to 1980 the colonial government had trained a total of only 40, 000. Even at the time of the research, villagers in the research villages maintained that those villagers with master farmer certificates got preference from the District Administrator under the Fast Track Resettlement Programme. This was so because it was believed at the official level that those with master farmer certificates could farm more productively

than those without since they had received the prerequisite training. One young AREX officer said at a field day:

People should make budgets when they farm. To be able to make these budgets and to do other things as well, we are going to have master farmer training programmes for next season. You should attend those meetings to get training. Mr Chidhakwa has his master farmer certificate. The certificate has a bull drawn on it. We need those bulls. We want everyone to have them. We are also going to hold a district agricultural show at Chakonda so we need to select those who are going to represent us there.

This master farmer certificate alone, as viewed by the AGRITEX officer, could vouch for the farming ability of its owner. As in the colonial period, the master farmers are still mostly male and women can only be wives and daughters of master farmers. The reasons for this anomaly are discussed in later chapters. However, there exist some deviations from the norm. Zinyama (1992:51) maintains that in the Save and Buhera districts, there was an equal number of men and women in the Master Farmer Clubs, although he did not investigate the dynamics of decision-making and participation in these clubs. In Mupfurudzi resettlement scheme, however, the Master Farmers are all male. Knowledge itself is masculinised and only 'the masters' can have knowledge.

There is therefore, still some continuity between the colonial and the post-independence government view on knowledge. Local views on knowledge are not entertained in the official discourse. Knowledge is understood to be only that which emanates from the centres of knowledge to be disseminated to the ignorant local 'masses'. For the officials, knowledge is hierarchical and follows rigid channels. Showing displeasure with this state of affairs Hagmann *et al* (1997:3) writes that 'the hierarchical one way flow of communication and the low standing of peasant farmers in society, especially as perceived by formally educated bureaucrats largely prevented their needs from being effectively communicated back into the system'.

According to the Chief of Crops (in the then AGRITEX Department), those farmers who attended farmer training programmes, adopted good modern farming practices and had good relations with AGRITEX had more knowledge about new developments and ended up having more knowledge and income than other farmers. The bottom line for AGRITEX (AREX) officials is that they are at the centre of the dissemination of knowledge and technology. For them no AGRITEX, no information and no knowledge.

The Common Man Approach to knowledge

There is no one approach to knowledge for the common man. Knowledge is regarded as multifaceted and therefore defies the official approach where knowledge is seen as more hierarchical and therefore has to follow proper channels from the top of the hierarchy to the bottom. Although, at times the common man can also see knowledge as hierarchical, his conception is more

local and often includes elements of counter-hierarchy which can also offer counter-expertise. Different people also have different interpretations of knowledge.

Unlike the official approach, villagers did not regard AGRITEX (AREX) or other state bodies (such as the veterinary services) as the most important disseminators of information and technology. Although respondents maintained that AGRITEX associated more with the 'good farmers'⁴², they did not attribute the capabilities of these good farmers with their association with AGRITEX officials. This, however varied somewhat over time. In the early years of resettlement, people maintained that they gained all their knowledge from AGRITEX. Therefore association with AGRITEX was seen as essential. In those years, it was regarded as imperative for people to have good relations with the AGRITEX because it was the route towards accessing government resources such as fertiliser and seed packs. In recent years, farmers are now beginning to feel that there is nothing much to be gained from associating with the AGRITEX unless one is thinking of venturing into new crops like tobacco. In 2001, most household heads did not see association with AGRITEX as a harbinger of knowledge but rather as wanting to work more with the richer farmers than with 'poor farmers'. AGRITEX officers agreed with the farmers, but as they saw it, not because of a deliberate shift of policy in favour of the rich, but because of a shift in policy emphasis from food crops to cash crops.

For officials, the acquisition of knowledge would mean the end of ignorance and the beginning of material wealth. According to this perspective, poor farmers have a poverty of ideas and no knowledge primarily because they do not adopt official advice. This is where the official view on knowledge diverges from that of most villagers. Farmers did not regard the officials as more knowledgeable than themselves. Sometimes they maintained that they did not need anything from the officials as they had learned everything they wanted from the white men in the commercial farms. Poverty was, according to farmers, not necessarily because they did not implement good farming practices, but rather because they failed to access enough inputs and support services such as access to financial loans.

On the other hand, farmers did not trust the official agents of the state. During the colonial, era farmers had resisted efforts by the state to modernise and develop agriculture as they equated this development with oppression and impoverishment. Coupled with the fact that farmers also do not like being told that they do not have knowledge, they learned to deal with the Agricultural Extension Officers with a degree of suspicion and even dislike. With

⁴² Note that the concept of good farmer is used sometimes as a technical statement and sometimes from the local farmers' point of view.

independence, such suspicion did not end. Even when extension workers tell people that certain things work, people do not adopt those things readily without having seen them work in other people's fields. Thus agricultural extension workers have introduced demonstration plots, where they carry out practical demonstrations for the farmers. In Zvomanyanga (a resettlement village in Mupfurdzi but not in the study sample) in 2003, for example, the department of AREX had a demonstration plot of seven different varieties of Pannar maize seed, and also portions of beans and soya beans, which they were trying to encourage people to cultivate. After having nasty experiences with certain seed or crop varieties, people usually resist attempts to reintroduce the crop:

What happened with Pannar was that it was given to people as drought relief after a particularly gruelling drought. People were given long season Pannar seed and unfortunately another drought occurred. That was in 1994. From then on Pannar lost popularity. Only a few people who had always cultivated Pannar before the drought stuck with it. However, very recently we had a field day for Pannar seed and people are beginning to like it again. However some people say that they do not like Pannar because weevils easily attack it.

Knowledge has a history. Thus farmers always call upon their existing stock of knowledge before they decide whether to accept certain things or not. However, this knowledge might be based on selective perceptions that provide only partial truths.

Although six household heads maintained that some farmers did not have knowledge, the things they associated with achieving this knowledge were very different from what the officials identified. For example, officials regarded master farmers as more knowledgeable than other farmers. On being asked what they considered important before a person could be awarded the master farmer certificate, one AREX officer pointed out that:

In the past, for one to get the certificate, we had one thing that we prioritised. After going through the necessary training the person had to have an implements shed before being awarded the certificate. Some people say they are good farmers but after the season, they just leave their implements ploughs and yokes outside to just rot. That is not being a good farmer. As a result we considered these things before we could give you the certificate. However these days after passing the exams, which can either be written or oral, the person gets the master farmer certificate; but we still tell them that it is a must that they should build these sheds. We just do not have the time any more to inspect the farmers' households.

This differed from the perception of farmers. One woman who had attended some Master Farmer training programmes failed to convince her husband to build a shed for their farming implements. Nevertheless, local people regarded this farmer as a very good farmer. Even when talking to the AREX officer on a separate occasion, the latter mentioned the farmer who had refused to build the tools shed as a very good farmer.

No farmer in the sample regardless of poverty levels admitted that they did not have knowledge; however some well-off farmers were quick to point out other farmers lacking in knowledge. Although all the people in the sample pointed out one or two individuals in the village as very knowledgeable, some villagers maintained that no farmer could be said to have no knowledge, but rather that most farmers lacked resources or were just lazy. This is what two farmers had to say:

I think there is no one whom we can say does not have any knowledge. If a person knows that when it rains they have to go to the field, sow their seed and apply their fertiliser, then that person has knowledge. Wanting to teach others and to know what you have. That is knowledge. One should also be able to distinguish their property from that of others. For example, you see that goat: if you can tell whose goat it is, then you have knowledge...

The second farmer went as far as to distinguish between a good farmer and a knowledgeable person:

If he beats other farmers in terms of yield then that person is a good farmer. If you know what type of crop variety and what it means, then we can say you have the knowledge.

Thus, when it comes to knowledge experts and farmers differed. The 'knowledge experts' focused more on the technical aspects of knowledge whilst the farmers focused on the social aspects of knowledge. For farmers, if a farmer fulfilled the roles that society expected of him then that farmer had knowledge. For example a farmer who was not stingy with his knowledge but disseminated it to others willingly, and one who respected other people's property, could be regarded as a farmer with knowledge. On the other hand, just like the officials and experts, farmers would evaluate the farming ability of the farmer. If the farmer had better crops than other farmers, or had animals like goats and cattle and did not steal other people's livestock, then that farmer had knowledge, though this was not the only consideration.

According to local farmers, a farmer with knowledge did not necessarily make a good farmer.

Those with knowledge are very progressive farmers. They farm together with their families and you can see their lives improve. Those with no knowledge regress. They can get two bags of maize, two bales of cotton or even nothing.

Are there people that you can say have knowledge but are not good farmers?

Knowledge is to know how to farm and get good yields. Some people just know how to talk. Hee, I know this hee, I know that. But when you go to their fields they do not do anything. Some claim that they have master farmer certificates. Sometimes you can even take what they say, do it in your field, while they do not apply what they know. If it had been you Mudege who would you say has knowledge? It is me because although I am getting their ideas, they are not doing anything with them.

That is what you call knowledge?

Jah. Knowledge is doing your work on time. Like right now we have ploughed all our fields except for madhunduru⁴³. The other one we did not plough is next to that place you helped us to pick cotton that year. Now we are just waiting for rain. As soon as we receive rain, we are going to plant our seeds. Those with knowledge but do not do anything, their knowledge is not knowledge at all. It is useless because they cannot use it.

There is discontinuity between this kind of thinking and the thinking of experts. For example, all good farmers have knowledge because one cannot be a good farmer without the requisite knowledge. The difference between the official approach and the approach of lay people is that the lay people do not equate knowledge with getting bumper harvests, but with accomplishing their basic agricultural tasks such as weeding and ploughing on time. On the other hand, experts associate knowledge not only with performing agricultural tasks on time but also with adopting modern agricultural practises such as the use of herbicides.

When it comes to knowledge, farmers use a different frame of reference from that used by government and other officials. The acquisition of knowledge from officials is not the sole definer of knowledge but rather how one conducts oneself vis-a-vis fellow villagers. For most villagers the hallmark of a knowledgeable farmer is whether he is able to feed his family or not. A crop surplus for sale does not really denote that a farmer has knowledge, as officials would like to argue. For villagers, a crop surplus merely indicates that a farmer is good but not necessarily that he/ she has knowledge.

Knowledge: We have all got it but some of us are lazy

The following four illustrations provide an exegesis on what villagers thought about knowledge as a concept and practice:

Case 1

This concern a farmer whom the villagers generally agreed was very lazy. He was an alcoholic and usually obtained no more than a wheelbarrow of maize from his twelve-acre field. Furthermore he had chased away his wife and children and he lived alone. Regardless of this, people maintained that he had a sharp mind and was very knowledgeable. He was a very exceptional builder. He usually gave people very sound agricultural advice which, if they followed it, sometimes did very well. For example, one widowed woman had this to say about this lazy farmer:

Poor people also have knowledge, but they do not have the ability to plan their farming activities well. Some people can even give you good advice when they themselves are not very good. Like Madhara, he sometimes gives me very good advice, I adopt it and do very well whilst he never gets more than a wheelbarrow of maize from his field. His field looks

⁴³ Contour ridges

like bush. He has knowledge, gives the knowledge to other people, and by so doing gives them wealth.

When it came to electing people to village positions that had nothing to do with farming, they usually elected him because he was a good public speaker and they knew he would represent them well and would not embarrass them in relation to outsiders. However, they could not elect him into positions related to farming because he was always away and did not have any interest in farming.

Case 2

This man was from another village but he was very much like the man described above. He presently had no wife and no children and people had lost count of the number of wives who had jilted him, though they were said to be not less than at least seven. People said that the wives ran away with other men because the man was lazy and could not feed them. The general consensus was that women like to stay where they are properly fed and well looked after. This man was a woodcarver of renown, his hallmark being that even white men bought his work. People in the village agreed that this man had great energy and they usually invited him to work for money in their fields as he usually did a perfect job.

It is not that he is not strong and healthy; he just wants to work for other people for money. When you ask him to work for you for such and such an amount that is when his farming spirits (shavi rekurima) possess him, but not in his field. He does not even see that if he harvests a good crop he will be able to buy his own things. We can say people like that do not know farming regardless of how good they are when they work in other people's fields.

Case 3

In one of the villages, there was a master farmer. There was a consensus between the AREX officer and the villagers that this farmer was very good, but most villagers, including six out of the seven in the sample, maintained that his being good did not mean that he had knowledge. He was not at all popular with the villagers because he was arrogant.

Samson here buys a motorcycle, which does not benefit his wives. Do you think you with your wrappers (pieces of cloth that women tie over their skirts to show respect or to protect clothes from dirt) you can ride a motorcycle.

No.

He has a lot of knowledge but he is not doing anything. Taurayi was very poor; he became rich because of farming. He bought a car and a television. If his wife wants, she can learn to drive a car but can I encourage anyone to buy a motor bike which women in their wrappers cannot ride? Now people hate Taurayi and accuse him of being an MDC but he is not. He worked for his things and everyone saw him work. I did.

Do you ever go to Samson's field to observe the way he cultivates his crops?

Aah what are you saying! He does not like people to even go to his homestead. He does not like people to look back when they are passing by his field. He will start to shout asking you what you are looking at. We no longer use the shortcut to the fields because then we will

have to pass by his field. We are now using the long route. [Someone told me earlier that people no longer use the short route because the route was effectively closed when Zadzamatura fenced his field.]

But you used to hold field days at his field?

It usually was either at my brother's field or at Samson's. However, now because of Samson's bad manners, no one wants to go to his place for field days. If we hold a field day at his place, afterwards he struts around the village telling people that he is the only good farmer around. Instead of the field day being a learning experience, it becomes a shaming experience. On the other hand, the AGRITEX Officer we used to have went away and we were left with an officer who was cruel and did not want us to succeed. Mrs R used to encourage the AGRITEX Officers to always visit the farmers. She was a hard worker that one.*

Case 4

Another good farmer in the sample had a good relationship with the AGRITEX and was popular with fellow villagers. Villagers maintained that he was good but did not have any knowledge because his children were badly dressed and did not eat good food.

Taking into account these four cases, we can at least begin understand what the villagers regarded as knowledge. While 'experts' focus only on agricultural knowledge, farmers are much more concerned with more general social knowledge. The first farmer was lazy, but he was seen to have knowledge because he was a good public speaker and an exceptional builder. He also sometimes offered people very good advice. Although the second case was somewhat similar to the first, and although he could perform agricultural tasks successfully in other people's fields, he was still not regarded as a person with knowledge. The third was a very good farmer but was not considered knowledgeable because of the poor relations he enjoyed with other villagers as well as his numerous wives. The fourth farmer was also a good farmer but not necessarily one with knowledge because his family did not live in a style a farmer of his calibre would deserve.

Hence, farmers use double standards in judging whether a farmer has knowledge or not, such that these judgements are more an indicator of social relationships than of anything else. The concepts of knowledge and 'knowledgeable persons' varied with time, and were not wholly reliant on farming ability. Whereas expert definitions of knowledge were much more specialised, focused and narrow, farmers' were much more concerned with social relationships. Experts focus mainly on whether the farmer is 'good' or 'bad' at farming and whether he is adopting their advice. They are not concerned with how the farmer relates to other farmers in the area. This is evidenced by the insistence of AGRITEX to hold a field day at one of the good farmers' field ignorant of the fact that people did not like him because of his arrogance.

Whilst the attention of AGRITEX and other organisations was focused on the specialised knowledge of farming, villagers judged farmers by their overall lifestyle. Although most farmers regarded farming as their prime reason for being in the resettlement, maintaining good social relations was seen as more important.

Still on knowledge some respondents maintained that everyone had knowledge while others insisted that some more than others.⁴⁴ As a result, farmers accepted that everyone had knowledge but evidently some forms of knowledge served the farmer better since he achieved crop yields.

Thus although experts envisage a positive association between good yield and knowledge, for the resettled farmers having farming knowledge did not necessarily entail good yields. To some extent good crop yields were seen as dependent on a person's relationship with their ancestors. If the ancestors were well pleased with a person's conduct they could richly bless him/her, but if they were not, they could show their wrath by giving the person poor yields regardless of how much he/she knew or of how many resources he/she had. Secondly, while knowledge experts (e.g. AGRITEX, veterinary officers and loan organisations) regard knowledge in a highly individualised and economised context, villagers interpreted the concept of knowledge in a broader social context. For the knowledge experts proper tutoring could move a person from a position of 'ignorance' to that 'knowledge', whilst for villagers a person might gain more knowledge but was never ignorant in the first place.

Farmers with knowledge⁴⁵

There were, however, at least three farmers who regarded other resettled farmers as lacking knowledge. These farmers regarded themselves as good knowledgeable farmers. They usually took pride in their association with outside agencies such as AGRITEX, Zimbabwe Tobacco Association, Agribank, Zimbabwe Farmers Union or their previous interaction with white commercial farmers. These farmers did not have much in common except that two had worked in former commercial farms where they said they had acquired their knowledge since they argued that commercial farmers know even more than do the AGRITEX officers.

One of the farmers was highly educated and claimed to have finished standard six. He also attended agricultural courses wherever they were held and,

⁴⁴ Note that, as explored in a later chapter the notion was different when it came down to women. Some respondents maintained that some women did not have knowledge at all, whilst others acknowledged that there were some women who had more knowledge than that of men.

⁴⁵ It is interesting that these three farmers who regarded themselves as farmers with knowledge were not so regarded by fellow villagers, although all of them were seen as very good farmers.

although he had never worked in the commercial farms, he felt if he secured enough resources he could perform just as well as the commercial farmers.

Netsayi: Why were you not growing that flue cured tobacco in the beginning?

The thing is that ZTA had not yet introduced the crop to people [meaning black people]. We just knew about barley. The cultivation of flue-cured tobacco was something done only by white people. We did not have any knowledge.

Christine: I've heard that tobacco is a difficult crop to grow. Where did you get the knowledge?

I was trained at Trelwane. Right now I am coming from the nursery.

Netsayi: Did all the farmers go for training?

Only members of the ZTA went.

Christine: In this village, how many people attended?

In this village, I am the only one who attended.

Netsayi: How were you elected? Was it according to your performance?

It depended on interest. The people from ZTA came and had a meeting with the villagers. They told us about the training which would take place, and that transport would be provided. I was the only one who was willing to go. The training was for three weeks. Let's see: they came around July... No they came between June and July.

Netsayi: There are some tobacco farmers in this village. Why did they choose not to attend a course that would have been very useful for them?

Some people do not like theoretical knowledge. They want practical knowledge. They would rather use the knowledge they got from the white man they worked for long ago than attend a theoretical course for three weeks.

Association with outside agencies usually meant that some people could access certain information not available to others. For example, through associating with the Zimbabwe Tobacco Association, this farmer was able to receive free training, which he now applied in his farming activities. However, other farmers not resistant to acquiring knowledge from outside preferred the knowledge to be practical rather than theoretical. Farmers were more likely to adopt certain practises they had seen to work elsewhere rather than adopt things they were told worked in a class-room situation.

Surprisingly, however, this distrust of theoretical knowledge did not extend to school knowledge. This also counters what Bourdillon *et al* (2002) found in Wedza district where knowledge from school was referred to as 'book knowledge' that lacked practical relevance. Everyone in the sample agreed that school knowledge was important to agricultural performance even though some of the respondents did not have children who had gone to school or who were attending school at the time. However, all theoretical knowledge was not knowledge at all if it did not pass the ultimate test of 'practise'. When asked if possession of knowledge made a person a good farmer, one of the farmers who believed he was good and had knowledge had answered:

In the years gone by, AGRITEX used to hold Agricultural lessons at Booker village. Some people attended and even attained the master farmer certificates,

but they are not doing anything. Even though they passed they are still not good. Knowledge does not mean anything unless you put it into practise.

Thus, for farmers, the celebratory claim by the officials that they had managed to disseminate knowledge to a great number of people through the master farmer programme did not mean anything if that knowledge could not be translated into observable production prowess.

These farmers, who regarded themselves as more knowledgeable than others, usually spoke differently and had a different understanding of farming. They were against most traditional practices such as the observation of *Chisi* (rest days) which, they said were, time consuming. These farmers were more likely to use English technical terms such as 'metres', 'centimetres', 'kilograms', 'acres', 'plant population' and 'energy'. The other farmers used terms such as *madhunduru* (contour ridges) or *madrain* (water channels), to refer to areas they had under cultivation, or talked about 'bags' of fertiliser instead of 'kilograms' when talking about the fertiliser they had used in their fields or 'scotch carts' instead of 'tons' when referring to their yields.

These farmers 'with knowledge' usually looked down upon others whom they thought had 'no knowledge' or at least those who shunned knowledge agencies. For these people one of the reasons why some performed badly was that they did not have knowledge. One of the 'knowledgeable' farmers was adamant that:

People are different. Some people have knowledge, some do not, so you cannot expect a person without knowledge to farm the same way as the knowledgeable person.

Same thing, different terminology?

'Experts' and the common man encounter the same phenomenon that they have to deal with. Even where they apply the same method to discuss certain issues or use particular terminology do they understand the same phenomenon in the same way? Understanding terminology is a very important part to the dissemination of knowledge to ensure that all parties involved are talking about the same thing. For example when AGRITEX officers are having meetings to discuss seed, a very interesting concept comes to mind that of 'crop breeding'. During a discussion with an AREX official, the latter maintained that farmers who planted well-bred seed from the seed companies and applied the required fertiliser did very well as compared to those who planted saved seed. Most farmers agreed with AREX that saved seed, particularly the new Seed Co varieties, were not good. Saved seed, with the exception of some Open Pollinated Varieties (OPVs), was never ranked positively. Farmers instead preferred *mbeu dzakauchikwa*. *Kuuchikwa* is a traditional process usually associated with the helping of infertile couples to become fertile. AREX adopted this term when explaining the new hybrid varieties to people.

However available evidence indicates that the way the two parties understand this concept of breeding/ *kuuchika* is different. For the AREX *Kuuchika* is the process that takes place in scientific laboratories where new breeds of seed are developed and seed manufactured. The process of *kuuchika* ends at the factory gate. For example, the Cottco representative was adamant that people did not understand that although Cottco had to use cotton seed from the previous year's crop because seed breeding had been disrupted, the seed had to be chemically treated at laboratories to be viable. What was left was for the farmers to follow the requirements of the technological packs to obtain good crops. On the other hand, the process of making the seed fertile as far as most farmers are concerned does not end at the gates of the Seed Company. In some cases it does not start at the company at all but when the seed is in the hands of the farmer. The headman of Mudzingo village maintained that for crops to do very well people had to take their seed to the *zumba* (traditional hut) for them to be blessed before they were planted. At the *zumba* the seed would be made more fertile because of the power of the spirits and would do very well when planted. Some of the villagers let their seed spend the night in the kitchen at the *huva* where the spirits would supposedly bless it so that when planted it would bear fruit⁴⁶. Even those who did not believe in the traditional method of blessing their seed, used other ways, as this woman farmer at Madziva green market said:

I use water, which has been made holy by prayers from prophets in my church. I sprinkle the water in my field before I start planting crops so that my field is blessed by the power of God. If my field is blessed so are the crops that come out of it. This blessed water will help my crops grow healthy and strong and will chase away any evil spirits so that when I sell my crops I won't have bad luck.

This makes it clear that at times official agencies and local people can use the same terminology but refer to qualitatively different things. The chapters that follow try, wherever possible, to pay attention to these different meanings that people assign to things, since this will help us to understand the social processes surrounding the production and dissemination of knowledge.

Knowledge and Status

When asked a straight question on whether knowledge conferred status, people often denied the link, but analysing the processes in the village indicated otherwise. Farmers were quick to point out that being a 'knowledgeable' person did not usually give that person status in the community. Yet, all those elected to leadership positions were considered good farmers both by villagers and AREX officers. ZANU (PF) district decision-making positions, such as those of the chairperson, vice chairperson and the youth leader, were all occupied by

⁴⁶ The concept of *Zumba* and *huva* will be discussed in detail in chapter 7.

very good farmers. Women and same applies to poor farmers occupied the less powerful positions such as those of the village police⁴⁷ and secretaries. Even when those the villagers regard as 'people with knowledge' do not occupy high positions, they are still held in high esteem and they are confident and can speak out in public and make their opinions heard.

They have the power to say anything they want. Let's say there is a meeting, they are usually the ones who contribute or ask questions.

Farmers who do not get high crop yields and who are generally not regarded as having knowledge do not usually speak out in public; and sometimes when they do speak, they are booed down. For example, at the Mudzingi village court, the good farmers and sometimes their wives were those who had been elected to deliberate on cases. Although anyone could contribute ideas and advice on how the case should be solved, the good farmers did most of the deliberations.

Sometimes status did not depend on the number of village positions that a person in the village occupied. At times people who were elected to positions in the village were elected to very lowly positions that did not give them much status. When asked if the 'farmers with knowledge' were conferred positions in the village one woman claimed that positions did not depend on knowledge.

They are not the ones who get village level positions. People just elect anyone they feel comfortable with. It all depends on whether one is a well-behaved person even if one does not know anything about farming. That man who was talking about women the other day – he is the village policeman. If you look at his house, even ours looks much better. People chose him because he has a very loud voice such that if he shouts everyone in the village gets the message. He is well behaved, but I feel sorry for him because of his tendency to divorce women. He has now divorced about six wives. He also eats animals that die but whose blood has not been spilled back to earth. Most people in this village give him their animals if they die on their own. He has got a very good field with ivhu gobvu but since he lives on his own he cannot cultivate the whole field. One time he asked us to use his field since ours was getting water logged.

Therefore, one is likely to get a village position if one is seen to have good manners. Good manners are very essential. For example how can you mediate between people who are getting divorced when you are always divorcing wives yourself. The village policeman usually ensures that people are quiet during court proceedings. Especially women have this tendency to talk among themselves and it is the duty of the policeman to remind everyone that there is only one court and if they want to say anything they have to use the proper channels. However, those who really preside over the cases are all good (meaning they often reap high crop yields) farmers. There is Chida, Goora, Mai Matanhire and Josiah.

People who obtained high crop yields had the opportunity not only to gain very good status within their villages but also within their families. This was so

⁴⁷ The village police are responsible for informing people of village meetings and delivering court summons, maintain order at meetings and generally work as messengers.

since, they were in a position to assist their relatives and other villagers with the need for food or cash and other things. They managed to take part in gift giving which gave access to other resources. As one person pointed out, *a person with knowledge is also a person who assists his or her relatives when they are in trouble.*

A person with knowledge that enables him to assist others is able to expand his patronage, and it is this patronage that gives status and influence in the villages. This could explain why some farmers fail to convert their position of relative advantage in terms of knowledge into status: they fail to amass a large number of clients in the village. Good villagers were supposed to share their knowledge with others, if not they will be regarded as selfish. When I asked one, farmer who was regarded as good by both the AGRITEX and local farmers, who in the village he would refer to as a knowledgeable farmer he said:

Do you have any knowledgeable farmers in this village?

Samson only. He is the only one with knowledge.

Does he share his knowledge with other people?

He is not stingy. That is what he wants. He is very happy when people ask him for advice. Not all these other people – especially that one who was standing here just now – if they tell you they are good farmers they are just telling a lie. Samson is an all rounder. He is good at everything, Tobacco, maize, cotton and groundnuts.

Why do you say he has knowledge?

He gets good crop yields. Everyone sees him working. He has knowledge that one... These people here do not think about anything except using magic. Some people do not even want anyone to pass through their field. Only this Samson I told you about does not mind and you can ask him anything. After the rains most people do not want anyone to pass through their field.

Samson was the farmer who was described earlier by some poor farmers as stingy and boastful and someone who was more often than not anti-social. This farmer did not go out purposely to make friends or to help other villagers. He was self-sufficient and made it clear to other villagers that he did not need their help or clientele either. The person who described him as a good person and knowledgeable farmer was self sufficient and did not need his patronage.

Despite having knowledge, a person's status in the village also depended on a variety of issues. There was a delicate balance of power between the 'good farmers' and the 'bad farmers'. To increase their influence and status, the good farmers had to know how to tread on the rope and maintain their balance. To understand this one has to understand the nature of friendships between the rich and poor.

Friendships cut across wealth lines. Mostly it is the poor who go to the rich person's house because they want to drink tea there. If you only stick to poor people like yourself, what will you learn from each other?

Do you think these friendships are good?

The friendships are good. If the poor are given tea and mupotohai (home made bread), the rich person will also get labour.

Do the rich people in this village like each other?

They do but usually they oppose each other. Like when I was in Harare where I used to lodge, two people had refrigerators. They always tried to 'down' each other's refrigerators, each claiming that their refrigerator was better than the other's. Those of us who did not have refrigerators just observed what they were doing without taking sides because we knew that one day we would want to put things in either of their refrigerators.

Some villagers were quite sure that apart from cheap labour the rich people did not benefit much from poor farmers. Although an outsider might regard the relationship between the poor and the prosperous farmers as basically exploitative of the poor, the relationship could be regarded as a symbiotic one. A rich farmer could get labour and support from the poor farmers, but this support could be withdrawn and given to another good farmer should the poor farmers feel short-changed in the relationship. Thus, even if one is rich one's status depends on how large one's clientele is. For example, although farmer Samson was the best farmer in the village, at one village meeting where he had volunteered for the position of party chairman, people rudely told him to sit down. They did not want him to be their leader since they did not like his manners. They chose another good farmer instead to occupy this position. He was regarded as good by the local farmers, although in my view, not as prosperous as Samson who had volunteered his services, but had very good relations with most villagers.

Sometimes access to external resources can be critical for acquiring status in the village, regardless of whether the person is regarded as knowledgeable or not. The individual who has access to external resources can limit access of these resources to other villagers. Thus instead of the resources benefiting the community at large, they could be distributed on the basis of patron-client relationships. Although such intermediary persons might not be held in high esteem by those who received no favours, people may not want to antagonise them. Referring to the working of one NGO, an old man pointed out that those who had received aid from the NGO had been friends of the person who represented the NGO at the village level.

Mrs Virimayi was the one who was associated with them. They built two toilets for her whilst most people failed to get cement for just one toilet. What kind of leadership is that? Those who were in good books with Virimayi and his wife are the ones who got the cement. They were very selective. If you walk around this village, noting every homestead you see with a round toilet, you will know the people who were Mrs Virimayi's friends. She even had a telephone at her house. She occupied a lot of positions in this village. She was also at ZRP despite the fact that she was a woman. She was the village health worker before Mrs Ngomahuru.

Who are these people who received this cement? If she was unfair in her dealings how did she get elected to all those positions?

They were about three or four people. Chakupadedza, Taurayi, Virimayi and some other person. [Taurayi was the then ZANU (PF) district chairperson and a very good farmer. Chakupadedza was a Village health worker at the time and so was Mrs Virimayi.]

Thus sometimes status did not depend on how much one knew, neither was it dependent on the benevolence of other villagers; but it depended on how one was able to network and access resources that other villagers could not.

Women usually did not attain a high status from being 'good' or 'knowledgeable' farmers. Indeed only one woman was said to be a good farmer. Although she was regarded highly by other villagers, her high esteem was not due to her farming prowess but to her traditional healing ability. Another woman was held in high esteem because they said she was a very good village health worker, although her husband was also regarded by some as a very good farmer. All the women who were regarded in high esteem in the village were involved with healing either as traditional healers or working as village health workers. Their being healers did not confer on them automatic high status but rather how they conducted themselves as healers. They had to show a concern when people approached them for help. Below is what people had to say about one traditional healer and one female village health worker both of whom were regarded highly by villagers.

She is a knowledgeable healer. If you go to her with a problem she will leave whatever she would be doing – even farming – to attend to you. She is able to deal with people in a proper manner. Even when certain things come up in the village and people have to elect people into positions, it is people like her who get elected.

Amai Karidza. That woman knows. If you are ill and you go to her and she does not have any medicines to give you, she will fail to sleep. Sometimes if she has her own tablets, she will give them to you. If she does not have medicines, she will leave everything she is doing to go to Zvomanyanga to get medicines. Now she has been given a bicycle so that she can move easily. Her position requires a person with knowledge. She was trained.

Some types of knowledge, then, are gendered with women monopolising knowledge in the fields of health, pottery and sewing. If women are asked about knowledge they are likely to mention experts in these spheres. Men are likely to mention builders and other masculine-type occupations. Women were seldom regarded as knowledgeable in farming in their own capacity: rather their knowledge was understood and described in terms of the male household head. Usually in cases when women are household heads, their success is attributed to their adult sons who are regarded as having the requisite knowledge. This brings to the fore the point that, although knowledge can confer status, the kinds of knowledge required are different for men and women.

From knowledge to specialised ignorance

Based on available evidence, it is possible that as people acquire more knowledge, they move from a position of knowledge to specialised ignorance. By 'specialised ignorance' people become more competent in doing certain things related to a certain task, but then increasingly acquire ignorance in doing certain things associated with the complete task. For instance, the first

generation settlers in the resettlement could save their own seed. They were not overly dependent on seed companies for seed. They could also preserve their own consumption maize using other means but not modern chemicals. However, people become more and more ignorant in these spheres as they acquire the skills and status of the modern farmer. Traditional ways of doing things become down-graded and associated with the more 'ignorant' or 'poor' farmers. As farmers become modern and more knowledgeable they become more dependent on seed houses and agro-industry for their needs. Those who still use other methods of farming or securing their own needs are regarded as generally ignorant and backward since they have refused to move with the new technological trends.

There is also another interesting twist to the conceptualisation of knowledge by the resettled farmers. Knowledge is usually associated with practise but, as people acquire more 'expert knowledge', the concept becomes diluted. People can lay a claim to knowledge not because they are seen to be able to do certain things but because they have been taught or told how to do those things. One of the farmers, who maintained that one should consider crop yield when identifying knowledgeable farmers, also claimed that his children knew how to preserve saved seed and maize for consumption. Although his children had never performed these tasks because they were dependent on commercial products, they knew how to because he had taught them how to do so in case they ran out of money to buy the requisite seed and chemicals after he was dead. Thus, the beginning of knowledge could at the same time imply the beginning of 'the growth of ignorance' to borrow a phrase from Hobart (1993). According to Hobart the growth of knowledge and ignorance were linked because as experts acquired more knowledge they designated others modes as ignorant. In this Zimbabwean case, even though the experts still label many traditional practices as 'ignorant', the more knowledge that 'modern' farmers acquire, the narrower their knowledge vision becomes and hence the more ignorant they are of alternatives.

Conclusion

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the preceding discussion. Firstly, official discourses on knowledge have not shifted much in the movement from the colonial to the post-colonial era. Apart from the removal of restrictive legislation that worked against black farmers to the benefit of white commercial farmers, nothing much has changed. In both eras, farmers were and are still never regarded in any way as originators of knowledge or even innovators, but rather as adopters, adaptors and rejecters of knowledge. Farmer creativity and knowledge is often overlooked and rarely acknowledged. What farmers know is often juxtaposed with what scientists know and the farmers' knowledge is often found wanting. However, as demonstrated in this chapter,

people cannot be regarded as without knowledge but instead as having different kinds of knowledge, which might or might not need to be integrated with other knowledge.

The metaphor of the local farmer or peasant farmer as 'ignorant' still persists in official discourses on knowledge. However, of course farmers have not always been vilified as inefficient and destructive but their position shifts according to the dominant political discourse of the time. Thus, in both the colonial and independence era, the metaphors and narratives used in official discourse on knowledge have functioned as indicators of the situated selections that the government has made at different points in time to designate who has knowledge and who does not. With this in mind, I agree with Pottier (2003:7) that one cannot discuss knowledge without discussing the economic and political dimensions of its emergence and its use'. Thus, even if official knowledge is not cumulative and does not have the ability to learn from error as 'scientific' knowledge claims it can, both are embedded within specific social, political and economic milieux. That is, the total context within which knowledge discourses are constructed and reconstructed shape their outcomes. Also as is apparent in this chapter, farmers cannot be regarded as one homogenous whole but as having different approaches to knowledge depending on their differential placements, interests and abilities within the society at large.

When there is mistrust between the farmers and experts and when farmers are not consulted then decisions by policy makers can be frustrated at the level of implementation. Knowledge has to gain legitimacy if it is to be as valid. Some policies failed at implementation during the colonial era due to politically motivated resistance. Sometimes a policy can be rejected not because of a weakness inherent in its knowledge claim, but because of the politics behind that lie behind the knowledge claim. Knowledge can never be found in its pure pristine 'scientific' form since it is always contaminated by the context within which it emerges. Knowledge is also associated with certain symbols, thus a knowledge bearer's symbolic capital can determine whether a knowledge claim is legitimised or not. How the knowledge bearer is therefore perceived is very important. This brings to the fore that knowledge is largely socially produced and based on socially-situated selections and network linkages with other local or external actors.

Farmers often strategise in their dealings with official agencies. They may successfully adopt the official discourse for perusing their own personal interests. For example, the extension officers did not understand why farmers still stuck to their 'traditional' ways of doing things after the extension department had pointed them in the right direction. On the other hand, people may seem to acquiesce to official discourse that designates them as ignorant and attend master farmer training whose teachings they may have no interest in

adopting, simply so that they can gain access to other resources such as fertiliser loans and seed packs. In this way, the master farmer certificate was regarded as a pre-requisite to access such government resources.

At policy-making levels, the technocrats use formal rationalisations such as measuring production levels, quality of produce, etc., in defining who has knowledge and who does not. On the other hand, farmers consider the farmer and his environment as a whole. Thus, when decisions are made to use some local farmers as model farmers, knowledge experts should adopt a holistic approach in farmer selection if they are to be effective. This fits in with Pottier's (2003:5-6) comment that sometimes 'expression of knowledge may say more about the social relations in which they emerge than about knowledge as such'. Pottier (2003) makes the link with the existence of locally varied and disputed technical explanations but here I link this with how farmers understand knowledge at the local level in association with social community relations; and also in association with relationships beyond the community level where knowledge can have different meanings for different actors. What the officials regarded as 'knowledge' farmers may sometimes regard as 'oppression'.

The general purpose of this chapter has been to map how knowledge (both official and local) emerges struggles, negotiations and accommodations that take place within a context of multiplicity of actors, interests and values (cf. Arce and Fisher, 2003:78).

Finally knowledge is not always what it seems and is not always positive. Knowledge can even be disempowering to those who are equipped with it. Although modern scientific knowledge is efficient, it has made farmers more dependent on agro-business as opposed to the more autonomous space they enjoyed when all the resources were locally available.

6

Seeing is believing: Experimentation, Observation and Popular narratives

Introduction

The expression 'seeing is believing' rings true for scientists and knowledge 'experts' who are expected to carry out extensive experiments before they can reach conclusions as to whether or not to reject a certain proposition. This is the logic behind the official approach to knowledge. On the other hand, laymen are expected to believe in something because an authority has told them that it is true. For scientists and experts, science is the opposite of argument from authority – and the few win because they have the truth on their side (Latour, 1993). However, this kind of reasoning can be turned against the 'scientists' if it is accepted that this argument is self-justifying probably because it has many authorities to back it up and not necessarily because it is true or correct. Sometimes scientific statements can be blatant statements to support what is already believed to be true such as the discredited biological theories of race that are now regarded by many as racist in nature and not at all based on 'facts'. In this respect scientists can choose evidence, data sets and methods that support their position at the expense of everything else. As has been pointed out earlier, assertions of scientists and experts regarding conservation and land in Zimbabwe have at times mirrored the political configuration of the country at certain times and were not solely based on available 'facts'. Facts depend on situated selections and interpretations of available information. To state the position of this chapter (and at the same time not to divert from the issue at hand and get embroiled in an attempt to deconstruct science) I agree with Knorr-Cetina (1983) that all facts are fabricated. I also agree with Bourdieu (1990) that in most cases facts depend on symbolic capital to become facts without which they remain mere speculation or just utterances.

Scientists claim that they move from the definition of the problem, sharpening their research tools, and engaging in experimentation and observation all in search of the 'truth'. Although scientists come up with useful scientific artefacts as in the case of hybrids that can be made resistant to certain pests or diseases, their thinking is linear and can hardly survive in the convoluted world in which these artefacts are supposed to be used. Although the scientists' linear thinking is highly valuable in the laboratory setting, it can



Cow dying of black leg.



Cattle vaccination exercise by farmers in Muringamombe.



Mr Mavheneke's field.

be regarded as sterile if it is to be applied by laymen in a world where no variable is controllable. If one is linear in one's thinking then one can be accused of putting on blinkers.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, expert knowledge has always been regarded by state officials and other experts as the panacea to the problems of rural productivity (Matose and Makamuri, (1993). In this approach, scientists who are regarded as central to the production of knowledge carry out experiments, replicate them, and after they are satisfied with the results, disseminate their findings for adoption by farmers. Any deviation from this expected order of things is not accepted by the experts hence the reason they label farmers who try to experiment as 'mad' farmers who should not be imitated (Murwira *et al*, 2001). However, as has been a theme recurrent in previous chapters, even the knowledge of scientists based on results of experiments is mediated by the various positions the scientists take with regard to knowledge. In an open discussion at a meeting of members of the Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Fisher (1936:122-123) said 'We have always had, and doubtless always shall have, persons who like to speak with authority on experimentation, and whose pleasure it is to take credit for superior knowledge by the simple process of demanding higher precision. If we use ten replications they can ask for twenty; if we use fifty they can ask for hundred. That they say in effect is a good experiment. All you misguided and negligent people are ofcourse content with a lower standard than mine'. Thus even amongst scientists there are sometimes disagreements as to what a real experiment should entail.

Authors, such as Helleiner (1970:292), who have discussed experimentation in Africa, believed that scientific methods would result in useful products if applied correctly and pointed to scientific research elsewhere that, for example had led to improved yields in Asian rice and Mexican wheat. Studies on how technologies fail at implementation have been abundant, some blaming the scientists for misreading culturally embedded notions about agriculture and farming (Mango and Hebinck, 2004), whilst others ask why farmers do not do as they are told by 'experts', thus focusing on the political, social and economic reasons why farmers reject certain technologies (Matose and Makamuri, 1993; Helleiner, 1970; Green and Hymer, 1966; Monu, 1982). Although these studies recognise the fundamental aspect that farmers do things that are beneficial to themselves, farmers are regarded as adopters and rejecters but not as agents who actively carry out experiments to get to the 'truth' as they see it. In this chapter, I move away from such conceptualizations of experiments and farmers and focus on the farmer as an experimenter.

Although others like Maurya (1989) Stuver *et al* (2004) have recognised the innovativeness of farmers, Stuver *et al* (2004:104) maintains, 'Farmers tend to generate knowledge from practical experiences, and not from formal

experiments.’ This is a commendable departure from viewing farmers as traditional and very conservative and not liking change even if it is beneficial to them. However, this approach falls short in that it doesn’t recognise farmers as people who can actively experiment with a desire to learn and not simply learn from doing what they have always done, what Stuiver *et al* (2004:106) refers to as ex-post reconstruction of experiments. Ex-post reconstruction of experiments refers to a situation where experiences are reconstructed as experiments in retrospect.

Some of the data in this chapter agree with the assertions of Stuiver *et al* (2004) that sometimes what farmers refer to as experiments are in fact ex-post facto rationalisations, and that experiments can happen accidentally, or as a result of improvisation because of the unavailability of inputs, and that usually independent variables are not controlled for. However I differ from Stuiver’s *et al* (2004:106) assertion that it is better perhaps to speak of ‘farmers’ experimental activities than farmers’ experiments. For Stuiver *et al* (2004) the term farmers’ experiments suggests a degree of deliberateness and demarcation that he thinks is misleading to describe what farmers do. If this assertion is taken to its logical conclusion it implies an attempt not to take too seriously farmers experiments, albeit unintentionally on the part of the authors. For instance, in Zimbabwe Murwira *et al* (2001:302) note that ‘the government staff regarded any type of knowledge that was locally developed i.e. that did not find its origins in either the DRSS (Development Research and Specialist Services) and AGRITEX, to be traditional and primitive and therefore not to be encouraged’. For the government staff technologies and knowledge had to be tested and proven presumably by scientific experiments not by farmers ‘experimental activities’. Thus, in this chapter, what Stuiver *et al* (2004) tentatively suggest should rather be called farmers, experimental activities, I call farmers’ experiments. Scoones (1993:14) notes that ‘studies that explore the dynamics of farmer experimentation also show that rural people empirically examine alternatives leading to progressive learning’. For this chapter - although I will focus primarily on farmers’ experiments - both scientists’ experiments and farmers’ experiments have to be understood in terms of the social circumstances that shape their social construction. Results from farmers’ experiments sometimes have more effect on what the farmer does or is willing to do regardless of the existence of conflicting or collaborative results from ‘scientific’ experiments. Also, given the scientific dilemma that seemingly ‘scientific’ results can be contradicted by other seemingly ‘scientific’ experiments, who then is to say that the experiments of scientists are more ‘experiments’ than farmer’s experiments?

The issue of observation is neither a new issue nor an issue that is uniquely Zimbabwean or African. It also emanates from the assumption that if farmers saw the miracle of modern farming methods they would believe in and adopt

modern ways. In 1892, Bolley (1892:270) maintained that 'the average farmer is eminently conservative when about his routine of work. He dislikes innovations as to methods and distrusts ways and means not clearly practical' (see also Hedrick, 1918). The need to disseminate practical information to farmers led in the 1900s in America to a debate on the usefulness of demonstration to give rise to a new breed of farmers that Hedrick (1918) referred to as the tutored farmer. 'The farmer reacts to no other educational stimuli so quickly as through being shown the successful achievement of some neighbour farmer. "Pick up in one place the instance of a successful farm achievement by one farmer and carry it to the farmer in other places", says an experienced demonstrator, "you will win their confidence and adherence at once" ' (Hedrick, 1918:162). This started the extension officers and agricultural demonstrations programme that Alvord later imported into Southern Rhodesia.

Alvord explained his advocacy for the demonstrator programme by saying that 'I made the discovery that the African must see things demonstrated on his own level, within his reach, by demonstrators of his own black colour and kinky wool hair...So in June 1921, I evolved a school for agricultural demonstration work for adult Natives' (cited in Sadomba, 1999b). In this scheme of things, farmers were not regarded as agents who could actively reason and actively create knowledge but were regarded as people who had to be taught. They had to be made to see the folly of their farming ways and appreciate the opportunities afforded by adopting 'modern' farming methods. This would be done by providing farmers with the opportunity to see and observe the fields and success of progressive farmers who had abandoned 'traditional' ways and adopted 'modern' farming methods. The progressive farmers were regarded as progressive because of their having been tutored into the modern ways of doing things by experts. However observation need not only take this form where observation is linked to people observing expert knowledge only. This is so because much of farmers' knowledge is learnt from a very early age by observing how adults and other people perform their agricultural tasks.

Many writers, such as Littleton (1965:21); McCullough (1987), and Walthall (1982), have equated narratives with fiction. There are many reasons why narratives are regarded by various authors as fictions. Littleton (1965:21) regarded narratives as fiction because they are not based on 'objectively determinable facts or scientifically acceptable hypotheses'. However for others, narratives are not only fictions in the sense that whatever is being discussed might never have happened but sometimes narratives have the 'power of fiction to recall more than the actual happening for the audience' (Walthall, 1982:571). In this section, I do not use precepts of scientific rationality and discard any theories as false since even such scientifically false theories are pointers to behaviour. In this Chapter, narratives are to be regarded as fictions

not on the basis of any scientific criteria to determine the existence or non-existence of certain things but because of a simple realisation that popular narratives are interpreted differently by different actors, resulting in different understanding and knowledge - hence the notion of 'partial truths' as advanced by Clifford (1988). The discussion on popular narratives indicates that farmers' knowledge is not always technical. The chapter shows that farmers are not sticklers for tradition as people who have to be changed from outside and even so are resistant to change, but that farmers are agents and actors who devise ways of dealing with problematic or restricting situations so as to pursue their own projects.

Seeing is believing: are the scientists the only ones able to see or is it that scientists and laymen use different kinds of eyes to see with and hence see differently? What are mystical beliefs? Are they irrational beliefs because of arguments from authority or do people choose to believe or not to believe? If so what makes them decide?

Experimentation

Crops

Experimentation is an integral part of all sciences. Whether one agrees that experiments are rigorous exercises in search of the truth or that they are political rhetoric to support specific paradigms, no one can question that scientists do carry out experiments. At the same time lay people, in this case farmers, carry out experiments. Although their methods can be said to be crude and rudimentary since no variables are controlled for in the 'true' scientific spirit, who can argue that their methods are less scientific than 'true' scientific experiments. Lay people do not carry out experiments to confirm specific paradigms but to get to the 'truth', as they see it. This is so because the results of the experiments are related to their day-to-day lives. Scientists are interested in the end product such as a maize variety that would withstand certain conditions such as excessive rains but farmers are more interested in whether the products suit their needs, which might not be of interest to the scientists. Farmers may consider things like taste, size or whether the crop variety responds well to manure: where the scientist has a thirst for knowledge, the farmer has a thirst for results. Thus experimentation does not end at the laboratory gate, to some extent it begins at the gate.

For instance, after carrying out extensive experiments with hybrid seed, SEED CO (2000:12) recommended that to select which hybrid to grow farmers 'first need to establish their mean yield over the last three or more seasons'. The hybrid recommendations are based upon the average yield potential of a field. For example, where the yield potential of a field is 3 tonnes per hectare, a farmer should consider early maturing varieties such as SC401. However, if

yields of above three tonnes per hectare are expected, then medium varieties like SC513 would be higher yielding than early maturing varieties. On the other hand, after carrying out their field trials, farmers do not consider only the yield potential of a field but other things such as taste of the variety when eaten. On being asked if she was going to continue to cultivate Panner seed as well as the SC501, both of which she had experimented with, one farmer maintained that,

The sadza from SC501 is good to taste. However, the variety we grew this year (Panner) does not taste good at all. If a visitor comes and you cook sadza, the visitor might think that you had mixed mealy meal with soil because of the dull/dark colour of the sadza. Others also say that if SC501 receives adequate rain you get a good harvest because it can have 2 cobs on every maize stalk. However, because of the poor harvest we got, I don't think we will be growing it again.

Although the SEED CO manuals recommended SC501 for the Shamva area this farmer reached a different conclusion as to that reached by the experts. She would not cultivate SC501 again because the yield was low and, on the other hand, she would not cultivate Panner either because apart from the low yield the maize did not taste good at all. Another farmer who had also experimented with different kinds of maize seed claimed that,

When comparing Sc501 and R215, Sc501 is more nutritious than R215. If you go to the grinding mill with a bucket of R215 and a bucket of Sc501 with the intention of having pearled mealy meal you will have less mealy meal for R215 than you have for a bucket of Sc501. This is so because the grains of R215 are much smaller than the grains of Sc501. Compared to R215, 501 has got top quality feed. 501 is like a hybrid. However, R215 and R201 taste better than Sc501. Sadza cooked from R215 or R201 is much tastier than that cooked from Sc501. Even when roasting green mealies, Sc501 is tasteless but with R215 you know you are eating real maize.

However this farmer preferred to cultivate SC501 despite its being tasteless because he claimed that he was cultivating for commercial reasons and varieties like R215 were for smaller and less capable farmers. In this respect scientists and farmers consider different things when carrying out experiments such that their results are bound to have differences and to lead to different conclusions and different applications.

For farmers there are two kinds of experiments: the first one I will refer to as individual experiments and the other as individual experiments in collaboration with AGRITEX and Agri-business. Most farmers in the sample carried out experiments before adopting new crops. However, their experiments were not defined in the linear way of scientists. For farmers no precision tools of research were necessary and their research methods were very crude. What is necessary is the availability of land and seed. The experiments are usually directed at testing whether the seed will meet certain specifications of the farmer. This led some farmers to experiment with maize seed of the *Shumba* and *Nzou* varieties despite the fact that these were long

season varieties and only short to medium season varieties are recommended for this area. One farmer had this to say,

I tried to grow Sc701, Sc603, Sc511 then I discovered that 7 and 6 are long season varieties. Because of the short season that we have here, if you grow 7 and 6 you won't get a good harvest. I also experimented with 4141. 4141 is very similar to R215 and R201. It's a complete waste of time. If you are growing for your own consumption maybe they are all right but not if you are growing any crops for sale. If you are preparing these varieties for sale they do not weigh much. On top of that they have an unhealthy dark colour (tunenge twakangosvipasvipa). If you grow R215, R201, 4141 you are certain to get nothing but poor grade. People who stay in the reserves (rural areas) should grow these varieties, not resettlement scheme farmers.

When I asked the AREX Officer on a separate occasion whether he agreed with the assertion of the above farmer that the R varieties were for communal farmers he disagreed:

I do not agree with what that farmer told you. As farmers, we differ in our times of planting. Seed varieties are not much different. It depends on how that farmer manages that variety. In this region some people plant 701 and 709 and they are doing very well. Even if you go to their fields you will be surprised by the crop but these varieties are not recommended for this region since they are long season varieties.

What is interesting in this case is that the farmer did not bow down to the argument of the authorities, in this case AGRITEX Officers and behind them the scientist who had manufactured the seed and tested it under rigorous conditions. Farmers should be regarded as active in the production of knowledge as they do not simply equate knowledge with professional and specialised ideas and information but augment this with the knowledge they generate themselves.

However, if the experiment fails the farmer usually blames authorities. Depending on what kind of support he wants, he can portray the authorities in either a good or bad light. For example, if a farmer's experiment reveals that a certain crop variety does not meet his conditions (despite the fact that no variable has been controlled for) the farmer does not blame his experiment but points the finger to authorities. In the case of such failure, farmers read the results of experiments, not limiting the reading to the conditions of their experiment but including also the political context within which the experiments took place. For example, in 2001 it was fashionable to blame any crop failure on agro-industry and AGRITEX for siding with the interests of the big white commercial farmers and western powers in creating useless seed to discredit the government.

The new hybrid seeds are no longer having a positive impact on our lives (Dzemazuva ano hadzisisina pundutso). If you put a little fertiliser then you get nothing at all. This year we put two bags top and the maize became yellowish whereas with the old seeds if you put fertiliser the maize would become deep green. We know what's happening. These white men are manufacturing good-for-nothing seed so that we turn against our own government if things fail to work out.

If the experiment has been successful then farmers do not need to transfer attention elsewhere. After confirming that the seed is good, there is no need to refer to agro-business or politics. Politics is only relevant when explaining failures.

There are those good farmers who are said to belong to the green group or the gold group depending on whether they are good in maize or cotton. Those in the green group usually get preferential treatment when seeking loans and they also can be given a portion of free seed to experiment with but they have to work closely with the AGRITEX officers who tell them what to do to ensure a good crop. As noted by Hedrick (1892:162) for America, and applicable to Zimbabwe today, most demonstrations are 'put on by being arranged for in advance through getting a farmer to make himself a model in performing some farm feat'. In the end other farmers are invited to observe the demonstration plots. One farmer confirmed that they learnt about new varieties by observing the demonstration plots at field days:

That is where we usually get to know about these new varieties, because the people in the GFC (referring to green groups) are given the maize varieties for free to plant and then we go to observe the maize in their fields on field days.

Such experiments rarely fail because the farmer is supplied with enough seed and fertilisers for the portion under experimentation.

These days, according to Mr Mushayi Mapeto, the Cottco representative, Cottco no longer provides fertilisers but just the seed. They look for farmers who will be able to afford fertilisers then provide the seed and supervision. However, if a farmer is able to beat other farmers and a field day is held at his or her home then that farmer will get full inputs equivalent to one hectare. If tended properly a farmer could get somewhere in the region of Z\$162, 000 (US\$1700 using the official exchange rate of 2002) from the hectare. When asked how they had selected a farmer for a demonstration plot in Mudzingo, the AREX officer alleged that he had intentionally selected a farmer who could purchase fertiliser.

I was looking for someone who would be able to purchase fertilisers because Cargill was only providing the seed. I first talked to the husband who said that he would be willing and able to buy the fertiliser. I met Mrs Chenjera recently and she told me that although the seed got burnt because of the prolonged dry spell, we experienced, she got more maize from the demonstration plot than from any other part of her field. The problem we faced this year was that fertiliser was very difficult to get so it was quite difficult to get people for the demonstration plots.

The difference between these experiments and those that are carried out without assistance from outside is that the success of the experiments with outside assistance is attributed to authority and to a lesser degree to the farmer. However, this farmer is seen to be good because of his association with the outside agencies. Failure is then attributed to uncontrollable variables such as illness and erratic rains.

The demonstration plots are very useful in the production of knowledge in the resettlement areas. This is because those farmers who cannot afford to carry out experiments on their own can have access to experimental results in the demonstration plots and decide either to adopt or not to adopt any new crops or seed. AREX also use these demonstration plots as a way of fostering new farming ideas and practices among farmers.

We have a demonstration plot for seven varieties of pannar seed. It is very near to this place. In that plot we also have one variety of soya beans but unfortunately birds are attacking the soya beans. We want to encourage farmers to adopt other crops like soya beans not to just keep on planting maize, tobacco and cotton.

AREX uses the demonstration plots as a way to experiment with soya beans so that people are in a position to adopt soya beans with confidence. However, the experiments in the demonstration plots are sometimes like self-fulfilling prophecies especially because they are not carried out in the 'true' scientific spirit of sniffing out the truth about the seed but rather as a way of advertising certain seed varieties. This was the case with pannar maize seed variety, which had become very unpopular with the farmers since the 1994 drought (See Chapter 5). In 2003, Pannar Seed Company sponsored a field day as a way of re-launching its seed.

Yet, it is debatable whether these experiments in demonstration units are relevant to farmers given the fact that most can never afford the kind of inputs that are needed for that kind of farming. For instance, all farmers in the sample complained of the cost of fertiliser which limited its application and now the seed is expensive if it can be found. In the 2002-2003 season, a fifty kilogram bag of fertiliser was selling at Z\$9 000, an increase from a cost of between Z\$1 500 to Z\$2 000 the previous season. People said they needed three bags of ammonium nitrate per acre and two of Compound D and producer price of maize increased from \$Z7 500 to Z\$28, 000 per ton.⁴⁸ The cost of these required fertilisers then reached around Z\$45, 000 per acre without including the cost of seed which was being sold on the black market at prohibitively higher prices as well as the cost of labour. Thus twelve households in the sample (four of the households belonging to the medium wealthy category) experimented with open pollinated varieties such as hickory king which does not require much fertiliser and can do well with cattle manure. As a result, the relevance of these demonstration units to farmers was very debatable. While some farmers maintained that they had learnt a thing or two by observing demonstration units at field days others regarded the field days mostly as socialisation events:

⁴⁸ In the 2003-2004 season, the price of fertiliser went up to between \$10 000-\$15 000 per 50 kilogram bag. The producer price of maize rose to \$130 000 per ton. Thus during this season a farmer required between \$50 000-\$75 000 per hectare for fertiliser alone.

I started to cultivate Sc501 in 1995. I attended a field, day that is how I got to know about Sc501. So I first experimented with the seed before I decided to grow it full scale. I planted 2 acres of R215 then an acre of Sc501. At harvest time my one-acre of Sc501 equalled 1 1/2 acres of R215.

Commenting on field day attendance, one farmer had this to say:

People select where to go. For example, when people know that there is very little food they do not go to the field day. However, this is usually rare. If you do not get any food it's usually because you will have arrived late.

Thus if the farmers do not adopt what they observe at model farms it is not because the mind of the peasant is difficult to change as some would like to argue but probably because the costs of doing so are prohibitively high especially if one cannot obtain loans (see also Bowden, 1970 and Green and Hymer, 1966) . At the same time to some extent people are content if they can get enough for their own consumption.

Except for two farmers who carried out extensive experiments one of them normally setting aside two hectares for experimentation and the other planting his whole field with the experimental seed which he will change the following year if things do not work out. Most initial experiments were carried out in gardens. The difference between these two farmers and the other farmers was that the former were relatively well off and probably could cushion losses well if the experiment resulted in a loss. However, invariably the portion under experimentation turned out to be smaller than the portion which was not. Poor farmers also carried out experiments with some OPV but these were regarded as high risk since they had no official backing. Women would plant these in gardens first before they would adopt them wholesale. Gardens were also used for seed breeding to ensure that there was enough seed from a successful experiment to move the crop from the garden to the field.

This year I planted bharabhara in my garden to see how it would fare and if I manage to save a lot of bharabhara seeds from my garden I am going to plant it in my field this year... No one gave me the bharabhara seed. What happened was that Mr Chipoirra dropped a bharabhara cob when he was coming from his fields during harvest. I picked up the cob and planted it in my garden so that I could generate my own seeds.

On being asked if they cultivated Open Pollinated Varieties some farmers said they did not, only to mention on later occasions that they cultivated these in gardens on experimental basis, for seed breeding or consumption. Gardens are important when trying to understand experiments and the diversity of seed and crops that people cultivate. Elsewhere Howard-Borjas (1999) notes that women's home gardens are important for Plant Genetic Resource Management (PGR). She also maintains that it is in home gardens that women domesticate wild plants and adapt new crops. Hence, by focusing mostly on the fields a huge amount of data on experiments and seed and crop varieties can be lost.

Although the soil type in the area is not very variable and farmers received the same rainfall, two different farmers experimenting with the same seed would

reach different conclusions. Below are two views of farmers on the same variety of maize:

In 1998 we got 7 tonnes of maize. However we did not grow 401(Katsoko) in the whole field. The larger area was sown with R215 and we planted only 20kg of SC401. We planted SC401 because we had heard from others in the village that it was a variety which matured early. After that, we never grew katsoko again because the maize cobs were very small.

The second farmer said:

I want the new hybrid varieties. I would love to grow katsoko. I have not cultivated katsoko yet but I saw it at Musona's and I liked what I saw.

A key question to pose is what exactly is an experiment? If experiments entail controlling variables, which variables should be controlled? Are farmers controlling for any variables at all and is it possible or even desirable for them to do so? To some extent farmers do not regard these experiments as reliable. For example, if farmer A's experiment fails, farmer B does not rule out the seed variety completely. The only variable that farmers control for in these experiments is fertiliser application. However frequently it is difficult to control for this because the amount of fertiliser a farmer uses depends on whether he has managed to get enough fertiliser either on loan or through purchase. Thus, by observing farmer's experiments, one cannot say beyond any reasonable doubt that such and such a crop or seed variety is good or bad. That is, by their very nature local experiments are specific to the individual farmer. Hence, using farmer's experiments one cannot conclude that a particular variety of crop is suitable for the area. For generalised application, we can only rely on experiments carried out by 'scientific' seed breeders. However, some farmers may disagree with the assumptions made by the seed breeders after carrying out their own experiments and things do not work out for them as they had expected.

In some cases, necessity forces farmers to experiment with the hope that things will improve. I am not sure whether such activities can be regarded as experimentation or just 'a scatter bomb'. In such cases farmers acquire their knowledge on particular crops and try to apply it to other crops on an experimental basis, regardless of whether they belong to the same family or not. For example, in the agricultural season of 1985-1986, maize was attacked by army worms. People who could afford cotton chemicals used them to spray the maize crop in an attempt to kill the army worms. This was not done on advice from AGRITEX or any other expert but people reasoned that if it could work on cotton by killing all those cotton pests, then it could also work on maize. (As it turned out in the recent army worm attack [2002] AREX advised farmers to use a cotton chemical carbaryl 85 to spray their maize fields when suffering an attack by army worms. However, they were required to use specific doses). Often when farmers carry out experiments, whether out of necessity or genuine experimental spirit, their knowledge of other crops is called upon. Thus, in the

early days of resettlement, some farmers (although no one admitted to this but instead pointed to others) had applied a portion of their cotton fields with manure just as they did with maize. They discovered later that cotton simply grew tall and green but no balls formed, so they stopped doing this. However, the AREX officer had a different opinion on the use of manure on cotton:

If you use manure on cotton, the cotton will have a very high rate of growth. The cotton plant will grow very tall. What you should do if you want to use manure on cotton, is first apply manure to a maize field, then rotate maize and cotton the following year. For cotton, you will also have to use compound L or soluble boron.

Animals

Experimentation is not only limited to crop farming but has these days also expanded to animal rearing. In the early years of resettlement, farmers worked very closely with the veterinary officers on preventing and curing animal diseases. However, because of the escalating costs of medicines to treat animal diseases people became more experimental. Experimentation, like other activities is gendered. In this case, it is not that men experiment more than women or the other way round, but that men and women usually experiment on different things. Crop experimentation and animal experimentation are different. It is mostly women who carry out experiments with crop varieties in their small garden plots and breed seed which can then be used in the field if successful. And it is usually men who experiment with animals⁴⁹.

When it comes to experimenting in animal rearing it is mostly men who deal with the larger livestock such as cattle and goats whilst women can sometimes deal with small livestock like chickens. Experimenting with crops is usually done to find better varieties, which can suit the demands of each farmer: however, experimenting with animals is usually carried out to find cures for diseases not to find better breeds.

The reason why experimenting to find cures for animal diseases is mostly the prerogative of men where larger animals are concerned is because the big domestic animals like cattle have been 'masculinised'. Women cannot keep cattle where they are married. If they have cattle these cattle have to be kept at their fathers' or brothers' houses. One old man maintained that it was a cultural taboo for the wife's cattle to be kept in the same kraal with her husband's cattle. If such an anomaly were to occur the wife's spirits would become strong and kill all her husband's cattle. Although sometimes women refer to the family herd as 'ours' there was an acceptance by women that the cattle are theirs only on a usufruct basis. This is reflected in disputes that sometimes arise between husband and wife over the use of money gained from farming:

⁴⁹ Elsewhere, in Malawi, Ferguson (1994:543) noted that 'knowledge about crops and responsibilities for growing them is often differentially distributed by gender'

Sometimes disagreements arise. For example, this year I felt my needs were being ignored. Every year we were buying cattle and these belong to the men. We had never bought anything I could call my own. As a result I felt it necessary that I should get something. My husband thought otherwise. We had a huge misunderstanding, other people in the village had to intervene to solve the dispute.

As a result, women do not focus at all on cattle because they do not own them and if such an animal experiment was to fail it would back fire on them. One very poor villager lost the only ox he had because he was away and his wives did not want to try a traditional method they had observed to cure eye cataracts. On the other hand, most people we talked to on this issue agreed that if the wives had used the method the ox would have been saved. When asked why they had not tried to save the ox one of the wives had this to say:

The problem was that father (i.e. the husband) was not there. He came back after the ox had died. We mourned for that ox as if we were mourning for a dead person.

However, widows to some extent experiment with cures but first they ask for ideas from some knowledgeable man in the village where they do not have grown up sons.

Experiments with large animals are rarely individual. When an experimental cure is being tried friends usually carry it out together so that everyone can observe whether the animal is cured or not. Just as people sometimes refer to witchcraft as science, so experimenting with cures for animal diseases is so described, though crop experiments are never. In this case, the term 'science' seems to refer to mysterious workings of witches and antidotes used to cure animal diseases that are not easily understood and explained, as compared to the relatively straightforward nature of crop farming. One example of such 'science' concerns how a group of men decided to mix traditional beer with cooking oil and give it to calves to cure *gwembe* (a skin disease in cattle):

You mix the scud with some cooking oil and give it to the calf to drink. I think it is the bitterness in the scud that kills the disease. It's like our traditional medicines, the bitter they are the more effective they are. Even those malaria tablets are bitter. We just decided to try it to look for 'science' to cure our animals.

But a scud, how can someone think of that?

What happens is, when we are with other men, one person can just start to muse aloud on whether a scud can cure diseases. After some discussion, someone with an ill calf can just offer his animal for the trial. That is how it works.

This is how knowledge is manufactured not by rigorous laboratory experiments but by a group of men who just happen to think that traditional medicines work because they are bitter, just as chloroquine is bitter and it works against malaria. The thinking does not end there but continues: because of its bitterness the traditional brew or the scud must be good for something apart from making people drunk, let's try it on animals. Of course had a scientist been present when such a conversation was taking place he would quickly point out that neither chloroquine nor traditional medicines work because they are bitter but

because of certain chemical components that they have. But because no such saboteur is there the discussion moves to the second stage concerning who is willing to sacrifice a calf for the experiment? After the person is found, and the experiment has worked, soon everyone in the village is a 'veterinary officer' making scud and cooking oil concoctions to cure the various ills of their livestock. Now the cure is not limited to cattle but is also tried on goats and chickens. Everyone believes that it is the bitterness that works. At this point perhaps, somebody comes up with the idea that maybe it has something to do with fermentation. In the meantime, no one has been able to explain exactly why one needs to mix beer with cooking oil, except in cases where cooking oil is used to assist with bowl movement when a goat has over eaten. An excerpt from an interesting conversation I had with a woman and her two adult sons illustrates this point:

I heard that soot is used to treat some cattle diseases.

Mrs Mushaniga: I do not know about cattle but chickens.

Tavengwa: Even cattle. You can make the cattle drink the soot.

Mushaniga: People are very innovative from scuds to soot.

Mrs Mushaniga: Even when cattle or goats get overfull with food you can give them the scud.

How does scud work?

Tavengwa: I think it has something to do with fermentation.

Mrs Mushaniga: If the goat gets overfull you can mix the scud with cooking oil so that the cooking oil assists in bowl movement.

How can people think of all that?

Mushaniga: (laughing) Mudege you know that if you are being chased by a lion you can climb a tree and by chance you get saved. It will not be because anyone told you to climb the tree you just do it.

After the initial experiments are carried out knowledge becomes something that people have and use but they may not know how they came to know what they know. People will also not question themselves as to why they do what they do so long as it works.

Experimentation with animals, as I have said, is not limited to men but women also carry out experiments albeit limited to smaller animals. They also try unorthodox remedies, such as giving chickens paraffin to cure coughs or smearing the whole chicken with paraffin to get rid of pests. The main argument here is that the smell of paraffin chases away pests and because it is poisonous aphids will die. As to why the chickens do not die after being fed with the paraffin, it is said that this is because the paraffin is given in small quantities. In addition, the chickens do not swallow the paraffin because the taste is not pleasant and in trying to force the paraffin out of their mouth they clear their throats of the cough. Thus, taste and smell and not chemicals are the main components in search for a cure, unless the potential medicine is considered to be highly toxic even when given in small doses.

People experiment more and more with their animals mostly because the costs of medicine have increased prohibitively.

We only go there for serious diseases that we do not know. If you go to the veterinary when your cow is suffering from gwembe you will end up buying medicines worth over \$2000 instead of buying a scud which costs less than \$150. Our own ways are much better. If the disease does not get cured and you are worried then you can go to the vet... In the past people were using those chemicals from the vet because they were cheaper. Now people have decided that going to the vet is a waste of money when the animals can be treated cheaply.

This lends credence to the saying 'necessity is the mother of invention'. Linked to this, there is a general mistrust of veterinary officers because some people suspect them of advising people to buy very expensive medicines so that they can safeguard their jobs when cheaper medicines, which are equally effective, are available. In both villages, people only inform the veterinary officers if there is an outbreak of serious diseases such as anthrax where the law requires that they notify the relevant authorities; and when if the necessary preventative measures are not taken the whole herd of cattle can be wiped out.

The above data should not suggest in any way that people are now more experimental than in the past, since there are no reliable data for comparison. Some diseases that farmers encountered after resettlement were new to them. Before resettlement, farmers kept disease-resistant and drought-tolerant 'hard mashona' cattle. However, after resettlement, they started to keep new breeds of cattle. These latter were also attacked by strange new disease; diseases often referred to as 'diseases of modernity' (*zvirewere zvechirungu*). Farmers would experiment with old remedies or look for alternatives if they did not work. Local knowledge does not die because of exposure to outside knowledge. Instead people actively select those aspects of both knowledge systems and adapt them according to the demands of the situation. Most farmers were adamant that the only cattle diseases they were aware of before coming to the resettlement schemes were liver flukes, diarrhoea (which was caused by changing seasons) and eye cataracts which could easily be cured by the use of *mutamba* fruit or fermented rapoko (finger millet) flour. Farmers agreed that with diseases such as black leg in cattle one had to consult the veterinarian.

However, in 2002, there was an outbreak of black leg in Muringamombe and unlike other villagers, one poor farmer decided not to use the expensive modern preventative medicine available through group purchase. Instead he applied aloe vera, a known folk medicine, and none of his cattle were affected by the disease. On an earlier occasion, this same farmer had mentioned black leg as the only cattle disease that would cause him to consult the veterinary services. Insofar as he was using the aloe vera against black leg for the first time, his application can be said to have been experimental since he did not know whether or not it would work.

I heard that there is black leg. Did you get your cattle vaccinated?

No. I have not yet injected my cattle. People formed groups to buy their medicines and to inject their cattle.

Why did you not join the groups like everyone else?

How can you join the groups when you have only a few cattle? You pay an equal amount when other people use most of the medicine.

But those who did not have money to buy the medicine or those who had few cattle are now paying \$250 per head to those with medicines to have their cattle vaccinated.

The other thing is that we are not in good books with those who bought the medicine. That small river is the boundary: we are in good books with those this side of the river and those at the other side are in good books with each other. They did not tell us that they had the medicine and they did not invite us so how could we go to them.

So what have you done to prevent your animals from catching black leg?

I gave them our traditional medicine. I just pound up the medicine and put it into drinking water. The grass the cattle are grazing is causing this black leg. This grass has not been rained on so that it is full of disease. Our cattle will not catch black leg because they are grazing at the river (Mupfurudzi) where the grass has water⁵⁰.

But you told me earlier that black leg is caused by mud.

That is during the rainy season but now it is because of the grass. The grass is weakening the cattle's bones. That is why the cattle are being attacked in the legs.

Diagnosis and experimentation are not only the privilege of the rich farmers. Although the above respondent was poor he used his small number of cattle as an excuse for not using modern medicine when, in actual fact, it was because he was not on friendly terms with the people who had bought the medicines and who were distributing them to most of the villagers. The wife of this respondent had a few weeks previously been accused of witchcraft at a village meeting. He denied that his wife was a witch and maintained that this was because the other villagers hated him.

Observation

Crops

Observation is a central process to learning about farming. Observation can be covert or overt. Although most people in the sample did not admit to learning by observation, it could be noted that some of the answers they gave pointed to this effect. In both villages, expressing undue interest in your neighbour's field could trigger an accusation of witchcraft; as a result people did not mention observation as a component in their acquisition of knowledge. It was also not only the person who was observing the field who could be accused of witchcraft. In at least two cases, respondents mentioned that they would not go to some people's fields to observe because these people had bad medicines.

⁵⁰ According to the AREX officer, bacteria cause black leg and penicillin is the only cure.

Strange things would happen to those who dared to observe fields without permission from the owner:

You might hear strange noises. Sometimes you will hear voices but you do not see the people. You can be instructed by a voice to leave the field immediately! Even snakes (he starts laughing)...If you go into these fields without permission you can be chased away by very large snakes.

Some people with farming magic were known to be hostile to those who wanted to observe their fields because these observers would not know of all the taboos required. If such taboos were not followed then this could spell disaster for the owner of the field. For example, marauding animals might attack his crops or the crops would simply refuse to do well.

Despite this denial of learning through observation of other people's fields observation is still central. One woman was asked how she had come to know of herb killers, although she had never attended agricultural lessons, did not go to field days and did not observe other people's fields (for fear of being labelled a witch). She answered that she had observed that in a field they passed on their way to church the field was no longer a problem with weeds. As a result she asked the owner of the field whom she knew on a personal basis, what they had done with the weed and she was told that they had used a herbicide.

What is interesting to note is that, although they referred to observing other people's fields, most people pointed to observing the fields of others who were living in a different village. People only expected to observe the fields of friends. If the person was not their friend, then observation would only be possible if that person hosted a field day. One person was threatened with a beating after he passed through the field of a farmer he did not know in another village with the intention of observing. The owner of the field suspected that his passing through his field had something to do with the use of bad *muti*.

Only one person admitted that he went to observe the fields of his friends who lived within the village and sometimes they would compete with each other over who was going to achieve the best crop. On another occasion, the same person mentioned that going to people's fields to observe was a thing of the past. On being asked why this was so, he said:

In the past people were united. Now! Ha! Even the AGRITEX officer commented on it one day that in the past people used to farm and buy useful things like ploughs but now people are farming and investing in goblins (zvidhoma) instead. This area was developing but now everything is going down hill. In the past people here were very good farmers. A bale of cotton would sell at \$5 but that money would be invested wisely for development.

This he said after the person he had mentioned earlier as the friend, where he went to observe, had not invited him to a tombstone laying ceremony. Thus, in this case, the issue of witchcraft was used to cover up socially-strained relationships. However, it is undeniable that observation is an important aspect

of the production of knowledge in the research area but then it is difficult to point at it if straight questions are asked.

Observation also becomes important where the youth are concerned. Although often people did not know why they performed certain tasks in certain ways, they maintained that they did those things in the same way they had observed their parents do them. One respondent maintained that she had learnt how to cultivate tobacco from her parents.

Mostly I learnt about rapoko when I stayed with my parents. Rapoko is something that is in people. It's not something that you learn to do or something that you can even remember learning. You just know that you know. We just learnt by seeing what our parents were doing. They were transplanting the rapoko and doing a lot of things to the rapoko and all these things we saw with our own eyes.

This respondent summarised in a neat way how some things are 'in people'. Especially where knowledge has been gained through observation, it becomes internalised. Such knowledge is also generally regarded as more valuable since it is morally enforceable. Some people confessed to doing certain things because that is what they observed their parents do and their parents had also learnt from their parents. (This area of youth and knowledge will be discussed in another chapter).

Observation can also be used for verification purposes. People can discuss new things with their friends and relatives but they can not just adopt any new thing before they can be sure the thing works. Even among close friends and relatives there is an element of mistrust such that people only feel comfortable in adopting something when they are sure it will work.

To be sure, they have to observe to ascertain whether whatever is being claimed works. As a result, most people said they would only adopt a new thing after they had observed that the thing worked for the person who first discussed the idea. Below is an extract from a conversation involving the researcher, research assistant and one of the respondents.

Christine [the research assistant]: Say, you hear of or see a new crop, what do you do before you decide to adopt or not to adopt the crop?

Maybe I will buy the seed in small quantities then plough a small piece during that year and see how it will do.

Christine: What if you hear about the new crop from your neighbour do you just accept the new crop?

I look at whether the person is also growing that crop and I will ask that person about the crop. If they are not cultivating it I will ask them why they are not cultivating it, why they have given that crop up. I will ask them why if they have stopped cultivating the crop they are encouraging me to cultivate.

Netsayi: What if it is your friend whom you trust who has come up with that idea?

Well, I will still have to make sure that they are still cultivating the crop. If they say, 'last year I made a profit', if it is true, then maybe I will also adopt the crop. One cannot accept seeds from someone just because that someone is your friend. Some people can just lie to you

about the benefits of cultivating a certain crop when they have not grown the crop themselves.

Netsayi: Why do you say they lie? Has someone ever lied to you?

No.

Netsayi: So why do you say people lie? I talked to some people and they said that they feared to take ideas from other people because people lie but when I ask them whether they have ever been lied to they say no they have never been lied to.

Some people lie. Sometimes in your mind you just suspect someone of lying to you, even though you have no evidence that you have been lied to before.

Although sometimes observation can breed suspicion, it can also be a very reliable method of verifying information. As shown in the above case, in a situation where there is a high level of mistrust, observation as a way of getting new knowledge or even disseminating new knowledge is indispensable.

Although the percentage of people who maintained that they got their knowledge at field days has declined from 79% to 29% field day/demonstration plots still rank highly as a place where people manufacture and disseminate knowledge. Information relating to new seed varieties is passed on from seed companies to AGRITEX, whose field officers in turn disseminate the information to the farmers by word of mouth and through field days. Appraised of the basic features or characteristics expected of a crop grown from that seed, AGRITEX carries out "field observation trials". In Mupfurudzi, the more successful farmers, especially those in the green group for maize and those in the gold group for cotton, would usually volunteer for field trials. These people would use their inputs and work in conjunction with AGRITEX so that, if their crops did very well, people would come to observe their fields.

The AGRITEX and the Seed Houses help with the provision of food for field days otherwise the farmer would get only prestige and sometimes might win ploughs and other things.

Field days are carried out at fields. The owner of the field is the one that explains everything to the audience. The farmer will provide beer and some farmers would slaughter cows or goats. AGRITEX officials also contributed but usually they only bought a little food to help the farmer. However, the farmer could sometimes win big things like a plough.

Officers disseminate knowledge about crops, especially maize, cotton and recently tobacco, on field days. The field days gave people the opportunity to observe in a relaxed atmosphere since the occasion combined observation, learning and entertainment. What I find noble about these demonstration units is the fact that the farmer whose field is being observed as the model, will explain to other farmers how he managed to produce such a model crop. Only the farmer who followed 'modern' ways of farming would have the honour of having a field day held at his or her field. This could be one of the many reasons why so many farmers began to adopt the new methods of farming and new technology because this new technology was associated with prestige and of course improved yields.

The concept of these demonstration plots is not entirely a new phenomenon. In the 1920s there was conflict between two groups one, which argued for the establishment of model farms or training of native agricultural demonstrators. Here it was assumed that to improve farming the Africans had to be exposed to model farms so that they could copy the methods. On the other hand, others wanted the training of native demonstrators to assist fellow natives with agricultural knowledge. Howman (Steele, 1972:13, 16) maintained that African farming was deplorable and lacked imagination and, above all, the mind of the African peasant was difficult to change. When asked about the 1920s controversy, Howman (Steele, 1972:32) said:

I wasn't aware of the people that advocated the model farms. At that time people took a simple attitude towards how you could change an African. They believed if you show him something better he is bound to pick it up a fallacy, which I do not think now would be accepted anywhere. Every European farm is a model farm but it made not the slightest difference to these people.

As can be seen, the European farm was regarded as the model so Africans underwent a process of being labelled 'ignorant' and thus their knowledge was delegitimised. For example, in the early days, people were forbidden to intercrop because it was thought that crops would disturb each other. After a couple of years there was a shift again towards intercropping, as it was shown that it increased ground cover and reduced soil erosion. Nowadays, AGRITEX encourages intercropping as beneficial for crops and situations of land scarcity.

Although these demonstration units are used to disseminate knowledge to farmers, they also have a highly political component. When people attend field days to observe these demonstration plots people also perform dramas and sing songs of the revolutionary movement as well as praise songs for President Mugabe and his government. Hence, knowledge on hybrid seeds is disseminated at the same time as the political ideologies of the ruling party are reinforced. To be successful, AGRITEX (AREX) Officers (especially in the current scenario) have to be seen, at least publicly, to be aligned to the ruling party and its standpoint.

Learning by observation is very useful for those who are not very well educated and cannot attend the conventional agricultural lessons offered by AGRITEX where people have to take notes. Although people can take an oral exam for the master farmer certificate they do not want the embarrassment involved in being the only illiterate among literate persons. As one illiterate farmer pointed out he had attended the AGRITEX lessons in the early days until he realised that he was not learning anything new since he had learnt everything at the commercial farms where he used to work. Most of the older farmers preferred to learn by observation and did not trust any theoretical knowledge that was to be imparted to them without a practical backing:

I do not listen to the radio or even to the AGRITEX officers. Those people do not know a lot of things. I stayed a long time at the large-scale farms working so that is where I learnt how to farm. I learned from the white man himself (ndichiona mubhunu). I learned by observing. Cotton and maize I learned from white man's farms.

In 2001, not many farmers admitted to have learnt anything from the large-scale white commercial farms where they had lived and worked for several years prior to resettlement. Only one farmer mentioned that was where he had obtained most of his knowledge on farming, while in 2002 this number had risen to five. This difference was probably the result of the tense political situation that was prevalent in 2001 during the parliamentary elections. At that time white farmers were vilified in political rhetoric as oppressors and as a result it was politically incorrect for one to admit that one had learnt anything from them.

Animals

As underlined earlier, observation is a very central element in learning how to do anything. Especially where cattle are being treated or given preventative chemicals, men and boys in the village congregate at the cattle kraals to observe the whole proceedings. Sometimes even small boys, who are too young to be of help, are invited to observe so that if they ever face that same problem in the future, they recall the knowledge of their fathers. The picture at the start of this chapter where people are congregated at a kraal where cattle are being vaccinated against black leg disease depicts this well. Even young men whose parents did not own cattle or did not have the money to buy the chemicals turned up to observe the event. When asked why, they said because they would learn what to do when faced with the same problem in future.

Young boys who were too young to take part in the physically strenuous activities were given small tasks to do. Most people learn in this way to perform certain tasks at an early age, and often they could not pin point the exact moment this happened. A more common response was 'no one told us we just know'. On being asked how they treat eye cataracts in cattle one male respondent said explained:

We use traditional methods. We take an unripe damba mix it with a little water then drop the liquid into the eye of the cow/ox. You can also use rukweza (fermented finger millet flour). You put the rukweza in the eye of the animal.

Do your young children know all these things you are telling me? (the two young boys started to laugh).

They know everything because they also help to treat the animals. For example, if a cow or ox gets tsanga (eye cataracts) you can ask the young boys to look for the damba, which will be used for the treatment.

Knowledge is practical. Even where smaller livestock such as chickens are being given doses of paraffin to cure diseases young children would often be tasked with chasing and catching the chickens and therefore would be present when

the treatments were administered. Young children, therefore, are not only observers or consumers but they also play some minor productive roles that prepare them for their adult lives. As Keesing's (1987) puts it, knowledge becomes like onion peels where one keeps peeling until one reaches the core. Knowledge is not imparted all at once but in bits and pieces as people progress from childhood to adulthood such that there can be no exact turning point where a person can say that is the point or the day I obtained this knowledge. Where observation is concerned especially when learning in a family setting, knowledge can only be said to be incremental.

In Zimbabwe there are not many taboos associated with animal rearing. When people claim that their enemies have killed their animals they do not imply by mystical means. It is usually by poisoning, drowning or axing the animal to death. Usually this is done in retaliation for example, after a dog has mauled the other person's animals or a cow or ox has grazed in another's field. Sometimes it is because of religious reason such as when people accuse Marange Apostles of poisoning dogs in the village because the apostles believe dogs are unclean in the eyes of God. As a result, it was easy to learn by observation where animal health is concerned, since anyone can just observe animals being treated without being suspected of magical malicious intentions towards the animals.

I am not quite sure why there are so few taboos regarding animal rearing. This might be related to the fact that when cattle are ill their illness is easily diagnosed and actions can be taken to remedy the illness. On the other hand, when it comes to farming, people do not have control of many of the critical variables including soil fertility. Faced with the many variables they could not control or understand people were perhaps more inclined to believe in magical explanations.

Popular Narratives

The final section of this chapter focuses upon the contents and significance of popular narratives. Although, I do not intend to discuss issues of witchcraft and magic, which I think warrant their own chapter, I will from time to time digress a little into these issues, since they are deeply embedded in these.

Popular narratives often involve beliefs that have no scientific basis but instead are grounded in spiritual matters. I differentiate these popular beliefs from beliefs in witchcraft by showing that the latter deploy medicines and magic designed to harm others, whilst in the case of popular beliefs, which sometimes take the form of myths, things happen because of spirits. That is, events are not caused or willed by individuals but by spirits. My focus is not on the origin of these popular narratives but on how they are used to generate knowledge or even to stifle creativity. In this section I would also like to offer a tentative answer to the questions I posed at the beginning. Is seeing believing?

Do people use different eyes, see differently, interpret differently and believe differently?

Chisi

Chisi is a day sacred to the spirits, during which agricultural work in the fields is prohibited. That is, *Chisi* is a mandatory day of rest. 'Failure to observe *chisi* would result in the failure of rains or crops destruction by animals (Matowanyika, 1991:230)'. According to Bourdillon (1987: 70) *Chisi* expresses the association between the spirits and the land. This is aptly shown in the quotation below when one respondent was asked why people could not go to the fields the day after the first rains:

Because the lion spirits will be walking around inspecting fields to check whether the rain received is enough. If it is not enough we will get more rain again.

Sadomba (1999a: 35) neatly summarises the relationship between land, spirits and people for the Shona: 'nature is close to the spirit world and through it the spirits and God communicate to the humans'.

This relationship between the spirits and the land is very immediate. If the spirits are unhappy, the land does not produce. For example, the rinderpest disease that killed cattle and the outbreak of locusts that led to famine in Southern Africa (Southern Rhodesia included), in 1896 were interpreted by Africans in Southern Rhodesia as a show of anger by ancestral spirits with the people for not fighting against the European invaders (Zvobgo, 1996)⁵¹. If anyone hurts the land in any way the spirits are unhappy and the land does not produce and rivers and ponds can dry up. We can not, however, talk only of an association between the spirits and the land since the spirits are the land and the land is the spirits. It is difficult to separate the land and the spirits from each other. The land is a living spirit.

There are different kinds of *Chisi* which people are expected to observe. First, there is *Chisi* day every Friday when no one is allowed to go to the fields. Every new moon people are also expected to rest and *Chisi* is also declared after the very first rains. While *Chisi* itself cannot be considered a myth the punishments associated with any infraction are in themselves mystical because they are supposed to be meted out by the invisible hand of the ancestors. Punishment might not occur on the same day of the infringement, but no matter how long it takes, as sure as the sun will rise the person will be punished: hence the popular proverb *Chisi hachieri musi wacharimwa*. However, just like all knowledge this issue of *Chisi* is highly contested and various negotiations and renegotiations as

⁵¹Onselen (1972) has a slightly different view. He maintains that Africans blamed whites for maliciously doing something to trigger the rinderpest disease. According to Onselen (1972:474) 'Rinderpest, certainly formed part of the political backdrop to the 1896-97 revolt in Southern Rhodesia'

to its significance have taken place over the years. As Bourdillon (1990:263) notes, "Even sacred beliefs change in their force or precise meaning over time".

According to the *Sabhuku* (headman) of Mudzingi village, rain is not just rain but is composed of three kinds. Distinguishing between the different kinds is important since it could mean contravening a cultural taboo or not. The first rain after a long dry spell or signalling the start of the season is called *Musana waamai* (mother's back), then there is *bumharutsva* (some rain of brief duration that occur in August or September before the onset of the rain season) and *yemunhurukwa*. *Yemunhurukwa* is the one which people use for planting their crops. The day after the first rains (*musana waamai*) no one is allowed to go to the fields because doing so will be breaking mother's back. In *Shona* culture mother's back is taboo. For instance if a girl elopes or has a premarital sexual relationship with the man she will eventually marry, the husband-to-be will be expected to pay a fine for breaking mother's back. Even if the marriage is legal the son-in-law still has to give the mother-in-law what some people refer to as *mbudzi yemusana* (the goat of mother's back) or *mbudzi yemushonga* (the goat of medicines and the medicines which are mixed with the meat for the back). As a result, breaking mother's back for any reason is a serious offence for which a perpetrator is punished.

Asked to explain why it was necessary to observe *musana waamai*, the headman claimed that the day after the first rains *vanhu vepasi* (people of the earth/ the lion spirits) inspect the fields to ascertain whether the rain received was enough. If not then the lion spirits will bring more rain before people can start planting. Going to the fields on such a day would risk meeting these *vanhu vepasi* and as a consequence one could be eaten by lions. However, *Chisi* is heavily contested as people dislike it for a number of reasons. Most people except those in the chief's family regarded *Chisi* as a waste of valuable time. Farmers lose nine working days in every month: four days are lost to the weekly *Chisi*, a further four days if one is a Christian and has to attend church service any other day during the week and the ninth day is lost to *Chisi* of the new moon. All this is assuming that no death occurs in the village or in a nearby village because then it would entail again the observance of another *Chisi*, the *Chisi* of death. Given the fact that the rains are erratic in the area, farmers maintain that they cannot afford to waste any rainy days, especially taking into consideration the fact that early planting could well prove to be their only salvation if the rains were to stop early. As a result, it is easy to understand the ire of farmers against the stipulation that they cannot go to the field a day after the first rains. The situation is even worse when the rain is followed by a Thursday since it will mean that people cannot work on the Friday either. Below is a discussion of *Chisi* I had with one family:

Netsayi: Some people told me about *Musana Waamai* what is it?

Father: That is *Chisi*.

Mother: That Chisi pains us I do not want to lie. When the rain has fallen and someone tells you that you are not supposed to go to the field because of *musana waamai*, it makes me mad. I think those people who are not able to farm and the lazy ones like Chisi very much.

Father: If you come here and do not get sadza will you visit us again? No. Then they tell us that when it rains we should not go to the field because of *musumo*. What is painful is this rule that people should not go to the field when it rains. We did know that is what they would make us do when we came here. They told us they were going to send us to the big farms (*kumapurazi*). We thought everything was going to be done the way we had done things at the commercial farms. We thought we were coming here to farm not to do all these other things.

Son: That's our tradition.

Father: That is laziness.

Son: If you don't do that, you will not get any rain. If you don't get the rain will you be happy?

Father: Aah you! God is the one who brings rain not all these traditional rituals you practice. Rain belongs to God.

Son: Are you saying traditional things do not exist?

Father: Of course tradition exists (*chivanhu chiriko*). On the monthly Chisi, people are not even able to eat sadza shouting that the new moon has risen (*mwedzi wagara*- literal translation, the moon has sat). Do you eat the moon?

Netsayi: What happens if you work your fields on Chisi?

Son: You pay a fine.

Father: God did not create us so that we would sit around doing nothing, no farming. He said humans had to sweat first before they could get anything to eat.

Netsayi: Is there anyone in particular who monitors the moon?

Son: The headman's policeman. It is important during the rainy season. Now people are not concerned with the moon.

Father: It's because these people are lazy. Now because everyone is just sitting around not doing anything the moon suddenly becomes unimportant.

This conversation serves to highlight Chisi as a domain that is now being highly contested because even people in the same household cannot come to an agreement over its worthiness. Those who are for Chisi cite morals and tradition as the basis for Chisi, whilst those who are against it cite production reasons as to why the practice should be discontinued.

In the early days of resettlement, observation of Chisi was not mandatory since the resettlement area was not under chiefs but under a government appointed resettlement officer. However, since 2000 when the government started a drive to restore power to the chiefs the resettlement areas have now been put under the jurisdiction of the chiefs. The first things that the chiefs did to make their authority felt was to reinstate Chisi and to appoint an enforcement police that would patrol fields on Chisi days and bring offenders to book. Most people in the sample maintained that the chiefs had done this purposely to 'fix' people in the resettlement area - a word which denotes possible tension

between the resettled people and the chiefs. The chiefs⁵² had failed to understand the differences between the resettled and the communal people since the former regarded themselves as pseudo-commercial farmers because they regarded their main purpose as farming to feed the nation. They distinguished themselves from 'communal people' or 'people from the reserves' whom they said only farmed for subsistence because they lacked the requisite skills needed for commercial farming. Consequently, people in the resettlement areas were very vocal as to why they disliked *Chisi*. They were not happy that they were being treated as communal people.

It is interesting that it was mostly the elders who were opposed to *Chisi*. The youth, whom I would have expected to loathe the idea as old fashioned, were at the forefront of upholding it and maintaining that it worked and that 'our traditions' had to be upheld and restored. This goes against Fanon, who thought that youths would be first to forfeit cultural norms and make fun of them:

After centuries of unreality, after having wallowed in the most outlandish phantoms, at long last the native, gun in hand, stands face to face with the only forces which contend for his life- the forces of colonialism. And the youth of a colonial country, growing up in an atmosphere of shot and fire, may well make a mockery of and does not hesitate to pour scorn upon the zombies of his ancestors, the horses with two heads, the dead who rise again, and the djinns who rush into your body while you yawn (Fanon 1967:45 cited in Lan 1985:xvi).

Instead the youths are at the forefront of defending custom.

On being asked what would happen if a person worked in his or her field on *Chisi* day, one woman thought nothing much would happen. The only exception these days was that the rules were tightened such that if one was caught contravening *Chisi* one would be sent to the chief's court for trial. The village police and the ZANU (PF) youths were responsible for arresting such people and sending them to the chief for punishment. Did the youth really believe in *Chisi* or was this belief based on issues of power⁵³? One youth believed that in a certain year when a drought was threatening people were told not to go to the fields for four days whilst the traditional authorities went to the lion spirits to ask for rain. On the fourth day, there was a heavy downpour which confirmed that it was the work of the spirits. The father, however, was convinced the rain was an act of God, it is natural: - either we had it or not and nothing anyone would do could make it to stop raining or start. I would like to posit that, especially considering *Chisi*, a link between knowledge

⁵² Read Roberts (2000:513-522) on how certain narratives can be empowering for the people who propagate them.

⁵³ Elsewhere in South Africa, Niehaus *et al* (2001) discusses how the ANC youth were at the forefront of witch hunts in South Africa and the possibilities for empowerment that such beliefs accorded these youths.

and power emerges such that those people who believed in *Chisi* stood to gain a measure of power from it whilst those who did not were more often than not disempowered because of its enforcement. The youth could empower themselves by enforcing customary norms and enrolling everyone, even if unwillingly, into their own political and social schemes.

The way people have responded to *Chisi* shows creativity and ingenuity. The *Johanne Masowe* Apostolic Church commands a huge following in the resettlement area as well as the surrounding communal areas. In the early days of its formation people would attend church on Saturday as God had rested on the Sabbath day, so they too would also rest and give thanks to the Lord. However, one day the church's very charismatic leader had a vision that the Lord wanted the church service to be held on Friday since the Lord had decided to anoint this day. As a result, the church became known as *Johanne Masowe wechishanu* (*Johanne Masowe of Friday*) to distinguish it from the *Johanne Masowe wemugovera* (*Johanne Masowe of Saturday* which is located in other parts of the country especially in urban areas where people work from Monday to Friday). An unanswerable question of course is whether indeed the church's leader received a vision or whether it was an attempt to deal pragmatically with the *Chisi* issue and minimise lost working days without confronting the traditional authorities.

At the level of farming people have responded well to new farming technology, such as winter ploughing, as a way of dealing with *musana waamai*. All people who practised winter ploughing in the resettlement area maintained that they had not done so prior to coming to the resettlement area. However, after being resettled and going into commercial farming, they could not waste any rains. Thus they ploughed their fields in winter, and then dry planted their crops such that when the rains came and they were not allowed to go to the fields because of *Chisi* their crops would still reap the benefit of the first rains. Tobacco farmers have also found a way around *Chisi* as it is now the norm that people pick up a lot of tobacco on Thursday then spend the whole of Friday tying the tobacco in preparation for putting it into barns. Thus the conditions that people find themselves in can make them receptive to new ideas as well as to devising new farming practises.

In proper observance of *Chisi* no one was allowed to dig the earth since this was also the day when the *vanhu vepasi* (people of the earth) were resting. Digging the earth, therefore, was a show of disrespect and would disturb the people of the earth from their well-deserved rest. However, as I was later to observe, people would work in the gardens (a practice which most people were quick to point out was not allowed in the past). Yet, there was no agreement as to what exactly a person was allowed to do in the garden. Some people argued that one could only water the garden but not dig the earth whilst others maintained that people were allowed to do both. To explain this discrepancy

the wife of the chief offered the very interesting comment that sometimes things are discussed at the village court and new pronouncements, which override old ones, are announced. However, some people hold on to what the spirits said long ago and thus do not keep track of any new pronouncements. Accordingly many things have changed and, as it later turned out, clever chiefs would take advantage of a time when the lion spirits are silent (i.e. when the spirit medium is dead and before a new medium comes) to make any changes they wanted. In most cases, after such changes were made, later mediums would rarely dispute them because it was believed that when the medium was not there, the chief could only make inspired decisions, unless of course the chief was unpopular with his people.

However, early changes to *Chisi* were made before the spirits became silent. People were not allowed to go to the fields because the *vakuru* (elders again referring to lion spirits) would be inspecting the fields in their lion form. People reasoned that the gardens were fenced and as a result *vakuru* could not get into the gardens. Hence, their walk would not be disturbed by people working their gardens. People also asked for permission to water their gardens on the pretext that in the gardens they would use *mvura yechirimo* (dry season water) whose *Chisi* had already been observed during the previous season. When asked if the same would apply for irrigable agricultural land, people were adamant that it would not work since the area was often too big and there was no guarantee that whatever was being irrigated would not receive the very early rains of the next rainy season. On 10 January 2003, a new pronouncement was made by the *sabhuku* in Muringamombe. In this pronouncement people were now allowed to weed their field crops provided they were planted in their back yards.⁵⁴ It was argued that the lions only roam the fields but not inside the villages where people live. It was therefore on such a *Chisi* day that I found my field assistant and myself weeding a back yard tobacco crop.

In the same village there was an outright resistance to *Chisi* and I had the fortune to see some people working in their fields on *Chisi*. People said they were probably working for *maricho* (payment) and presumably this was less serious than to be working in one's own field on that day. Surprisingly, the people were not arrested even though they were working near the roadside and in full view of anyone who was passing by. Given these varying applications of the *Chisi* taboo, it emerges that people are not just docile in their acceptance of

⁵⁴ Resettlement officers had prohibited people from growing crops around their homesteads as this was thought to cause diseases like malaria. Homesteads also had to be kept clear of agricultural crops since thieves could hide in them waiting for an opportunity to strike. However, just as people resisted the edict to stop them from keeping goats or to stop stream bank gardens, people also resisted this move and backyard farming became common.

things simply because they come from authorities but find ways of manoeuvring and in the end doing what they want to do.

Indeed, as shown by the conversation below, people sometimes amended *Chisi* to suit their own needs and requirements.

Christine: So in terms of the observation of *chisi* is everything still the same?

Yes it is still the same. If the moon comes out for the first time or if there is a death people do not go to the fields and we still observe our Chisi on Friday. Chisi has not changed.

Netsayi: With all these deaths is that not a problem. Let's say three people die in a row you will end up going to the field one day that week. There is one village in a country here in Africa where people used to go to a single funeral for seven days and people were not allowed to work in their field for those seven days. Now because of AIDS a lot of people are dying such that they no longer follow the custom otherwise they would all die of hunger.

Which country is that (Looking surprised and with laughter in her eyes)

Netsayi: It must be Uganda, I am not really sure I read about it a long time ago.

Well here people do not go to work until that person has been buried.

Netsayi: So if there are a lot of deaths it means you do not go to work even for a week like those people who used to spend weeks and weeks at funerals.

They ended up spending all their time at funerals. (She said with mirth in her voice as if she was finding the whole issue funny and difficult to believe)

(We all laughed at this)

Netsayi: So the funerals are one day?

But here even if there is a series of funerals we do not go to work. It happened once. Centenary died and then another man from behind there (Feku). We mourned for Centenary then buried her. Soon after the burial that man died and from the cemetery we went to the other funeral. We spent the whole night weeping for that man and we still did not go to the fields.

Christine: Was it during the rainy season?

It was during the harvest.

Christine: But what if you go to your field? Are there no people who ignore the *chisi*?

It's just not proper. As an individual you might find it very difficult to go to your field when there is a funeral

Netsayi: But for you it is easy to avoid the funerals if you are at the fields?

You can go to work if you have not heard about it but as soon as you hear about it, you put your hoe down, go to take a bath and start preparing for the funeral. Especially for us these funerals are more demanding. We also have to attend funerals in Takawira village. We have to respect death.

Christine: But you are not forced?

We just respect our fellow village, so if there is a death there we attend the funeral because that village is close to us.

Christine: So Takawira is very close to your fields?

It's very close. It is just like this place and that place where those trees are so that when we are at our field we can hear people from that village talking.

Christine: Ho-o

The place is low lying but our field is a bit elevated so you can hear people from Takawira. We are real neighbours. Even at Rataply⁵⁵ village if there is a funeral we do not work.

Netsayi: At Rataply why?

It's just respect. If you hear that there is a death you just put your hoe down and attend the funeral.

Christine: What of you? You stay at the fields can you not ignore those things? Who will see you? You can even attend the funeral while your children remain at home to do the work.

Um, you cannot do that. If you do not know you can be forgiven. If people know that you did not attend the funeral or that your children were working people will call you for a small meeting. At this meeting they will tell you that you are not attending funerals. If there is a death in the village your children can only look after cattle not plough or do any real work.

Christine: What about tobacco farmers?

The rule still applies. If the person had already started reaping the tobacco then they can bring that load home because you reaped the tobacco before you knew of the new developments. You are allowed to tie that tobacco at home even if there is a funeral. But as soon as you hear of the funeral you are not allowed to continue to harvest any more tobacco.

Christine: So the crop does not get affected in the field?

It does but you have to know that one day can not do any real harm. You have to work at your field a number of days so one day cannot make a difference. Even if the funeral is at Rataply you have to stop everything to attend.

Thus although in the past people were not allowed to do any agricultural work on *Chisi* except herd cattle, with the advent of new crops such as tobacco which could easily go bad if proper procedures are not followed the rules are changing.

On the other hand, people do observe the *Chisi* of death not only because it is mandatory but because there is a genuine fear that if you do not people will not come to your aid should such a misfortune befall your family. Most farmers did not believe that *Chisi* was helpful at all but observed it because they did not want to antagonise traditional authorities.

In the past it was believed that if a person worked on *Chisi* his field could be attacked by marauding animals sent by ancestors or the person would see terrifying things like a monkey or baboon dancing to a radio or could see a python coiled around his plough. In extreme cases the perpetrator could be struck by lightning. These things are no longer seen to be happening and some people were complaining that they observed *Chisi* yet marauding animals often attacked their field instead of the fields of those who were not observing *Chisi*. *Chisi* is no longer self enforcing such that people can make their understanding of *Chisi* suit their own ends. The people who still cling to the idea of *Chisi* are the chief's and the *sabhukus*, most probably because they stand to gain if the traditional structures are kept in tact. However, the two *sabhukus* were

⁵⁵ Officially the village was called Rataplan but villagers referred to it as Rataply

unfortunate in that they were unpopular with the people. One was seen to support *Chisi* because he was very poor and very lazy and the other one was said to be supporting the idea because he was crazy as he had just recovered from a mental illness caused by witches.

Interpretation of events

Still on *Chisi*, events in the village can be interpreted differently by different people to suit their own agendas. One such incident occurred in the early 1980s when three people in the village lost their cattle to marauding lions. One individual lost two cattle and the other two individuals lost a cow and an ox each. All the people in the sample agreed that when they first came the area had thick trees and forests, which were a habitat for many wild animals including lions. I had three different versions depending on the people I talked to.

One of the villagers mentioned that Nyamaropa (the lion spirit of the area) had done it because the man who had lost two cattle had worked on *Chisi*. Suffice to say, the man was being punished for his sins. However, the respondent conveniently failed to mention that others in the village had also lost their cattle on that same day. This is selective retrieval to suit whatever point they want to put across. The second respondent who was among those who had lost cattle on that fateful day did not think it was because of *Chisi* violations because she had never worked on *Chisi*. However, she thought it was not a mystery, given the number of lions that roamed the area at that time. The third respondent was adamant that this was a clear case of punishment from the spirits:

Chisi hachieri musu wacharimwa (one does not get punished on the day that one breaks the *chisi* taboo). *One year we experienced a drought. My brother Josiah, the apostle, took water from the river fetching it with drums and a scotch cart to water his field. The spirits did not like that so his cattle Mazai and Misisi were attacked and killed by lions. Children who were going to school saw the cattle lying in the road in a strange way and they quickly came back to report. Madzisahwira began to ask him how he could water his tobacco using water from the river. Now look at how the spirits had retaliated.*

In this case it would be foolhardy to claim that seeing is believing because people witnessed the same event but understood it differently. In this incident we reach three different understandings of the same incident. The first one is yes, there were a lot of lions at that time but this was no ordinary lion but Nyamaropa who was punishing a violation; (2) there were a lot of lions and the lions would sometimes attack livestock; (3) Yes, there were a lot of lions but this was Nyamaropa's work. However, the person was being punished for irrigating his crop using river water. In this case, three different knowledge assertions were generated. These assertions converge at some point and diverge also on some fundamental points and every one is convinced that what they are saying is the truth for which they have evidence.

Related Stories

There were also other stories that circulated in the village which people believed in, although there was no tangible proof that whatever was said to have happened had actually happened. For example, in 2002 there was a story of an evil old woman who walked around with a dead child on her back; causing untold harm to the people she met by weaving her evil magic spells on them.

There is this story I heard when I went to Murehwa recently. It is said there is an Old woman who is walking around carrying a dead child on her back.

Netsayi: Carrying a dead child!? Why?

I do not know but they said it is also happening in Harare as we speak. Everyone knows about this old woman.

Netsayi: What is this old woman doing with the dead child!?

What she does is that if she arrives at your homestead she will ask for water to drink or even food. If you give her the water or food as soon as she leaves a child in the household dies.

Christine: So you do not have to give your things to just anyone or at least to people you do not trust.

Yes you must not give your things to just anyone. People are bad. They are not good at all. As I told you earlier, this old woman with the dead child is also terrorising people in Harare.

Christine: This old woman should get arrested.

People have tried to get her arrested but the old woman is elusive. If you invite a n'anga to catch her, the old woman just disappears from sight. It is said that sometimes she turns into an anthill. When the n'anga leaves the village the old woman comes back with her dead child. My water is boiling now. I am going to bath I hope I am not delaying you.

I did not take this story seriously until I went home to Harare for the heroes day holiday and heard from people that an old woman was terrorising Harare. I arrived home to see white ash and salt sprinkled around people's houses (in Epworth where my parents live) since it was said the evil people borrowing food were afraid of ash and salt. A lot of funerals in the area were attributed to the old woman. I also heard a similar story in Glenview Harare, only with a slight variation that the old woman could ask for money or for you to right her child's hat. They also said she could take your baby away and leave you with the dead child but in your eyes you would see the dead child as your child. The explanation in Harare was that it was the Satanists who were making sacrifices and causing a lot of accidents and funerals to happen because they liked blood. The story also made headline news in the local media because a lot of old women who were seen carrying babies or who asked for help were beaten up as they were suspected of being the evil old witch.

Whatever the explanations given they were fed by a traditional belief among the Shona people that an evil person cannot use mystical powers to murder someone else unless they have been granted permission by the relatives of the person or their ancestral spirits. For example, people can ask for fire embers and if you give them that is the permission they need. In this way, you have given

the person permission to kill an inhabitant of the household. If you do not trust the person, you do not give anything away lest you give the person more than you bargained for.

No one had ever seen the old woman but everyone believed the old woman existed. Everyone in the village (and indeed many urban people) took the story of the woman very seriously and people scattered ash around their homesteads because this was said to scare the woman away. It was possible that the story had been generated because of the drought and people wanted to justify not wanting to give people any kind of assistance. We also heard stories of people who had been unwittingly given goblins because of too much borrowing. At the time of the IFPRI project, the stories had been of stingy people who got punished instead of generous people.

When it came to beliefs that were mystical, things did not have to be seen to be believed; as indeed seeing such a thing could spell your end. For example, people did not have to go to the field on *Chisi* to ascertain whether indeed the lion spirits were roaming the land. Likewise, people did not have any particular desire to meet the old woman to determine her authenticity before they would sprinkle ash and salt since the consequences of meeting such a woman would be deadly. Indeed such mystical stories have self-preserving qualities, the old woman could turn into an anthill each time she felt threatened or did not want to be seen. At one time she is said to have turned into a plastic paper after a thorough beating from members of the public. Although as a researcher it would have been quite nice to meet either the lion or the old woman as this would have verified the existence of such a phenomenon, I did not have the inclination to meet either the lions or the old witch.

Conclusion

Both farmers and scientists carry out experiments, although they reach very different, and even sometimes conflicting, conclusions. Although these experiments differ in their construction and basic structure, both farmers and scientists are out to improve livestock and crop farming. Since they consider different things when evaluating seed, if the scientists fail to consider the needs of farmers, they can breed a seed of scientific high quality but one that does not meet the needs and demands of farmers. There is thus no rigid distinction between 'nature' and 'society' or 'culture' and 'science'. They are embedded into each other as this chapter has demonstrated. This proves the fallacy of the modernisation theories where knowledge can be regarded as only that which flows from the experts to the farmers. Farmers should not be viewed as traditional and unscientific but as actors who actively take part in the production of knowledge by making situated selections of what they think will work for them and also experimenting to improve agriculture in a way that is meaningful for them. This is so regardless of whether what is meaningful for

them conflicts with 'expert' knowledge. Knowledge and indeed the capacity to produce more knowledge is not only the preserve of experts. As a result, there has to be at least some form of consultation between experts and farmers before seed can be developed.

Secondly, although the sponsored experiments were an essential way by which farmers could gain knowledge, they were limited in their usefulness because of the high input cost required. Sponsored experiments were good for farmers who could afford to buy seed and fertiliser for they could purchase seed knowing fully the seed potential, thereby minimising the risk. As individual choices were limited by the distribution of resources, it is my conclusion, however, that for demonstration plots to be relevant, agricultural experts also have to focus on low input farming with better returns. These experiments could focus on the use of different kinds of manure and locally available seed. These experiments would be highly relevant to the needs of the poor ensuring that all social levels of people are catered for. It should be noted that, even in the event of a demonstration of an agricultural 'feat' performed by some farmer, farmers can only take up practices that they can afford. Thus farmers do not always stick to what they know because they are conservative but often because the conditions under which they operate set limitations of what is possible. Farmers have to do the best they can within limited choices. For farmers it makes much sense to observe the fields of friends and adapt their friend's ways of doing things because usually they experience the same structural circumstances, instead of observing demonstration plots that emphasise high-input agriculture when they can not afford it. In this way, individual choices are shaped by the distribution of resources.

As people are generally more sceptical of expert knowledge and rely more on their own observations and experiments, AREX and other knowledge experts must tap into this proclivity. As discussed in this chapter, for most farmers observation is important before any new methods of farming are adopted. There should be more observation plots. However these demonstration or observation plots should be structured in such a way that they address problems as defined by farmers, not address problems as defined by experts. It has to be realised that expert knowledge is mediated by farmers' experiences, beliefs, and ability. Farmers make selections and choose that which suit their own needs and capabilities. Although there is need to equip farmers with theoretical knowledge, Master Farmer certificates need to be regarded as more than just paper to access resources.

To be effective, AREX and other experts should understand people's belief systems. Frequently, people's beliefs can prevent people from adopting, - or sometimes encourage them to adopt, - certain behaviours. It is important then for rural development workers to understand the belief systems of people they

work with, since this will enable them to negotiate the beliefs and changes in behaviour without antagonising people.

In contrast to the common belief in popular literature that the peasant's mind is difficult to change, local farmers always negotiate and renegotiate their knowledge and beliefs to suit current needs that give rise to new world views. The point has been explored in this chapter in relation to *Chisi*, a sacred day among the Shona. People have found novel ways of modifying and contesting the enforcement of *Chisi*. 'Traditional' knowledge is therefore not as traditional as it may seem at first sight as people 'always process social experience and ...devise ways of coping with life even under the most extreme forces of coercion' (Long and Ploeg, 1994:66). However, farmers can only change behaviour and attitudes if the required changes are within their means and perceived to be beneficial in both the short and long term. Development experts should first understand farmers' needs before they are quick to condemn them for being resistant to change.

This chapter has also challenged the notion of the 'conservative' peasant farmer. Such a notion does not provide a convincing picture since local farmers are not homogeneous in their outlook and neither are they very conservative. This fallacy of labelling peasant farmers as conservative stems from another fallacy, namely, the modernist belief that views 'development in terms of a progressive movement towards technologically and institutionally more complex integrated forms of modern society'. This is a fallacy because, as people are confronted with modernity and its problems, they find local solutions that are more beneficial than modern remedies. Farmers make strategic accommodations where expert and local knowledge are integrated in novel ways. Thus sometimes farmers do not adopt modern methods because they are insufficiently tutored or because they are not yet believers in science and need to be converted, but rather because they choose, in certain circumstances, to strategically break away from official knowledge.

It has become apparent in this chapter that farmers also have a thirst for producing new knowledge. They do not learn only from doing what they have always done but actively experiment to produce knowledge.

Lastly and most importantly, it can be concluded that seeing does not necessarily lead to believing. People observe things and interpret them differently, such that the same thing can be attributed to different causal factors. As a result, rural development workers should not be overly scientific, ignoring the different perceptions and meanings that people attach to certain activities and interventions, as this could spell the failure of scientifically-sound projects.

7

Magic, Witchcraft, Religion and Knowledge

Introduction

There is hardly a way that one can talk of farming and knowledge in Mupfurudzi without reference to issues of magic, religion and witchcraft. Indeed, these issues had a way of cropping up in conversations with various informants whether they were specifically asked for or not. People would deny or acknowledge the existence of magic depending on the social context in which a particular question on magic was asked. However, no one in the sample denied the existence of witchcraft and all respondents claimed to belong to one religion or the other that is Christianity or African Religion.

Letts (1991:305,306) regards magical beliefs, religious beliefs, and superstition as illogical, inconsistent and evidentially unfounded. For him the only legitimate questions that can be asked of these beliefs are why people hold them, where and when they originated, how they are transmitted and what functions they serve. For positivists like Letts, there is a real world out there in which people need to act objectively and scientifically to achieve results. To them, believing in witchcraft or magic is just like believing in Father Christmas and the tooth fairy. In this view, to be effective local farmers should react to the dictates of the objective world and their magical and religious beliefs are regarded as out of touch with the 'real' world out there. Magical, witchcraft, and religious beliefs are regarded as retrogressive and an obstacle to change. For Bourdillon (1989:29) the term 'magic' can also be used to denote circumstances where 'people confuse the logic of communication with the logic of material efficacy'. His argument is that this kind of confusion sometimes occurs and that it is convenient to classify such confusion as magic.

Accusations of witchcraft have been linked to jealousy (Fisiy and Geschierre, 1996:197; Daneel, 1971:68; Dolan, 2002:669; Ciekawy and Geschierre, 1998:5), and for Evans-Pritchard (1937: 404) 'the sickness is the sorcery and proof of it'⁵⁶.

⁵⁶ However, it should be noted that Evans-Pritchard (1937) also tried to show that witchcraft beliefs are rational and based on experience although he also was interested in explaining why the Azande people believed in these false beliefs. For instance in explaining why the Azande believed in magic in spite of contradictory evidence and beliefs Evans-Pritchard (1937:475) wrote: 'magic is very largely employed against mystical powers, witchcraft and sorcery. Since its actions transcend experience it cannot be easily contradicted by experience... contradictions between the beliefs are not noticed by the Azande because beliefs are not all present at the same

This denies the possibility of regarding people that believe in witchcraft as rational people who consider evidence before witchcraft is attributed to be the cause of anything. Instead the witchcraft accuser is condemned to a perpetual state of jealousy and a perpetual state of confusion in which he fails to recognise the all-too-obvious link between disease and bacteria and other contaminating agencies out there in the 'real' world.

Although I do not deny that some witchcraft accusations are a result of jealousy on the part of the accusers, I also maintain that in most cases people consider the evidence before them before accusations can be made. Some witchcraft accusations are dismissed by villagers (both rich and poor) for their lack of evidence. Although Niehaus *et al* (2001:116) recognizes that often evidence is needed to ascertain whether witchcraft has occurred, he trivialises this evidence when he claims that sometimes evidence can be circumstantial. Thus, if his view on circumstantial evidence is taken to its logical conclusion, evidence that is normally permissible for those who believe in witchcraft is not substantive, is not able to tie the witch to the witchcraft act, and indeed does not even prove that witchcraft has occurred at all. Where the witches confess, the confession is tied to political power games. Similarly, the poor are seen as using the confessions or threats of witchcraft to gain power within their households (See Dolan, 2002:667 on how women in a district in Kenya used threats of witchcraft against their husbands to gain access to resources within households). Niehaus *et al* (2001:9) regards witchcraft as a 'weapon of the weak' which the latter use to gain access to resources owned by the rich within their communities or families.

Elsewhere witchcraft beliefs and accusation have been linked to conflict and stressful situations. 'In our extremely stressed society traditional, witchcraft beliefs provide apparent relief. At times of economic repression, suspicions of witchcraft abound as do the consequent witch hunts' (Bourdillon, 1993:119; also see Dolan, 2002:663 on the link between witchcraft and friction within communities). Although these observations are relevant, I feel there is need to go beyond these economic and social tension approaches to witchcraft. This is so, because as mentioned above it has to be realised that people consider different kinds of evidence before a person is accused of witchcraft, in spite of his or her wealth or lack of it.

Structural approaches that emphasise economic explanations and the accompanying jealousy to some extent fail to analyse magic and witchcraft beliefs from the point of view of the people that believe in them, or who believe that they are witchcraft practitioners. This is so because these people's beliefs and their confessions are dismissed a priori as due to delusions caused by confusion and a critical failure to deal adequately with 'objective' facts in an

time but function in different situations. They are therefore not brought into opposition'.

'objective' world; and as an ineffectual attempt to deal with modernity; or simply as an indicator of the stress levels within a society. It will become apparent in this chapter that instead of adopting structural explanations, witchcraft beliefs are better understood by adopting situational and multi-meaning explanations which are highly aware of the ongoing dynamics and differential interpretations of the significance of witchcraft.

The witchcraft-modernity thesis that links beliefs and accusations of witchcraft to an attempt to deal with the malcontents of modernity (Geschiere, 1997) fails to explain why people who believe in witchcraft at one moment might not believe in it at the next moment, except maybe by simply alluding to jealousy and the need for power and wealth as the explanation. If witchcraft beliefs are to be understood as an attempt to deal with the 'malcontents of modernity', what does it mean in circumstances where the believer in witchcraft does not turn to witchcraft explanations when in other similar circumstances he did so? Does it mean that, in that particular instance when he chooses not to resort to witchcraft explanations, the tension between him and modernity's malcontents have been resolved? This then leads to a spurious understanding of modernity and witchcraft whereby if people do not understand or fully appreciate or want to gain control over modern changes, they turn to witchcraft, whereas, when for some reason or other, understanding and enlightenment finally dawns on them they drop witchcraft accusations and beliefs until such a time when, again, they are in tension with another segment of modernity. Such understandings can only be achieved through denying persons the capacity to interpret the evidence available to them, and the right to be able to believe or not to believe, and they only focus on the possibilities afforded by these discourses to gain control over modern changes. This chapter maintains the position that there is need for 'anthropologists to avoid either extreme in their analysis of witchcraft: on the one hand of assigning only the 'traditional', micro-community social tensions to witch-like powers, or on the other hand of superimposing western academic and popular notions of modernity onto them' (Rasmussen, 2004:336).

Geschiere (1997) laments what he calls 'the rise of the occult' in modern Cameroon and links this to modernity where politicians are seen to amass power through recourse to the occult, where witchcraft is a 'language that 'signifies' the modern changes:... it promises unheard of chances to enrich oneself' (Geschiere, 1997:24). However, what he does not appreciate is the fact that what he perceives to be a rise in the occult might simply reflect an opening up of political space in which these beliefs can be discussed openly by the repealing of the colonial laws that made it illegal to accuse others of witchcraft and seek redress in courts for any loss and pain suffered through the witchcraft perpetrated by others. The same criticism applies for Niehaus *et al* (2001) in that, although in South Africa the witchcraft suppression act has not been

repealed, the fall of the apartheid regime opened up spaces for people to discuss witchcraft. Hence, the apparent rise in witchcraft which Niehaus linked to modernity can best be explained as a grassroots response to democratisation which opened up discussion on such matters that had been expunged from public discourse.

In Zimbabwe, to the dismay of colonial authorities who were intent on 'improving' African agriculture, Africans always linked good crop yield to magic, witchcraft and religion instead of good farming practices (Bolding, 2004) and skills such as hunting were and are still linked to magic and religion. Thus, in this chapter, I take the view that witchcraft is not a language that signifies modern changes but rather continuity with 'customary' and deeply embedded sets of beliefs and practices. In African societies wealth, health, and agricultural production or rather wealth, health, agricultural production, and fertility were inextricably linked to issues of magic, witchcraft, and religion; Leading to a rearrangement of witchcraft beliefs and arguments whenever the later were contested, negotiated, and reworked by people in accordance with their needs. This, in itself, is not problematic so long as the dynamism of witchcraft beliefs is recognised and we do away with attempts to understand witchcraft simply as 'traditional' or as 'modern'. 'More often bits and pieces of discursive texts are brought together in innovative ways or in strange combinations in particular situations in order to negotiate or contest certain shifting points of view. Indeed the multiplicity and fragmentation of discourses [and this would include discourses on witchcraft]... is more often the case than the clash of well defined opposing view points and rationalities' (Long, 2004:28)

For Geertz (1966:4 cited in Keesing, 1987:166) 'Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic'. A weakness of Geertz's definition is that he does not leave room for negotiation, contestation, and change in his definition of religion. In this chapter, there is a realisation that there is no one religious belief, and that, religious beliefs in the area I studied were contested (as indeed they are contested all over the world). This chapter acknowledges that different people adhering to the same religious faith might not practice and interpret their commitment in the same way. However, regardless of these differences within and across religions (both Shona religion and Christianity⁵⁷)

⁵⁷ As noted later in the Chapter, some independent Christian churches have borrowed heavily from African Religion. In spite of this, these churches have managed to maintain their distinction from African Religion, just as they have managed to maintain their independence from mainstream Christian churches such as Roman Catholicism, the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church, and the Salvation Army etc.

religious belief affects conceptions of knowledge and how agriculture is practised. As Havekort *et al*, (2003:142) puts it, 'Religious and philosophical concepts have their place within traditional world views. Cosmovision to a larger extent dictates the way the land, water, plants, and animals are to be used, how decisions are taken, problems are solved, experimentation takes place, and how rural people organise themselves'. However, people do not simply order their practices according to a pre-given order of religiosity, but, as demonstrated in respect to *chisi* beliefs in Chapter 6, they invent new religious forms and transform the old religion to suit new needs and conditions.

On the other hand, there are other scholars, like Pool (1994) and Jackson (1989), who do not seek to establish the truth or falsity of these beliefs but rather to study and understand these beliefs in their contexts. Why spoil the fantasy? In this chapter, however, I do not aim to discuss the various functions or dysfunctions of various magical, religious and witchcraft beliefs that people may hold. Neither do I wish to discuss the premises on which these beliefs are held to be true for that indeed is the role of the anthropologist of religion. Denying the importance of these factors, for example in enhancing or lessening agricultural production as scientists do, does not make them any the less important in people's agricultural practices. My aim in this chapter is primarily to discuss how these beliefs impact on knowledge. The importance of magic, witchcraft, and religion as part of the local theoretical tradition for identifying facts and genuine phenomenon can hardly be overemphasised.

Magic

While much agricultural practice is shaped by rational economic and technical choices, there are also issues of culture that affect people's perceptions and behaviour. In this section, I focus on magical beliefs and practices that can affect farming practices, and in particular that can affect the way information about agricultural technology is produced, transmitted and received. I will try to distinguish between religion and magic, but they feed into each other and cannot always be distinguished. Some forms of magic are incorporated into religious practice but not all religious experiences are magical and not all magical experiences are religious. For example, some people regard water blessed by Christian priests and prophets as an effective counter against people with bad magic. On the other hand, those who believe in African religion might interpret events such as poor yields as punishment from the ancestors who have great power over the livelihoods of their descendants. Indeed for me religious beliefs are magical. My decision to separate magic and religion is based on the fact that most Christian churches regard magic as evil and they ban the use of magical amulets and medicines among their followers. Thus, in the Johanne Masowe and Johanne Marange churches that are dominant in the

study area anyone seen using these magical amulets or magic horns is regarded as a witch.

These beliefs in religion and magic provide a basis through which people evaluate their performance as well as the performance of others within the community. For instance, good crop yields might mean a person is using bad magic, or that he has protected his field with magical charms, or that the ancestors and God are satisfied with his conduct, not merely that he has great farming knowledge or that he manages his things well. For many, consideration of effort or skill or technology is a secondary issue – and in any case begs the question of how an individual acquires the skill or knowledge or propensity to work. Often magic is supposed to produce good yields at the expense of others: for instance, the magician finds supernatural ways of stealing the crops of others. On the other hand, when good fortune is understood in terms of religion, then it can never be at the expense of others, and sometimes it will be good for the general populace.

The majority of the people in the sample believed in the existence of magic to enhance agricultural skills. However, of all those who believed in the existence of magic, none admitted to having used magic and only two people in 2001 and three in 2002 claimed to have lost their produce to people with magic.

Case 1

In this family, the children were convinced that some people have bad magic (*tsvera*) to steal from other people's fields. They were convinced of the existence of the magic because when they herd cattle during the dry season often they found clay pots filled with water and medicines buried in the middle of particular fields. Why would anyone bury a clay pot filled with *muti* in their field, if it is not for the purposes of *tsvera*?⁵⁸

The father was convinced that *tsvera* existed because he had at one time been a victim of it. Someone who pretended to be his friend once came to his field during the evening to ask for snuff. When he left this farmer's field, this 'friend' collected a tin full of soil from his field. On discovering that this is what had been done, he followed the man to his field and found him still with the soil in the tin. He asked him why he had taken some soil from his field to which he answered that he wanted to use the soil to wash his hands in the river which, as was latter pointed out, he had already passed. The respondent was enraged and strongly suspected *tsvera*. He demanded that the soil in the tin be thrown away. In the end, the field never gave him anything so he had to change the field. The *tsvera* had already worked. It had made his soil cold. The official reason for

⁵⁸ Incidentally some people thought that some people dug medicines into their fields to protect them from *tsvera*. As a result we can never be sure that the clay pots in people's fields were indeed *tsvera* or were an attempt to counter *tsvera*.

moving from that plot was that the field was less than twelve acres. If he had asked the resettlement officer to be moved because the field had some bad magic on it, he would not have been transferred to another field. Asked how anyone can tell if they are a victim of *tsvera* this respondent answered:

That's easy to tell. For example, if you had received good rains and applied enough fertiliser you expect a good yield. If you do not get a good yield you will know something has happened. The convictions become a certainty if a prophet confirms your suspicions.

The only way to neutralise *tsvera* was to use holy water.

Case 2

This farmer was a very poor farmer and people thought that he was lazy. He believed in the existence of *tsvera*. He believed that if you cultivated a large piece of land and applied enough fertiliser then you could expect to get a large yield.

If the yield is low, then it is obvious you will have lost your yield to tsvera. People with tsvera are like witches that operate at night and are able to get in even if you lock your door.

According to the respondent, some people also have magic to make others unknowingly work for them at night when they should be sleeping⁵⁹. The following day, the people who will have been overworked at night will feel too tired and lazy to work in their own field. Cattle can also suffer the same fate such that when their owners want to use them the following day they will be tired and sleepy. Faced with this problem, one can appeal to traditional healers and prophets. They will tell you who your enemies are and how to overcome their magic. When asked if his cattle had ever been used this way, the respondent said no, but when asked if he thought he had ever been a victim, he said yes he had been a victim:

That has happened to me. For example, this year Farmers World gave us a loan for cotton. We had enough things for one hectare and we are supposed to get 7-8 bales per hectare but we got only 4½ bales. However, I managed to pay back the loan.

To protect fields against *tsvera* one had to use protective medicines, which often turn around and start to 'eat' one's own children. As a result, he does not do anything to protect his field, though his wives sometimes got holy water from the prophets. The respondent also said, that as a result of his possession by baboon spirits, he was not allowed to visit traditional healers (regardless of the fact that one of his wives was a traditional healer) or go to prophets. He strongly believed that in the village there were some people with *tsvera*. These people cultivated small areas but got huge yields. What was surprising to him was that all farmers loaned seed and fertilisers at the same time. The

⁵⁹ See Niehaus *et al* (2001:5) for similar accusations in a village in South Africa, where a villager was accused of keeping baboons and turning children into zombies to work in his garden at night.

respondent felt that, sometimes, he had even worked harder than those whom he suspected of having *tsvera*, but always the culprit's yield surpassed the wildest imagination. His wife, a traditional healer, had once been accused of practising witchcraft on infants and toddlers at a village meeting. He refuted this allegation and maintained that it was because people hated him.

Case 3

The respondent was a very poor farmer and did not believe in the existence of *tsvera*. For him *tsvera* is a thing of the past when people did not use fertilisers and used cow manure instead. In those days a person would plant a small area and get a lot of maize, even more maize than those who planted a large area. This was because the person had *tsvera*. But the advent of fertilisers spelt the end of *tsvera*. For him, *tsvera* accusations are just like witchcraft accusations: when a person dies there is always a witch (*panofa munhu hapashaikwe muroyi*).

Case 4

This was a very capable farmer (using the standards of both the local farmers and the AREX officers). Neither he nor his wife believed in *tsvera*. The use of sufficient fertiliser was the answer to poor yields. The ability to plan and manage farming properly was the only *tsvera* that a person needed to be a successful farmer. However, their children, a son and a daughter, were convinced that *tsvera* existed, but they would only say so in the absence of their parents and they wondered why their parents were denying the existence of something they (the parents) knew existed. The children went further to comment on scenarios and examples within the community which to them indicated the use of *tsvera*.

As I consider these case studies I can't help but think of Zeitlyn's (1991:61) comment that, 'The existence of mythical creatures is more newsworthy than their non-existence', just like the existence of *tsvera* tickles my imagination more than its said non-existence. This can also simply reflect the fact that a lot of people in the sample believed in the existence of magic and those who did not, or at least doubted its ability to work, did not have much to say on the topic.

Magic is a complex issue since some people who denied its existence or ability to work often still took measures to protect their fields from people with bad magic. Even when the wife was the one looking for magic to protect the field, it was impossible to tell whether the husband was simply humouring their wife by allowing her to use magic; or whether he somehow believed in magic but was loathe to admit this. Usually men left the duty to their wives, who took holy water from prophets and priests. All female-headed households except one had taken measures to protect their crops. Below is the view of one man and two women on magic.

On being asked why he did not take any measures to protect his crops although he knew people with bad magic were stealing from them, one man said,

I am not interested. My wives are the ones who go to get the holy water.

On the issue of crop protection, one woman pointed out that:

Some people put pegs (hoko)⁶⁰ in their fields to guard their crops against mysterious disappearance, but I use holy water from my church. When I go to Mutemwa this year, I will take a five-litre bottle of water. I want Sekuru Chakaipa⁶¹ to bless it.

The second woman said,

I use water that has been made holy by prayers from prophets in my church. I sprinkle the water in my field before I start planting crops so that my field is blessed by the power of God. If my field is blessed, so are the crops that come out of it. This blessed water will help my crops grow healthy and strong and will chase away any evil spirits so that when selling my crops I won't have bad luck.

There are gender differences in the way people regard magic. Men are more likely to acknowledge the existence of magic and then deny its effectiveness. On the other hand, in their role as providers of food, women need to feel they are in control over what happens to their food supply to ensure food security. They need good healthy crops to feed their families or risk going to *maricho* to work for food when there is a crop failure (men hardly ever go to *maricho*). The different domestic roles played by men and women have an influence on their views on magic and ultimately on their behaviour. A big healthy crop is not necessarily associated with the variety of seed, although people realise that if you put enough fertiliser and everything else remains constant you are assured of a big harvest. Whilst farmers and scientists believed in the usefulness of fertiliser application, for farmers technology was good but needed to be propped up with a little magic to get good yields.

Often the good farmers are accused of using magic. All poor farmers except one believed in the existence of magic: all the better-off farmers ridiculed this idea. The farmers who were accused of using magic were sometimes accused because they were able to achieve extraordinary feats such as cultivating only a small area but getting much more than people who cultivated twice the area and who worked twice as hard. Presented with such an argument, the wife of a farmer who was regarded as a good farmer and not considered by others villagers as using magic was adamant that,

The only muti is the one I have been telling you about. If you plant the whole 12 acres with two bags of fertiliser that is, one top dressing, one down dressing what do you think you will

⁶⁰ *Hoko* is usually a peg, which is used to demarcate boundaries. It is usually a wooden stick or an iron rod but can be anything that marks boundaries. However, when used in association with magic and witchcraft, it refers to the herbs that are used but are usually dug into the soil in clay pots or bottles.

⁶¹ She belonged to the Roman Catholic Church and referred to Father Patrick Chakaipa (now deceased) as Grandfather Chakaipa because of his advanced age.

get. Then you start pointing to your "next door" neighbour accusing him or her of using magic. You will be saying ah, why is it that I planted 12 acres and they only planted two but they got more maize than I did. It is because they had enough fertilisers for those two acres.

However, even among those who believed in magic, there was an acceptance that access to fertilisers could determine who the good farmer was. Regardless of this, most farmers who believed in the use of magic refused to consider the fact that they might have been incorrectly applying fertilisers to their crops. One farmer, who was adamant that he was always losing his crops to *tsvera*, maintained that he correctly and consistently applied fertiliser to his field. On a separate occasion, when he was asked how much fertiliser he applied to his crops, he maintained that he applied one bag of ammonium nitrate, and one bag of Compound D to every acre of land. This was despite the fact that, according to him, AREX recommended two bags of Compound D and three bags of ammonium nitrate per acre.

On the other hand, one of the good farmers maintained that he used six bags of compound D and eight bags of ammonium nitrate per hectare which was much higher than the village average for fertiliser application pointed out that:

In most cases if you work hard and have access to inputs then you are likely to get something. Others work hard, but because they do not have inputs and other farming implements, they do not have anything. You can plough your field and even manage to weed the whole field but if you do not have fertiliser you will not get anything.

However, the kind of farming skills a person has, or the kind of farming practices used, even the kind of seeds and technology applied, were usually not regarded as the first consideration in explaining success or failure. One female household head in Muringamombe alleged that she had lost her maize to people with bad magic:

This year people with bad magic stole our maize... We were expecting a good harvest from the way our crops looked in the field. But we failed to get even one ton.

This female head was convinced that her crops had been stolen using magic, despite the fact that she had planted an open pollinated variety on a large portion of her land and had not used enough fertiliser. There is an all-too-familiar pattern in which people look at external causes before evaluating their own culpability. People would rather blame someone else than admit that they do not have enough resources or that they are not applying the correct amounts of fertiliser or even cultivating low-yield, non-commercial varieties, whilst their colleagues are doing the opposite. As a result, the belief in *tsvera* can make people reluctant to question their own behaviours and sometimes they are even reluctant to learn new things from others since these others might be seen not to be good but as using bad magic. With all this in mind, one might ask whether *tsvera* is a defence mechanism by powerless and resource-poor farmers. But does this not risk reducing the concept of *tsvera* to another idiom denoting powerlessness?

Jackson (1989:103) points out that some beliefs are held to be true because one's elders hold them to be true and hence they have the authority of custom. Jackson looks at a variety of factors that influence people's beliefs. For example, people can pick up beliefs from others around them. What others take for granted and believe, what people learn from parents and elders, what they learn from peers, hearsay stories, real experiences, etc can influence a person's beliefs and ideas. This, however, was not always the case where *tsvera* was concerned. In the sample there were two families in which the parents did not believe in the existence of *tsvera* but some of the children in the family did allude to its existence. Even for those who agreed with their parents that *tsvera* existed, the children often pointed to 'evidence' that was independent of their parents; as in case 1, where the children pointed to clay pots filled with water and *muti* in the culprit's fields. However, this does not completely rule out belief from authority since what could be interpreted as evidence could well have a strong cultural underpinning.

The belief in magic worked against learning by observation. As the following examples will show, it was the general sentiment that during the rainy season people did not like people to come to their field because some would pretend to come to observe whilst they putting in place their *tsvera*. The same sentiment was highlighted in Case 1, when the respondent maintained that his 'friend' pretended to come to the field to borrow some snuff when all he intended was to steal some soil so as to use magic to steal the respondent's crop. One informant in the sample was threatened with a beating in a nearby village for walking on the edges of someone's field during the rainy season because of the suspicion that he was using magic because crops can follow the footsteps of the person with magic. Indeed on many occasions most people mused why anyone would want to pass through their field during the rainy season and, sometimes, staring at someone's field for a long time would raise the ire of the owner of the field.

Tsvera was not only used to steal crops whilst they were still in the field. Even when the crops were at home *tsvera* could still be sent to steal the grain. In all discussions, *tsvera* was mentioned in connection with food crops such as maize and sorghum but never in connection with commercial crops such as tobacco and cotton, which were regarded as modern crops. If accusations of the use of bad magic are reactions to modernity's malcontents or even a result of jealousy, why did these accusations not extend to tobacco and cotton, which could easily lead to jealousy since these crops were associated with more money and wealth? Indeed, as shall be seen later, these crops could not be sent to the *Zumba*.

Familiars⁶² that looked like dolls could be sent to *eat* the grain or a whirlwind could be sent to snatch the grain away. To deal with familiars one had to consult the prophet, while the whirlwind was easier. For example, when one was winnowing rapoko a whirlwind could be sent to steal it. According to one old woman, to make the medicine powerless one would say something like 'take the rapoko and see if you will benefit'. The whirlwind would 'feel shy' because it would know that it had been seen and so it would not take the rapoko. (That brings me back to memories of my childhood when I used to stay with my grandmother during school holidays. If there was a whirlwind my grandmother would instruct us to lift our index fingers and to start shouting go away whirlwind. Do not come here because there is no child of a witch, and then the whirlwind would change direction away from us).

All people who believed in *tsvera* magic agreed that there existed ways that could be used to counter the magic. However, counter-magic was always risky as it could turn from being good to being evil. As a result, most people claimed that they did not protect their fields with counter-magic but sometimes used holy water blessed by the priest at church. Even those who used *tsvera* were at risk since at any time the *tsvera* magic could turn against them. With this in mind, not all the good farmers were accused of using magic. Only those with poor households, that is those who get bumper harvests but have nothing of material value to show for it, are accused. Added to this category are good farmers with problematic homesteads. For example, a mentally retarded child was taken as a sign of the use of magic by a farmer whose child was so afflicted. Is it legitimate then to question whether the fact that people do not have total control over farming inputs and implements explains their lack of control over *tsvera*?

This belief in magic also impacted on the people's willingness to discuss issues related to their yields with other people. If their crops failed to fetch a good price on the market, and they have little money to spend after a good harvest, they are likely to be suspected of using witchcraft. This is so because it is usually believed that money obtained by using magic is like paper and cannot buy anything worthwhile. In some cases the goblins which are used to amass such wealth are very demanding such that the money is then used to

⁶² Witchcraft familiars refer to the tools that the witch uses to perform his/her witchcraft acts. These familiars can be inanimate objects such as dolls or herbs to which people attribute the human like abilities to move, think and act. Familiars can also be dead people who are taken from their graves by magical means and controlled to do bad things by their owners. In some cases familiars are understood to be things that are made by witches, acquire human form although they always take the form of dwarves or young children. Snakes, owls and hyenas can also be witchcraft familiars.

purchase things for the goblins to keep them happy (when goblins are not kept happy they will start causing havoc for their owner).

Such beliefs restrict the spread of information about seed varieties. It also impacts on the free circulation of seed within the same village. People exhibited great mistrust of their fellow villagers and instead felt comfortable carrying out transactions with people from other villages. For example it was believed that some people could give you seeds that they had treated with *tsvera* medicine such that if you planted their seed then your yield would automatically go to their field. Alternatively, a person could give you seed which could turn into witchcraft familiars and haunt you and your family. This sentiment might as also be a factor in building social networks, since people always pointed out that their best friends with whom they exchanged information and other things did not live in their village.

Magic was not always used to steal from others or to protect crops against people with bad magic: it is also used to protect crops against marauding animals. To do so, they had to observe certain associated taboos. For example, according to one traditional healer, some people have rules not take salt to the field, so as not to neutralise the magic that protects the field. They should not eat any of the field crops whilst standing or walking. Either they have to sit down and eat at the field or they carry everything home and eat on arrival. However, before they are allowed to pluck anything from the field, monkeys should be given their share, after which no animal will attack the field. One woman would hang some cobs of green maize in trees around the field for the monkeys to eat. This was to thank them for not eating the maize. This was done because the woman had magic to protect her field against marauding animals but for the magic to work it was stipulated that this action had to be carried out every time before eating any of the first crops from the field. As a result, farming knowledge did not only mean good land husbanding methods, but also good magic that could make the difference between being a farmer and being a very good farmer.

Witchcraft

It is difficult to offer an accurate definition of what constitutes witchcraft. In Shona the word for witch is *muroyi*. A *muroyi* is basically an evil person who specialises in killing people through magical and mystical means, which are associated with the use of bad *muti*. Gelfand (1956) also regards killing a person by poisoning as an act of witchcraft. According to Bourdillon (1987:183) "Witchcraft is the paradigm of all evil and anti-social behaviour, but not all such behaviour is witchcraft...Witchcraft can refer to any threat, involving an element of furtiveness, to personal security by the violation of the human person or of human life, or by the violation of any deeply held value. A witch or sorcerer (*muroyi*) is a person in any way responsible for such a violation".

Some informants referred to witchcraft as a 'science' and sometimes white man's science was referred to as witchcraft. However, witches always intended harm on others whilst some good could come out of the work of the scientist. The similarity of the two lay in the fact that the workings of scientists and witches were mysterious to ordinary people. That is, the 'witchcraft of science', and the 'science of witchcraft' are not easily understood by lay people.

On the other hand, witchcraft is not so very different from magic - it can be understood in some cases as a form of bad magic - with the *proviso* that magic is not always bad and witchcraft is always invariably directed to harming others. Hence when magic is used to harm others then it is sometimes referred to as witchcraft. For example, some people in the sample referred to *tsvera*⁶³ as witchcraft. The belief in witchcraft sometimes took so weird twists. Getting a very good yield when everyone else did not get anything could sometimes be a shaming and embarrassing experience. One farmer who achieved an excellent groundnut harvest, when everyone else in the village got nothing was embarrassed to shell her groundnuts during daylight and took to doing so at night. She could not even ask people to help her because she was afraid that people would accuse her of stealing their crops using magic. She feared people could easily suspect her of witchcraft since she had lived previously with a *n'anga* (traditional healer). After a comment from my research assistant, Christine, that her groundnuts were unusually large for a drought year this woman admitted this and pointed to what she thought was a possible explanation:

That's true. Some people say it was an omen foretelling Centenary's death. At our field we had a lot of pumpkins also. People are saying that pumpkins and groundnuts are bad omens especially in a bad year or when you get more than usual.

Christine: How many bags did you get?

Eight bags.

Netsayi: How much maize did you get?

Two scotch carts. Just enough to see us through the season.

Netsayi: But you got a lot of groundnuts?

Jah sure. No one in this village got groundnuts except me. I feel ashamed and embarrassed to shell them during daylight because people will see me if they come by.

Netsayi: Why do you feel ashamed? (I asked in genuine surprise)

⁶³ Of Gelfand's nine different kinds of witchcraft, I am mostly interested in his definition of *divisi* which is also another name for *tsvera*. Gelfand (1956:53) defines *divisi* thus 'there is a witch who possesses a *gona* or special horn filled with medicine which has the power of producing plentiful crops. The power of *divisi* passes to whoever possesses the *gona*, but before the bountiful crops can be obtained the *gona* must cause a death or even several deaths... The fact that he (the owner) accepts the price of procuring such a *gona* makes him a witch or tantamount to a witch'.

Centenary was a traditional healer and people will start to say because we stayed with a n'anga then we must have been using magic to steal the groundnuts from other people's fields and that is why everyone else's groundnuts failed.

However, a large crop does not always result in witchcraft accusations. Accusations depend on a number of factors. If it is generally a good year for everyone then people are less likely to be accused of witchcraft, though in a bad year or other associative factors like this woman's previous association with a traditional healer are might be viewed suspiciously.

My respondents differentiated between two different kinds of witchcraft⁶⁴ *uroyi hwedzinza* (inherited witchcraft) and *uroyi hwekutenga* (where a person is not inherently evil but buys the evil charms and portions, thus corresponding to Bourdillon's 'sorcerer'). But there is a fine line between the two, since the person who buys the witchcraft paraphernalia can pass it on to his or her offspring and the witchcraft is then inherited.

Others use bad muti to steal from others. That's witchcraft.

Are there people with bad muti in this village?

Some of the people here have got 'tsvera'.

Have you ever lost any of your maize to these people?

I have never given it serious thought, but some obtain a lot of maize when they have planted only a small area. We end up thinking that maybe they are using enough fertiliser but in fact some of them will be using tsvera.

Is there anything that can be done to protect your crops from tsvera?

There is nothing that can be done because the moment you start protecting your crops you have joined them. N'anga muurayi (A n'anga is a killer/witch)

What about getting holy water from the prophet?

Holy water can also work.

Have you ever used holy water?

No.

Do you have tsvera?

She starts to laugh then says, Sister Netsayi, man! , I don't have tsvera but even if I had tsvera do you think I would tell you?

How can you tell someone has got tsvera?

If a person is not afraid of saying things that other people are afraid of saying, what gives that person courage? Its because that person has got medicine. A person who likes walking through other people's fields when the owners are not there is a witch. Sometimes a person starts telling you about where you left your hoes, and telling you about things a person who is not concerned with your field would never notice. The person might even tell you that this year you have got a lot of crops but come harvest time you will get nothing. Others come in person to steal maize from the dara.

⁶⁴ Bourdillon (1987), contrasts between witches and sorcerers. For Bourdillon (1987) witches kill people and do other evil deeds because they take pleasure in seeing people suffer. On the other hand, sorcerers buy their evil charms from evil herbalists and then use these charms to exact revenge on others or for personal gain to the detriment of others.

If *tsvera* makes you rich, why is it that people do not like it?

Tsvera brings you bad spirits. Bad muti might turn your children into zombies or good-for-nothing children (hurombe). Even the person who has tsvera might be a hurudza but a hurudza with nothing because muti money does not buy anything.

For this respondent *tsvera* was also witchcraft and was associated with *uroyi hwekutenga*. A person who is not inherently a witch can buy the *tsvera* magic from corrupt medicine men or women, hence the popular belief the *n'angas* are also witches.

For the medicine to work the person who has bought the *tsvera* might be asked to sleep with his daughter or to marry her daughter to a goblin (*chikwambo/tokoloshe*). If this is done the daughter never marries and sometimes cannot enjoy relations with men. If this happens then the father is branded a witch since his greed for riches is seen to cause his daughter to suffer. Sometimes sons can also be so afflicted if their father owns a female *chikwambo*. In some cases, as discussed with the respondent above, the children of the person with *tsvera* become zombies. Commenting on one good farmer, some people maintained that he used witchcraft in his farming because he had a mentally disturbed child. Anyone accused of witchcraft is accused of practising evil, maybe to their own advantage but certainly to the detriment of everyone else. That is why magic such as *tsvera* is regarded as witchcraft since it can harm others. In witchcraft discourse the idiom of exploitation is rife such that witches are accused of using some people to achieve certain ends. For example, people often referred to the unmarried daughter or the idiot (zombie) child as such a person *arikushandiswa* (someone who is being used). This also reminded me of another conversation I had with another respondent who said that there were people with bad *muti* in the village. She said they would welcome a witch hunter to flush out the witches. She said there are farmers who used witchcraft for farming (names not provided).

You can identify them by the fact that their granaries usually burst open at certain times of the year and when they burst you certainly know a member of the family is going to die. This is so because the tokoroshis⁶⁵ that are used for farming demand payment in the form of human blood. And they should get this blood every year. These deaths usually occur at the same time every year and the sequence of events is the same first, the bursting of the granary and then the death.

When I attended the village court in one of the villages, I noticed that all the people seemed to defer to one man and he seemed to command a lot of respect. Later I asked some women why people respected him so much and they told

⁶⁵ Tokoroshis are another kind of witchcraft familiars. They usually take the form of dwarf sized individuals. These tokoroshis are rumoured to be imported mainly from South Africa hence the word tokoroshi is derivative of the South African word Tokoloshe to indicate the same. Tokoloshes are very powerful, ruthless and love human blood.

me that it was not respect but fear. People think he has bad *muti*. This man was believed to have witchcraft powers to eliminate anyone who displeased him. People also thought that he used *muti* for farming. He cultivated a lot of cotton and maize and even employed people to harvest for him but he did not have property commensurate with his farming prowess. However, I had an occasion to talk with the feared man who complained bitterly about the pricing of his cotton crop by CMB.

I sent twelve bales and they were all graded C. Getting \$3000 for a bale! What am I farming for?

Was he really a witch or was he just a victim of unfair pricing policies?

At one time, cases of infant illness and deaths, which had been occurring in one village, were attributed to witchcraft. At a village meeting at which all this was discussed, men accused women of witchcraft and most of the people pointed indirectly to one female traditional healer. They all agreed that the person who treated children for a fee was the one who was bewitching children so that the children would go to her for treatment. (The year-old son of the people I was staying with was also attacked by *chivere*. Fortunately he lived after the mother gave the child some traditional medicine and performed a ritual that her mother had taught her was effective against *chivere*).

Others said that prophets at the church had advised them not to take children below the age of two to the borehole because that is where evil medicine was located. The prophet had said that if nothing was done to remove this medicine a lot of children are going to die from this sickness which people referred to as "*Chivere*". At the meeting other child 'doctors' stood up to defend themselves saying they were clean because they did not charge money for treating the children. People chanted slogans, which talked about how children should be loved because they were innocent souls.

Of the three women who treated sick children, two of them defended themselves. As it later turned out the husband of the third woman who was thought to be the witch did not sleep that night, and accused all the people in the village of having accused his wife and at a subsequent meeting threatened to sue people in the village.

At the meeting people proposed solutions, none of which were taken seriously. Some wanted to invite Tsikamutanda the witch hunter, some to bring a prophet to remove the bad medicine. Those who opposed Tsikamutanda were darkly accused of knowing something. (In later conversations with other people it also emerged that they believed the third healer was a witch because she had proceeded to a *dandanda* (a traditional ceremony) even though she had been told that a child of their *sahwira* had died

of the mysterious illness (*Chivere*)⁶⁶. Leaving the dead child of their *sahwira*, not attending the funeral and going to a *dandanda* instead was unforgivable. According to the people, it was behaviour typical of a witch. Even after the incident, the said witch and her *sahwira* are still very good friends. As it happened, after their cattle were threatened by black leg, the man whose child was said to have been bewitched by the healer promised to give his *sahwira* medicine to vaccinate the cattle as soon as he received some from his sister. Some people in the village even had very good relations with the witch and her family and discussed many things with them, including agriculture. However, on several occasions I was warned not to become too friendly with the said witch as she could take advantage of the friendship and bewitch me. If people did not discuss things with others, it was usually not because of witchcraft but because maybe the people were seen as snobbish. Thus, although witchcraft could limit the flow of information, it was not always a major consideration.

Witchcraft accusations sometimes take place when people are already involved in conflict or when people want answers to occurrences that do not immediately make sense to them. For example, one woman used the idiom of witchcraft to explain why her family was in economic decline and why they had stopped cultivating some crops they had cultivated prior to coming to the resettlement area. Below is a conversation that took place between Christine and the woman:

Do you still cultivate sorghum here?

Oh no. I stopped cultivating sorghum when I came here because I became sick. In fact, I have been very sick for a long time now.

What have you been suffering from?

My whole body. (Silence) I have really been suffering.

Your whole body?

Yes that issue of some people practising their witchcraft against others.

Um (in agreement then silence)

When I came here I worked very hard then one day I had a dream. I dreamt that I had been hit by a magic horn. A voice then said to me: 'I have hit you with this magic evil horn because you have gone to the resettlement and are going to be more successful than us'.

Whose voice was it?

I saw the person. He was my husband's relative. I was given his whole face in the dream and I knew the voice.

⁶⁶ I have to state here that I was very relieved when I was not pointed out as the witch. I was still new in the area and the illness more or less coincided with my arrival. I was afraid I would be accused and this would put my research in jeopardy. However, as I learnt later, this illness was not new to the village, so the witch could not have been a new person. I was also happy that people did not call Tsikamutanda because then everyone would have been forced to drink his witch finding medicine called *muteyo*. The media reported that sometimes people died after drinking this medicine.

(I remained quiet for a moment to regain my composure. I wanted to laugh. I could not believe the story)

Yes I was given the face. When I woke up in the morning, I was very ill. Around this time, I vomited the horn.

You vomited the horn. Had you been treated or what?

No I had not been treated. It is something that just happened. I just felt like vomiting so I went to those trees.

Ho-o on that guava tree (the tree behind the main house)

Yes in between those two trees. Between the guava and the orange tree. I just felt like vomiting and I vomited the magic horn.

Ah! (In surprise)

The horn was like this size. (Indicating the size of the horn on her fingers. The horn was indicated as being half the size of her longest finger). *The horn had a chain of beads around the neck.*

Um (Trying to show sympathy as well as fear at the meaning of all this)

The beads were of the white and black colour.

Ho-o.

It had beads. The whole village came to see the magic horn.

So they were two chains.

Yes.

Ho-o.

The whole village saw the magic horn with its beads.

lil I think you faced a major obstacle.

I have been suffering for a long time now. Since I came here, I have never been able to do anything.

When they first came to the resettlement area this family experienced a marked improvement in its lifestyle. They were able to purchase cattle and other farming implements. However, recently they are experiencing economic decline. The household head has become very old and partially blind and can no longer work in the field. Two of his daughters died after a long time suffering from AIDS which disturbed the farming activities of the household. At the same time, the twelve acres, which the family started out with, has been reduced due to subdivision of the field as the family grows. As in most other families, this fragmentation of farms has been necessitated by the various conflicts which arose where parents shared the same field with their adult children. In some cases conflict was latent, whilst in others conflict became openly violent to such an extent that parents were even beaten up or accused of practising witchcraft on their children. As result of increased fragmentation, people have had to make trade-offs between the various crops they grow. People with highly fragmented fields also resort more and more to growing maize to meet the food needs of their families, unlike in the past when they used to grow more cotton. The husband of the woman above had this to say:

I gave my children 2 acres each to grow their own food. We decided to subdivide this plot in the 1999 to 2000 season because we were having problems with combining our labour. From

the 1999-2000 season I stopped growing cotton. I am now concentrating on maize because it is a food crop. However, on his two acres my youngest son grew cotton only.

This family could not focus on cash crops like cotton, which used to give them cash to purchase property. Maize was not regarded as a cash crop but solely as a food crop. At the same time, most of the food they produced had to go towards feeding the young orphans they were left to take care of.

We can also understand how farmers make decisions to adopt or not new knowledge or technology by looking at associated indigenous knowledge, especially in respect to beliefs in witchcraft and medicine. For example, during the course of the study a mysterious illness that attacked and killed some children broke out in Muringamombe. People were at first baffled by the illness and then they started to agree that this illness was *Chivere* (the issue of *Chivere* has already been raised above) caused by witches. In the end, people resorted to traditional healers and prophets, who confirmed what everyone in the village was beginning to suspect. The whole village was also agreed on who was causing this terrible illness. Even the health workers in the village were convinced that this was *chivere*. What is striking is that no one thought of calling in the health personnel to determine the scientific cause of this illness, which they said always, attacked children in the village at certain times of the year. No one was concerned with verifying whether what the healers and the prophets said was true.

Parallels can be drawn with the way people adopt or refuse to adopt new technology. For example, some people were disgruntled by the blue fertiliser which they had been given by the Farmers' World in 1999. They said the blue colour of the fertiliser was washed away by rains and left white stones behind. People were also particularly disappointed with the Katsoko seed that they had received from the Farmers' World the same year. When their crop failed, people blamed Katsoko and the blue fertiliser. On further questioning it emerged that there was more than average rainfall that season, but no one ever considered the fact that the fertiliser might have been leached by the rain and only one person linked the failure of Katsoko to the excessive rains. The explanation by AREX was that they had told people that Katsoko was an early maturing variety such that if people failed to get seeds early then they would have to plant Katsoko in early December. Whether it was for lack of understanding or love of experimentation people planted Katsoko very early at the start of the season. When the seed failed they turned around and blamed AREX. Just as in the case of the mysterious illness, people did not investigate further the causes of their misfortune. Therefore, the adoption of new technology is not simply based on its technical qualities. Rather it is based on the schema which individuals and groups use to verify their knowledge. In this case, farmers use indigenous systems of thought to verify western scientific technology. Verification and production of knowledge does not end with the scientist. If the

introduced technology does not fit into the existing patterns of knowledge and beliefs, people might resist.

The effects rather than physical proof of the existence of witchcraft is necessary in accusing people of using witchcraft. People deny learning by observing the fields of neighbours. They say that if you show too much interest in the fields of those around you, people will suspect you of witchcraft. While this is a widely accepted ideology, as discussed in the chapter on experimentation and observation, some of the knowledge that people have is gained through surreptitious observation of neighbours' fields. However, the impact that the belief in witchcraft has on knowledge is such that the circulation of knowledge within the village is inhibited since people are usually freer to discuss with those that live in other villages rather than in their own.

There was a belief that sea-shells⁶⁷ (*nyengeresi*) were very dangerous as they could be used to bewitch a person. One young woman who had three young children had this to say on the subject of witchcraft and sea shells:

Netsayi: Do people use traditional medicine?

People are not good. They use magic. Some people have Nyengeresi. Especially those old women. Nyengeresi is very dangerous.

Christine- What is Nyengeresi?

Netsayi: Sea shells.

Christine: Seashells are dangerous?

Yes. If you antagonise people and they have this Nyengeresi they can use it on you and you will just start thinning as if you have AIDS.

Netsayi- I know some people use it for curative purposes.

If you have been bewitched using Nyengeresi, the traditional healers can use it also as treatment. Sometimes if the person who bewitched you feels sorry for you he/she can wash your dress with it. If you put on the dress you will be cured and your body will come back. Sometimes some people can make children ill. When they come to funerals these old women with Nyengeresi will be holding people's children. If the child falls ill, people will advise you to go to the old woman. All the people would be saying she is good at children's illnesses when all what she is doing is washing them with Nyengeresi then giving them placebo treatments just to fool you.

Old women were especially suspected of using seashells and the person who is bewitched using such potent witchcraft would start wasting away as if he/she has AIDS. At funerals these old women with *nyengeresi* would hold other people's children with the intention of making them ill so that the parents of the child who becomes sick because of contamination by *nyengeresi* will go to them

⁶⁷ In a similar study in Wedza area (2002), Bourdillon *et al* (2002) record that one man claimed to protect his field from *tsvera* magic with *nyengeresi*, while some villagers maintained that this man was a witch because he used the sea shells which were believed to be detrimental to people's health and people believed that this man used magic to steal their crops.

to pay for the treatment of their sick child. The old woman pretends to treat the child while all she is doing is washing the child with *nyengeresi*. Although this was related to illness and health, the message instructs people to distrust everyone - the AREX officers and their scientists and even one's own relatives. The only person one trusts is oneself. Beliefs in witchcraft lead people to carry out their own experiments and come up with new knowledge that is relevant to their needs; however it prevents them from learning from the experiments of others. This lack of trust ensures that experimentation does not end at the gates of agro-industry. Hence people are not simply passive recipients of knowledge but are also active participants in its creation.

Religion

In this section I discuss Shona religion and Christianity. Below is a summary of what both religions entailed for my informants.

Shona Religion

Shona religion can be understood at both the family and the community level. Bourdillon (1987:237) correctly points out that among the Shona 'religion is concerned with persons who lived in the past and their supposed control of present events, religion serves to bring the past and the present together promoting in the living community a respect for tradition'. This assertion is valid at both the family and the community level. The Shona believe that the spirits of the dead come back to look after the living and to take care of their health and wealth. To demonstrate the link between the dead and the living on the question of wealth and general well-being one informant responded as follows:

What causes people to be wealthy?

Some people say that their ancestors are the ones that give them wealth. It is because they appease their spirits. Some people get rich in their old age. Like Chidavaenzi. He was a very rich man before he converted to Christianity. He left his traditions and joined the apostles. He threw away what his ancestors had given him. When they converted him, they gave him six rank badges to denote that he was now the leader. Now he has nothing. He was the first person to own buses here. They pretended to like him when all they wanted was to drink tea at his home as he was a very rich man.

So we can say the ancestors can make people rich?

Sure. When we migrated from Bushu to Goora, we were very poor. We used other people's cattle for farming then my brother worked hard and the ancestors blessed him. If you go to keep 7 and ask for Abraham Pfunde, everyone knows him. He built a shop with a bar and butchery. If we go to his place, we are not afraid to eat anything he offers, which is plenty. We say to ourselves let's eat. We were once poor. Now he wants to buy a house in Bindura so that he can sit all year round like this. (He crossed his legs and cupped his chin in his hand)

The spirits have to be honoured and appeased to be happy. Otherwise things will not go well for the person who displeases them. Even when it comes to

farming, if the ancestors are not pleased with your conduct, they can make sure your crop will not do well or they give you bad health until you do their bidding. Thus, a poor harvest was not always attributed to poor application of technology or even to losses due to bad magic, but could also be attributed to ancestral spirits. Some families maintained that before planting their seed they would leave a portion of their seed to spend the night at the *huva* (a stand in the kitchen where claypots⁶⁸ and water buckets are kept) for the ancestors to bless the seed. When people pray to their ancestors they usually do so in the kitchen facing the *huva*. In the case of a death in the family, the body lies in state at the *huva*. Aschwanden (1989:99) referred to the *huva* (or *chikuva*) as an altar or sleeping place of the ancestors. The relationship between the ancestors and fertility of fields is represented by the act of leaving the seed at the *huva* overnight for the ancestors to guarantee fertility.

In one village one of the brothers of the village head had passed away the previous year. This deceased brother was of the Marange Apostolic church and did not believe in participating much in the traditional rituals that the *Sabhuku* (Village head) upheld. Traditionally when an adult dies at his funeral people have to slaughter a cow/ox which they call *nhevedzo*. In This instance though, the *nhevedzo* was not slaughtered at the funeral. This was rectified a year later because of some problems, which were blamed on this omission. Many people we talked to in the village on other issues always found a way to include the case in the conversation by alluding to *mupostori wekufa gore rakapera wekuzobairwa mombe gore rino* (That apostle who died last year and had his *nhevedzo* cow/ox slaughtered this year). This was because people wanted to demonstrate that spirits are very powerful and that, even if one was a Christian, he or she still had to do their bidding. For some reason people found the story to be quite funny because they always joked about it during discussions on religion. Thus, all spirits of the dead in the family have to be appeased according to custom. Such an omission can bring disaster to the family should the spirit of the deceased be angered. The disasters can range from bad luck in business dealings, to poor health or poor crop yield.

At the community level, the dominant figure in the religion is the *mhondoro* (lion spirit⁶⁹). In the study area, the *mhondoro* spirit that was frequently mentioned and regarded as powerful was Nyamaropa. The land was regarded as belonging to Nyamaropa. Some apostles were adamant that land belonged to

⁶⁸ For the symbolic association between clay pots and fertility see Herbert Aschwanden (1989) Although his insights are too Freudian for my liking, his analysis gives insight into some of the symbolism that affect fertility rituals not only among the Karanga but among other Shona groupings as well.

⁶⁹ For a detailed description of Shona lion spirits see Bourdillon (1987:253-282) also Gelfand M (1956:11-34).

no one but God but, however, they still took part in activities to honour the ancestors though not always very actively. When asked why she could not just decide to flout the culturally prescribed *Chisi*, a woman of the apostolic faith linked the land to the lion spirits by saying;

How can we do that? People just instil fear into you such that you will not even dare go to the field on chisi. What if you went to the field and saw horror or something terrible happened who would you tell. People will ask you if this land belongs to the apostles. What will you say? We just follow all the rules. If you do not go to the field for one day you do not loose much. Chisi has always been there. Even in Murehwa we had Chisi, it is only the days of chisi that vary from place to place. In some places Chisi is on Wednesday or Friday or even Tuesday.

These lion spirits are the owners of the land and are responsible for securing soil fertility as well as ensuring rain. There are two types of *mhondoros*. There is the lion spirit of the earth (*mhondoro yepasi* controlling soil fertility) and then there is *mhondoro yemvura* (the lion spirit of water). The lion spirit of water (rain) is explained as the lion spirit, which went in the water while it held some soil in its hands. Although it was immersed into water neither the lion spirit nor the soil in its hands got wet. This is the spirit that later comes back to live among us as the lion spirit of the water. On the other hand, the Lion spirit of the earth is usually quiet and does not say much. One old man maintained that the difference between the lion spirit of the earth and the lion spirit of rain was that the lion spirit of rain (water) demands rain-making ceremonies every year. However, the lion spirits of the earth only get *Chisi* days when they can walk undisturbed.⁷⁰

The lion spirit is usually the spirit of an elder who died long ago. The spirit dwells in a wild lion and can possess a medium who is known as *svikiro* (the place of arrival) or *homwe* (pocket). When the lion spirit comes back to dwell among people it should possess someone who does not come from the village but from far away lands. This is so because the person who is possessed should be able to tell the villagers things about the village, things that the villagers might not even know but things that are nevertheless true. A true lion spirit does not arise from the same village but comes from another place.

Also, like family spirits, the lion spirits of the land may also be responsible for the wealth of the people in the community, providing these spirits are honoured properly. 'If the descendants of the *mhondoro* obey his laws and perform ceremonies in due time, they will leave in peace and plenty' (Lan 1985:32).

⁷⁰ Some people were also of the opinion that the lion spirits of the water also walk around on *Chisi* to check whether adequate rain has fallen.

Your domain extends over a large area including the commercial farms. Did the commercial farmers also honour chisi and some of the beliefs like the one you have just mentioned of zinc metal?

Yes they respected the beliefs. Vaienda kunopetera. As soon as they wanted to build anything on their farms, they would go to the spirit mediums to inform them first. Otherwise the house might become uninhabitable, it might become haunted or something terrible would happen such as the house falling down.

What is kupetera?

They would come with cloth and snuff for the spirits. Even all those people who are digging for gold, they would come with cloth and snuff for the spirits. That is why they get gold. If they do not do that they will not get anything. Some of them are very lucky.

My Father once had a mining claim at chin mine.

There is a lot of gold at chin.

If there is he did not get any of it. He went broke because of it. When he left the mine within a week he heard that people had got a lot of gold from his claim.

Maybe he had not done the proper rituals for the mhondoro spirits such as giving the cloth and snuff.

When I heard later about the mhondoro I asked him whether he had done any such thing and he told me he had.

Maybe he did not do it correctly, or they were some bad people around him who did not want him to get the gold. It is also possible that he did not know where the gold belt was.

The lion spirits maintain their territorial integrity by guarding their land and their wealth jealously from outsiders. Any misfortune suffered by these outsiders, whether in terms of poor crop yield or as in the case of my father, the missed gold belt, could be explained by failing to follow the proper ritual not by lack of knowledge on how to deal with the new environment.

Since the lion spirit is the guardian of fertility and wealth of the land, all the people who dwell on that land and hope to reap from it should pay homage to the spirits of the land. Thus, regardless of race, wealth and religion, everyone is supposed to contribute to rain making ceremonies or other religious ceremonies as the spirits might demand. For the rain making ceremony all people are expected to contribute rapoko and maize. The apostles who are loath to take part in traditional ceremonies still make their contributions to the village head. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some people feel that demands by chiefs to observe *Chisi* and the rain making ceremonies are designed to 'fix' the resettlement farmers who, until recently, lived independently of the chiefs and traditional customary restrictions.

One woman who had previously lived and worked on Large Scale Commercial Farms run by whites maintained that if there was a drought the white men would go to the *mhondoro*. They usually went to Musana or Chikwakwa. All the white farmers would contribute different things, bags of maize, rapoko, snuff, nhekwe, wooden plates and take these to the lion spirits to ask for water. The lion spirits would then ask the old women to brew the beer.

On Saturday all farm workers would be let off work early so that we could go to the rain making ceremonies where people would spend the night drinking beer and eating meat.

This woman, however, was of the Marange apostolic faith so never actually attended these functions. Only old women, past child bearing age, and, who are no longer having sexual intercourse with their husbands or indeed with any other men, are allowed to brew the beer. Aschwanden (1989) has presented accounts of how semen is synonymous with dirt when certain traditional ceremonies and rituals are performed, such that some spirits forbid their female hosts from having sexual intercourse so that they (the spirits) are not exposed to the dirt. Pre-pubescent girls are the only ones who are allowed to fetch the water used for the beer brewing. It could be that prepubescent girls are mostly virginal as they do not have the hormones yet that tempt them into sexual relationships with men. Menstrual⁷¹ blood is also regarded as unclean and any menstruating woman would spoil the beer as it would become unclean as well and the ancestors will be displeased.

The beer is brewed in the forest at a hut called *zumba* and is drunk in the forest at the *zumba* and nowhere else. During the ceremony two pots of beer are left at the *zumba* for the lion spirit to drink. After two days the people go back to the *zumba* to finish the beer which the lion spirits will have left. The lion spirits do not drink everything but only drink some beer in each pot. The lion spirits have never been known not to drink the beer.

The *zumba* is not only associated with rain making ceremonies but also with fertility. People take a portion of seed from all the food crops they cultivate and take them to the *zumba*. These spend the whole night at the *zumba* where the lion spirit blesses them and then people can mix these with the seed they eventually want to plant. However, according to the village head of Mudzinge, treated seed and modern crops like tobacco and cotton can never be taken to the *zumba*⁷² because they are sprayed with smelly chemicals and the *mhondoro* will not recognise the crops.

In an attempt to establish the efficacy of the rain making ceremonies, I had the following interview with the Sabhuku who was the leader of the rain making ceremonies. However, the discussion brought to the fore some other issues related to the lion spirits. On being asked, whether people thought the rain ceremony really worked, the Sabhuku pointed out that;

⁷¹ The fear of menstrual blood is dominant among the shona. Menstruation is associated with a lot of taboos. For example, it is believed, that if a menstruating woman walks through a groundnut field the groundnuts will not bear fruit or if a menstruating woman shells maize the maize will be easily attacked by weevils.

⁷² Lan (1985:47) also found the same consideration in the Dande area of Zimbabwe where he carried out his research on the role of spirit mediums in the liberation war.

People believe it works. They are actually troubling me to start the process. Now there is Mashaga a village head in Takawira. He announced that he is going to start his own Zumba. So I am afraid that if I brew the beer he will poison it since it is left alone in the bush. If people get poisoned they will blame me.

What are others thinking of this issue?

Most people were angry. They asked me to take him to court over that issue but I refused. What had given him that thought? When we first came, the lion spirits came here and showed us the place where they wanted the Zumba to be. If he wants to go against the spirits, let him but I am not going to say anything. If the spirits want to punish him, they will do so. Now if I was to confront him and he fell ill people would begin to think I did something to him. But if the spirits just punish him on their own volition people will tell him that the misfortune is a result of his own folly.

So you are not going to brew the beer this year?

No we are not. Kaseke had suggested that we should go ahead and brew the beer but then make sure that people sleep at the zumba to guard it but I refused. One day there might be a lapse of security and the beer could be poisoned. Even on the day people drink, someone might be bribed to poison the beer and all the blame would be on me. No we are not going to brew anything.

People from the other village understood the matter differently. As it happened a man from one of the study villages had found a pangolin in the bush. As is the custom, the man did not eat the pangolin but decided to give it to the chief. He took the pangolin to the headman who led the rain making ceremony for him to take the pangolin to the chief. The village head promised that he would take it to the chief but instead ate the pangolin himself. When he got no thanks from the chief as custom requires, the man who had found the pangolin went to the chief to inquire about it. When the chief knew that the village head had eaten his pangolin he demoted him. The Spirits can be political⁷³. The issue of the *mhondoro* is highly political. When the village head lost the power to be the leader of the rain making ceremony it was not only a loss for himself but a loss in status and prestige for the village as well. That could explain why there was a suggestion to go ahead and brew the beer instead. There is also evidence that

⁷³ According to Ranger (1967), among the Shona people the spirits played a very important part in mobilising people to fight against colonialism. Spirits like Nehanda and Kaguvi led the first attempts to fight against white colonialists in what is referred to in the literature as the first Chimurenga of 1896. Mhondoro spirits have played an active role in Zimbabwean politics. Lan (1985) documents the role played by the mhondoro in organising and mobilising people during the second Chimurenga war which culminated in independence in 1980. In the current highly politically contested land invasions in Zimbabwe, some lion spirits have also been at the forefront of claiming white-owned land that falls within their domain. However, Beach (1979:419) maintains that the political role of the spirits especially in the 1896-7 uprising was overemphasised. Instead, he points to the spontaneity of the rebellion against the colonialists without the intervention of the religious leaders. Beach (1979:419) maintains that Ranger's thesis attributing the rise of the 1896-7 revolt to a pre-planned revolt led by religious leaders resulted from Ranger's misquoting of sources.

tradition can be circumvented and changed to suit current needs. For example, I would have been interested to know how the lion spirits would drink the beer at the *Zumba* if the villagers had guarded it all the time like Kaseke had suggested. The issue that the spirits have power over the people's health and fortunes is also highlighted when the village head remained adamant that the spirits would punish the other headman who had taken over the rainmaking ceremony without sanction from the lion spirits. If it is true that the village head ate the pangolin that was meant for the chief, maybe his refusal to go ahead with the rain-making ceremony was because of fear that if he did so, he would be the one to be punished by the lion spirits.

Even in traditional religion people have to guard themselves against charlatans and a 'good' or 'real' *mhondoro* is recognised by its power over nature and lesser spirits. As in the conversation with Mr Virimayi below, it emerged that a person who others purported to be possessed by goblins claimed that he was the medium of Nyamaropa the highest spirit of the land.

Christine: So how is this different from the lion spirits in your land?

It's different. There was this young child here claiming to be possessed by Nyamaropa and people were very excited about it. They even built a little hut for him along the river. Songs were sung and women ululated (imitating the ululation) Our lion spirit has come, our lion spirit has come. People were easily fooled and led astray. We have this tendency of easily believing things. The child demanded a lot of things, I want this, I want that, until Nyamaropa came and said that the child was possessed by zvidhoma (goblins)

Netsayi: How come they built the hut for that person without consulting Nyamaropa first?

The child had told them he was Nyamaropa. When Nyamaropa came he was chased away.

Christine: So where is this person now?

He is now a nobody with nothing. Ava rombe. He lives in rataply. You know Nyamaropa can do it. He is the real thing. That impostor was chased away. Even if you do something that is not permitted, Nyamaropa will bring you to heal. If you plough on Friday, you will get into trouble.

Netsayi: Did any misfortune befall someone in this village who had disobeyed?

Yes (he points to Josiah's homestead). He ploughed on Friday and as soon as he finished, the cattle he had used were eaten by lions.

Netsayi: Why did he choose to disobey the rules?

I do not know and incidentally he is from the Nyamaropa family. He just refused to listen and said that because he was apostolic he could do anything he wanted.

Netsayi: So Nyamaropa is serious. If it had been someone else they would probably have spared their relative and given him some other form of warning.

As a descendent of Nyamaropa he should have known better. If the Nyamaropas disobey the rules, who will follow the rules? If you just follow the rules nothing bad will happen. I have not heard of anyone whose animals were eaten by wild animals or beaten by a snake.

Netsayi: I heard that one of Chakupadedza's grandchildren died from snakebite.

Ho that one. They know what happened. They know. A snake bit the child but it was not a real snake.

Netsayi: So what was it?

That snake was not God's snake. It was sent. The father of the child was demanding custody of the child since he had separated from the mother. The father sent for the child but Chakupadedza refused to let the child go. He told them that if they continued to refuse a snake would bite the child but they refused to believe this. The father of that child sent that snake so that neither of them would have the child if the child died. That snake was not a real snake.

The question arises as to why people easily believed that this was Nyamaropa. It could well be that people in that village were happy that Nyamaropa had come to their village, as this would raise the status of their village. Their village would have been the centre of focus for all traditional rituals. Indeed one of the people in my sample, whose village was next to Rataplan, was convinced that people had used magic to steal the lion spirit from the young man since they knew that being possessed by the lion spirit would give them power. The above excerpt also brings to the fore the fact that the lion spirits have domain over all living things. For example, wild animals would not attack one's animals or crops if one followed the laws of the land which are invariably the laws of the *Mhondoro*. The *mhondoro* cannot allow animals under its domain to harm the people under its protection, hence if a snake bites anyone then it cannot be a snake at all but rather some magic sent by a person with evil intentions that takes the form of a snake.

The *mhondoro* is well known for not liking modern things. For example, according to Chief Bushu's wife, the lion spirit had to be persuaded to allow people to build houses roofed with zinc sheets or asbestos sheets. Asked to explain how change was possible if the ancestors who disliked modernity and change were also part of the decision-making process, the chief's wife had said:

...if the mhondoro yakaparura (That is if it kills its medium, though kuparura does not mean kill but something like tearing) and no one can speak to the people the chief can make the requisite changes. My husband initiated a lot of changes here. We were not allowed to do a lot of things. It is because of education. He is an educated man that is why he was able to change a lot of things.

Do you still remember some of the things made possible by your husband?

For example, the lion spirits here did not allow people to use zinc roofs or asbestos sheets because they said the material was shiny and the shine would flash into their eyes blinding them (tinozopenyerwa). I think it was in 1965 when we put asbestos sheets on our house because my husband went to the chief and asked him why he did not want asbestos sheets and zinc roofs. My husband then pointed out that people were no longer using clay pots but shiny modern pots and tins to fetch water. Did it therefore mean that all those things had to be thrown away if the mhondoro did not like the shine? After a lot of debate and discussion, modern roofing was then allowed.

Indeed some people believe that the rivers are drying up because people are washing their dirty linen and using modern soaps and washing powders in them. Some ponds have dried up because women have dumped their contraceptive pills into these ponds thus angering the spirits.

Christianity

The Christians did not believe that the *zumba* could ensure seed fertility as well as rain. However, they also contributed to the seed that was taken to the *zumba* as well as the grain that was needed for the rain making ceremony. As one respondent who did not believe in the *zumba* commented, 'When you are in Rome do what the Romans do.'

Christians mostly point out that rain and fertility come from God, not from some spirits of the land. At the start of the season they would take their seed to the various priests of their various denominations for prayers to be blessed. The seed would then be mixed with the rest of the seed at home before planting. This would ensure that the crops grew healthy and strong and it guarded them against *tsvera*. Any kind of seed treated or not, modern or traditional, can be taken to the priests. For the Christians, there was no distinction between modern seed and traditional seed in terms of performing fertility rituals. The apostles went further to get holy water to sprinkle into their fields or to bury bottles of water in their fields to guard against *tsvera*. In this section I only discuss the apostles, not because they are the only Christian churches in the research area but because, of all the churches, they have the largest number of followers and their teachings and doctrines have had greater impact on knowledge than all the others. Within the apostolic churches however, Johanne Masowe and Johanne Marange are the largest.

Apostles

Although, the different apostolic churches operating in Mupfurudzi, differ in a number of ways, they are similar in fundamental ways. For example, unlike the missionary churches the apostles emphasise speaking in tongues, seeing visions and having prophetic dreams. Thus, during disputes dreams and visions can be used to support particular positions. For believers, it is through praying, prophesying and fasting that a person can be protected from ill health and poverty. Daneel (1987: 235) correctly points out that for the apostle there is a clear causal connection between human activity and the absence of rain. For example, both Marange and Masowe preached that if people did not do as God commanded them, then there would be drought and diseases. If people desist from unholy deeds like witchcraft and adultery then God will bless everyone with abundant rain and bumper crops.

I had a conversation with one woman who was a member of a very little and unknown apostolic church called Borngesi. This is what she had to say:

We once discussed traditional beliefs. You said you do not believe that stuff. However I want to know whether you send your seed to the *zumba*.

We just give them the seed. They will be doing it for the rain so even if we do not want we will just end up giving them our seed. After all, we will not use the seed in our fields so

there is no harm done. Someone refused to vote during the elections and he was told to live in his own world where people do not vote. That is what we are afraid of. At the end we just do everything we are asked to do, even though we might not believe it works.

What kinds of people believe in traditional issues?

I think they would have believed these things from birth. For example, we say we do not eat meat at a funeral when the body is still in the house. It is a traditional rule that a cow or ox should be slaughtered at the funeral but we do not do that. However, in our case we slaughter the beast at the memorial service. We are still slaughtering such animals but we are hiding. We still have to send the seed to the zumba because when it rains can I say it should not rain at my field because I am a Christian and the rain is from zumba. I would be the first one to take my plough to the field regardless of where the rain comes from.

So you just send the seed even though you do not believe?

Yes. If I believed then I would have to ask myself where God is. I think God and the ancestors are people who know each other, walk and work together. If we, the apostles, spend a day in the mountains praying for someone who is on his death-bed, he can rise up and walk.

For abundant rain the apostles also climb the mountains to pray to God who will hear their prayers just as he hears and answers their prayers for the sick. Thus, at the beginning of the rainy season, when the elders go to the Zumba in the wilderness to ask for rain the apostles also go to ask for rain by praying hard, fasting and preaching until God gives them a vision of what's going to happen. They will receive the answers on whether their prayers have been answered through the various prophetic messages. As a result, there is confusion among some people as shown in the above excerpt, as to whether rain comes from the Christian God or the zumba. The confusion is not only among the Christians but also among the traditional authorities. When one Village Headman was asked about rain making ceremonies, he maintained that sometimes he even goes to Wimbow to ask for rain at the people's request. Sometimes non-Christians use the behaviour of the apostles to validate their own behaviour and, likewise the apostles look towards tradition to validate theirs. Asked what she thought of taking seed to the zumba, one woman replied:

That is the law. Even the apostles take their seed to Wimbow so that he can bless the seed.

Wimbow then distributes the seed back to the people. It is the same thing with our culture.

While those in the African Religion take their seed to the Zumba for fertility guarantees, so the apostles take their seed to their prophets for fertility prayers. (However, note that not all Apostles believe in the efficacy of these apostolic fertility rituals. One Johanne Marange Apostle was adamant that only the proper use of fertilisers could guarantee good harvests and not holy water from Priests).

Also just, like the Lion Spirits in African religion, the Christian God of the apostles is concerned with the general well being of his followers.

Some people get priests to pray for their seeds before planting. Do you also do the same?

People who belong to a church might have their seeds prayed for before planting.

So have your seeds for this year been prayed for?

Not yet. The pastor has not yet started praying but they have started in other villages.

Do other villagers do the same?

Yes but usually you cannot know what people will be doing in their homesteads. However, praying for crops helps.

So if the seeds get blessed why is it that some people go hungry?

It's usually because we cannot control the rain. I still remember one drought year when Wimbow asked people from his church to come to him so that he could reduce the size of their stomachs through prayer. This was so as to make sure that they did not feel the need to consume a lot of food.

Was there any change?

What change? It did not work. These people. When it came to eating we sometimes left them in the plate, meaning that their stomachs were as big as ours were. Maybe ours were even smaller than theirs (laughs).

Since this is a drought year have people gone yet to have their stomachs reduced in size?

This year he has not yet said anything. Maybe they will go later because the hunger has not really started. Maybe the church members have already been informed about what they are going to do.

I talked to people, some of whom were not members of Johanne Masowe,⁷⁴ who claimed that Wimbow had indeed had their stomachs reduced in size and they had not starved during the drought year because of that.

Discussion

In foregoing section, I sketched out some of the main features of the two religions dominant in the area. Now I discuss how these two dominant religions impact on knowledge and knowledge production. It is not religion *per se* that determines what a person chooses to believe and what is relevant knowledge. Sometimes it is the social positioning of the individual that is crucial. Knowledge is a result of situated selections. For example, one poor farmer who was also the village head strongly believed in traditional customs, firstly as the custodian of local culture and most importantly because it gave him an element of power. Because he was the person who could communicate with the ancestors, people gave him respect which he would otherwise not get if he did not hold a traditional office. The same goes for the ZANU (PF) youths (discussed in chapter 6) who strongly believed in the power of the ancestors even though their parents might have been of a different persuasion. These youths gained position in society by enforcing traditional regulations and punishing offenders. On the other hand, those who can gain neither power nor office by following the traditional rules, at certain times believed that regardless

⁷⁴ Wimbow now refers to his church more and more as Vadzidzi (The Disciples). I do not know whether this signifies a break from mainstream Johanne Masowe.

of what the spirits of the land thought, good farming methods ensure good yields, whilst at other times they would point to the importance of *mhondoro* or *midzimu*. The Christian God or simply God would also be seen as ensuring general prosperity and good luck.

The tension between local knowledge and western knowledge is epitomised in the ritual of the *zumba*, where no modern seeds are allowed. The *zumba* constitutes a ritual rejection of modernity and modern farming methods, which are perceived to harm the land, and a reaffirmation that the ancestors are concerned about the well being of their people. This they do by focusing on food crops to ensure food security. However, this does not mean that those who believe in the power of the *zumba* do not cultivate modern crops. On the other hand, people who do not have access to certain resources can use the *zumba* or other beliefs attributed to Shona religion as a rationalisation for not doing certain things, regardless of whether or not they believe in the *zumba* and Shona Religion. For example, in the army worm outbreak of 1985, those who had cotton chemicals sprayed their maize. Those who did not spray claimed that they did not do so because they were afraid to anger the owners of the land because they had not been given permission to do so. At least one of the people who cited respect for the owners of the land as a reason for not spraying their crops was a member of an apostolic church that deplores anything that smacks of African spirits and ancestors. Appeals to African spirituality could have been a legitimate reason for not spraying their crops but it does not mean that it was the only or main reason.

Christians, and those who subscribe to Shona religion, are not very different in their farming beliefs. For them some power determines fertility, rain and good fortune. No amount of fertiliser application or even good rains could save you from the wrath of the Gods (whether African or Christian). If the Gods are displeased no matter how hard you have tried you will still lose out. This is where the knowledge of agricultural experts and people differed. For the experts, agriculture entails proper planning, a planning which starts with buying the requisite seed and fertilisers on time as well as preparing the land on time. For people, good agricultural knowledge entails proper planning, a planning which does not start with seed and fertilisers but with having a good relationship with the Gods and ancestors. Only after you have a proper relationship with your God and ancestors would you be satisfied that your seed and fertiliser had power. Nevertheless, there exists a perceived interdependency between religion and farming technologies. For example, people realise that one cannot simply rely on religion without getting the necessary farming implements, and farming implements without proper religious backing will not take you far.

Indeed the apostolic faith churches borrowed much from Shona Religion, which might explain their popularity among the people. Burying bottles of

water which have been blessed by priests to protect one's fields was not much different from digging in clay pots filled with water and medicines to also protect one's field. The only difference was the interpretations accorded to each act. The clay pot was regarded as a sign of *tsvera* and not protection, while the bottle of the apostle could never be regarded as *tsvera* but only protection. Blessing the seed or taking the seed to the *Zumba* can both be regarded as *divisi* since both actions are meant to ensure good healthy crops. However they were both good *divisi* since they did not encourage the breaking of incest taboos. Taking a cue from Aschwanden (1989), the virgin sisters of Johanne Masowe, who were dedicated as the wives of God through whom all requests should be pass to God, could be regarded as the ultimate sacrifice. That is, a sacrifice of fertility so that God could hear man's requests whether they be for rain or the fertility of crops. As mentioned earlier some 'witches' who used *tsvera* or other kinds of *divisi* also sacrificed the fertility of their daughter(s) by dedicating them as wives of goblins and *Chikwambo* so that they never married. If the goblin was kept happy then the *divisi* would work.

For most people, religion has a direct influence on their ways of thinking and evaluating data available to them. If a person strongly believes in something then that belief may preclude all other possible explanations of events. People and groups do not necessarily adopt any kind of information they receive from outside since they retrieve information and act on it according to their perceptions. These perceptions could be influenced by religious beliefs as well as by what is seen to be beneficial. For example, people mentioned that when they first settled in the area there were a lot of trees, animals and the rivers were overflowing with water. However, since then people have cut down most of the trees, cultivated gardens along riverbanks (violating the rules against stream bank cultivation) and people have panned for gold in Mupfurudzi river. Nowadays the animals are nowhere to be seen and the rivers are drying up. The explanation behind the rivers drying up and the animals going away as mentioned earlier was that people had started using soap in the river which was against the dictates of the lion spirit. This had angered the lion spirit who dried the rivers. An alternative explanation could be well that the rivers are silting up because of gold panning and stream bank cultivation.

Linkages also existed between local religions and the Christian church. For example, a local traditional chief who led the traditional rainmaking and fertility ceremonies was a member of the Salvation Army church. This was not seen to be so much a conflict as the Chief's wife argued that the bible said *to Caesar what is Caesar's*. Also most people drew parallels between Christianity and African religions to justify their positions. For example, concerning seed fertility ceremonies people would argue that they had to do this because it was the law and even the Christians took their seeds to their priests. Thus,

Christianity and African religion reinforced each other in the face of doubters like the agricultural scientists.

Another important consideration is how gender difference, can impact on religion and knowledge. Invariably the women tended to be more religious than their male counterparts and mostly cited their religion as Christian. As mentioned before, it was more usual for women rather than men to take seed to the priests or go to the priests for holy water. On the other hand, apart from when the women brewed beer, men were mostly in control of the traditional ceremonies. Although women could be mediums of powerful spirits, the role of women in traditional ceremonies was generally marginal. Women took part in brewing the beer for the ceremony but they were not involved when the major decisions were made. Major decisions could only be made by the chiefs and village headmen (who were all men) and the rain maker (who sometimes could be a woman possessed by some powerful spirit). Where men expressed some scepticism on the ability of the traditional ceremonies to ensure bumper harvests, all women were adamant that their holy water could ensure a healthy crop and guard their crops against bad magic. As mentioned earlier, it was usually the men who were in control of obtaining all farming implements. Women did not have control over those things, though at the same time they were expected to ensure food security or risk going to *maricho*. This could explain why more women than men turned to religion.

Conclusion

Knowledge is largely interpretative in nature. Knowledge from the same sources can be interpreted differently by different people. This means that knowledge itself is not an entity out there waiting to be used but is socialised and re-socialised in different ways by different people. 'Social circumstances mediate in the production of knowledge accounts. These accounts are to be understood as actively constructed accounts, rather than passively received reflections of an external world, and they are to be understood in terms of the social circumstances which shape their social construction....accounts are to be viewed as the end product of a process of construction' (Woolgar, 1983:244). Interpretation is locally specific and contextual. At the end, people can understand the same phenomenon differently giving rise to different knowledge claims. Even people from the same household, as indicated in this chapter, can sometimes have conflicting views on the existence and efficacy of magic in enhancing farming ability, leading household members to explain the same phenomenon differently. In such circumstances, people or household members might call upon different bodies of knowledge to explain certain phenomena that structurally looked the same.

Before people can adopt new technology, it must be something they can find both acceptable and useful. This has wider implications for technology and its

use. Knowledge 'experts' must understand that technology is not value free, not merely an artefact to be used, but rather a technology that has to be interpreted and understood in a social context.

Belief in magic does not directly impact on agricultural production. Rather magical beliefs are used to explain failures but the beliefs in themselves did not cause such failures. People did not rely on magic to get good crops but also applied fertilisers and bought good seed. Even those who used holy water from the church or took seed to the *Zumba* still used other technologies to increase their yield. Only those who could not get access to enough fertiliser and good seed to get good crops often blamed their low yield on magic. Hence, religious and cultural beliefs should not be regarded as impediments to increased agricultural production because such beliefs do not preclude the adoption of more productive methods of farming. The tension between African beliefs and modernity is largely imagined. Discussing ritual powers among the Tuareg, Rassmussen (2004:318) notes that 'these powers do not imply neat temporal oppositions between 'tradition' and 'modernity', or linear regression from one to another ...these powers suggest plural and interweaving, rather than singular or sequential, moral discourses of tradition and modernity'. In this chapter, the interweaving of outside and local knowledge and diverse local theoretical traditions has led to knowledge that defies attempts to be strait-jacketed into categories of traditional or scientific.

There is a mistaken belief that African beliefs are static and resistant to change and that this rigidity of African beliefs has proved to be an impediment to agriculture. On the contrary, as shown in this chapter, African religion and culture is highly flexible and mechanisms exist within it for generating change. This ability to change has enabled African religion to maintain its relevance even in the face of the onslaught of modernism. Instead of looking to beliefs and culture to explain why people refuse to adopt certain technologies, experts should also begin to question the technologies themselves.

One needs to identify the cultural dialectics that make it possible for people to adopt new things that are of use to them. Local forms of knowledge are always being reworked in interaction with changing external and internal conditions. Thus, local knowledge should not always be regarded as resistant to change. People could not control *tsvera* effectively and therefore were always afraid of losing their food security. The use of fertiliser and other effective farming methods was, as it were, another kind of *tsvera* but one they could take full control over, thus guaranteeing food security providing they followed its rules.

Since *tsvera* is only associated with food crops, not cash crops AREX and other outside agencies could focus on the latter. As discussed in previous chapters, farmers can import what they know from the cultivation of cotton and tobacco to other crops; since the basic principles of farming are the same for all crops. All crops require that one needs to prepares land early, obtains good

seed, enough fertiliser, and plants on time. Therefore, good cash crop farming could filter down and to women extent improve the cultivation of food crops.

Shona religion gave rise to certain knowledge. This knowledge functioned within the system assigning power to some people within the system but not to others. The same can also be said of modern knowledge and technology that gives power to government bureaucrats. Knowledge assigns power within the system resulting in functionaries such as the village headman and ZANU (PF) youth clinging to some African beliefs that give them certain powers and trying to change those things within African religion that do not suit their projects. On the other hand, ordinary people and farmers expressed their desire to move away from these systems which they saw as inherently disempowering, although they also clung to traditional beliefs and knowledge when it suited their needs. Thus, knowledge is partial, indeterminate and sometimes self-contradictory.



Mr Kadungure the host of the Field days in Magazi, explaining to other farmers with his two wives standing by his side.



A women's choir club at a field day.

8

Field Days: Knowledge Dissemination and Entertainment

Introduction

Field days were introduced as a way of recruiting the farmer into the modernisation agendas of the 'experts'. 'By means of celebrating agricultural success demonstrated in the fields... it was hoped to induce less successful farmers to copy or mimic prize winning master farmers' (Bolding, 2004:95). In line with the Transfer of Technology approaches, officials understood field days as occasions for AREX officers to impart agricultural knowledge to farmers, assuming thereby that farmers lacked such knowledge and needed to be tutored (Hedrick, 1918). Unlike Master Farmer classes (discussed in Chapter 5), field days emphasised the practical rather than theoretical side of knowledge or knowledge disseminated in the context of the classroom.

Field days were also understood as occasions when farmers share knowledge with each other in a guided and controlled environment. Although the host farmer was given the opportunity to explain to others what he did to get a good crop, the expert was present to offer guidance and correction where farmers erred in their explanations. This contradicts Bolding's (2004:100) assertion that 'most field workers perceive field days not as learning events fostering the effect of trickle down otherwise known as extension but events to legitimise their *raison d'être* as state agents committed to modernity, development and commercialised small holder agriculture'. The data in this chapter show that although there could have been many reasons for holding and attending field days, officers took seriously their teaching and learning functions.

Officers disseminated knowledge about seed through pre-planting meetings and field days right through the season. Field days give officers a time to disseminate information in a relaxed atmosphere, different from the school room atmosphere. Such days are usually entertaining with people performing dramas and singing songs, of a political or agricultural nature, and, in some cases there is an abundance of food and beer though not at any of the field days I attended. All farmers get a chance to participate and share their knowledge.

Apart from being situations to share and impart knowledge field days, are also occasions where social hierarchies are recognised, reinforced and disputed. Although designed as occasions to discuss production issues, they are also occasions where dance and drama is used to highlight farmers' problems as well as to entertain. Some people might also take a field day as an opportunity

to solve long-standing disputes and to gossip. In some instances field days are highly political. I start the discussion by focussing on how agricultural knowledge is spread at field days.

Field days and agricultural knowledge

Both farmers and experts took field days as learning occasions. However, as will emerge in the course of the discussion, the emphasis that farmers and field officers put on field days as learning occasions differed. The AREX officer and the Cottco Collection Point Supervisor mentioned field days as the special days they set aside to talk to farmers. Farmers, however, were disappointed that they only met field officers at field days and other large gatherings. To understand the impact of field days as instruments of agricultural knowledge dissemination, it is important to investigate these differing perceptions.

Farmers and Field Officers operated from different premises. Farmers saw the officers as having been mandated by the government to work with them on a personal basis as they had done in the early days of resettlement. The failure of officers to offer this personalised service was regarded by farmers as a betrayal. Furthermore, some farmers were too timid to ask questions at large gatherings for fear of revealing their ignorance. One poor household head and his wife pointed out that they were not very happy with the conduct of the AREX Officers.

Wife: We do not want to lie to you. Ever since we came here we have never seen AGRITEX officers at our fields.

Husband: AGRITEX officers can only be seen at meetings.

I heard that if you want the AGRITEX Officer to come to your field then you have to invite him.

Husband: What kind of AGRITEX Officer waits to be invited to people's fields. Are you telling me he should spend the whole year sitting in his offices doing nothing just because no one invited him to his/her field? An AGRITEX officer should go around inspecting fields of his own accord and advising where necessary. That is what we know. The real officers were the ones we had when we first came here. They knew their job.

On the other hand, especially where AREX is concerned the government had embarked internal restructuring, sending some of the officers to the fast track resettlement schemes. At the same time there has been a noticeable drop in the number of extension workers due to the restructuring of the civil service. For instance Mutangadura (1997:37) writes of an AGRITEX with a staff component of 2 500, whilst Murwira *et al* (2001:302) writes of an AGRITEX with a staff component of 2000. Also, with the dismantling of AGRITEX to form various specialist departments, of which AREX is one, the number of extension workers focusing on crop production has gone down. Instead of six AREX officers operating in Mupfurudzi, there was now only one. A single officer could not deal on a personal basis with all the farmers and so could only meet them at field days where there was usually a large gathering. Farmers would be

encouraged by the officer to ask questions. Another villager who was not pleased with the way the AGRITEX was being structured said:

They only come to inspect madhunduru (contour ridges). What they had told us was that they were going to have an AGRITEX officer concentrating on tobacco only and another concentrating on the rest of the crops. They were supposed to operate from Zvomanyanga to Chidubwe near Bindura. That has not yet happened but I guess it would not have worked out. One AGRITEX officer operating in such a large area. It is better for them to tell us that they are no longer going to give us AGRITEX Officers. How can one officer be expected to cover such a large area effectively. In the early days they used to tell us to educate our children because they said AGRITEX officers and resettlement Officers were with time going to be phased out and we would be left to run our own affairs. I think that is what is happening now. One can ask questions at village meetings but then sometimes people will laugh at you after the meeting. Like that man over there who used to tell us that he was the only good farmer in the village each time a field day was held at his place.

AREX officers and the representatives of the company sponsoring the field days took it upon themselves to choose the 'good' farmers to host the field day. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the field officers and the farmers viewed the concept of good farmer differently. The Cottco Collection Point Supervisor (CCPS) made it clear that Cottco was concerned only with the production capacity of the farmer,

We assess whether the crop in the field is healthy. We also look at weed management and pest control as well as the amount of feeding that he gives his crop. We look for someone who performed better than all the other farmers. If he gets more than 30 balls per plant, then judging by the standards used here, the person will be good.

Whilst the field officers considered only production factors, farmers considered also things like suspicions of the use of magic as well as how the farmer related to others. This could determine whether people were willing to attend a particular field day or not. One farmer mentioned that he did not like attending field days held at a particular man's field because the man was arrogant and boastful and thought he was the only farmer around. Three farmers in the sample were disappointed that the field officers sometimes did not hold the field days at the real good farmers' fields but instead chose farmers who farmed with the help of bad magic. Field days in this way failed to achieve their goals because officers did not have a full understanding of the local politics. Knowledge is political. Officers were also excluded from village gossip: not many people were willing to tell them anything since they were sometimes seen to be good friends of those who were suspected of using magic.

Field officers regarded field days as a way of encouraging good farming practices by fostering envy and the spirit of competitiveness among farmers. Extension officers and private companies tried to create competitiveness by giving farm inputs as prizes for the farmer who was judged good enough to host the field day. It was assumed that other farmers would also want to get free inputs and gain recognition as good farmers and would thus try to

improve their farming. For example, from the Cotton Company a farmer selected to host the day would get inputs sufficient for one hectare. At the national level, a small farmer selected as the grower of the year would get a million dollars, inputs, a scotch cart, water cart, rain gauge and a T-shirt. Apart from the material rewards on field days, the good farmers were often praised by the experts and the villagers would praise the farmer in song which would make the farmer feel good. For example at a field day hosted by Mr Kadungure, people sang:

*We are proud of Mr Kadungure,
He cultivated cotton that has a lot of balls
He will get a very good yield
Come and observe so that next year you farm
We are proud of Cottco: it gives us loans
To advance the farmer
We are proud of Mr Mushayi and Mr Jonga,
They give us knowledge so that we can progress.*

At times AREX would choose a few farmers and give them seed to cultivate on demonstration plots to be observed at field days. Why these farmers were selected was not made clear to the farmers. As a result, some farmers pointed to favouritism. However, the AREX officer declared that sometimes for demonstration plots they did choose a 'good farmer' but a farmer who could access fertiliser and would agree to close monitoring by AREX on the demonstration plot through out the season. Thus those who did not like close monitoring were left out even though they were good farmers and could afford fertilisers. Some farmers were known to be short tempered and did not take kindly to being told what to do.

Although field days can be regarded as a viable option of spreading information where alternatives are restrained, they are still limited in their scope. Instead of being learning experiences to some extent they become more like road shows for companies to advertise their products. For example, if Cottco sponsored a field day no question on any other variety that was not produced by Cottco could be asked. As a result farmers that do not cultivate Cottco seed or deal with other cotton companies, like Cargill get no clarification of their problems unless their company also held a field day.

People sang songs praising the company that was sponsoring the field day and often ridiculed other companies. The following are example of two such songs that were sung by Magazi and Chiedza Women's Clubs respectively at a field day in Magazi:

*All of you get lost
We love Cottco because it is good
Agricom get lost
Tsikamutanda get lost
All political parties get lost*

*We only want Cottco it is the only one
All of you get lost
Cottco is very good.*

Chiedza club women sang:

*We have our seed, holding our weapon
We are going to unseat Cargill
We have Mr Mushayi we are going to unseat Cargill
We have Mr Jonga we are going to unseat Cargill
We have Mr Kahari we are going to unseat Cargill
We do not fear Agricom we are going to unseat Cargill*

Such field day songs suggest that they were ostensibly occasions to advertise the company that sponsored that particular field day at the expense of its competitors.

According to the CCPS, Cargill is Cottco's biggest competitor in buying cotton from farmers with Agricom in third place but not a very significant player. Tsikamutanda was a local name given to a Tanzanian company that also purchased cotton. Tsikamutanda is a name given to some witch-hunters who sniff out witches by divination and mysterious means. Applied to the Tanzanian company, the name could have been derogatory, as these witch-hunters do not get favourable media coverage. However, it could simply point to the mystery surrounding this company as little was not known about it except that it came from Tanzania a country that also was mysterious to most of the villagers. Unlike the powerful Cargill Company that needed 'unseating', Tsikamutanda and Agricom could just be pushed over.

Although the farmers composed these songs it did not mean that they believed in what they sang. If another company held a field day (usually Pannar Seed and Seed Co - maize seed houses - and Cargill, which specialised in both maize and cotton) the same groups might perform the same songs and simply swap the names to suit the company sponsoring the day. During the performance people would mention and praise the company officials and field officers, who would then feel obliged to give money to the performers a practise, popularly known in Shona culture as *kupfupa*. These performances could therefore be regarded as clever fund raising initiatives by the performers. Laughter could often be heard from the audience who would be saying, 'this group knows how to shake the tree', (make the officials give them money) or, 'that group does not know how to shake the tree'. Officials usually had prior knowledge of the number of such groups so they brought with them enough money to give to them maybe as a token of appreciation of their performance or just to fulfil an obligation.

All performances whether song or drama, had to be related to agriculture. No song or drama could be performed just for its entertainment value. As pointed out by one respondent:

Those who cannot sing can perform drama. However everything has to be a message designed to encourage people to farm some more. Those who cannot sing or act, can dance, clap hands or just join in the singing

Even primary school children who took part in the entertainment by singing or dancing to traditional songs selected songs that had something to do with farming. The following are examples of the songs they sang. The first song show an appreciation of the good work that farmers do to keep us well fed and nourished:

*I thank you grandmother I thank you
Thank the farmer
I am full with food grandmother I am full with food
Thank the farmer
Thank you grandmother I am full with food
Thank the farmer.*

The second song pointed to the consequences of being lazy. Lazy people led miserable lives:

*This year I am not going to farm
Heha he-e
This year I will eat goat dung
Climb on top of the mortar and tell those at home*

Thus, field days can also be regarded as festivities to celebrate the farmer.

Some of the dramas discuss issues relating to lack of access to loans or unfair treatment by loan officers, or of farmers who lose their crops to unscrupulous salesmen who pose as buyers. They serve as a way for farmers to inform officials of their concerns and problems. In their speeches the officers frequently refer to some of the issues raised during the performances and they sometimes provide clarification, a solution or a promise of a solution after consultations with their bosses.

Why people attended field days

People had a variety of reasons for attending or staying away from field days. Of eight people asked, only two attended field days regularly. They maintained that they attended because they could get knowledge and information from other farmers and the experts.

I always go to field days. The lazy ones are the ones who do not because if you go to field days that is where you know all about becoming a good farmer. The lazy ones will say, 'Even if I go to the field days where will I get fertiliser. It's no use.'

Some farmers attended field days not only as a quest for knowledge but also to escape stereotyping. For instance, not attending can sometimes carry negative connotations such as being labelled lazy and or ignorant. These stereotypes are not mere words but can have real consequences. The companies that sponsored field days also offered loans. If the sponsors thought you did not attend because you were lazy or resistant to acquiring farming knowledge and improving your

farming skills, this could reduce your credit worthiness and sometimes even the ability to secure anything on loan.

Others attended field days to maintain good relations with fellow villagers. Most people, especially women, only attended field days when they were held within their villages. Although one woman felt that people could learn a lot of useful things, she admitted that many women (herself included) usually did not attend if they were held in other villages.

We usually don't go to field days unless they are held in this village. It is very rare that we go to field days if they are held in other villages. We are just lazy to walk long distances.

This woman only did attend the field day that was held in her village. If she had not done so, people would have viewed her with suspicion or even have openly accused her of being jealous of other people's success.

One woman said she had never attended a field day, because she felt only men were encouraged to attend, as household heads, to learn about farming, so that they could successfully feed their families. When I pointed out that at the field days I had attended there was a large contingent of women as well, she simply pointed out that,

Women also go but they mostly do the cooking and a few go there to watch the proceedings.

This was true: most of the women I saw at the field days were there as entertainers. Apart from the government female workers, who did not take part in entertaining the audience, all the women were involved either in the dramas, or in cooking or singing in choirs. The women took pride in their singing and dramas and it is highly probable that women mostly attended the field days so that they could perform. As mentioned earlier, they were given money for performing and they usually did not take much interest in the official proceedings as they were constantly reminded to listen instead of making noise as they seemed fond of.

Most often women said they did not attend because the field days were held far away from home. Either they were just too lazy or maybe frail health prevented them from walking such long journeys (one woman cited a heart condition). One old woman explained:

Usually the field days are held a long way from here. Because you are not the AGRITEX Officer you ask yourself why you have to go through the trouble of walking all those long distances. But it is said that people actually learn a lot from attending field days.

It could be that apart from the singing and dancing, women felt that they did not have anything significant to contribute and felt that whether they attended or not, the field day would not be affected in any way by their absence.

The reluctance of women to attend was not limited to field days but extended to other meetings. The AREX officer felt that at other meetings women and men did not attend proportionately.

But it is possible that the high attendance of women at field days compared to other agricultural meetings was because field days had high entertainment

value and offered opportunities for women to make money as well as point to their roles as cooks. At other meetings no food was cooked or offered but on field days there was always food and women had to be there to cook it.

Only one woman said she did not attend field days when her husband was alive, because he had been a jealous husband and had forbidden all his wives from attending any such occasion. Consequently, even after his death she never really felt the need to attend any field day.

Some men also did not attend field days but the reasons for men were different from those of women because of the different demands on their time. One man said that he had not attended for the past two years because he often did not get to hear about them. Usually he got the news when the event had already taken place. This could have been true because on two separate occasions I faced difficulty in trying to find my way to the places where the field days were being held. When I tried to ask directions, villagers, claimed that they were not aware of any field day being held in their own or even in the neighbouring village.

One young man maintained that he did not attend because he did not like the fact that he might have to spend the whole day hungry. He expressed nostalgia for the past:

In the past field days used to be a place of feasting, but now those feasts are no more.

He claimed that in the past people would drink beer at such events and a cow/ox would be slaughtered for people to eat. In the past, he had usually attended these field days to feast but now all that was gone. This young man liked drinking and was often to be found at the local bottle store.

Interaction at Field days

Field days were an opportunity for the host farmers to explain to other farmers how they managed their farming activities. This was usually done during a tour of the field. The tour usually consisted of going to that part of the field where the crop was greener or more fruitful. The farmer would stand in the crops and explain to the other farmers standing in the walkway what he did to achieve such a good crop. The farmer was allowed to explain without interruption and farmers could then ask their questions. In the explanation the farmer included information about the days that he had planted his crops, how he planted them, what kind and amounts of fertilisers he had used and the kind of seed. In this instance the farmer would be the male head of the household and the women were usually forced by public demand to stand besides their husbands while they explained the intricacies of farming. Farmers might also discuss any obstacle they faced, and at the field days I attended, farmers often pointed to the lack of access to fertilisers. First, the farmer was asked to explain what he did and the officers would explain where he went wrong and what he did right. Farmers were often not very confident of their knowledge as often they would

point out something they did and quickly apologise that they do not know if it had been the correct thing to do. Below are two excerpts of interaction between farmers and officers at two field days. The first was with a resettlement scheme farmer while the second was at a field day in a communal area.

Kadungure: *Forward with farming* (People started to shout that he should be standing together with his wives as they also worked. The wives came and stood besides him while he made all the necessary explanations. I could not fathom from the expression on the faces of the two wives whether they were unhappy, serious or simply shy to be standing in front of a huge crowd). *I planted my cotton on the first day of the rains. I planted 1 hectare just behind here. I planted on 5 November and covered the seed the next day. This cotton where we are standing I planted it on the 10th of December. The problem I faced here was a lack of fertiliser. I planted it without fertiliser. I asked Mr Mushayi for fertiliser but what he gave us was not enough. I did not get any top this cotton only has L. (Farmers make sympathetic noises). I got the top recently but it is no longer useful this season so I am keeping it at my home for next season. My secret is that I plough the land on time. I practise winter ploughing. Lumpy soil disturbs germination so you have to make sure the soil is not lumpy. My cotton also faced germination problems. Some of the cotton did not germinate. It was patchy. I wanted to replant so as to cover the patches but Mr Nyamaharo told me not to replant as I was supposed to leave 1m between columns and 30cm between plants in the same column. The seed inspector came to inspect the seed and he said that the seed is mixed. As you can see some of the cotton has branches that are close together whilst the other has branches that are far apart. He told me that he would ask Mr Mushayi next year to give me cottonseed that is of the same variety. Something happened to the seed packs that I was given. I planted foundation seed. Well I do not know if I did everything correctly. If I did some things wrong the Officers will tell you.*

Nehuje: *Now it's time for questions.*

Mushayi: (No one seemed to be making a move to ask questions so Mr Mushayi asked the question). *How many acres of cotton did you plant?*

Kadungure: *4 hectares*

Mushayi: *How many Compound L bags of fertiliser did you apply?*

Kadungure: *I used 15 bags of L.*

Mushayi: *For 4 hectares you should have used 20 bags of L.*

Man 1: *You did not tell us about spraying.*

Kadungure: *I first sprayed 85 for a whole month then I moved on to lavin and then to the chemicals that kill pests, the gukurahundis. Here where we are standing I sprayed gukurahundi three times but there where the cotton is already ripe for picking I sprayed twice.*

Man 2: *How much spacing did you use?*

Kadungure: *I spaced 1m apart. I think I should have spaced even more for this cotton here but I did not know that it would grow to such height.*

Mushayi: *On average how many balls does your cotton have?*

Kadungure: *Some has 58, some 40, and some 28. That one which is ready for picking ranges from 10-25balls.*

Mushayi: *Did you use herbicides?*

Kadungure: *We used our hoes. Hoes are the ones that weed that is why as you can see my wives here got these hats (People laugh).*

Mushayi: *what was your spacing between rows?*

Kadungure: 30cm

Woman 1: *I want to ask Mr Kadungure if he also came across a disease that we experienced. Red spider mite. We used fenikill but then we discovered that the fenikill was not helping.*

Kadungure: *I did not face that disease. It is only now that I see the leaves of my cotton plant are changing colour to red or purplish.*

Mushayi: *Do you see any red spider in this field?*

Farmers- *Yes it is all over the place.*

Mushayi: *How can you tell that it is red spider mite?*

Farmers: *We know all about red spider. We have been taught about it. It is easy to spot. Like right here where we are standing. (Farmers were just shouting in a disorderly fashion).*

Mushayi: *This is not red spider but I will explain in detail when we are seated but if you examine the leaf closely you will see that there is no red spider.*

(As the explanations were finished, we tracked back to the tent where entertainment was awaiting).

Below is the excerpt from the communal area field day:

Makwena: *Forward with cotton farming. I always do 'winter plough'. This year I am late because I am training new cattle to plough. In October I should turn the soil then cut the lines 1metre in between. The lines should not be very deep because if there is a lot of soil the seed will fail to germinate. During ploughing the mouth of the plough should go 20-30cm deep into the soil so that the cotton roots will move easily. This year we planted the seed first before applying fertiliser because I had applied manure so I knew everything was going to work out. I also used a hand drawn harrow to cover the seed with soil. I planted on 27 October and the first rains came on 13 November and my seed germinated on 18 November. When the seed germinated I thought of weeding but that is also when I got fertiliser so I applied the fertiliser in between the plants so that the plants would not get burnt. After applying fertiliser I used an ox-drawn cultivator to cultivate the field. After one week I started pulling out weeds in between plants. Up to six weeks I did not have any chemicals so I went to Mashco to buy a bottle of chemicals, I also bought a bottle of Unicorn and Unisulphine as well as two bottles of Carbaryl. On the first of February that is when I got Fenikill and Gukurahundi. We did not get enough Top fertiliser so we applied only a little. If we had enough fertiliser I am sure we would have got more cotton than this. Now we are planning to start 'winter plough'. I am appealing to our mother and father Cottco to give us fertilisers early, especially Top.*

Chirume: (AREX Officer) *Chairman ask for questions*

Chairman: *Forward with farming. Anyone who wants to ask a question should do so now.*

Man 1: *Forward with farming. He did not tell us whether he used any measurements when he applied fertiliser.*

Makwena- *I used 8*

Mushayi (Cottco Collection Point Supervisor): *When he cut the lines he said that he cut them one metre apart but he did not tell us what gap he left between the plants when he was reducing the crop population.*

Makwena: *We left a 30cm gap between crops.*

Mushayi: *When did you pull out the excess plant? How long was it after your crops germinated?*

Makwena: Two weeks after germination.

Mushayi: Two to three weeks that is okay. How many times did you weed?

Makwena: Three times.

Mushayi: You did not use herbicides?

Makwena: We just weed the field.

Woman 1 (Government worker): I see that the tips of the cotton plant have been cut. Is it helpful?

Chirume: If you remove the tips of the cotton plant the food will now go to the cotton balls instead of the tip where the plant will just eat but not produce any balls. However, research has shown that the gain from such an exercise does not warrant the labour that you invest in removing the tips. 27 October that was a very good date for planting the seed. According to the law no cottonseed shall be planted before the 20th of October. 1m x 30cm that is what we encourage for early planted cotton. For late-planted cotton you can reduce the 1m. You also reduce the 30cm to 20cm. If you plant the cotton very close to each other the balls will fall down. He put compound L after the cotton had already germinated that is a crime (*mhosoa*). The root is the mouth of the plant. You fed your child porridge through the nose what went through the mouth was just by accident. (People start to laugh good-naturedly. Makwena tries to defend himself by saying that it was because he got the fertiliser late from Cottco but then the AREX Officer cuts him off). You are not here to make arguments but to learn. I am not accusing you of any crime. I also encourage people to use cup number 8 for fertiliser. This year we did not have enough rain. If we had plenty of rain the cotton would not have done well because the fertiliser would have been washed away.

Mushayi: Mudhumeni (AREX Officer) officer why do we encourage 'winter plough'.

Logic: (a young AREX officer) There are many reasons for 'winter plough'. Firstly it helps to keep moisture in the soil. 2ndly the weeds are buried in the soil for a long time giving them time to rot and become manure. There are a lot of diseases and some harmful insects in the soil. When we practice winter plough these are brought to the soil surface and the sun burns them. When it is now time to plant it will be easier for us and the mouths of the ploughs will not easily wear and tear because the soil will be soft.

Chirume: We confuse you because we say zero tillage. With our season here we need 'winter plough' because the first rains are not for ploughing the land but for planting the crop.

Mushayi: What is the area of your field?

Makwena: 1 hectare

Mushayi: What is your yield?

Makwena: I was supposed to get 6 or 7 bales taking into account the rain we received this year. Some of my cotton has 50balls. Some has 22 balls the maximum 56balls per plant. My average is around 38balls per plant.

Chirume: If you want to know how much you are going to get ask me in private (people laugh). Compound L has got trace element Boron that helps to keep the cotton balls.

Old man: What causes red spider mite. Does it affect the lint and what can we do to prevent it?

Chirume: Red Spider is not a disease but an insect. You should prevent it by spraying your tomatoes and okra. You can only use the same chemical for two seasons only. For example we can use mitec but now you are using hustathione because the mite has become resistant to mitec. If you use mitec now the mite will multiply instead of die. You need to spray

quickly if you detect red spider mite in your field. You can also do spot spray but you need to quickly spray the whole field after that because when you spot spray the mite would be clinging to your clothes and you will spread it to other plants in the field. Red spider sucks the sap from the leaves. The leaves are the factory where the food for the plant is manufactured. When it attacks after the balls have burst then it is not dangerous. Red spider is dangerous when the balls are still green.

Mushayi: Is this red spider mite? (pointing to the cotton)

Farmers: Yes this is red spider. It is all over this place.

Chirume: There is no phosphorous in this field because Compound L was applied after the crop had germinated. The 18% phosphorous can not move it is like a cripple. Nitrogen is the one that moves.

Mushayi: This here is not red spider. This is alternaria leaf spot, which is caused by lack of phosphate. There is also another dangerous disease known as Verticilium wilt. If you uproot the plant that has been attacked by the disease you will spread it. This is so because wherever the soil from the plant falls the disease is spread as well. This disease cannot be cured.

Old Man: That is AIDS (people laugh)

Young Man 1: How many balls should a plant have?

Chirume: Some questions don't need to be asked. You can answer that one for yourself.

Mushayi: It depends on the soil type. In Dande in Mukumbura you can have as many as 250 balls per plant. However in the end they fall down because they lack proper feeding.

Chirume: If you get below 20 balls I would encourage you to stop cotton cultivation. The spirits of cotton farming are not yours.

Old man: I heard on the radio one day that we should not mix the top and the bottom cotton when grading. Why is this so?

Mushayi: The cotton that you pick first will not have any stains, plus it would be very strong. The cotton that you pick last will be weak. If you get a BWV on your bale it means the cotton got a B grade because it was weak a BT means it got a B grade because there was a lot of trash.

Chairman: It seems like there are no more questions. We can go back to the house.

Chirume: (Talking to Mushayi) When we go back, focus on picking and grading. We cannot go back to scouting because they will do that next year and they are likely to have forgotten by then.

During question and answer time the experts asked more questions than the farmers. Two women, one of whom was a government worker, not a resettlement scheme farmer each asked a question on two separate occasions. At the Magazi field day only two men asked a question and at the Madziva field day only three men asked question and two of these asked more than one question. The experts asked more than 85% of the questions. Farmers did not appear to have any inclination to ask questions. Two farmers from Muringamombe pointed out that they were disappointed that AGRITEX only associated with the rich farmers at the expense of the poor. They would only see the AREX officers at large gatherings and field days where they sometimes could not ask questions and sometimes they needed the personal attention they had received from the AGRITEX in the early days. Except in just one instance,

the people who asked questions in the question and answer segment were all good farmers by local standards.

The pattern of questions and answers on both field days confirms Bolding's (2004:99) assertion that 'the actual performance of the field day often creates impression of a ritual, with each actor playing its assigned role of champion (master farmer), promoter of development (extension agent), benefactors (agribusiness company) or student (cheering audience)'. Experts sometimes asked questions they knew the answers to, such as asking farmers about the hectareage of a particular crop under cultivation and the fertilisers they had applied, highlighting what the experts thought was the relevant knowledge to be disseminated. At the same time, farmers sometimes also asked questions they knew the answers to, conforming to their role as the students who do not have knowledge. The farmer hosting the field day occupied an ambiguous position. He was the champion and at the same time, a student, there to learn from the 'experts'. Thus although fellow farmers sang him praise songs, he could not entirely conform to his role of champion as often he had to acknowledge his lack of knowledge and defer to the expertise of the agricultural knowledge 'expert'⁷⁵.

It is clear that the stereotypes of the Officers can determine the course of the field day. 'Professionals, like others, seek to order and make sense of their experiences. Like others, they construct realities, their interpretations and ways of construing the world.' (Chambers, 1997:33.) At the first field day, the officers thought that the people in the resettlement area knew how to farm and so did not participate actively. As discussed later in this chapter, because of the Presidential elections that were to be held, the atmosphere in the resettlement area was highly politically charged. One of the officers pointed out that one had to tread carefully so as not to trample on other people's toes. Making enemies could be fatal. This difference in the politics of the resettlement areas and the communal areas was largely because of their different natures. As argued in an earlier chapter, resettlement was closely linked to politics. People were resettled by the ZANU (PF) led government after independence, whilst the people in the Communal Areas were not settled there by the government so they felt that they had an ancestral right to their land: as a result, they felt they had more secure tenure. Some farmers in the resettlement areas feared that if the opposition political party won, the new government would expropriate their

⁷⁵ Freire (1993:45) highlighting the lack of confidence by the peasants in their knowledge wrote "Not infrequently peasants in educational projects begin to discuss a generative theme in a lively manner, then stop suddenly and say to the educator, 'Excuse us, we ought to keep quite and let you talk. You are the one who knows. We do not know anything.'"

land, and give it back to white farmers, forcing the farmers to go back to the impoverished communal areas. The communal area farmers had no such fears.

In the communal area, the AREX officer was highly active and indeed controlled the content of the field day. He did not hide the fact that he thought the farmers were ignorant and needed to be guided. Even the questions that the experts asked were different in the two field days. In the first they focused more on technical aspects like the amount of chemicals sprayed and spacing, while in the other field days they also had to ask about winter ploughing which they thought farmers were ignorant about. It was also left to the experts to point out what the farmers did wrong and warn against such practices.

Explanations by the experts were often put across in terms of local idioms and parables that farmers would easily understand and identify with. For example, when talking about farmers who reneged on loan payments the officers would start by talking of the dog that bites the hand that feeds it. The orator would involve the audience by asking what they thought for example, the person whose hand has been bitten by the dog he was attempting to feed should do. On one occasion one speaker likened the person who failed to service loans to someone who bites the back of a person carrying him to the hospital. As a result, he would be thrown down and left to die or to walk on his own to the hospital because he was ungrateful. Usually these parables would end with an appeal to the farmers not to bite Cottco on the back or on the hand.

Although much of the discussion on field days focused on loans and markets, crop pests and diseases were also discussed. These again were explained in terms that the farmers would understand. Sometimes farmers would take part in the unravelling of meanings so that they could understand better as in the case of the verticillium wilt mentioned in the excerpt above, where verticillium wilt was likened to AIDS. Although this comparison caused a lot of laughter, the officer then used the idiom of AIDS to explain the disease in the terms that the farmers could understand. If the stalk was pulled the disease would spread to wherever the soil from the stalk dropped. However although like AIDS the disease was incurable, it did not affect production. Put this way farmers could easily understand the explanations compared to if scientific jargon had been used.

When sitting and during the field tour men, women and the young did not mix. The men walked in front, the women following right behind and the young last. In Magazi the field day was held during the school term. As a result, the 'O' level agricultural class from the local secondary school attended. The students stayed close to the CCPS, who explained to them the various things related to cotton farming as well as the diseases that were likely to be encountered. Some students took down notes and some pretended to. During the question-and-answer session, the students asked nothing. On being asked why, they said they could ask their teachers at school to explain anything they

did not understand. It was not proper to talk in the presence of elders and besides it would not bode well if a student asked a difficult question that the farmer was not able to answer.

During the field tour it emerged that both farmers and students explained or understood disease by referring to what they already knew. For example the leaves of the cotton crop both at Magazi and Madziva were turning red and purple in colour. On being asked why, both farmers and students were convinced that it was red spider mite. Although the farmers could not see the red spider mite on the leaves that was the only thing they knew that caused leaves to change colour. Some had even sprayed their cotton with red spider mite chemicals. As was pointed out later by the Cottco representative, leaves were changing colour due to a potash deficiency in the soil. This problem could be solved by using Compound K fertiliser that was high in potash.

Field days and social differentiation

In Mupfurudzi, as in most other Zimbabwean rural areas, it is difficult to talk of social classes but one can talk of social differentiation. When they first came to the resettlement areas most people had nothing and had to rely on the government for everything. However, some had a few cattle and some farming implements. Those who had a few resources managed to get a head start over those who had nothing, and in most cases, those who started better off are still maintaining the lead. This differentiation is not only between individual families, but also between sexes. It was reinforced at field days, although instances in which this differentiation was challenged also emanated from the way of the field days themselves. In Magazi, social differentiation was recognised in the way people were introduced as well as where they were eventually asked to sit during the proceedings. This is what Mr Gweshe, a local farmer and Cottco Representative at Magazi, said when opening the field day:

After reciting slogans telling people that Cottco and the ZANU (PF) government were good, Mr Gweshe invited everyone to come nearer to the stage where everything was going to be taking place. Women sat in the blazing hot sun in the dust whilst those women who had arrived early, sat under the shade provided by a nearby big tree. On the other hand, men sat on benches in a crude tent that had been set up and the dignitaries sat in the tent on the high table with a lace tablecloth and bottles of water as well as Mazowe orange drink. In the tent there were only five women: I the researcher, my assistant, the cotton company secretary, the village health worker, and a Cottco group leader.

Everyone should come here except those who are cooking (who as usual were all women). I also want to arrange people in the tent to sit according to their positions. Village heads, Gold Club members and AREX officers. Mr Nyamaharo come here in front. How can you sit in the back you who teach us how to farm? All gold club members come in front. You are the real farmers. We do not want you to get sunburn. The Chairman, Kahari and Kambiriyaenda come in front. All teachers sit over there (the other side of the tent which

would soon be in the sun but it was still in front) and all health workers over here. All Branch and cell chairmen come here in the tent because we do not want you to complain that you were left out, as happened last time. I had not mentioned any of you including the District Committee members because I know that all these people are also leaders in Cottco. I know I am also one of them. (Clenching his fist and raising it up high in readiness to make a slogan) Forward with cotton farming, down with Tsenza⁷⁶ farming.

The question arises is the field day a celebration of the farmer as I said earlier or is it just a celebration of the good farmer. All the farmers who belonged to the gold class were invited to sit in the tent where they would not get sun burnt whilst all the other farmers were not that important. What is surprising is that the wives of the gold class farmers (all male) sat in the sun and did not join their husbands in the tent.

This assumption of the male head as the farmer and organiser and that women simply followed, was challenged by the Mushamukadzi drama club that was composed entirely of elderly women. *Mushamukadzi* is a popular *Shona* saying that recognises that women are responsible for making good homes and their families, including making their husbands successful. Below is a summary of the main components of the Mushamukadzi drama. Throughout the performance all women were cheering, whilst some men were complaining that the women were an embarrassment as a drama club.

The drama starts as the women attend a Cottco loan meeting. They are asked to bring their vouchers. Some have the vouchers some do not. Some of the women lack confidence and have constantly to consult their peers before answering questions from the loans officer. Some of the women are shaking and trembling. One family consisted of a lazy father Madzinga, and a hardworking mother, Nyekete. Nyekete is the one that went to get the loan. On the 22nd of October, she wants to start planting but is prohibited by her husband, who says the seed will get burnt. When the wife tells the husband that Mr Mushayi told her that that is the right time to plant cotton, the husband tells her that Mushayi knows nothing. When the wife is away, Madzinga sells the wife's fertiliser and chemical bottles because he says he wants to fix the wife. He uses the money to finance his and his girlfriend's drinking habits. Mushayi comes to inspect the field but the husband sends him away saying that the road is not suitable for a motor bike. He will first have to clear the way then call him back some other time. When the wife discovers that the chemicals are missing, she confronts the husband, who accuses her of not keeping the keys in a secure place, as the village is full of thieves. Nyekete accuses Madzinga of stealing the chemicals and she is beaten up. Madzinga tells his wife to sell to Tsikamutanda because he claims that Cottco grading system is unfair as they use a machine which when switched on turns all the cotton to a red colour. When Cottco comes to collect the cotton, Madzinga tells Cottco that cows attacked the only bale they had. As usual the recovery clerks come and take the entire woman's property.

⁷⁶ The scientific name for Tsenza is *Coleus Esculentus*. In a paper discussing resource struggles in Kaerezi, Zimbabwe, Moore (1993:395) notes that in Kaerezi, Tsenza was a women's crop but its cultivation was prohibited by the government because, 'tsenza is widely believed to poison the soil, robbing it of its nutrients... (and) eroded deep slopes'.

This drama highlights the problems that women faced in their farming endeavours. First they had no access to land and had to access this through their husbands. If living with their husbands, the success of these women depended on the benevolence of the husband. The tensions between men and women were acted out albeit in a humorous manner. The intention of this kind of drama would be some kind of awareness campaign to condemn such practises. However, apart from the condemnation no solutions were offered nor does it seem that any were in sight.

The role of women at field days was particularly that of cooking and entertaining. Although women also took part in the field tours for some reason they did not seem particularly keen to ask questions but sometimes would congregate in-groups swapping stories and laughing. For example, after one performance at a field day in Madziva, women gathered to congratulate a group of people that had just performed. This happened although one of the officials was giving a speech. The women had to be asked to stop making noise and asked to come and listen to what the officials were saying.

Social differentiation was also recognised in the way the food was shared. The officials, as well as the gold class farmers and government workers, were given properly prepared food and drinks while the women and children got no drinks and some failed even to get food to eat. While it was conceivable that not all people were going to get enough to eat, it was also understood that the people in the tent could not go hungry. The stage was arranged in such a way that the performers faced the tent and had their backs to the women and children.

All farmers regarded field days as learning occasions. However, ten out of the fourteen respondents recognised the high entertainment value of field days as they mentioned that most people went to field days because of the food and beer as well as the entertainment although in the process they could learn a thing or two.

Field days, knowledge and politics

Although field days were primarily for disseminating knowledge they were also highly political in nature and any person making a contribution had to realise this and in most cases use the proper political rhetoric. There were several different ways in which political rhetoric could be recognised. The context in which field days were held could also determine the politics and even the content of the field days.

At the Magazi field day, the political content was blatant. I argue that although a field day was primarily a farming affair, failure to recognise the political hierarchies could lead to trouble. For example, the speaker, Mr Gweshe, felt a need to introduce ZANU (PF) district members because he did not want a repeat of what had happened at another field day. At this field day

someone had forgotten to introduce them and the District member had complained of having been left out and the speaker had to apologise. If one was a party official or a Sabhuku he/she was allowed to sit at the 'high table' in the tent regardless of whether the person was a lazy or a prominent farmer. Thus the field day was not only a celebration of the farmer and a disseminator of agricultural knowledge but also served to reconfirm the power structures in the village.

Village headmen were also party cell chairpersons and were therefore also introduced to the farmers although everyone knew who they were. They did not seem particularly keen to be introduced as party cell chairmen. This was probably because their position as Sabhukus gave them more than their role as cell chairpersons. As cell chairpersons their position had less power than those of all the other party members. As Sabhukus they had the backing of tradition and nothing could be done in their villages without them being consulted. There was some tension between ZANU (PF) district members and village headmen. During the 2002 elections and its aftermath, the power invested in the position of Sabhukus was eroded while party positions were consolidated. One of the Sabhukus was bitter that some party officials acted without consulting them as the representatives of the traditional authority. They overwhelmingly supported the party principles but felt they needed to be consulted more.

In Madziva, the ZANU (PF) councillor did not attend the field day. When his wife who had attended was asked why her husband had not come, she answered that it was because the Councillor had not been informed about the field day and as a result did not know about it. Clearly, the wife and all the people in the village knew about it, but the organisers of the field day had failed to recognise protocol and extend a personal invitation to the councillor as he felt his position warranted. Although the official function of field days is to spread agricultural knowledge by analysing the interaction of actors both present and not present at the field day one can thus gain an understanding of the political landscape.

Although songs and dramas were performed for education and entertainment the messages conveyed were also highly political in content. Even the speeches that were given also had a political inclination. The field day in Magazi intended to teach farmers about seed production. However, instead of sticking to the factual information on how seed was produced, they talked about the political and economic implications of land reform and why black people had to move into the field of seed production. One speaker said,

Foundation seed used to be a preserve of the Reeds and the Dicks but now we are venturing in.

Below is a speech by the AREX officer

Forward with Cottco. Forward with taking loans from Cottco. Our life is now leaning more towards the soil so we must not misuse the soil. We have enough land, now its time to show

our farming prowess. Some farmers are always happy when they clear their loans, which is good but you are not yet a farmer if you only farm to pay back loans. One must have a lot of surplus. Crops like cotton bring foreign currency into the country. In the past we left this duty to white people but now that we have the land we must all be like Mr Kadungure (people clap hands). Farmers should plan their things on time and make the appropriate steps. A farmer should set targets for him or herself and follow everything that is required to be a successful farmer. Cotton has its own requirements. If you want to go into cotton blindly without following the various rules and regulations, cotton will bring you down. Some people planted at the same time as Mr Kadungure but did not follow all the requirements and their cotton is very embarrassing. Some people can even deny ownership of their fields if you ask them if the field is theirs, because the crops are a disgrace. A company like Cottco has created a good name for itself over the years. It helped a lot of white farmers to prosper. If you saw some of them riding around in Mercedes Benz, it was all Cottco's doing. Cottco gives enough inputs to people who are able to plan and use the inputs effectively. Some people cannot think. Some people are selling the inputs that they are getting on loan from Cottco. They deliver the inputs they sell at night so that they are not seen. At the end of the day, the kind of farming they do is very embarrassing. Inputs were sold here even during the days of AFC. People used to come here to buy seed and fertiliser cheaply. The only problem they would face was transport and at the end of the day we were the losers. (People started to cheer in agreement with the assertion.) We have a lot of companies here that are coming to buy our cotton, what have these companies done to help us. You know what children do when they see visitors. They start to behave in incredibly embarrassing ways. When the visitors go away the parents usually beat the misbehaving child. That is the same with farmers. In English they say biting the hand that feeds you. Let's say you have a dog and you want to feed it but then it bites you what happens?

Audience: The dog will die of hunger because no one will want to feed such a dog.

AREX Officer: You know what the white man did: he took the loan, farmed, and made huge profits that he banked. He always made sure that he serviced his loans so that he would be eligible for another loan the following year. Our problem is that we are failing to pay back our loans. That is dragging us as farmers down. We are encouraging you as your farming advisors to become very good farmers. When you arrive at the homestead of a farmer you can always tell. Farmers wear uniform. If you did not have a plan as you go from here today, you should start making plans. Forward with farming. What about those who do not know?

Audience: They should be taught

AREX Officer: No they should not argue (People start to laugh and clap hands whilst the AREX officer, Nyamaharo sits down).

There was talk that the Reeds (white farmers) were the ones that had dominated seed manufacturing that is why they drove Mercedes Benz and Pajeros. Although political rhetoric was a good appeal to emotions, it might not have been sufficient without also appealing to the economic side. The various speeches indicated that the white man was the yardstick, which the black man must emulate. Black people should cultivate seed like the white man, they should also be able to pay back loans like the white man, and they should also get very good harvests like the white man. The experts did not understand the logic of the farmer. Most maize farmers in the resettlement areas were farming

to feed their families and then sell any surplus. Cotton farmers pointed out that they farmed cotton to raise money for school fees or to buy farming implements. As mentioned in Chapter 5, if a person could afford these, then he was a good farmer and did not have the desire or indeed the motivation to farm like a white man. For the resettled farmer, the yardstick was other farmers in the area, not some remote white man's farm. However, there also existed differences among farmers. The highly successful farmers, especially those who cultivated cotton and tobacco, aimed to farm more successfully than the white man and frequently mentioned that they could beat the white man if they had access to resources. Thus at the field days, appeal to politics and economy were all interwoven in the production of knowledge. Thus at the end of the day, knowledge was not only an accumulation of facts but knowledge was given a morality of its own and the advice given was regarded as something that a patriotic and principled person would adopt.

Context would also determine the kind of politics that was preached on field days. For example, an analysis of the content of songs that people sang at field days of the early 1980s and those of recent years reveal that the content is changing. Although the songs still espouse ZANU (PF) party ideologies, the focus has changed possibly reflecting a change in the focus of the party. The first three songs are songs that had a political connotation sung in the field days of the early 80s and they depended on the farmer's recollection. The last two songs were sung at the field days that I attended in 2003.

1. *Our country Zimbabwe*
That's where we live
We thank Muzhuzha and Mugabe
And all those who help us
To lift Zimbabwe.
2. *Mugabe gave birth to a very small child*
The name of the child is development
Development to the rural areas.
3. *Is this what you planned for us*
Planned for us our father Mugabe
We thank you for your plans
We are celebrating because of your plan.
4. *Zimbabwe is independent*
Our job is to farm cotton to develop our country
We thank Mr Jonga and Mr Mushayi
We thank Shava for progress.
5. *Elders do not ever forget that we have taken the land*
Give me embers

Give me dry grass

We will get the firewood at the big farms.

Although from the first to the third song farmers were singing about development, the cause of that development was credited to the president of the country and as a result he had to be thanked. Although the AGRITEX officer (who was Muzhuzha in the early 1980s) was also thanked, high level politics dominated the agenda of the field days. This could have been influenced by the context of the 1980s. In the 1980s the government gave people seed packs and fertilisers and helped them to start farming by farming a hectare for free for each resettled farmer during the first year. For instance there is a groundnut seed variety now popularly known as *KaMugabe* because people first cultivated the seed when they were given it for free by the government. The farmer's achievements were attributed to the government and President Mugabe led the government hence the frequent mention of his name in songs.

However, in 2000 the focus had shifted. Instead of always mentioning the president in their songs, farmers are now singing of those people whom they frequently interact with in their day-to-day business. People like AGRITEX officers and agricultural company representatives are now being popularised in the songs. It does not reflect a wane in the popularity of the president but rather a decentralisation in the control of the day-to-day activities of the farmers. For instance, in the 1980's the government, through its various arms, was responsible for giving people loans of seed and fertiliser and sometimes gave these for free. But now people have to deal with commercial companies and banks to get loans. People also sang about current political issues in their songs. For example in the last song people were singing about the fast track farms.

Listening to the field day songs one can understand some of the people's aspirations even though they are not explicitly referred to in the speeches of the different speakers. In the 1980s dramas performed at field days mostly focused on the problems farmers faced in transporting inputs from the producers as well as in selling their produce to the market. Dramas, served as a way to convey grievances and problems to the relevant authorities, invited to the field days. These authorities would then be expected to come up with solutions. It might also have been because most field days were organised by the AGRITEX department and there was no pressing need to advertise the products of any specific company.

The dramas performed in 2003 as I mentioned earlier focused on gender conflicts, advertised the company that was sponsoring the field day but above all they also dramatised the various ways in which fake buyers could con farmers out of their crops. Below is an outline of a drama performed by a group of young people dramatising how people had been conned out of their crops the previous year by a fraudulent company that called itself Chorima.

Sineri Sineri Drama Club

Club consisted of 4 males and 3 females. The narrator started by saying

Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to present to you our drama entitled anoudzwa odzoka (Literal translation-Tell him/her when he/she is back meaning, You sometimes tell people about things that will harm them after they have already been harmed, because when you tell them before they are harmed they refuse to listen to you). Some things are funny and some things make you sad. See for yourself.

Mr Mbanda: (shouting at top of voice) *Hear me, hear me, people. Come to the meeting. Come to the meeting. Hey the Kadungures come to the meeting* (People laugh at the mention of Kadungure)

Mr Kadungure: *Amai Tu you have heard for yourself lets go.*

(At the meeting. The one who has been calling for the meeting asks Mr Kadungure or baba Tuji (Tuji's father) to open the meeting by praying. Every time they say baba Tuji people laugh because it sounds like babyish language for faeces)

Mr Kadungure: *Let us close our eyes and pray. God our Father hear us. God we thank you because you created us as humans. If you had made us into cockerels instead of human beings, we would have to be killed for visitors on Christmas day.* (Laughter and hand claps from the audience).

Mr Mbanda: *Without wasting any of our time secretary, meet the people* (Man 1 stand up). *Women be silent: show that you like our programme here.* (Amai Tuji and the other woman were whispering to each other).

Secretary: *Forward with farming. Forward with modern houses. Down with cars that do not have starters.* (Laughter from the audience). *I have travelled all over the world to many countries: therefore, I now know the countries to which we can sell our cotton at better prices. These other buyers are now denying you T-shirts and giving you shawls instead, but we will give you both* (agreement from the audience within the drama). *I will send our cars to collect the cotton.*

Mr Mbanda: *make sure that the trucks are filled with cotton bales. In the interest of equal rights, I will leave you to madam. She has something to say.*

Madam: *Chorima hit and run* (People start to laugh apparently some people fell to the chorima scam. This scam was when conmen and women came to the village and offered farmers prices that were unrealistically higher than those of other official buyers. Because farmers were attracted to the higher prices, they sold their crops to these con-artists with the understanding that they would get paid as soon as the buyers delivered the crops to the actual buyers. The con-artists vanished with the farmers' crops and the farmers never got paid. The most notorious group of con-buyers was the group that called itself chorima.)

Kadungure: *Its harvesting money* (Kukohwa mari)

Madam: *That's not it. This is our slogan. If I say the Chorima, you say hit and run. We went to Italy. In Italy, they buy cotton at \$10 000 per kg. How much do these other people buy cotton from you.*

Dramatists: (in unison) *\$50/kg*

Madam: *What is that? We give you much more. If you deliver cotton today, after three days, you get your weights and after 1 week, you get the cheques. You cannot wait for wealth to come to you. Women, let's get rich.*

Mbanda: *You have all heard for yourselves. Mr Kadungure, can you say the closing prayer for the meeting?*

Kadungure: God, You heard what has been said here. Just keep on looking. Amen.

Mbanda and his wife argue where to take their cotton. In the end, they decide to take it to Chorima while Kadungure and his wife decide to go to Cottco. After some time, Mr Kadungure tells his wife that he heard through rumours that all those who sent their cotton to chorima were conned. He starts to laugh at Amai Mbanda saying that when he went to their house to convince them not to sell to Chorima, Mrs Mbanda shook her chest at him until her breasts looked like they were going to fall down. She chased him away from her house. (There is laughter from the audience). Amai Kadungure meet Amai Mbanda at the water pump and Amai Mbanda looks like she is wilting. She tells Amai Kadungure that they were swindled. Mrs Kadungure points out to her that it is because she never listens when others speak. Mr Kadungure is very happy and praises his wife for her prophetic abilities in insisting that they sell to Cottco. It comes as no surprise to him as his wife's mother was a traditional healer. He ends up by saying he will never divorce her.

(A new scene starts. The conman and women are enjoying themselves drinking beer and soft drinks)

Secretary: That is why System sang that song where he says you were married to a crook. It is true you got married to a crook. We hit and run, baby. Let's go to the DRC, to Iraq, to Ethiopia, to enjoy ourselves. We have got plenty of money to indulge ourselves. And just think of it. We sold the cotton to Cottco. (They laugh and move off the arena)

Mr Kadungure: (Goes to Mbanda's house) Amai Pinjisi (referring to Mbanda's wife), why do you look sad? Have you not yet received your money?

Mbanda: The child has just been dismissed from school. We do not have money for school fees.

Mr Kadungure: Jah, you women of the shava (eland) totem speak too much (people laugh: shava women are alleged to be verbally aggressive). I met those Chorima people in Bindura where they were selling your cotton to Cottco. I have been told to inform you that after ten days Cottco is going to send that fat man (people laugh because they know they are referring to Gweshe) to come to take all your plates.

Amai Mbanda: But they cannot do that. They already have some of our plates they took when we failed to service the loan some years ago. I will tell them to keep those.

Mr Kadungure: They will take all your property because you have failed to pay them. That serves you right: you nearly ate me alive when I was trying to dissuade you from selling to Chorima. I feel pity for people like you. I will give your son's school fees and buy him a uniform. I will also pay back what you owe Cottco. Then I will take your two cattle. (They start singing and dancing signalling the end of the drama).

Thus song and drama made sure that information was not only a one way affair where the experts disseminated information. It meant that all those who could not be given time to voice their opinions through speeches could do it through drama and song, as there was no restriction on who could perform. For example, the drama highlighted that farmers were not happy with the cotton prices they get from Cottco. The dramas were also highly versatile as the various dramas could include even announcements that were made at the field day. For instance, Cottco had just announced that it was going to phase out T-shirts and hats for farmers and give the shawls and headscarves instead, a measure which did not go down well with the male farmers. This brings to

mind Long's (2001:7) assertion that creativity is not the monopoly of 'experts' and 'intellectuals', but is also manifest in the creative abilities of ordinary 'lay' persons and 'amateurs'.

Field days as social occasions

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter apart from their education value, field days were also social occasions where people could gossip, catch on gossip as well as settle disputes. Field days are also social occasions in the sense that what happens at field days is not only limited to the confines of the field day but often has a long history.

Disputes that were discussed at one of the field days I attended were related to issuing loans. Some villagers were dissatisfied with the way loans were issued and hoped that by airing their grievances in public they would get a speedy resolution from the dignitaries present. Here is an extract of how some people raised their complaints and how the dignitaries responded:

Young man: *Last year I wanted to get cottonseed and chemicals on loan, but I was denied access to the loan because they said I had not cultivated cotton the previous year.*

Kahari: *These issues of loans do not begin at our offices but here in the villages. The chairman is the one who has to come and ask for a loan on behalf of the farmer. The farmer cannot come to vouch for him/herself. Where have you ever heard that a person can go to marry without sadombo?*

Old man: *In Chiimbira we also had a similar problem. I was denied loans because they said my name did not appear in the computer*

Kahari: *What happens is that the chairperson assesses your field. He has a rough idea of what to expect from your field. What do you do? You take 2 bales to Tsikamutanda, use 2 bales to service the Cottco loan then hide the rest for other buyers.*

Mushayi: *If you hide the cotton and sell it to other buyers, I will not give you anything. Why do you sell your cotton to those who did not give you any fertilisers and who sell you chemicals at exorbitant prices. If the chairman says I should not give you anything, then I will not. I get a crop progress report from the chairperson. If I count the balls in your field I will get a rough estimate of what you will get. Why should I get masese (second rate beer) when others are drinking musungwa (best quality beer). How much do you buy fenikill from Mashco?*

Audience: *at \$3000*

Mushayi: *But at Cottco we sell it at \$720 and if you are paying cash we sell at \$600.*

Young man 1: *You said we have to be assessed. We were assessed and were asked to pay a joining fee, which we paid. I got the seeds, which I paid for using my own cash, but then I did not get the 3 bags of L fertiliser I was supposed to get.*

Audience: *(Start to make noise with some whispering that the fertiliser did not belong to him but to his wife. He was complaining for things that were not his. People told the officers to ignore him. At last the officers told the man to come to their offices).*

Field days acted as a social control to guard against excessive abuse of powers by the chairmen, as discontented people could bring up their issues for discussion at the field day. However, it is not clear whether that end was

achieved to the satisfaction of the farmer, as in most cases the officers would end up blaming the farmer. In the second place, there were some social processes at play where the officers did not want to be blamed for any wrongdoing. Thus if there were any misunderstandings, it was either the farmer or maybe the chairman who was to blame, as they acted according to the information they received from the chairman.

On the other hand, when people attended field days they did not attend the field day only in their capacity as farmers but also as villagers who have a life apart from farming. When people related to you, they took into consideration your other identities as well. Thus when the young man complained that he had not received the loan fertiliser from Cottco although he had paid the joining fee, people chose to ignore his complaints as they said he was not the one who had joined, but his wife. They said he was not hard working, did bad things to his wife, and wanted to control his wife's assets. Everyone knew that had it not been for his hard working wife, he would not have anything to eat at his place. However, they could not come outright and tell him to get lost because they did not want him to lose face in front of his peers.

Disputes discussed at field days were not only those between farmers but could also be those between farmers and experts. Sometimes there was latent tension between farmers and officers where the farmers might feel they were being treated unfairly by the officers. For example in one of the cases, the Cottco representative was complaining that some people had decided to skip him and go straight to Bindura to ask for inputs. This presented a challenge to his authority and he threatened to take action to bring the perpetrator to heel if such action continued to occur. This was what he said to the gathering:

I am not very happy as I stand here. One of your chairmen here went to Bindura to ask for fertiliser. The person in Bindura is bigger than me but when I am within my jurisdiction, he is small. Do not think because so and so married your daughter then you can go to him and not follow the proper channel. I will reduce both you and the manager to your proper sizes. This year I am going to transfer that person to Bindura. He will get his inputs from there, as it is what he wants.

To be asked to collect inputs from Bindura was a bad thing as transporting the inputs from Bindura was very expensive compared to collecting inputs from the local depot where one did not need to pay for transport. Furthermore in Bindura, sometimes one would not get the inputs but was instead referred back to the field representatives. Thus although farmers could contest the authority of the officials, the officials were in a position of relative advantage and could use their powers to punish those who were recalcitrant. No one at the field day dared say anything contrary to what the officer was saying.

However, to understand the position of farmers I had a conversation with one farmer on the issue of loans. I asked the farmer why he thought he was

going to fail to secure a loan that year (from a different company from the one that had sponsored the field day)

You were talking about the loans saying you might not get the loans why?

It's because Zengeza does not tell people the truth. He used to work for Cottco: now he is working for Agricom in Bindura. His job is to look for customers but he is 'very bad'. He had told people that if they bought seed from Agricom, the organisation could loan them things. Now he told me that the loan facility has been closed already and I cannot have anything.

Have they closed?

No. I met Taurayi today and he asked me how the loan facility could be closed already when people had not yet started farming. He told me to take my money for the seed straight to Agricom Bindura and explain my position. They will give me a loan.

One village head also grumbled about some people who were making it difficult for them to get loans. Dhangeni who resided in the village had been denied a loan for no apparent reason. The headman maintained that they would leave whoever was doing it alone, but if he ever were to have a problem that would require the services of a village head, he would punish him.

Women also used the field days as opportunities to discuss issues that affected them directly. These might not be limited to farming but relating to the patriarchal structures that women always felt were very unfair to them. Mrs Gwaze (see cover picture), a very powerful woman in the party structures, upon being asked to say the vote of thanks alluded to the important role that women play in agriculture.

Forward with farming. Cottco is the first wife. We now have the land what is needed: now it is for us to use that land. The wife is powerful. She is the farmer. These men are in our hands. If the wife is lazy then there is no development in that household. When the women and children go to the fields for an honest day's work the fathers and husbands remain at home sleeping. Some men are just men for what we see inside their pants. Such men do not know how to use their hands: they are just bulls (people laugh). We women are the ones who do all the work. If the child asks his father for a pencil the child is told to go ask her mother. We do not want the role of women to be recognised only in the singing and dancing at field days. It is we women who organise and attend the agricultural shows: men just want us to cook sadza for them so that they can go to the beer hall.

Women were also the ones who first started clamouring for women to stand beside their husbands when the husbands were explaining to the audience how they had managed to get good crops. The reasoning was that the women had contributed most of the labour, something that had to be recognised.

At field days, the role of women in agriculture is recognised and women seize the opportunity to act out the tensions between them and men. However, this does not go beyond the field day. For example, the woman who gave the vote of thanks chose not to confront the fact that some men do not work as much as their wives but in the end control the products of the labour. Instead, she chose to regard it as one of the strengths of women that they work to feed their families successfully, even in the face of useless husbands. At the same time,

men would accept that women generalise on the faults of men at field days, but would not take kindly to women who tried to contest such inequality – real or perceived – within the home. Overall it was men in their capacity as household heads who decided what was and was not beneficial education for the woman. One old man had this to say:

Are there different sources of information that men and women use such that they end up knowing different things?

The difference is that women do not know how to plan things. However, these days women are getting educated so that they now know a lot of things –sometimes even more than men. Let's say I was to marry an educated woman: this woman would know more than I do. In some cases, women are invited to meetings only for women. Usually they would be taught about living harmoniously with their husbands in their homes. If it is a meeting to do with agriculture, everyone is invited.

If only women are invited do you feel threatened and sometimes even stop your wife from attending?

No. We do not feel threatened at all because they will be just taught how to live peacefully with their husbands. Like the last time women were invited to Madziwa mine, men were not allowed to attend because they said they wanted to teach women. But usually after the meeting the women come home to tell their husbands what they have learnt.

What if you do not agree with what they have been taught?

I will just tell them to forget it.

Do women also attend the AGRITEX meetings in large numbers?

Not really. Usually women just say to their husbands, 'You can attend then tell us what you have learnt when you come back.' Some women do not care. They just say as long as the man has attended and is getting the knowledge. Those are the women with the poverty spirit in them (laughing).

As long as women knew how to behave properly in their homes, men did not have a problem with anything women might say at public gatherings. As long as the education women received enabled them to live harmoniously with their husbands, men did not have problems with women getting such education.

Field days were also occasions where people could catch up on gossip⁷⁷. Women usually gathered in small groups, talking in whispers, laughing out loud, and sometimes clapping hands in an expression of disbelief at what they heard. On one occasion, a group of women who were cooking lunch were gossiping about certain women whom they said had the bad habit of not helping with the cooking whenever there were large gatherings in the village. These women had the notorious habit of coming to the gathering when it was

⁷⁷ In a study on gossip in Wedza Shambare and Bourdillon (2002:13) point out that many people claimed gossip to be useful. While people may spread gossip out of malice, or for sheer entertainment, gossip can be useful in spreading important information about things that cannot easily be brought into the open. Gossip criticises behaviour that is regarded as unacceptable within the community, and to this extent gossip helps to maintain the values of the community.

already lunchtime so that they could eat the food cooked by other women. A nearby store had also been robbed and some people were discussing the event and pointing to certain young men within the village they thought were involved with the robbery. It was said that the police were about to pick the youths up so that they could help with their investigation into the robbery. However, invariably such stories ended with the storytellers cautioning the listeners not to tell people they had heard from her.

In one of the incidents, a group of people was talking about a young woman whose two children had died. People were discussing how unfortunate the young woman had been. Someone then said she had heard that the children were dying because the husband had not paid the motherhood cow. The discussion degenerated into how the young woman's husband's family was useless and how at one time the young husband had stolen a goat from one of the villagers. As it emerged later, the girl was paying for her refusal to listen to her parents, as her parents had never supported the girl's intention to marry into that family as they had suspected that the mother of the man now deceased was not a good woman (meaning she was a witch). Field days are not only occasions where people gather to gain knowledge on farming but to get information on other things as well.

Conclusion

This chapter shows that for a variety of reasons field days are important events in the calendar of the farmer. Agricultural knowledge is disseminated from the experts to the farmers and the farmers get an opportunity to interact with the experts in a relaxed atmosphere. Farmers can also seek clarification and solutions to problems they face. For the 'experts' field days have an advantage in that they can reach a large audience at the same time. Despite being agriculturally inclined they have a highly political component that should be understood if the various actors within the context of the field day are to achieve their plans. Thus the politics of rural development have to be understood. Knowledge is not 'neutral' to be disseminated in a 'neutral' environment. Field days are not only occasions of dissemination of knowledge and entertainment but are also occasions where status is reaffirmed and contested.

There is an inherent tension between AREX, other 'experts' and farmers. In Chapter 6, AREX was blamed for the failure of Katsoko seed and the blue fertiliser as they were accused of siding with the Large Scale Commercial Farmers (LSCF) and agro-business against the government. In this chapter, AREX was said to favour the rich farmers and accused of not offering the personalised services that farmers wanted. This tension was a result of the different worlds in which farmers and AREX operated, giving rise to different worldviews. This tension was exacerbated because of lack of resources by

AREX to implement government programmes. Where there was a discrepancy between government policy and what AREX did, farmers were quick to blame AREX, whilst AREX pointed to lack of resources.

Because of their rigid application of scientism, AREX and other knowledge experts fail to understand the social context within which farmers operate. 'All forms of external intervention necessarily enter the existing lifeworlds of the individual and social groups affected and in this way are mediated and transformed by these same actors and local structures' (Ploeg and Long, 1994:64). AREX and, other experts fail to recognise, that social relations within any one community can affect the status given to knowledge. Where farmers considered a farmer in a social context, AREX only considered productivity leading to the selection of unpopular farmers to host field days. Farmers viewed in a negative light the method of selection of good farmers by AREX leading to a negative impact on knowledge dissemination. Knowledge should be understood within a social context if it is to be disseminated successfully to the intended audience.

For farmers, field days were not necessarily occasions for gaining new farming knowledge. People attended field days so that they would not be regarded as lazy, to maintain good relations with other villagers, for entertainment, to settle disputes and to a lesser extent to gain knowledge and information.

Farmers did not ask many questions and most of the discussions were directed by AREX and field day sponsors. This might have been because farmers were not participating in their own projects but in the projects of the experts. Field days were mostly organised on the initiative of AREX and agribusiness. These field days meetings were different from village meetings initiated by the villagers, where the villagers directed their own discussions and participated fully, (see discussion of such a meeting in Chapter 7).

The gendered nature of knowledge made itself apparent on field days. The master farmers were the men whilst women could only be wives, mothers or their daughters and never master farmers themselves. This was the interface between culture and knowledge. In spite of their knowledge, women could not be regarded as master farmers in the presence of their male 'guardians' and there were thus relegated to a perpetual state of ignorance. The different forms of prevailing social relationships mediated the status of knowledge.

Observation highlights that an ability to tread delicately between politics and economics was essential for the dissemination of agricultural knowledge at field days. Thus in this vein it can be concluded that knowledge is not a resource and an artefact out there waiting to be used but a social construct and a social relationship. 'Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other' (Freire, 1993: 53.)

9

Knowledge and Practice: Men, Women and Children

Households can never be considered as single units but as containing people with different needs. These needs can sometimes converge depending on the context and situation that household members find themselves in. In a study of a sugar out-growers estate in Zimbabwe, Mate (2001:44) noted that 'the effects of lack of information and knowledge were revealed in those households where the original settlers are deceased and the widows had to be in charge'. After the death of the male head these widows had to rely on male neighbours for information and knowledge on how to do certain things. Thus any study of knowledge can never claim to be complete if the different groups in what has been traditionally known as the household unit are not considered.

Although differences may exist within the different groups in households, for analytical purposes I have placed people within them into broader groups depending on gender and age. Knowledge can only be fully understood when men, women and children within households are considered separately to bring out what they know and consider as knowledge. Men, women and children may know differently not only because they are situated differently with regards to their access to knowledge but also because their social positioning and the parameters within which they operate are different. On the other hand, the knowledge that people have or think they have, impacts on how they process information and knowledge they receive from elsewhere.

Households are characterised by differential access to resources for men and women and for the young and the old. Within households, 'relations between people are transactional and punctuated with negotiation, bargaining or open conflict. Power relations determine resource flows, whether they emanate from socio-cultural values or material endowment (Mate, 2001:58).' The household is not an altruistic entity. According to Shepherd (1998:15), the concept of the altruistic household has to be challenged because it allowed 'development theories to be targeted unthinkingly at the (usually male) head of household; the notion of shared poverty when in fact poverty may be experienced differently by men and women'. As discussed in previous chapters and again later in this chapter, even the dissemination of knowledge as part of the development initiative was structured in such a way that women were frequently disadvantaged in accessing formal information. In the same vein as



Mupandasekwa nephew's wife shelling groundnuts with her two daughters.



Father and son helping each other to smear paraffin on chickens to get rid of ticks

Shepherd (1998) who advocates studying the different members within the 'household', I evaluate the different groups within households separately in order to understand their approach to knowledge and practice.

Reconstructing the household in this way provides an understanding of the needs of the household unit from those of the individual members, showing how such differentiation can have an impact on what the different members know or think they need to know. The issue of gender and knowledge is a critical area that requires careful study. In a study of newly introduced rice technologies aimed at improving rice cultivation in Gambia, Carney (1993:337) states that, 'development meant the delivering of female labour for intensified rice farming without concomitant income gains. The reinterpretation of customary tenure by male household heads and village elites aimed to ensure continued female access to rice land, but only as workers on plots whose benefits would flow to men as disposable surplus. The donors' uninformed view of the Gambian household-based production system was to prove the nemesis of the project'. How women perceive new knowledge and technologies brought and adapted from outside by their husbands or other male heads can be very significant in whether that technology fail or succeeds. Therefore, how certain technology and knowledge affects and are affected by household dynamics especially those based on gender, should be taken into consideration when trying to introduce 'knowledge' from outside.

Men and women operate sometimes under different constraints such that they may reach different conclusions or take different courses of action. That is the different constraints that the genders face may have an impact on what they know and what they do. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the land resettlement scheme was conceived of in terms of male-household heads and female labourers or housewives (see Jacobs, 1993). All of the female household heads were widows. The general picture of the female headed households is grim, if we take into account that at the national level according to the Poverty Assessment Survey (1995:69) the majority of the female-headed households were placed in the very poor category: 57% as compared to 40% of male-headed households. Furthermore, only 28% of female-headed households as against 40% for male belonged to the better off categories. Compared to the 40% of male headed households that were not in the poor category, only 28% of female headed households belonged to this category. Elsewhere, Mombeshora (1998) makes the interesting observation that the poor are the most unwilling to take risks and adopt new technologies.

Knowledge dissemination and formal channels

Agricultural lessons

AGRITEX officers formally impart knowledge on agriculture, through periodic courses of formal lessons for master farmers' certificates. As mentioned earlier, being a certified Master Farmer can mean the difference between accessing some resources from AREX or not. This was so because some resources from government were channelled through the Agricultural Research and Extension Department. The government adopted this strategy to avoid a lot of bad debtors by giving enough fertiliser and seed loans to those farmers who were vouched for by AREX officers. Therefore, as discussed in the Chapter 8, some people attended the formal lessons so that they could establish a good relationship between themselves and the agricultural officials. The good relationships would ensure that the AREX officers would put in a good word for them to access the loans. None of the female heads in Mupfurudzi had ever attended the lessons offered by AGRITEX officers whilst only one of the wives of the male heads had attended the Master Farmer training lessons. On the other hand, all male heads claimed to have attended Master Farmer Training lessons at some time

High illiteracy rates among women was usually mentioned as one of the reasons why most women chose not to attend the lessons. Two female household heads in Muringamombe had this to say when they were asked why they had never attended the formal lessons:

What about the farming lesson I heard about.

They last came here for the lessons last year but one (1999).

Did you go to the lessons?

Others went but I did not go. It was like a school. You have to read and take notes and remember everything. I would not have been able to cope. It was a school, where those who passed were given certificates and resettled kuminda mirefu (Long fields).

The second woman said:

I am not able to write. In addition, the classes are always full of men and it's a little embarrassing to be the only woman in a class full of men.

However, further investigations indicated that although illiteracy could have contributed to the women's lack of confidence to attend agricultural lessons it was not the only reason as many illiterate men had attended the Master Farmer Training lessons and managed to acquire the certificates. On being asked about the importance of literacy for attending these lessons the AREX officer Mr Nyamaharo claimed that literacy was not a valid reason for not attending.

Some farmers said that they did not attend your master farmer training programmes because they are embarrassed since they are not able to write and when they attend, they will be expected to take notes. Do you also think that the training programmes are very helpful to farmers?

You know that in Wellaway we have Bosiya Tiriboyi. He cannot read and write. He was not a very good farmer and people used to laugh at him. After attending our training programmes, he is now a very good farmer such that very few people beat him. When people

began to see that he was prospering because of his association with AGRITEX, they also began to attend training sessions.

One must note that the agricultural officials also taught oral classes and gave oral exams for those who could not read and write. Consequently, the failure of women to attend the lessons may be related more to the gender division of space where the public domain was for males and women would be embarrassed to compete for that space with men. Cheater and Gaidzanwa (1996:191) point out that in Shona societies, 'traditions of male mobility contrast sharply with female immobility'. Women who were highly mobile and ventured out of the bounds of their immediate residential neighbourhoods were often labelled as prostitutes. Such negative association between female mobility and prostitution might have militated against women attending agricultural lessons that were often held far away from the village and sometimes entailed being away from home for a few days.

In some cases where females attended the lessons, they would meet with a variety of obstacles to obtaining the Master Farmer certificates. As mentioned in Chapter 5, in the past after going through the necessary training the person had to build an implements' shed before being awarded the Master Farmer Certificate.

It may have been requirements such as these that discouraged some women to go for the Master Farmer Training as they would need approval from their husbands to initiate certain developments on their homesteads and the approval was not always forth-coming. One woman who had attended the Master Farmer Training for a number of years but had still not managed to get the certificate had this to say about what she had learnt at the farmers training programmes:

Did you learn anything about the keeping of animals?

The workshops were inclusive of both crop farming and animal rearing. They taught us that a household should have three cattle kraals, one for the dry season and two for the wet season. They taught us things which made a lot of sense. They taught us about the need for a rubbish pit at homesteads. They taught us about the distance that should be maintained between a kraal and a house as well as the direction in which the cattle kraals have to be built. They even taught us how to care for our farming implements. Things like scotch carts and other equipment are not supposed to be left lying around like we leave them. What we are supposed to do is to build a shed where we can keep these things during the dry season when we are not using them. This will protect the tools from rust.

You said that you were not able to implement some of the things you learnt because of constraints. What were these constraints?

What happens is that if we who wear dresses go to the workshops, if we come back and try to implement what we have learnt, there will be conflict in the household. When I came back, I tried to have the shed built, but my husband insisted that he had never seen that since he was born. He kept asking why a plough should be kept in a built shed. He could not understand it. There was a lot of conflict until I decided to drop the shed issue. As a result one can not implement everything one learns.

Thus illiteracy as the main variable explaining the non-attendance of women is short sighted and fails to take account of the involved household dynamics.

It was not only the agricultural lessons that women did not attend, but also other agricultural meetings that were held in the village. Although these were usually held on Fridays (*Chisi*), women still could not attend as they used this day to focus on the domestic tasks they had ignored during the week. It was usually on Fridays that women cleaned their houses, redecorated them, washed the family's clothes, and watered their gardens, whilst they also had to prepare meals for their families. On the other hand, men would be visiting friends and those who drink would spend the Fridays at the local bar talking to friends and generally lazing around. It emerged that men had more time than women to attend these meetings. The AREX officer confirmed the high attendance rate of men as compared to the low attendance rate of women for both agricultural lessons and agricultural related meetings.

What about the people that you work with? Can we say both men and women attend meetings in their equal proportions?

Mostly men attend because women will be busy attending to their domestic duties. In that village called Banana, it was worse because not even a single woman attended the meetings that we held there. I was forced to reprimand them at one time. Both the women and men said that they were just used to the fact that only men attend the meetings.

That is sad because what happens if the man dies and the woman did not attend to hear things for herself?

That is the problem. Yesterday I was in DERUDE carrying out a crop census on behalf of the central statistical office where I have to ask farmers how much they produced this year. As it happened many male heads died. So I had to ask the women and their answer was invariably that we do not know anything: father is the one who knows but unfortunately, he is dead. We only know how to work. At the end of the day, we just guess. That affects the accuracy of our statistics.

Because of the gendered nature of access to public information, women lacked competent knowledge in certain aspects along the agricultural production chain.

Youths and Knowledge

Youth are an important element in the dissemination of knowledge and the adoption of technology. We talked to fourteen families on the issue of youth. All families thought children were important for information gathering. Seven of the fourteen families had sent their adult sons to attend agriculturally related meetings on their behalf. One of the young men was now overseeing the running of the family farm although in consultation with his father.

All the female household-heads in the sample except one had adult sons whom they usually relied upon to attend the meetings and lessons and then pass on the knowledge to them. However, it was not only the female households that relied on their male sons but also those households where the

male head was very old. Below is an extract from a discussion I had with David Seda a young man who was also the district youth chairman of ZANU (PF):

Did your father attend the lessons?

I still remember that between 1982 and 1985 he used to go to the lesson every year and then they would write exams at Ponesai. But after 85 he said he was losing his vision: he was no longer seeing clearly so he stopped going. After 1991, I am now the one who is going to these lessons.

Why after 1991?

Because that is when I finished my 'O' levels.

Adult sons are very important for many households in order to access outside knowledge as they have high mobility as compared to old men and women. It is in only one household that an adult son mentioned that he did not attend the Farmer Training Lessons, his reason being that they were taught in Shona. He maintained that he would have attended if the lessons were conducted in English as they did at school.

Youths were also important in the dissemination of knowledge and technology, especially adult sons who had no limitations placed on their mobility.

Do you think you can learn anything important agriculturally from your children?

A child can tell you something that he has seen somewhere. Sometimes he can encourage you to do it; sometimes the things work out well sometimes they do not.

Have your children ever taught you anything that you did not know?

My children have never taught me anything. I am the one who teaches them things because I have always had the knowledge from the farms where I used to work. I was a tractor driver and I used to live with white people.

The importance of mobility for knowledge acquisition can hardly be overemphasised. For example, some youths maintained that they had heard of Agricom first when they had gone to Bindura town to visit friends. They had gone to the offices to inquire about how people could secure loans from Agricom at their offices in Bindura. When they came back to the village they told others, who immediately teamed up to secure loans from Agricom and made one of them their group leader because he had more knowledge on how Agricom operated. Although male adults might deny having learned anything from the young people, it is undeniable that youth are important for external information gathering.

Sometimes as in the above quotation adult contradicted themselves, pointing out that they learnt something new from their children then denying it later. This might be because of the cultural considerations in which older people are regarded as wise and are expected to impart their knowledge to the young instead of the other way round. Thus when asked a hypothetical question it was easy for old people to admit that they learn from the young but when a direct question on the same issue was posed the answer was most invariably a firm negative. On the other hand, women had no problems in admitting learning

from their children since they had no cultural constraints forcing them to want to appear more knowledgeable than they actually were.

The importance of having highly mobile male children unencumbered by societal obligations as compared to their female counterparts indicates how the development of human capital, which is a key element in development, was skewed in favour of men. Although many researchers (See Rukuni, 1994:19) correctly link the development of agriculture to technical research, extension, price support, marketing infrastructure and finance this was at the national level where the production statistics focused on what was produced but did not differentiate between who produced what in terms of gender. At the local level there is an invisible thread linking knowledge to development at the household level.

The youth were not only important as information gatherers but also in the implementation of knowledge. Knowing is not an end in itself but practising what is known to produce results. Some people in the village who were known to be very good farmers did not appear to do so well when their youthful children moved away to get jobs or to start their own families. Below is an excerpt of a conversation that took place between two women from Mudzingo Village when they were asked to point out the good farmers in their village.

Aunt: There is also Ruben. He is a good farmer but has not been doing well for the past two years.

Svinurai: I heard that one of the children had gone away.

Aunt: Which one? George?

Svinurai: Yes George. He was not around during the planting season.

Aunt: Hoo. That is why these days they are broke as far as farming is concerned.

Although the importance of youth is not immediately apparent, their importance in household food security can never be overemphasised. Some households that did not have grown up children suffered food shortages, as there were usually not enough people to provide labour and bring in new ideas. Of the seven poor households, four heads of these households mentioned labour constraints as also contributing to their low crop production. One of these 4 household heads had no children, two had young children who could not contribute meaningfully to labour and the fourth household head had six adult children but they were not contributing to agricultural labour as they all worked. These children also did not remit any of their income to their parents. One of the medium wealth households whose general wealth levels were declining had lost some of its adult members to death and was left with young orphaned children who were too young to provide meaningful labour.

It is not only the young adults that are important to the household as far as knowledge and food security is concerned. Although the very young do not contribute new knowledge, they acquire agricultural knowledge through performing small tasks for their families. The young often run small errands:

they may lead the cattle during ploughing and also herd cattle. In one household where all the adult children were temporarily unavailable a young eleven-year-old boy missed a day of school so that he could have the cattle vaccinated against black-leg. On other occasions he also had to miss school so that he could take the family herd to be sprayed for ticks. Thus the young also learnt how things were done from their parents as they grow up.

There were sometimes conflicts between the young and old, since the old who claimed they had more knowledge because of their seniority sometimes wanted things to be done in certain ways whilst the young, who also claimed knowledge by virtue of having been taught at school, wanted things to be done in other ways.

Apart from accessing information through their adult sons, women may informally acquire the information from friends whose husbands had attended agricultural lessons and meetings. Two female household heads mentioned hearing about new information in this way. Women would also sometimes discuss what they had heard with other women at the water pump.

School Lessons

Access to knowledge for the young was divided along gender lines, as it was among adults. While most young men regarded schools as an important source of agricultural information, young women depended on the radio. Girls had a high dropout rate from school because of pregnancy or lack of money. Usually when there was shortage of school fees girls were more likely to be pulled out so as to enable the boy to attend. Until recently the law was such that in the event of pregnancy a girl was expelled from school as her pregnancy was thought to disturb and agitate other students. Although the law has been changed, parents are likely to pull their child out of school if she gets pregnant as a way of punishing her and sometimes just so that she can look after her baby. During the course of the study only one girl from a sample household fell pregnant. Her parents pulled her out of school although they said that the girl would go back to school as soon as her child was old enough.

Although at school students are free to take up any subject they want regardless of gender, females gravitate more towards traditionally defined female fields whilst boys gravitate towards the traditionally defined male fields. As mentioned in Chapter 6, some agricultural areas and tasks were gendered. For instance large livestock were regarded as a male concern, and women were afraid to experiment with these lest their experiments failed and they were blamed for any losses incurred. Thus girls usually took up fashion and fabrics whilst boys took up agriculture, building and metal work. Also because women were not resettled in their own right (Gaidzanwa, 1995; Jacobs, 1990 and 1991; Rukuni, 1994; Mate, 2001) it made sense for women to take up sowing because although they could have done agriculture at school, their decision making in

agriculture was limited as they could only have secondary access to land. On the other hand if they owned a sowing machine, they would be in full control of their machine and the products from it, as sowing was a female field and men would rarely challenge them.

The young were more comfortable with knowledge they got from school although all the youths pointed out that sometimes this knowledge was too scientific to be of practical use.

You said you did agriculture at school.

Yes.

Do you apply what you learnt at school when you are working in your field?

I follow everything from how to apply fertilisers, how to cut lines, spacing and how to plant, when it comes to the garden even the vegetable varieties.

Everything? Even the Thumbs rule to ensure adequate amount of rain for planting has fallen?

Some of those things are "too scientific" to be practical and you have also to know that some of the things were designed for soil types and climatic conditions different from ours.

Your father said that you applied 4 bags of fertiliser per acre. Did you also learn that at school?

At school we were encouraged to put 8 bags per hectare, 5 down dressing and 3 top.

That sound like a lot of fertiliser.

It sounds like many bags of fertiliser but that's the recommended amount of fertiliser if you want to get a good harvest. We put less than that because we do not have access to enough fertiliser.

Is what you learned in school any different from what you were taught when you attended AGRITEX lessons?

No.

Thus although the youth held school knowledge to be important, it had to be modified like any other knowledge to suit local conditions and available resources.

Although all male heads denied learning anything useful from their children, everyone pointed out that school knowledge was important and very useful. The adults maintained that they learnt nothing from their children not because they thought the knowledge was useless but because they felt they had already learnt everything a long time ago at the commercial farms. All female heads were, however, very willing to learn new things from their children. This is what two female household heads thought about school knowledge:

Do you think school knowledge is very important to farming?

It is very helpful. If a child does agriculture at school he/she can teach you a lot of things. Those with children who did agriculture at school are receiving a lot of help from their children.

Did your children do agriculture at school?

No but I know its helpful. You see what happens at other people's houses. Even this Zengeza we are talking about it is because he is learning. At present I do not have a child who has done agriculture. Educating one's children is very good. If you have uneducated children

that is when you end up buying goblins because of jealousy when you see your relative's children succeed.

The second woman said:

Netsayi: Do you think school knowledge is important?

Mrs Mapudzi: *I believe so because when the young children go to school they can tell you new things that you did not know.*

Netsayi: Do you think this knowledge is very useful when it comes to practical farming and do you follow their advice?

Mrs Mapudzi: *Yes we follow their advice because the knowledge they get is the same as the knowledge the AGRITEX officers have.*

Netsayi: Is there anything in particular you remember hearing from your children?

Mrs Mapudzi: *We follow their advice on spacing in the garden. They told me how to space the vegetables. The spacing is also the same we use for cotton and maize. We were taught spacing in cotton and maize fields by the AGRITEX and the school children learnt the very same thing at school.*

Bhero: (Mapudzi's son) *Even crop rotation we learnt that at school. We also learnt how to prevent soil erosion by ploughing across the field and we also learnt about soil drains.*

Netsayi: But when I went to your field you ploughed along not across.

Mrs Mapudzi: *We have now changed. We plough across. Usually we plough across the rest of the field but then when we reach the slopes at the end of the field we plough across the slope. When ploughing our field we use the c formation. Even AGRITEX encourages the practice.*

Netsayi: Do you see this ploughing across as helpful?

Mrs Mapudzi: *It is very helpful. This year we did not lose soil to erosion. School children's knowledge is the same as AGRITEX knowledge.*

For women school knowledge is reliable and can be depended upon. Thus it can be seen that in female-headed households, the youth have more freedom to implement their ideas and knowledge than do youths in male-headed households.

At primary school, both boys and girls did some agriculture. For instance Muringamombe Primary School had a school garden and a school field, where pupils were expected to work during school days as well as holidays. Mr Togara, one of the teachers at Muringamombe, was very excited about the garden and field.

We are training the Master Farmers of tomorrow. Some of these children will not be able to go to secondary school. So if we can teach them to farm, we will have given them a skill they can use to look after themselves in future.

Parents did not take this agriculture at primary school seriously since they regarded it as a school fund raising venture. All the children did was to provide the physical labour. Some teachers also had the habit of instructing the children to work in their personal fields, shell maize or groundnuts, and sometimes prepare peanut butter for them. This was done under the guise of teaching practical skills to the children. The parents regarded it as mere exploitation although they never opposed it. This was so because the children enjoyed what

they did, for if they worked for the teacher they could get lunch. If the child was a good worker, good relations could be established between the parents and the teacher such that if the parents needed a cash loan they could easily approach the teacher.

Consulting children was also based on the age of the child with those in primary school rarely involved in decision making. Young children in primary school were generally regarded as not having knowledge.

Gender

After marriage the woman's knowledge becomes redundant as she has to adopt the ways of her husband's people. Sometimes during the interviews with both husband and wife, the husbands expressed surprise at things their wives claimed to know.

Christine: What of sunflower? Why do you cultivate it?

Mr Mbanda: *We grow sunflowers for sale. We also use sunflowers for making cooking oil.*

Christine: Are there people who have these oil making machines in this village?

Mr Mbanda: *Yes there is someone with the machine at Danken.*

Christine: Danken is it a village or a farm?

Mr Mbanda: *Danken is a village just like this one. That is where the person with the machine resides. If you have sunflowers or groundnuts that you want to be processed into oil you just pay them and they will do it for you.*

Mrs Mbanda: *But I can make some oil.*

Mr Mbanda: *Iii... (In a voice mixed with surprise and disbelief) you can make oil!*

Mrs Mbanda: *Yes I can: my mother taught me how.*

Christine: So how do you do it?

Mrs Mbanda: *You just pound the sunflower in a mortar. After that you process the cooking oil from the sunflower just like you do groundnuts. My mother used to do it and she taught me.*

Mr Mbanda: *This one knows since her mother taught her (Still not convinced).*

Mrs Mbanda: *My mother used to do it, but since I came I do not do it because the sunflower is mostly grown for sale.*

Women's knowledge on agriculture may remain unutilised when they move into a new household, as in the case of Mrs Mbanda, despite the fact that they had been married for many years.

The redundancy of the knowledge of women was not limited to the older generation. One married young woman in her late 20s admitted that after she got married she had never used any of the agricultural knowledge she had acquired from school. Instead she just followed her husband's way of doing things.

When we were still at primary school that is when we grew groundnuts in a school plot. However, as you know, if you finish school and get married soon afterwards, you start to think all the things you learnt in school are not important. You do not even want to think about whatever it is you learnt, and if you do, in most cases you do not even want to use them in case they conflict with what your husband wants. The husband is the government

and one does what government wants. My mother did not want any of her children to work after finishing school because she thought that would turn us into prostitutes. We all went to school. We are nine in our family and we all went up to form 4, but she never allowed us to look for work. For her, it was even preferable to look for a herd-boy (usually very poor uneducated person whose job is to herd cattle for better off people for very low wages) and settle down than work.

Women preferred not to practice what they knew because they did not want to be blamed in case what it is they knew failed to work and jeopardised the family's food. As discussed in the Chapter 6 where the wives of an absent male household head did not use a method that would have saved their ailing ox from death because they were afraid to do that since they would be blamed if the cure failed and the ox died.

Although all household heads concurred that school knowledge was important, most male household heads denied that they learnt much from their children. All female heads in the sample claimed that they had successfully utilised most of what their children had learnt from school and they had found it very helpful. This is what Mr Arumando and his wife had to say about school knowledge:

Do your children ever teach you new knowledge on farming that they learn from school?

Wife: Yes.

Mr Arumando: *yes they tell us what they would have learnt at school. They do agriculture at school. We encourage them to do what they are capable of doing. But as far as our knowledge on farming is concerned we got it a long time ago from our forefathers and we still use that knowledge.*

Do you think the stuff they learn at school works?

Mr Arumando: Yes. My eldest son who did agriculture at school is doing very well.

Do you think this knowledge is important?

Mr Arumando: *I am not quite sure because my son lives close to me and farms in my field. I think he still learns from me and uses my knowledge. I will start to be real sure whether the knowledge works or not when he starts to live faraway from me.*

When it came to farming men and women often knew different things and therefore often clashed when making decisions. For instance because they utilised sometimes differing knowledge sources, men and women in the same household sometimes reached differing conclusions on how the family farm should be cultivated. For instance, in one case the wives of the man wanted to inter-crop whilst the man said it was not good farming practice as he had learnt long ago at the big farms and the agricultural lessons. In the end the wives mixed maize with cow- peas and pumpkins and the husband ploughed the cow- peas and pumpkins down. He was furious that his wives had risked the family food basket by refusing to listen to his good sense.

Making decisions

Processes of making decisions help us understand the gendered nature of knowledge. In nine out of fourteen cases in the sample, household heads claim to consult other members on the selection of maize variety. This information was not always reliable: in one case the head said he made decisions alone and then when his wife was present said he consulted her; and in another, the husband claimed to consult his wife while she denied this when alone with the interviewer.⁷⁸ Three out of the four female heads consulted with their adult sons or other male relatives before deciding which seed variety to plant, especially where maize was concerned. In the fourth female headed household there was no real consultation as the grandson who worked in Harare just bought whatever seed variety and fertiliser he managed to secure and gave them to her. Although sometimes the grandmother would have preferred some other variety, she was still thankful for the seed that she got and she never complained to her grandson. On the other hand five male heads maintained that they consulted with their families.

Women in all households were involved in decisions affecting the choices of peripheral crops such as groundnuts, roundnuts, rapoko and open pollinated varieties of maize, which are regarded as women's crops. This was a recurrent theme throughout interviews with the different households, indicating that knowledge has gender. The following excerpt illustrates this:

Netsayi: Do you think men and women have the same knowledge or that they know differently?

Mr Arumando: *(Laughing)* Some women have more knowledge than men, but some women have no knowledge at all.

Wife: Both men and women know different things. For example, groundnuts, round nuts, and cow-peas, those are a woman's crop. Beans and sunflower belong to both men and women so they have almost the same knowledge on those crops. Soya beans are a man's crop.

Netsayi: Why do you say that beans are a crop for both men and women?

Mr Arumando: Because if there is plenty of it, let's say you get a lot of tonnes, the beans could be sold to the GMB. So it is a man's crop.

Mr Arumando: In case of surplus the man and woman share. The woman would get her share for domestic consumption whilst the man would get his share for sale.

Netsayi: What about when it comes to cotton?

Mr Arumando: Women normally do not know about cotton. We are the owners of cotton so we know more. If it refuses to germinate we will know what to do.

Wife: Aah, but I have a lot of knowledge on cotton. I know everything. Cotton is very difficult. If it refuses to germinate you will have to sow more seed.

Mr Arumando: Like this time, for cotton, we should have tilled the land already. By the time you send a bale of cotton to the CMB you will have worked. Maize is very easy. For

⁷⁸ Goebel's (1999) survey in the Wedza area of Zimbabwe, has 70% of men deciding on the planting of maize.

beans if you do not spray when it starts to flower, pests will eat it. Soya beans for bread is difficult at sowing, but, once it germinates you are home and dry.

It can be argued that knowledge was gendered to the extent that female expertise was rarely questioned in areas that were traditionally considered their domain. However, when it came to farming crops like maize, cotton and tobacco men generally regarded themselves as more knowledgeable. Men's advice was also more actively sought on these crops. In all interviews, both women and men pointed out that crops like cow-peas, round nuts, and ground nuts were women's crops and women had more knowledge where those crops were concerned. What is interesting however is that women also claimed expertise on the male crops whilst males always deferred questions on female crops to their wives, professing complete ignorance where these crops were concerned.

On occasions when women were consulted on cash crops it was not usually because their knowledge on these crops was highly valued. All women in the sample concurred that their husbands would ask them for their opinions but when their opinions did not agree with those of their husbands they ended up doing what the husband wanted. When he started to cultivate flue-cured tobacco instead of the air cured varieties, one farmer did not consult his wife because he thought she had no knowledge of tobacco farming. However, at first the wife resisted this crop because it was very labour intensive and she withdrew her labour by pretending to be sick for part of the farming season⁷⁹. Although the husband strongly suspected her of feigning illness, he could not force her to work without seeming like a villain in the village. She later agreed to cultivate flu cured tobacco because it paid well, but the husband now consults his wife before adopting any new technology because he does not want his wife to withdraw her labour.

Women who were pointed out as knowledgeable about crops like tobacco and cotton were usually widowed women. Especially concerning tobacco, people agreed that these women were usually free to attend training courses held by AREX and their success could not be easily attributed to male presence. Especially in one case a woman had successfully adopted tobacco farming after her husband's death. People claimed that it was because she had attended

⁷⁹Elsewhere Ehrenreich (1973:43) noted that upper class women in England during the industrial revolution feigned illness to avoid intercourse with their husbands. Women sometimes subverted the sick role to their advantage as a form of birth control for women who wanted to avoid pregnancy 'feeling sick was a way out'. 'A doctor could help a woman by supporting her claims to be too sick for sex: he could recommend abstinence. So who knows how many of this period's drooping consumptives and listless invalids were actually women, feigning illness to escape intercourse and pregnancy?'

tobacco-training courses and gained the requisite knowledge. However, where the widow had adult sons any success she might achieve as a cash crop farmer or indeed in farming in general was quickly explained in terms of her adult sons.

To prove that women had less knowledge than men, one farmer pointed out that it could be seen by the yield that women got when they farmed alone. Even in the traditionally female crops like groundnuts, women still got less than men when men decided to venture into groundnut farming because men could access knowledge from AREX and employ it in their farming ventures. However one woman maintained that this was not because women knew less than men but simply that since men allocated the farming land they naturally allocate the most fertile land for male crops. In explaining why she had harvested a few ground nuts, one woman in Mudzingi village explained:

I think it's because of the soil. When I got enough to sell, I had been given the shapa soil...Baba (father meaning husband) is the one who gives me a piece of land to plant my crops. So I just plant wherever I am given.

The man who blamed the low productivity of women on their perceived lack of knowledge conveniently did not mention, as he had earlier mentioned for farming in general, that sometimes lack of access to resources like money to purchase inputs, might also explain low productivity among women.

However, although women feel they can do better if given good soil, they are generally not bitter about the way land is designated. This is because women's crops are not grown for commercial reasons, and although these crops allow for diversity in people's diets, they cannot afford people food security in the way of maize.

Women were partial to open pollinated varieties whilst men expressed preference for the certified seed. All questions relating to open pollinated varieties were usually deferred to the wives of household heads during interviews. It was also the women who named open pollinated varieties because they were the ones that dealt most with open pollinated varieties and could name them after their characteristics⁸⁰. The issue of open pollinated varieties was gendered because they were usually not cultivated for commercial reasons; hence fell under the control of women.

⁸⁰ For example one open pollinated variety was named *Kadya* (the small eater) because although the maize cob and even the kernel was of a small size, and multi-coloured if planted in the same field with other maize varieties cross pollination would occur and the characteristic of *Kadya* would dominate. Hence the metaphor of eating simply denotes that this variety would dominate all other varieties.

Investments

The investment patterns of men and women differed to some extent. Out of eleven people in Mupfurudzi, eight said that while maize was an important crop they did not use proceeds from maize to buy any large items. Three of these eight households were female headed and they claimed that they could not use money from maize for any large purchases since they only rarely got enough to feed themselves and their families. Most households, even male headed ones, used money from maize to buy food and clothes, and to pay for children's school fees, whilst some went further to use maize as payment for labour they hired to weed their fields. Three people admitted to having used maize to buy things of great value. Two male heads had bought solar panels and the third person (a widow who did not grow cotton and tobacco) built a kitchen and a granary using maize as payment. These three also used maize as a source of food and cash for school fees and clothes.

Farmers were concerned that they were using most of their maize to pay back loans on inputs and were left with no maize to invest in other things. Thus, whereas in the past people could invest cash from maize into their children's education, people are now looking more and more to other cash crops like tobacco and cotton. As a result, female headed households with no adult sons are getting poorer and having less and less to invest in their children's education and in the acquisition of implements. This is because these women have little access to knowledge that would enable them to diversify into other crops like tobacco and cotton. They not only have less access to the information they might need to diversify into these new crops but even less access to the requisite resources.

Poverty and the Poverty of Knowledge

Female-headed households predominated among the poor households in the village. Out of the four female headed households in the sample, two were in the poor category, one in the very poor category while the fourth was in the medium wealth category. The very poor woman had no children and had thus no access to labour, while the two poor households had all their children resident at home and had no other sources of income. The woman who was in the medium wealth category had sons and grandsons who were well educated and worked in the urban centres.

These women explained their poverty in different ways. One of the poor households maintained that they were poor because the male household head had been ill before he finally passed away and could not do much field work. The second household maintained that it was because the husband had many wives and many children and everything he worked for went towards family consumption. The other poor household attributed its poverty to the lack of labour. One of the good male farmers pointed out that the poor households

were very poor because they did not have the required knowledge to farm profitably. A similarity among these households was their lack of access to resources when they came into the resettlement scheme. They owned no cattle and only one household owned a plough. As earlier mentioned, most of the medium wealth households came into the village with a few resources of their own that gave them a head start over other households.

Women might also have predominated among the poor households because of their lack of mobility. In the sample only one female household head had regularly attended meetings. None of these female household heads had ever gone to the GMB depot or to Cottco in Bindura where some respondents claimed to get information on new developments in farming by talking to farmers from other areas or the employees of these organisations on an informal basis. A highly mobile woman headed one of the progressive female-headed households (not in sample). The household head was a traditional healer and almost everyone in both Mudzingo and Muringamombe claimed some sort of relationship with this woman. This woman attended most of the agricultural meetings, which other women shied away from, and in 2001 she diversified into tobacco cultivation a crop which she had not cultivated when her husband was alive. Although other factors might explain her success one factor that stands out is that compared to other women she was very highly mobile and could access information that other women could not. In the same village there was another female traditional healer (in the sample) who did not have a husband to limit her movements but was not a successful farmer and barely managed enough to eat. Although she was confident and as mentioned earlier most people in the village affectionately referred to her as *ambuya* (grandmother or aunt) she did not actively seek information on how to access resources and loans from outside and did not attend lessons to learn about new crops. Mobility was a critical factor especially in those houses that did not have grown male children to take over this function of gathering information from other sources.

Conclusion

Knowledge dissemination is gendered as women and men often use different sources of information. Few women attend Master Farmer Training programmes and although a large number attend field days (see Chapter 8) it is mostly as entertainers. Space is divided into specific gender domains as women sometimes do not feel comfortable attending male dominated meetings. Illiteracy and social powerlessness among women also determines what women know relative men. Thus by understanding household dynamics, the weaknesses of official channels of knowledge dissemination can begin to be appreciated.

The gender division of labour also meant that men could frequent places and attend meetings that women could not because they had domestic chores to attend to. The division of labour also entailed that what men and women knew was somewhat different as each gained expertise in areas that directly concerned their areas of operation. As a consequence, the issue was not whether men had more knowledge than women but rather what they knew depended on their gender domains and social positions.

The fact that women lacked mobility made them more dependent on their male sons and husbands for certain information and knowledge. Hence, it would appear that by their very nature female-headed households were more liberal as compared to male-headed ones, as far as the flow of information within the households was concerned. Also in male-headed households information usually flowed from the top downwards, the flow was more lateral in female headed ones.

At marriage women have to adopt their new family's way of doing things. As a result, the wife's knowledge is rarely taken into consideration when plans are being made. When she moves into her husband's home her knowledge and skills sometimes undergo a process of delegitimation or it simply loses its value. It is assumed that the woman can only know what she knows through her husband or other male relatives. Thus, even at school women took up those subjects that enabled them to control what they knew and to use their knowledge without any recriminations.

Having knowledge does not always mean using the knowledge. A variety of relationships affect what a person can and cannot do. Thus knowledge becomes an outcome of negotiation. As indicated in some of the discussions, women also disputed the label that men gave them that they did not have knowledge where the cultivation of certain cash crops like cotton were concerned. Sometimes attributions of knowledge were linked to power games where men found it in their favour to label women as having no knowledge on cash crops possibly to justify why they had to control income from these crops. Thus attributions of knowledge or lack of it might have little to do with the presence or lack of such knowledge in certain individuals but might be a discourse used to indicate or justify a variety of local relationships.

Although women were sometimes consulted for decisions, decision making was heavily skewed in favour of men such that what women knew was hardly ever taken into consideration.

10

Conclusion

The book has investigated the struggles, negotiations, contestations and accommodations that take place between actors during the production of knowledge. A consistent argument throughout has been that knowledge should be regarded as primarily social and its production a social process. The central focus has been to understand how farming and farming knowledge is embedded in the social, economic, political and cultural lives of actors. One of the recurrent themes in the investigative journey is the centrality of witchcraft. This urges us to fully understand and come to terms with the importance of witchcraft and witchcraft accusations in agriculture.

Theoretical pitfalls

I have sought to avoid at least two theoretical pitfalls. The first theoretical trap was the dichotomy between what has been known in the classical sociological literature as 'scientific' versus 'traditional' knowledge or rather the distinction between 'modernity' and 'tradition'. This pitfall was avoided not only by denying the existence of such dichotomies but also by showing that they were irrelevant for explaining social and cultural phenomena in the Mupfurudzi resettlement area where I worked. Knowledge can never be regarded as modern or traditional; where the notion of 'traditional' implies that the knowledge so defined is static and resistant to change. In contrast, as shown in this book, knowledge is always in a state of flux. Even knowledge that has been passed on from generation to generation is reworked to suit existing conditions. For instance, as shown in Chapter 7, the practice of *chisi* was reworked by villagers to suit the requirements and needs of their resettled communities, and information that was received from so-called scientific sources was often reworked to suit the farmers' needs and in tandem with what the farmers believed to be true. For instance, although farmers adopted the use of certified seed and fertilisers, they still send seed to the lion spirits and to the prophets for blessing in fertility rituals. Thus, as far as farmers were concerned, knowledge could not be compartmentalised into two opposing types - 'traditional' or 'modern' since it could not fit snugly into either category.

At the practical, level knowledge is neither scientific nor traditional but simply local. To capture this, I adopted the conceptual terms of 'localisation' and 're-localisation' that take into account how knowledge is reworked to suit local conditions and needs. We should not draw rigid distinctions between

'nature' and 'social' or between 'culture' and 'science'. In daily life there are embedded within each other. Thus the scientist has to understand the farmer in his or her context otherwise projects of scientifically high-quality may prove to be dismal failures at the point of implementation.

The second pitfall I sought to avoid was that of conceiving of knowledge as a resource 'out there' waiting to be used. Knowledge is socially constructed and knowledge outcomes are often not consciously calculated or even intended by anyone. All knowledge is reworked to suit available conditions and the context in which that knowledge is applied. Therefore, I have avoided this pitfall by showing that knowledge is a result of negotiations. Farmers did not regard information imparted by the so-called knowledge experts as simply knowledge. There were some rigorous tests that this knowledge had to undergo to be accepted as such. For instance, the knowledge bearer's symbolic capital often determined whether a knowledge claim was legitimised or not. Sometimes knowledge experts were suspected of trying to make money out of farmers' misfortunes such as when recommending expensive drugs for livestock diseases. Scientifically, the experts might have been correct in recommending such drugs but because of the expense involved this knowledge was viewed with suspicion by farmers who would seek solutions elsewhere. And in some cases farmers carried out their own experiments to test the authenticity of the 'experts' knowledge claims. Thus, in some cases (see Chapter 6), farmers would arrive at conclusions far different from those of the experts.

Methodological implications of the study

It emerged that local farmers were not overly concerned with the observable 'facts' of knowledge but had other considerations before knowledge could be attributed or accepted or even rejected. To understand these processes and perspectives an ethnographic method was adopted to unravel the complex dynamics involved. No other method of inquiry would succeed in understanding the whole context in which people interpreted 'facts' and made their decisions. Although it is possible I might not have been fully accepted into the community, this immersion into people's ways of life, even if incomplete, was superior to other methods of data collection for getting to the heart of the matter.

Although a lot of planning has to go into making the field experience a successful endeavour, Maanen (1988:2) astutely points out that 'accident happenstance shapes fieldworkers' studies as much as planning and foresight, numbing routine as much as living theatre, impulse as much as rational choice, mistaken judgements as well as accurate ones'. Thus, although I had a sample to allow me to have at least a comparable data set from which to draw my conclusions, I did not ignore chance occurrences that gave me access to information I had not directly solicited. I might not have known at the moment

of occurrence how to relate the data to my overall study, but some of the data later became important for the overall analysis and interpretation of my field materials. For instance, it was by chance not planning that I was at a village meeting (referred to in Chapter 7) which turned out to be an informative encounter that revealed to me how interpretive associations impacted on making choices and interpreting knowledge. Such encounters that are initiated by villagers themselves to discuss intricate issues turned out much more important than such meetings called or extension staff.

Negotiated order

Since my ethnographic study was carried out over a considerable period of time, I was able to have series of discussions with the same people, during which time they sometimes changed what they said before. This, did not however, necessarily make what they had said earlier a lie or contradictory. For instance, at one moment a village head told me that only the proper application of fertiliser could determine high yields. But on another occasion he explained that no matter what amount of fertiliser a person applied, if the ancestors were not happy, or if the *mhondoro* (lion spirits) were not happy with the person then the crop would fail. In one instance he was talking as a farmer trying to grapple with issues of increasing his crop yields using technical means; on the second, he was talking as a *sabhuku* whose powers rested on the recognition of the power of the ancestors and the spirits of the land regarding soil fertility, health and wealth. If people moved away from such beliefs to rely on other things, then his ritual powers would be eroded. Hence ethnographic research should not be directed towards the verification of the truth or falsity of statements but to the social processes at play that make people believe in one thing at one time and something else at another.

The study also exposed the notion that the government is powerful enough to direct the production and dissemination of knowledge through its various experts to the docile farmer. While people acknowledged the existence of the government and its impact on their lives through its various instruments of control, they the people did not regard it as an entity that had to be obeyed all the time. I noted in Chapter 3 that resettled people still took up jobs in the formal sector despite laws explicitly prohibiting this, and people have also resisted various state laws in both the colonial and post-colonial era that were imposed from above under the guise of the transfer of knowledge.

As an ethnographer, the researcher must be able to be versatile and to fit into the society that he/she is studying. However, does fitting into a community mean doing whatever the people in that community practice and do? This raises an ethical and practical dilemma concerning actions that violate the ethics or at least the standards of behaviour laid down by whatever ethical body the researcher subscribes to. It appears that there is not much one can do but to

make judgements as one moves along with the research. A normal ethnographer's handbook would encourage neutrality and not favouring one group rather than the other. The same rules would also apply to rural development workers such as the extensionists I worked with. However, what does one do in a society with deep cleavages such that people state to you, as a well-known politician has succinctly put it 'if you are not with us then you are against us'? When as researcher, you are asked to say something at a public gathering where party slogans and long speeches on how good the government and the ruling party is precedes whatever it is you are supposed to say. Likewise what do you do when, as a rural development worker, you are expected to couch your development ideas in certain political terms or risk being vilified as representing the opposition and thus having your development ideas however ingenious viewed with suspicion?

On carrying out ethnography

Anthropologists should be able recognise the uniqueness of the human condition. Sahlins (1976:viii) takes as 'the distinctive quality of man not that he must live in a material world, circumstances he shares with all organisms, but that he does so according to a meaningful scheme of his own devising...'. From the discussions running throughout this book it can hardly be overemphasised that ethnographic research must move towards a hermeneutic approach that takes full cognisance of how 'facts' or 'events' are translated and understood by persons in the course of their everyday lives.

A hermeneutic approach serves three functions understanding and explaining (Hirsch, 1976:19) and then the determination of the significance of what has been explained and understood. What does the use of fertiliser mean to us as anthropologists who seek to understand the practice and what does it mean to the people whom we seek to understand? If research is being carried out for probable input into policy making then this is the only way the research can be useful both to policy makers and to the ethnographic subject. Otherwise the anthropologist's project becomes like a government's project that fails to understand people's ways of doing things, and thus ends up getting ignored, not because the idea is regarded as stupid but because of its total irrelevance.

This approach also happens to be very friendly to the actor-oriented paradigm which I would encourage fieldworkers in Africa to adopt at least in the initial phases. Long and van der Ploeg (1994:64) state that 'all forms of external intervention necessarily enter the existing lifeworlds of the individual and social groups affected and in this way are mediated and transformed by these same actors and local structures' (See also Long, 1992; 2001; Arce and Long, 2000) for a fuller discussion of the actor-oriented approach). I would go on to add, that any external intervention is processed by people in a form no longer its own but as embodied meaning. Sahlins (1976:209) puts this nicely

when he states that 'the natural fact assumes a new mode of existence as a symbolised fact'. This actor orientation and a focus on hermeneutics would allow researchers to understand what people do, and why they resist some ideas but not others. It would permit researchers to regard people neither as passive recipients of technology nor as resisters of ideas that would benefit them according to our standards (whatever they may be), but to understand how decisions are sometimes shaped by large frames of meaning and action as well as by the distribution of resources in the wider arena.

Ethnographic studies should follow a holistic approach because people do not live their lives in fragments: everything is connected to everything else. As shown in this book, government policies, politics, religion, magic, witchcraft, health and agriculture are all connected at some level. Thus, by focusing on just one part of people's lives a lot of other essential data for understanding the matter under investigation will be lost. Fairhead (1993:199) reaches the same conclusion in his study of Bwisha farmers in Zaire. For him the 'focus on technology helps isolate agriculture from the social context, or put another way the farmer from the person. Researchers who are permitted to examine agriculture in terms of agricultural knowledge can maintain themselves in ignorance of the multitude of non-agricultural influences which influence agricultural practices'. In the same vein, still on agricultural research, Hebinck and Ruben (1998) maintain that agricultural practices can only be understood in the context of practices in, at first sight, non-agricultural domains.

Anthropology is also about understanding the 'self'. Unlike a situation where some western researchers study non-western cultures to understand why 'others' believe in the things they believe in, and then dismiss these beliefs as falsehoods, non-western researchers studying their own cultures are denied such luxury. It is implied in this book therefore that social anthropologists of whatever kind should acknowledge the historical situated-ness of the anthropological projects and adopt a critical stance that will give humanity and agency back to their subjects. People will hence be treated as proactive in their approach to life, as in this case local farmers as actors not as condemned to simply react to outside forces.

Real native culture does not exist out there 'in some pure pristine form waiting to be discovered and represented by the ethnographer, ...ethnography is above all shared praxis, dialogue, performance and production, in which communication is often not unambiguous and complete but indeterminate and fragmentary' (Pool, 1994:239). It is my contention that any field study that worth its name should be able to unravel the meanings that people attach to certain things and actions but to achieve this requires developing research strategies of a dialogical and practical kind that highlight the inherently ambiguous and heterogeneous nature of social life.

Experts and farmers

As shown in Chapter 5, both colonial and post-independence governments, had ambitious knowledge projects into which they intended to recruit the farmer: the farmer being the object that had to be acted upon. The farmer had to be supplied with knowledge and because he was regarded as perpetually 'ignorant' the only salvation was for knowledge to be injected from outside. With the help of experts government sought to introduce various mechanisms to ensure the farmer was schooled into the science of farming. Master farmer training, field days, and village meetings with experts leading the discussions and defining the topics were held.

The experts also adopted ways of classifying farmers so that those who were considered not good enough would change their ways and model the 'good' farmers. As noted in the preceding chapters, these interventions had minimal impact on farmers' behaviour since they were recruited into 'projects' they had little interest in. Farmers had their own projects that were different from the projects of government officials and other experts. Farmers were interested in reducing the cost of production, for instance with how to produce better yields with low cost seed making minimum use of fertilisers. They were also concerned with finding low cost and effective cures for animal diseases.

The lack of interest of farmers in the projects of the 'experts' was evidenced by the way they sought to recruit the experts and their resources for their own projects. Farmers know what they want. To be effective experts have to understand the farmers' worldview. Alternatively, just as farmers managed at times to hijack experts' projects to serve their own, so the latter should devise means of sometimes hijacking farmers projects to serve their own. To maintain their relevance to resource-poor farmers, agricultural experts also have to focus on low input farming with better returns as well as the use of locally available inputs for sustainable farming.

A recurrent theme throughout this book has been that knowledge is understood differently by different actors. This is not akin to reducing everything to interpretation but acknowledging that the different life-worlds of the different actors within any social situation influence how they view certain available information and how they will eventually act. For example, those farmers who interpreted their poor yields by alluding to the evil works of people with bad magic never questioned their farming methods as would the scientists. This was so because their interpretation of poor harvests precluded the consideration of other factors, just as rigid scientism would preclude all magical or spiritual explanations. Depending on where actors are socially situated, they observe things and interpret them differently, such that the same thing can be attributed to different causal factors. Consequently, rural development workers must not be overly scientific, ignoring the different

perceptions and meanings that people attach to activities and interventions, since this can spell the failure of scientifically sound projects.

However, how people interpret certain events and occurrences often depends on larger frames of meaning and action. For instance, in issues of ill health, people were quick to blame witches without investigating other probable causes such as the scientific origins of certain forms of pathology. When it comes to crop failure, witches may be accused of stealing crops, or experts accused of knowingly supplying useless seed with the intention of discrediting the government they may point to angry ancestors who need to be appeased. However, discussed in the previous chapters, such interpretations and meanings were largely dependent on the distribution of power and resources. Actors with differential access to power and resources could interpret the same event and come out with different conclusions.

Meanings are important to understand everyday life. It is the meanings that people attach to events, occurrences and actions that give the impetus to take up certain actions. These meanings also lead people to adopt or not certain things as knowledge. At least, at the local level, meanings attached to things or their properties lead to the production of certain forms of knowledge. The attached meanings give rise to theories. Even if these theories can be proved false by adopting scientific rationality, such theories are often pointers to behaviour, which also has implications for knowledge and its production. For instance, when farmers arrived at the conclusion that it was the bitterness of certain herbs and medicines that gave the herbs and medicines healing qualities, farmers experimented with a local beer brew that also had a bitter taste to try to cure animal diseases. The beer was then found effective against certain animal diseases. Thus, although the meanings and their interpretation gave rise to a theory based on a false premise, the actions it produced had practical implications for knowledge and the rearing of animals.

For intervention to be effective, AREX and other experts should understand people's belief systems and the meanings they attach to certain things. As discussed in this book, how people interpret and attach meanings to certain actions can often prevent people from adopting, or encourage the adoption of certain behaviours. For example, if people decide that spraying food crops such as maize with modern chemicals to prevent attacks from pests was an affront to the spirits of the land, they would not use the spray, even if it could mean saving their crops: as was the case in the army worm outbreak of 1995, when some people did not spray their crops. This was not because they did not know that spraying cabaryl 85 could at least spare some of their maize from army worm attack but because they would rather get permission from the spirits first. It is very important for rural development workers to understand such cultural responses. Doing so, enables them to negotiate these meanings and beliefs with a view to changing people's behaviour without antagonising them.

Farmers strategise in their dealings with other actors and agents. With respect to experts, farmers did not follow them blindly and neither did they entirely divorce themselves from them. They employed various linking and de-linking strategies in an attempt to maximise their gains from each encounter. At interface encounters between the resettled farmers and outside institutions and agents farmers were not always powerless. For instance, when there was mistrust between the farmers and experts and when farmers had not been consulted, the decisions by policy makers could be frustrated at the implementation level. For example, when without consultation the government took a unilateral decision to force farmers to brand their cattle to protect cattle against theft farmers resisted such a move. Farmers thought that it was a way of government to make money out of them by selling them the branding equipment since each farmer had to have his own unique registered brand. Farmers resisted this move and the plan was never implemented.

To succeed, experts need to consult with farmers at every level of policy making, not just at the implementation level as is often the case. The traditional stereotype of the peasant being resistant to change precludes experts questioning their own ability and conduct when certain projects fail. They are quick to blame the farmer. It is my position that farmers are not resistant to change but they resist projects that they see as not serving their interests well. Before people can adopt new technology, it must something they can go along with and find both acceptable and useful. This has wider implications for technology and its use. Experts should understand that technology is not value free, an artefact to be used, but has to be interpreted and understood in a social context which will determine its success or failure.

Knowledge is not always what it seems and is not always positive. Knowledge can be disempowering to the one who is equipped with it. Although modern scientific knowledge is very efficient, it has made farmers more dependent on agro-business as opposed to the independence they had enjoyed when all the resources were locally available. It was not only scientific knowledge that was disempowering to the farmer but local knowledge also. Thus although its value has to be recognised, local knowledge should not be regarded as the solution to all farming problems as it is not always effective. For example, although farmers liked to use local seed as it entailed less outside inputs and reduced production costs, farmers recognised that those who used certified seed and fertilisers generally got higher crop yields than those who used local seed and manure.

A theme that needs to be constantly emphasised is that knowledge and technologies are not only technical but also social. Knowledge can be scientific but, as discussed in the preceding chapters, it can also be recast by resorting to African systems of thought. This being the case, experts need to understand

these African systems of thought if they are to have any lasting impact or indeed any impact at all.

Power is always contested and negotiated. Peasants are not always powerless and dependent, neither is the state always powerful and dominant. Experts had to tread carefully in their dealings with the farmers because if they became overbearing and arrogant they could be branded as belonging to the political opposition with the aim of discrediting the government. The threat in itself was a powerful weapon in the hands of farmers in order to keep experts in check, such that they could not even deal harshly with loan payment defaulters. The worst they could do was to deny the defaulter access to further loans, but they could not seize the defaulter's property to recover losses. An ability to tread the delicate ground between knowledge, politics and economics is an essential tool for the rural development worker otherwise his or her effectiveness is limited.

When association with experts would bring them advantages such as access to seed and fertiliser, farmers would attend agricultural meetings and classes convened by such experts. They would attend not because they expected to learn anything new but simply to maintain good ties with so that the experts would not deny them access to resources. On the other hand, experts could always use the threat of withdrawal of seed and fertilisers to bring recalcitrant farmers to heel. This indicates that power is always contested and negotiated, the peasants not always powerless and dependent and the state is not always powerful and dominant.

The fragmentary and contradictory nature of knowledge allowed farmers to manoeuvre within their social system and to negotiate to their advantage. This fragmentary nature of knowledge allowed people to work with a multiplicity of understandings, beliefs and commitments. This enabled farmers to bridge the gap between external and local knowledge to. Farmers knew that to have good yields they had to have good seed. However, there were different understandings of what good seed was. The scientific understanding was of seed that was properly and scientifically engineered to resist pests and diseases. Subscribing to this view, farmers bought commercial seed varieties if they could to afford or they got the seed on loan if they were still eligible. However, the farmers' conception of good seed did not stop at certified seed but extended to include the importance of spiritual blessing to make the seed even better. Although for scientists good seed had nothing to do with priests and spirits but with proper breeding, farmers were able to bridge that gap because for them knowledge did not have those essentialising qualities that made it apart and distinct. For farmers, knowledge was contradictory and fragmentary which made it easy for them to believe in one thing at one time and maybe in a totally different thing at another. Thus, to share Long's sentiment, one cannot distinguish between different forms of knowledge but it should be regarded as

an outcome of the negotiations that take place between actors and their life worlds.

Heterogeneity

It has been a recurrent theme in this book that local farmers are not homogeneous in their outlook and neither are experts. This heterogeneity among local farmers means that expert policies and programmes are experienced differently, leading to diverse interpretations and actions. The heterogeneity of local farmers was also a result of the resettlement programme that brought together people from diverse backgrounds and communities who had varied reasons for applying for resettlement. Experts also differed in the way they implemented their knowledge, as shown Chapter 8. Some officers are overbearing in their manner whilst others were engaging and persuasive in disseminating knowledge to farmers.

The discussion of gender in Chapter 9 argued that it is indeed a fallacy to say that because people in the same house practised the same things, they know the same things. It was shown in that chapter that at marriage women had to adopt their new family's way of doing things. Consequently, merely observing what people do or how they cultivate their crops or rear their animals does not tell us what these people know. When it came to women in male headed households, the link between practice and knowledge often became tenuous. For instance, the woman who had attended AREX lessons and acquired new knowledge could not implement what she had learnt because her husband was resistant to the ideas. This woman continued with the practices that were now inimical to her new-found knowledge. Social powerlessness among women determined what women practised relative to what they knew. Thus, the relevant question to ask would not have been whether women and men had access to the same information but whether they both had equal chances to practice what they knew. This is so because, although there were no physical barriers or laws discriminating against women's access to certain kinds of information, women usually did not actively seek this information. This was mostly because they would not be able to implement the acquired knowledge if it was met with resistance from their husbands and sons. This I would regard as the interface between knowledge and cultures. Although some women had knowledge, this knowledge would not be given the recognition it deserved from their male guardians. If it was not recognised then it could not be applied. The different forms of prevailing social relationships mediated the status of knowledge.

In concluding this study, let me borrow a statement from Pool (1994:52) who says, 'I can never attain a final interpretation of what my informants 'really' meant because there is no final interpretation'. My understanding and interpretation of ethnographic case material has shown that indeed knowledge is not an artefact out there waiting to be used but is manufactured and

produced as a result of struggles, negotiations, contestations and accommodations between farmers and outside agencies and institutions. These processes also take place between the individual farmers and families of the resettlement community where the research took place

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Summary

The book developed a better and in-depth understanding of knowledge production and goes beyond the modernisation perspective that perceives knowledge as an artefact that can be transferred. The modernisation perspective also assumes that the receivers of new technologies do not or hardly command any knowledge. In contrast, the book understands knowledge as a social construct, as embedded in complex sets of social relationship between and among farmers and external agencies. It focuses on all the actors that are involved in the production and dissemination of knowledge and regard all people as possessing knowledge albeit at times different knowledge. Hence the book discusses the social processes involved in knowledge production and dissemination. To discuss what happens at the knowledge interface when different knowledge regimes meet and the negotiations and accommodations that take place, the thesis also focuses on the social contexts in which scientists, other 'experts' and farmers operate. There is also a deliberate attempt to study local farmers not as a group but as actors who are also different from each other in terms of gender, age and socio-economic standing within the community. As a result the book also attempts to bring out how these differences can eventually impact on knowledge production and dissemination.

This book also looks at the dissemination of various types of agricultural knowledge. Knowledge is regarded as localised and relocalised into the locally specific contexts of individuals and communities. Through out the book focus was not only on how new technology and knowledge are adopted but also on how people rework them and give them new meanings that were not intended at the initial dissemination. The book focused on local knowledge including belief systems that impact on agricultural practices. The dissemination of knowledge across generations both formally through the school system and informally through socialisation in agricultural work was investigated. The book also attempts to understand how the various socioeconomic and political constellations at a given time impact on the knowledge discourses of the various actors. The main **research question** that informed this book was: how knowledge is produced, reproduced, socialised and reworked in farming areas and how locally existing conditions filter themselves into the new practises. The book then aimed to accomplish three things: (1) to analyse how social processes impact on the adoption, adaptation and dissemination of knowledge and technology. (2) To investigate how differences between actors (e.g. based on age, gender, social and economic standing, institutional affiliation, the knowledge networks used by the various actors) can impact on knowledge

dissemination and appropriation. (3) To look at how existing knowledge frameworks affect knowledge analysis and acceptance and how people bridge the gap between 'outside' and 'local' knowledge.

Chapter 1 served to introduce broader issues related to land resettlement in Zimbabwe as well as introducing the research villages. It emerged in this chapter that although there is plenty of academic literature on the issue of resettlement evaluating the successes and failures of land resettlement there is scant literature discussing the production and dissemination of knowledge in resettlement areas. This was not regarded as a problematic area as it was assumed that people coming into these resettlement areas had to be given knowledge by knowledge experts. Thus the only concern was with raising the number of extension officers to a level where they would be able to disseminate knowledge and information to farmers effectively. These assumptions were based on the Transfer of Technology (TOT) approaches. In this chapter it became clear how this book was to differ from all the previous approaches in that it does not take the farmer as the knowledge receiver and the 'expert' as the knowledge giver but also attempts to emphasise the farmer as a knower. This chapter indicates that no one is completely without knowledge but that people may know differently.

This chapter also discussed land resettlement showing why land resettlement was regarded as imperative in Zimbabwe. It emerged that the gross land disparities in land ownership that existed between whites and blacks in terms of amount and quality of land provided both political and economic rational for the redistribution of land in Zimbabwe. Land resettlement consisted of settling a segment of the black population in formerly White Commercial Farming Areas. Discussed in this chapter is also the criteria that was used to select families eligible for resettlement as well as the various models of resettlement that were used.

Chapter 2 discussed the theoretical framework and concepts that have been used to understand knowledge in the past and those that will be used in this book and why. Past discussions and debates in the sociology of knowledge have distinguished between modern scientific and localized knowledge. However, recently knowledge has been studied in a framework of modernity where knowledge is regarded as a hybrid phenomenon neither global, nor universal nor purely local. This chapter takes the position that knowledge has to be perceived as a social construct and a social relationship rather than an artefact because any information and knowledge is only made meaningful in relation to local conditions and through the understanding and strategies of local actors. This chapter advocates that knowledge should be studied in context. Concepts such as power, wealth, poverty, gender, good farmer are introduced and defined in this chapter. The research is introduced and the various themes to be tackled in the following chapters are introduced as well.

Chapter 3 is the sampling and methodology chapter. This chapter discusses how and why the sample was chosen and introduces and discusses the research methods used and the problems faced by the researcher in the field. The principal research method used was the ethnographic method with a focus on case studies. There were in total 14 case study households (from two villages) that were followed over a period of 30 months. The case studies were based on detailed observation of the families over two agricultural cycles using participant observation as the principal research technique. In depth interviews, observation and participation were used as ways to gather data. An effort was made to talk and interact with different household members. However, interviews and observation were not always limited to the sample households but the sample remained relatively open to be able to pursue new issues and talk to people who might not have been in the sample but their contribution in certain areas of the study regarded as important. Discussed in this chapter also are issues methodological or otherwise that arise out of doing ethnography.

Chapter 4 situates the reader into the research setting by introducing the various institutions active in agricultural activities in the area. The two dominant religions in the area that is Shona Religion and Christianity are discussed in detail. There is also a brief background of all the households in the sample. This chapter also managed to show that resettled households are heterogeneous and hence likely to subscribe to different notions of knowledge depending on their socio-economic position.

Chapter 5 discussed how knowledge is always contested and how it goes through cycles of legitimation and delegitimation depending on the constellation of various social, economic and political forces that impact on the knowledge discourses. This chapter discusses the knowledge discourses and approaches that are taken by different actors. There is a discussion of the official approaches during the colonial era and the post colonial era as well as the common man approaches to knowledge. This chapter managed to show that knowledge is not static nether is it a process where one moves from a point of ignorance to a point of knowledge, but that different actors know differently and that the different narratives and representations employed by different actors can have impact on the production of knowledge. Another important theme discussed in this chapter is that knowledge is not always positive sometimes it can be disempowering to the people equipped with it.

Chapter 6 examines the positivists' claims that seeing leads to believing as far as knowledge dissemination and production is concerned. This has often impacted on official choice of methods to disseminate knowledge to farmers. Such official methods include demonstration plots referred to in this chapter. Another area that is discussed and examined is the views of 'experts' that farmers do not carry out experiments on their own by simply accept something because an authority has told them it is true. Officially, farmers are regarded as

adopters and rejecters of knowledge instead of people who actively carry out experiments to get to the truth as they see it. This chapter conceptualises the farmers also as an experimenter who carries out experiments to seek new knowledge, to put new knowledge to test and to find solutions to problems. Observation and experiments are discussed in this chapter as central to the production of knowledge. This chapter puts to shame modernisation theories that regard knowledge as only that which flows from the experts to the farmers. In this chapter farmers emerged not as traditional and unscientific but as actors who take part in the production of knowledge by making situated selections of what they think will work for them and also experiment to improve agriculture in a way that is meaningful for them. The importance of people's belief systems in knowledge dissemination and adoption has been discussed in this chapter. The centrality of interpretation in knowledge production and dissemination has been discussed. The same facts can be interpreted differently by different people leading to different knowledge thus seeing is not always believing making interpretation an important area that should be understood by rural development workers if they are to effectively intervene.

Chapter 7 discusses magical beliefs, witchcraft belief and Religious beliefs and how they impact on knowledge production and dissemination. Highlighted is the dismay felt by knowledge 'experts' when confronted with farmers' beliefs that they regard as retrogressive to the spread of agricultural 'knowledge'. However, this dismay is misplaced as this chapter demonstrates through the focus on religion and magic that Shona beliefs are highly flexible and exists within them mechanisms for change. This chapter brings to the fore the understanding that technology is not value free, an artefact out there waiting to be used but that technology is interpreted and understood in a social context determining the success or failure of technologies. By looking at magic, witchcraft and religion this chapter managed to demonstrate the interweaving of outside knowledge, local knowledge and the diverse local theoretical traditions that have led to knowledge that defies attempts to be straight jacketed into categories of traditional or scientific.

Chapter 8 discusses field days and how these not only act as occasions for knowledge dissemination (as defined by knowledge experts) but also as occasions for socialisation and entertainment. The political nature and the politicisation of knowledge is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 9 focuses on the knowledge of men women and children within households. Discussed are the knowledge dissemination channels, the relationship between gender and knowledge. Principally this chapter draws upon the preceding chapters to discuss gender issues and the role that children play in the production and dissemination of knowledge.

The general conclusion highlights how the different themes have been dealt with in this book. This final chapter, Chapter 10, discusses why it was

important in light of the material discussed in the previous chapters, for the study to reject the distinction between modern and traditional knowledge. Coming out in Chapter 10 is also the understanding that knowledge is not a resource out there waiting to be used but an outcome of negotiation. The methodological implications of the study are made apparent in this chapter. The chapter also offers tentative guidelines to carrying out ethnography and offers a general conclusion to the farmers and knowledge 'experts' debates. The chapter also offers some recommendations on what rural development workers and knowledge 'experts' should do, realise and understand if they are to remain relevant to farmers needs.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift beoogt een beter en diepgaander begrip van de productie van kennis te ontwikkelen. Kennis is, zoals de modernisatie theorie veronderstelt, geen artefact dat kan worden overgedragen. De ontvangers van kennis zijn ook geen passieve actoren die geen kennis hebben of kunnen ontwikkelen. Door kennis als een sociale constructie te beschouwen, als ingebed in een complex geheel van sociale verhoudingen van en tussen boeren en andere actoren, richt dit proefschrift zich op alle actoren die betrokken zijn bij de productie en uitwisseling van kennis. Alle actoren hebben en ontwikkelen kennis. Dit boek analyseert aldus de sociale processen waarin kennis is ingebed. Door uiteen te zetten wat er gebeurt als verschillende vormen van kennis elkaar ontmoeten, de onderhandelingen en aanpassingen die daar weer uit voortkomen, richt het boek zich ook op de sociale context van kennis waarin wetenschappers, experts en boeren opereren. Boeren worden nadrukkelijk niet als een homogene groep beschouwd, maar als actoren die in termen van gender, leeftijd en sociaal-economische status van elkaar verschillen. Deze verschillen worden in dit boek belicht en waar mogelijk in verband gebracht met de productie en uitwisseling van kennis.

De uitwisseling van verschillende typen landbouwkennis is ook onderwerp van analyse. Kennis wordt begrepen als lokaal specifiek en dat tegelijkertijd ook weer wordt 'geherlocaliseerd' als het ware doordat het in de specifieke context van individuen en gemeenschappen wordt geplaatst. Een doorlopend thema in het boek is hoe nieuwe technologieën en kennis wordt geïntroduceerd, maar tegelijkertijd ook wordt aangepast en herbewerkt. Kennis en technologie krijgen daardoor telkens nieuwe betekenissen; iets wat uitdrukkelijk geen vooropgezet doel was tijdens de verspreiding. Locale kennis inclusief religie en hoe dat uitwerkt op de landbouwbeoefening krijgt daardoor veel aandacht in dit boek. De intergenerationele uitwisseling van kennis, zowel via het formele systeem van scholen als het informele kanaal van de socialisering van werken in de landbouw is ook onderzocht. Door ook de politieke en sociaal-economische constellaties te onderzoeken, krijgen we ook vat op de kennis discoursen van de verschillende actoren.

De hoofdvraag waarop dit proefschrift een antwoord probeert te geven is: hoe wordt kennis geproduceerd, gereproduceerd, gesocialiseerd en herbewerkt in de landbouw en hoe lokaal specifieke omstandigheden door sijpelen in de nieuwe landbouw praktijken. Bij deze hoofdvraag zijn drie doelen geformuleerd: (1) het analyseren van de invloed van sociale processen op de adoptie, herbewerking en de uitwisseling van kennis en technologie; (2) te

onderzoeken hoe verschillen tussen actoren van invloed zijn op de uitwisseling en toe-eigening van kennis, die in het bijzonder gebaseerd zijn op gender, leeftijd, sociaal-economische condities, institutionele binding en het gebruik van kennis netwerken; (3) te onderzoeken hoe bestaande kennis kaders de analyse van kennis en de acceptatie ervan beïnvloeden en hoe actoren de kloof overbruggen tussen 'externe' en 'lokale' kennis.

Hoofdstuk 1 gaat vooral in op de brede context van landhervorming in Zimbabwe, ook word hier de dorpen waarin het onderzoek zich heeft afgespeeld beschreven. Hoewel er veel wetenschappelijke literatuur is over landhervorming die vooral gaat over het relatieve succes, is er weinig tot geen literatuur over de productie van kennis in landhervormingsgebieden. Dit werd niet als problematisch gezien en ervaren daar men er van uitging dat de boeren die zich hier vestigden geen kennis hadden en die daarom door experts moest worden overgebracht. Er is toendertijd veel aandacht geschnken aan het inzetten van voldoende landbouwvoorlichters om kennis en informatie over te dragen. Deze aannames borduren voort op het gedachtegoed van de Transfer of Technology (TOT). Dit hoofdstuk laat zien hoe en waar dit boek afwijkt van dergelijke benaderingen: namelijk dat boeren niet de ontvangers, en de experts de gevers van kennis zijn. De boer is een 'kenner' en iedereen heeft en beschikt over kennis, maar zoals zal blijken, mensen weten op verschillende manieren.

Dit hoofdstuk bediscussieert ook wat het belang is van landhervorming in Zimbabwe. Land in Zimbabwe is uitermate scheef verdeeld tussen blanke en zwarte boeren, zowel in termen van kwaliteit als kwantiteit. De landhervorming moet dit corrigeren en land van blanken werd ondermeer verdeeld onder zwarte boeren. Om in aanmerking te komen voor land, moesten boeren aan bepaalde criteria voldoen. Ook zijn er verschillende landhervormingsmodellen in de paraktijk gebracht.

Hoofdstuk 2 bespreekt de literatuur over kennis en analyseert vooral de verschillende posities en debatten. In het verleden werd onderscheid gemaakt tussen wetenschappelijke en lokale kennis. Meer recent wordt kennis in het kader van moderniteit vooral als een hybride fenomeen gezien dat noch globaal noch lokaal is, of universeel. In dit hoofdstuk wordt de positie ingenomen dat kennis een sociale constructies is en een sociale verhouding is en geen artefact. Informatie en ook kennis zijn alleen betekenisvol in relatie tot lokale omstandigheden en in relatie tot de strategieën van de betrokken locale actoren. Kennis zo, wordt hier gesteld, moet worden gecontextualiseerd. Concepten die nodig zijn voor de analyse van kennis, zoals macht, rijkdom, armoede, gender, en wat een goede boer is, worden in dit hoofdstuk uitgewerkt. De thema's voor verder onderzoek worden eveneens besproken en afgebakend.

Hoofdstuk 3 handelt over de methode en de selectie van de cases. De belangrijkste methode is etnografie in combinatie met case studies van boeren families. In totaal werden 14 cases in 2 verschillende dorpen gevolgd over een

periode van 30 maanden. Gegevens werden ondermeer verzameld door participatieve observatie gedurende 2 agrarische cycli evenals diepte interviews en waar mogelijk meewerken in de dagelijkse activiteiten. Het aantal van 14 cases was relatief open en is flexibel gehanteerd ten einde ook met andere informanten over andere belangrijke onderwerpen te spreken. Ook staat dit hoofdstuk uitgebreid stil bij de angels en voetklemmen die kleven aan de etnografische methode.

Hoofdstuk 4 situeert de lezer in het onderzoeksgebied. De verschillende instituties die een belangrijke rol vervullen in de dagelijkse praktijk van boeren worden besproken en beschreven. Ook is er aandacht voor de twee belangrijk(st)e religieuze stromingen in het gebied: de Shona religie en het christendom. De 14 verschillende huishoudens en families die aan de basis staan van het onderzoek worden voorgesteld. Dit deel duidt ondermeer de onderlinge verschillen die mogelijkwijs verband houden met kennis.

Hoofdstuk 5 laat in detail zien hoe kennis altijd is en werd bestreden en hoe kennis verschillende cycli van legiterming en deligiterming doorloopt. Dat laatste is mede afhankelijk van de diverse sociale, economische en politieke krachtenvelden die op zijn beurt de kennis discoursen vormgeven. Dit hoofdstuk bespreekt de kennis discoursen en benaderingen die de verschillende actoren hanteren zowel gedurende de koloniale periode als daarna. Ook de benaderingen van de 'gewone man' komt aan bod. De analyse laat ondermeer zien dat kennis niet statisch is en dat het niet een proces is dat verloopt van onwetendheid tot kennis hebben. De verschillende actoren kennen ieder op een eigen wijze. De verschillende verhalen en voorstellingen hebben echter wel hun invloed op de productie van kennis. Dit hoofdstuk laat ook zien dat kennis niet neutraal is en niet altijd positief wordt aangewend.

Hoofdstuk 6 onderzoekt de positivistische claim dat waarneming tot geloven en bevestiging ervan leidt. Dit heeft vooral invloed op de keuze voor de methode van overbrenging van kennis. Demonstratievelden is een dergelijke methode. Een ander onderwerp dat in dit hoofdstuk aan bod komt is de opvatting van 'experts' dat boeren niet experimenteren, maar bevindingen accepteren omdat een autoriteit gezegd heeft dat dit of dat waar is. Voor de overheid in Zimbabwe zijn boeren of actoren die kennis accepteren of verwerpen en dus niet als actoren die actief experimenteren om de waarheid te bevestigen zoals zij dat zien. Dus wordt in dit hoofdstuk de boer als een actieve experimenteerder gezien die daardoor nieuwe kennis zoekt, kennis uittest en actief op zoek is naar oplossingen voor bepaalde problemen. Waarnemen en experimenteren zijn cruciale aspecten van de productie van kennis. De stelling van modernisatie theorieën dat kennis overdraagbaar is van experts naar boeren wordt onder vuur genomen. Boeren worden in dit hoofdstuk niet als traditioneel of als onwetenschappelijk gezien, maar als actoren die zelf kennis produceren door context specifieke keuzes te maken voor datgene dat zij

denken dat werkt. Experimenteren is daarvan een essentieel onderdeel. Het belang van geloven voor de productie van kennis komt in dit hoofdstuk ook aan bod wat op zijn beurt wijst op het cruciale van interpretatie. Dezelfde feiten kunnen anders en verschillend worden geïnterpreteerd en begrepen hetgeen kan leiden tot verschillende kennis. Dus is zien niet altijd geloven waarmee interpretatie een belangrijk thema wordt dat door beleidsmakers en – uitvoerders moet worden begrepen indien zij effectief willen interveniëren.

Hoofdstuk 7 bespreekt magie, hekserij en religie en hoe deze kennis beïnvloedt. Kennis ‘experts’ voelen zich altijd ongemakkelijk als zij geconfronteerd worden met datgene dat boeren geloven wat stevast als een belemmering wordt gezien in de productie en verspreiding van landbouwkundige ‘kennis’. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien dat dit misplaatst is en doet dat middels de uiteenzetting van religie en magie en dat Shona religies niet alleen maar flexibel zijn maar ook mechanismen voor veranderingen in zich hebben. De theoretische vertaalslag hiervan is dat technologie niet waarde vrij is en niet een artefact is dat klaar ligt om te gebruiken. Technologie wordt echter begrepen en geïnterpreteerd in een sociale context die mede bepaalt of deze technologie aanslaat of niet. Door nu magie, hekserij en religie in de analyse te betrekken, demonstreert dit hoofdstuk de verwevenheid van ‘externe’ en lokale kennis met de diverse theoretische tradities die resulteren in kennis die elke poging kennis te categoriseren als wetenschappelijk of traditioneel bestrijdt.

Het fenomeen dat boeren en voorlichters elkaar ontmoeten in de velden en allerlei zaken betreffende kennis en technologie bespreken, komt in hoofdstuk 8 uitvoerig aan bod. Het centrale argument is dat dit soort gelegenheden niet slechts gaat om uitwisseling van kennis (zoals de kennis experts dat zien), maar ook als momenten van entertainment en socialisering. Het hoofdstuk staat ook uitvoerig stil bij het politieke karakter and de politisering van kennis in het huidige Zimbabwe.

Hoofdstuk 9 concentreert zich op de productie van kennis van mannen, vrouwen en kinderen binnen huishoudens. De verschillende kanalen van kennis uitwisseling en de verhouding gender en kennis worden beschreven en geanalyseerd. Dit hoofdstuk bouwt voort op de voorafgaande door aandacht te schenken aan de gender gerelateerde aspecten en de rol van kinderen in de productie en uitwisseling van kennis.

Het laatste hoofdstuk zet de belangrijkste thema’s en conclusies op een rij. Hoofdstuk 10 bediscussieert in het licht van de voorafgaande hoofdstukken waarom het belangrijk is het veel gemaakte onderscheid tussen moderne en traditionele kennis te verwerpen. Kennis, zo onderstreept dit hoofdstuk nogmaals, is niet zo maar een hulpbron die klaar ligt voor gebruik, maar is het resultaat van onderhandeling. In dit laatste hoofdstuk wordt ook stil gestaan bij de implicaties van de etnografische methode. Uitgaande van de ervaringen opgedaan tijdens het onderzoek wordt een aantal tentatieve richtlijnen

geformuleerd voor etnografisch onderzoek. Ook biedt het een meer algemene conclusie betreffende het debat over kennis van boeren en experts. Tenslotte zet het enige aanbevelingen op een rijtje voor ontwikkelingswerkers en kennis experts.

Curriculum Vitae

Netsayi Noris Mudege was born in Harare Zimbabwe where she attended her primary school before she moved to Chiswiti School in Mount Darwin in 1988 where she completed her primary school and secondary school. She did her advanced level studies at Chindunduma High School in 1995. In 1996 she joined the University of Zimbabwe where she graduated with a BSc Honours Degree in Sociology in 1999 and an MSc in Sociology and Anthropology in 2001. After obtaining the MSc degree at the University of Zimbabwe she joined the Wageningen University and Research Center when she was awarded with a Sandwich Scholarship by WOTRO. Between June 1999 and April 2000 she volunteered as a media monitor for Musasa Project an organisation that fights against all forms of domestic violence. Between June 2000 and April 2001 she worked as a tutorial assistant in the department of sociology at the University of Zimbabwe. Between September 2000 and March 2001 she carried out research for the Germany Development Corporation (GTZ)/Forestry Commission on the role of communication in social forestry. Between May 2001 and December 2001 she undertook collaborative interdisciplinary research with the International Food Programme Research Institute (IFPRI). This research investigated the impact of hybrid maize varieties on livelihoods. During the time she was doing her PhD she worked briefly as a part time lecturer at the Women's University located in Zimbabwe.

COMPLETED TRAINING AND SUPERVISION PROGRAMME

Description	Department/Institute	year	Credits (ECTS)
<i>I. Orientation</i>			
Literature research	Wageningen University	2002	4
Presentation research proposal	Wageningen University	2002	2
<i>II. Research Methods and Techniques</i>			
Domain specific theories	Wageningen, Advanced Research Seminar Rural Development Sociology	2002	6
<i>III Seminar Presentations</i>			
'The Production and Exchange of Knowledge in Resettlement Areas'	Utrecht University, CERES Summerschool	2002	4
' Magic, Witchcraft, Religion and Knowledge'	University of Zimbabwe, New Dimensions in History Seminar Series	2004	4
'Seeing is Believing: Experimentation, Observation and Popular Narratives'	South Africa, South African Sociological Association	2004	4
'Knowledge and Development: Men, Women and Children'	Accra, Ghana, Pan-Africa Anthropological Association Fourteenth Congress	2004	4
'Knowledge we have got it all but...'	ISS The Hague, CERES Summerschool	2005	4
Total			32

