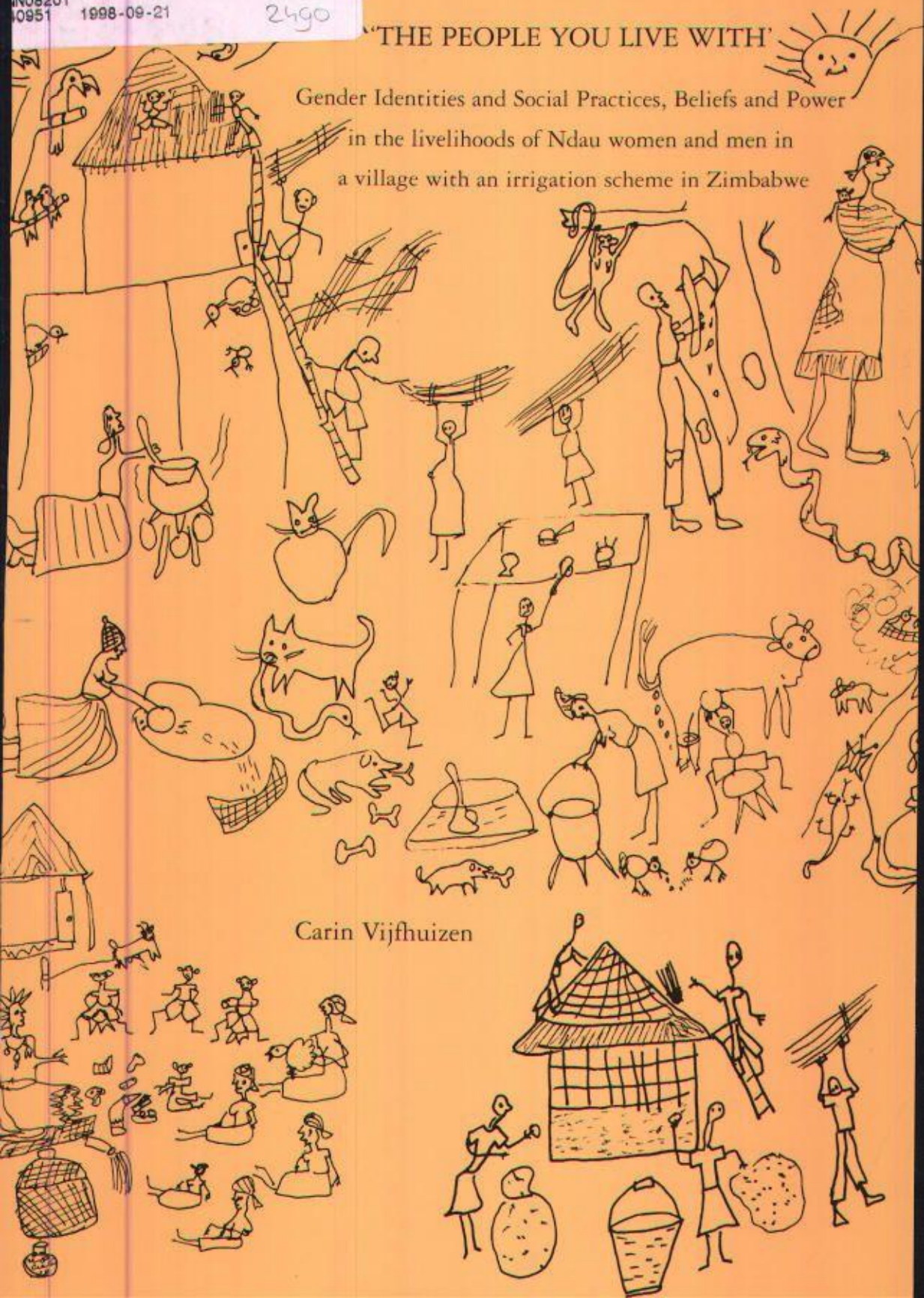


# "THE PEOPLE YOU LIVE WITH"

Gender Identities and Social Practices, Beliefs and Power

in the livelihoods of Ndaou women and men in  
a village with an irrigation scheme in Zimbabwe



## STELLINGEN

1. We have to look beyond the conventional generalised models of patriarchal families, i.e. women are not passive recipients and victims of patriarchal structures but are strategic social actors who also reproduce, manipulate and transform daily life.
2. The weakness of actors is too often a deprivation or deformation of the power of 'naming' (Apthorpe, 1996).
3. Women and men have their own but overlapping worlds and in between there is usually a woman (*vatete*; HZ; HFZ; WFZ).
4. We should skip the concept 'heads' when we label homesteads and label them according to the way people live together in a homestead.
5. A woman's space can be limited if women as mothers choose the sides of their sons, or, as sisters choose the side of their brothers, or, as wives choose the sides of their husbands. This can result in the undermining of women's ability to wield power.
6. The valorisation of small scale crops in a smallholder irrigation scheme is not always considered, despite the fact that taken together, they represent a considerable value. In sum, smallholder irrigation schemes do much better than is officially assumed.
7. Many people believe that farmer participation is now 'the' approach to development! However the participation approach could worsen the gender bias towards land.
8. If conflicts are arbitrated and resolved, then heavy rains can be expected.
9. Sacred rules and sacred places are maintained and manipulated. Therefore places cannot be easily shifted as Kopytoff assumes (1987:22). Chiefs usually stick to places because shrines are part and parcel of maintaining domains and wielding power (chapter 6 and Villarreal, 1994).
10. Coincidence hardly exists among Shona-Ndau people. Thus the more difficult things become, the more they need to be explained, the more bad spirits are constructed, the more trust decreases among people, and the more women are made scapegoats.
11. 'Wetenschap is toetsbare originaliteit'. Science is originality which can be verified (Fresco, 1997).
12. *Hamba hairemerwi nemakwati ayo*. The tortoise is not overburdened by its shell (Hamutyinei/Plangger, 1987: 234).

Carin Vijfhuizen

Wageningen, September 1998.



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with an irrigation scheme in Zimbabwe**

CENTRALE LANDBOUWCATALOGUS



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**Carin Vijfhuizen**

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To  
Locadia Makora



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The approximate value of the Zimbabwe dollar (Z\$) was:

1994:	1 US\$ = Z\$ 8	1 Dfl. = Z\$ 4
1995:	1 US\$ = Z\$ 10	1 Dfl. = Z\$ 5
1996:	1 US\$ = Z\$ 12	1 Dfl. = Z\$ 6
1997:	1 US\$ = Z\$ 14	1 Dfl. = Z\$ 7

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Carin Vijfhuizen  
Mutare, 24/01/1998



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This study explores, from a sociological, gender perspective, everyday rural life in a Ndaushona village in Zimbabwe (Southern Africa) with an irrigation scheme. Women and men from the village cultivate land both inside and outside the scheme.

The first part of the introduction covers some of the different gender perspectives, theoretical concepts and the actor-oriented approach, which I use in this study to get to grips with the complexities of everyday life. The second section reviews some Shona and irrigation literature from an engendered actor-oriented perspective. The justification of this study also emerges here. The last three sections briefly outline the research area, the research methodology and the organisation of the chapters.

### 1.1 GENDER, THEORETICAL CONCEPTS AND SOCIAL ACTORS

This section first examines the different gender perspectives, then explains briefly the theoretical concepts used to explore everyday life, concepts such as practice, power and discourse. Lastly it looks at the actor-oriented approach, the approach used throughout this thesis.

#### Different gender perspectives

Watching the evening eight o'clock news in Zimbabwe, the newsreader explained that today, the 15th of October 1997, had been the first World Rural Women's Day. He announced further that 80% of the Zimbabwean population lives in rural areas and 70% of them are women. He mentioned that women do all the work in the fields, but they do not control the land or the benefits from the land. The people who watched and listened were told that women receive only one percent of the benefits.

In relation to my own research I was surprised. My first reaction to the statement that women do all the work and receive only one percent of the benefits was that women are not that silly (see specifically chapter 4 and 3). He had also said that women do not control the land, but not so in my study. Women not only use the land but have a certain measure of control over it (see chapter 5). Thus, to a certain extent the newsreader depicted women as passive actors and victims of patriarchal structures. Such perspectives reflect the major views of conventional gender theories, and they shape to a large extent the outcomes of existing Shona, gender and irrigation studies in Southern Africa and elsewhere. Such views are not only reproduced in research studies and research literature but by journalists and news reporters as we have seen above, resulting in the reproduction of a common discourse.

The focus of my own study in fact shows that women are not passive recipients and victims of patriarchal structures but are strategic social actors who also reproduce and transform everyday life. But before getting to that point let me briefly review some of the conventional gender theories and common discourses. Many authors (Keuper and Smetsers (1987), Moore (1988), Leonardo (1991), Kabeer (1995), and Sachs (1996), have written on the theme. My research is focused on women and development issues and Keuper and Smetsers (1987) provide a useful overview of the different gender perspectives on this theme, distinguishing and explaining three different approaches, the liberal, the Marxist and Marxist feminist approach.

1. Representatives of the liberal approach, like Boserup (1970) and Rogers (1980), see development as a linear or evolutionary process, entailing economic growth and profit maximisation. The position of women in this liberal approach is perceived as lagging



behind that of men, but the conviction is that the position of women will improve when women are integrated in development.

2. Representatives of the (Neo)-Marxist approach, for example Sacks (1975) and Etienne and Leacock (1980), view the inequality between women and men as structural, namely as embedded in relations of production. They believe that inequality between the sexes can only be reduced if the relations of production change. This implies that society has to change towards socialism.
3. The Marxist-feminist approach, (see, for example, Rubin 1975), Edholm, Harris and Young (1977) and Beneria (1979)), maintains that it is not only modes and relations of production that cause and explain women's subordination. It is also what Rubin (1975) has labelled 'the sex-gender system', meaning the rules by which biological gender is transformed into psycho-cultural gender. These psycho-cultural processes also contribute to women's subordination.

The common discourse emerging from these gender theories is that women and men are not equal, that women lag behind men, that men dominate or oppress women, and that women are subordinated to men. Such gender perspectives are to be found in recent literature on the subject. For example, Sachs (1996) uses feminist theory in her book on rural women. She emphasises women's knowledge, but argues that scientists, agricultural policy-makers and patriarchal family structures devalue that knowledge. She argues that although women do the majority of the work in agriculture, older men still own the land, control women's labour and make the agricultural decisions in patriarchal social systems. She writes (*ibid*: 18) 'rural women experience extremely oppressive conditions as a result of the gender divisions of labour in rural areas and the patriarchal conditions that pervades rural life'. However, she also states that women are not powerless and therefore subordination is not complete. My study shows that conventional gender perspectives are too simple, and that rural everyday life is much more complex with, for example, women as sisters who are authorities and women as wives who are value shapers of agricultural produce etc.

Moore (1988: 2) implicitly questions the theoretical gender perspectives of researchers by pointing to male bias. She argues that male bias consists of three aspects: 1) male bias is carried into fieldwork by researchers, approaching male subjects who are seen as better informants; 2) women are considered subordinate to men in many societies; 3) researchers assume asymmetries to be analogous to their own cultural experience. Thus according to the male-bias argument, men's perspectives shape the outcomes of studies and women are considered to be subordinates. All these outcomes contribute to the construction of common discourses or familiar models. Guyer points to the danger of familiar models:

'... the surge of women into farming...is not a paradox of evolutionary change -evolution going backwards as it were- nor a transformation of the culturally defined division of labour, nor unambiguously a linear trend (a rise or decline) in female status. We draw on those models but avoid applying them with a priori conviction. The past twenty years of reappraisal -with ourselves, colleagues, farmers and a host of others- has conveyed the danger of turning too quickly to familiar models with their own implicit judgements about temporal farming and significance, hidden presumptions or intellectual connections'. (1995: 44)

Guyer and Peters wrote in 1987 (p.211) that there remained a large gap between theoretical formulation and empirical documentation. De Vries (1997) argues that development theories are highly powerful in making some aspects of social life invisible. I would add that conventional gender perspectives obscure the fact that women and men are both strategic social actors and that women also reproduce and transform the world in which they live.

Perspectives and models are continuously changing. Leonardo (1991) argues that correction of the male bias started at the beginning of the 1970's, by shifting the focus from women towards gender, 'to denote our concern with both sexes'. She writes that the main

focus of feminist anthropological literature in the seventies was explaining women's lower status. Researchers who emphasised the power of women and the myth of male dominance, or of women's considerable status, economic and symbolic, were labelled as ethnographic liberals, such as Susan Carol Rogers (1975) and Annette Weiner (1976) (see Leonardo 1991: 10-13). Other anthropologists also questioned this notion that women were of lower status. Kaberry (1952) maintained that 'women of the grassfield' did not have a lower position than men. Evans Pritchard (1955) argued that women had their own social life with a good deal of freedom. The gender perspectives in feminist anthropology also changed with the criticism of dichotomous pairs such as nature/culture, female/male and public/domestic spheres (Leonardo, 1991).

While Leonardo explains some changes in gender perspectives from the reviewing of feminist anthropology, Kabeer (1995) comes up with three different gender approaches through exploring development from a feminist perspective. She asserts that a limitation of the Women in Development (WID) approach was that it focused on women only. But the advantage of the approach was that women emerged as a visible category in development research and policy. A result was the inclusion of chapters on women in books. She concludes that 'the WID was grounded in a theory of 'irrational' prejudice and sex-role stereotypes when what was needed was a theory of male power and conflicting gender interests' (Kabeer, 1995: 36-37). Kabeer explains that after the WID approach came the gender relation's approach, aiming to bring power relations between women and men into perspective. She argues (1995: 65), that a contribution of the gender relations approach is 'its concern with the complex processes by which the simple 'facticity' of biological difference become socially constructed as gender difference and gender identity'. After that came the alternative gender approach on development, highlighting the empowerment of women and women's strategic gender interests.

Hence the focus changed from women, towards gender. Gender is conceptualised in different ways. For example, Ortner and Whitehead (1981) argue that women and men are largely products of social and cultural processes, in other words 'social and cultural constructions'. Moore (1988: 21-30) conceptualises gender as the socially constructed differences between women and men. Davis et al (1991: 5) conceptualise gender as an organising principle. They perceive 'gender' more as a descriptive, rather than an explanatory concept for understanding the position, activity, and behaviour of women and men. I appreciate this emphasis on the descriptive nature of the gender concept. However, if gender is conceptualised as an organising principle, then a structuralistic tendency may emerge. My own view is also that gender is socio-culturally constructed, but, and this is the emphasis of my study, constructed by social actors, by women and men themselves, about themselves, in both past and present. In Southern Africa, including Zimbabwe, little research has been done that takes the view that women are strategic social actors who also reproduce and transform everyday life. The present research aimed to do this. It aimed to shed light on the question of how women and men themselves use, transform and manipulate rules, beliefs, and normative/value frames in practice, thereby shaping practice and vice versa. To explore everyday life I have used the concepts of practice, power and discourse.

### **Practice, Power and Discourse**

I use the theoretical concepts of practice, power and discourse in order to get to grips with the complexities of everyday rural life.

#### *Practice*

Bourdieu (1977) argues that practice refers to people's actions, which are set in time and space that is in the material/physical environment. Time refers to former practices and experiences. Arce et al (1994: 156) argue that 'the study of practices involves analysing the ways in which people operate in their everyday life'. Bourdieu mentions the historical notion

of actions. Long and van der Ploeg (1995: 68) in another context, emphasize the future, namely that 'people's actions derive from their deliberations about the future'. They say that 'history is relevant insofar as it is used in the modes of ordering the future'. But we must also take cognisance of the fact that social actors do not always act rationally or strategically by taking into account past and future. People's actions are also emotionally driven, without thinking immediately about past and future. Social actors can simply forget, or may also purposely want to forget certain aspects of the past and neglect certain future aspects.

Kabeer argues that gender is only one aspect of social relations and is not the only form of inequality in the lives of women and men. 'While gender is never absent, it is never present in pure form' (1995: 65). Gender practices refer to practices, which are shaped by gender relations. Thus, practice can be partly explained by gender. Or in other words gender plays a role in all practices. The absence of women, then, in certain fields and domains also becomes a gender issue. In addition, power struggles among women and among men are gender issues, because they are usually shaped and influenced by gender relations.

### *Power*

Gender specifically focuses on differences of inequality between men and women. But gender differences in and of themselves, do not indicate why relations between women and men are usually asymmetrical. To do this, we need the concept of power. Latour (1986) maintains that power is not something one possesses, and must therefore be treated as a consequence of the actions of people rather than as the cause of such action. Villarreal (1994) has contributed to the theoretical discussion in gender studies in her book 'Wielding and Yielding' of power (1994). In the dictionary, wielding briefly refers to 'holding and using' and yielding to 'giving way to pressure'. Villarreal explains (p.165) that she prefers to use power wielder, rather than power holder as it is more active and implies exercise rather than possession'. She explains:

'I have defined power as of a fluid quality, as embedded in social relations, in strategies, discourses and forms of organisation. Power is not inherent to institutions, actors and social positions, but is socially constructed. It is wielded through complex processes which involve diverse forms of agency, whether we are speaking of power as being wielded, or as a capacity to wield' (p.223)

Arce et al (1994) argue that each individual is a locus of an often-complex set of social relations. Then, when power is embedded in every relation and is fluid in nature, it depends with whom a person interacts, in what situation and about what topic, as to whether she or he wields or yields power. Consequently, to assess the position of women, or a particular woman, implies that all their relationships should be considered, in other words, not only the relations between men and women but also those between women and those between men. In rural African societies women, to a large extent, interact with other women, and thus we have to look into those processes among women. Power inequalities are not necessarily only between men and women, but also between women and women and between men and men. Hoogenboom (1983: 264-69) argues that women derive their power from their position in the family and from the hierarchy in the women's world. She argues that the position of women can be better understood from their relations with other women, than from the supposed dependency on men. The present study shows that women also wield power outside the family and the so-called 'women's world'. Considering the different relations of women, also means looking at the different positions of women over time. Their position is not static. For example, take the notion of subordination. Villarreal argues (1994: 263), that subordination is central to an understanding of power, and for women it is sometimes strategic. She argues:

'Subordination, on the one hand, indicates the action of 'patients' of being the vehicle of others' agency. It allows power to be wielded by yielding, by acceding to the wishes of the other, thus relinquishing a possible social capacity or status to acknowledge a stronger, better or more appropriate bearer. On the other hand, such yielding can emanate, not from the wishes of others, but from the 'subordinate' actors' own agency

(....). Subordination, then, does not imply a zero-sum process whereby those who yield are necessarily powerless' (1994: 224).

Her standpoint is that women have a restricted room for manoeuvre and in that restricted room they fight with the weapons of the weak (see Scott, 1985), namely by manipulating and subordinating themselves to achieve certain goals. Villarreal also distinguishes compliance. Compliance, she argues (1994: 224):

'... generally entails an acceptance to become the vehicle of others' agency..... it is underpinned by a social recognition of ranks, authority and superiority, where the action falls on those who acknowledge an actor as 'powerful' or who are willing to submit to what they consider are its designs. Hence, the yielding of power here resides in the social acknowledgement of it'.

Another side of acknowledging is resisting. Again, as Villarreal argues (1994: 223):

'The concept of resistance already implies an identification of a weaker force which is counteracting a stronger one and is unwilling to yield it'.

The distinction between and explanation of power, subordination, compliance and resistance is already an indication of the complexity of the processes in everyday life. Most importantly, power, subordination, compliance and resistance are outcomes of people's practices and discourses and agency.

#### *Discourse*

S.A. Long (1992: 148/165) argues that:

'Discourse encompasses both knowledge and practice, and implicit in the relationship between these is the problem of power and how various discursive forms are manipulated by individuals in furthering their own interest'.

Thus actions and beliefs are intertwined. Villarreal (1994: 211) argues that 'culture is continuously recreated in overlapping and conflicting discourses'. She argues that some discourses can become dominant (1994: 220). Long and van der Ploeg (1994:67) say:

'All societies contain within them a repertoire of different lifestyles, cultural forms and rationalities which members utilize in their search for order and meaning, and which they themselves play (wittingly or unwittingly) a part in affirming and restructuring'.

They argue (1994: 67) that it is essential for social actors to win the struggles that take place over the attribution of specific social meaning to particular events, actions and ideas. Long (1994: 65) argues that:

'Many studies fell short, because of a tendency to adopt a voluntaristic view of decision-making and transactional strategies, which gave insufficient attention to examining how individual choices were shaped by larger frames of meaning and action.'

These larger frames of meaning and action refer to the common discourses in everyday life.

#### **The Actor-Oriented Approach and the Focus of this Study**

The concepts of practice, power and discourse are intertwined and emerge in all the chapters, because they are used to explore everyday life in a Ndau village. I explore how women and men, be they farmers, government officials, African doctors, husbands, wives, chiefs, traders or spirit mediums, shape and transform everyday life by using, changing, reproducing, bending and manipulating beliefs, rules, normative and value frames (discursive forms) in practice, while at the same time they shape practice and assign meaning, usually for their own survival and interests or projects and thereby enabling or restricting each other. Power, then, is an

outcome of these processes.

In order to capture the social dynamics in everyday life of Ndau women and men, I have used Long's actor-oriented approach. Long (1992: 5) argues that 'the essence of an actor-oriented approach is that its concepts are grounded in the everyday life experiences and understandings of men and women, be they poor peasants, entrepreneurs, governments bureaucrats or researchers'. I have used the actor-oriented approach in this study, because it is the most appropriate for understanding people and their everyday lives. Long (1997: 230) has argued recently that:

'While most scholars would readily agree that an understanding of agrarian change would be sadly deficient if an appreciation of the interests and strategies of the key actors were missing, few have yet grasped the full significance of introducing into the analysis of such an actor-oriented perspective. For example it is often simply assumed that the outcomes of struggles between agrarian actors are primarily determined by those who 'possess' power or have leverage over the 'weaker parties', who thereby become losers. This image... fails to address...the complex and subtle manipulative ways in which the weak may shape the negotiations that take place, thus extracting certain significant benefits for themselves'.

The empirical data in all the chapters shows that Ndau women are definitely not always 'the weak'. Specific contexts, gender identities, negotiations and agency need to be taken into account. Long (1997:241) argues that is through agency that 'actors acquire and sustain appropriate forms of 'knowledgeability' and 'capability' in carrying out their social actions and how they enrol others in the 'projects' they develop.' He and van der Ploeg (1994: 66) argue that 'agency (and power) depend crucially upon the emergence of a network of actors who become partially, though hardly ever completely, enrolled in the projects and practices of some other person (s)' (see also Long, 1992: 23-24; Long, 1997: 241). Thus they perceive structure as emerging ordering processes, which is the outcome of 'interlocking actor's projects' (1995: 68). Subsequently they argue (1994: 62-63) that liberal and Neo-Marxist models are tainted by determinist, linear and externalist views of social change.

'The liberal (modernization) standpoint ultimately believes in the benefits of gradualism and the trickle-down effect. The radical (Neo-Marxist) standpoint views development as an inherently unequal process involving the continued exploitation of peripheral societies. Both see development and social change emanating primarily from centres of power in the form of intervention by the state.... These external forces encapsulate the lives of people, reducing their autonomy and in the end undermine indigenous or local forms of co-operation and solidarity, resulting in increased socio-economic differentiation and greater centralized control by powerful economic and political groups, institutions and enterprises'.

Long and van der Ploeg (1994: 62-63) maintain that a more dynamic approach to the understanding of social change is needed. They argue that (1994: 64-65) social actors mediate and transform (external) intervention; and that different patterns of social organisation emerge from the interactions, negotiations and social struggles that take place between the several kinds of actors. Thus their conclusion is that the different patterns are in part the creation of actors themselves.

## 1.2 AN ENGENDERED ACTOR-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVE AND JUSTIFICATION.<sup>1</sup>

In this section I review some Shona studies and gender-irrigation studies. The justification of this study will then emerge.

### Shona studies

Most of the literature on Shona people (see for example Holleman, 1952; Bourdillon, 1987; Chavunduka, 1994; Lan, 1985; Fry, 1976; Gelfand, 1973a,b; 1979; Aschwanden, 1982; Rennie, 1973; Werbner, 1991; and Ranger, 1985; 1995) contains useful information but is largely written by men and thus gender tends to be depicted from a particular viewpoint. Women are given a separate place and are usually depicted as subordinated. It might be said therefore to have a male bias. For example, Gelfand's (1973a) book, is entitled 'the Genuine Shona', but in fact writes about the Genuine Shona man and 'the great family as a real brotherhood'. Bourdillon (1987) emphasises the position of women, but this is done in a separate section, through which women become isolated from and do not negotiate in the Shona life he describes, such as, for example, in marriage and bridewealth. Ranger (1995) includes in his book a chapter on 'making class and redefining gender'. But is gender really redefined? He clearly states in his introduction that by describing the collective biography of a father and two sons would illuminate much of the history of both elite and mass African politics. Perhaps gender would have been redefined if the title: 'Are we not also men', would have been 'Are we not also people'. But the social actors in the study are not that gender conscious themselves, as they talk about men and manhood. Both Bourdillon and Ranger make women visible by taking them separate, i.e. the WID approach. However, by following that approach, gender relations do not really emerge. Apart from the male bias, existing Shona literature is to a large extent really about the Shona people and not about how women and men themselves assign meaning to and shape their lives.

Many male authors make Shona men superior. Most likely because they are men themselves, though some of them were assisted in fieldwork by their wives<sup>2</sup>. Taking into consideration the situation and perceptions of some of the male authors, Shona women become automatically less powerful and subordinated. Except for the *vatete* (FZ/HFZ), who is usually perceived by authors as powerful (see for example Gelfand, 1973b; Holleman, 1952 and 1974). Such authors have reproduced and contributed towards a conventional model in which men are superior and women wield power only when they are aunts and grow old.

Women have written about Shona people in specific contexts. For example Weinrich (1971; 1982) writes about chiefs and African marriage; Cheater (1981, 1984, 1986 and 1990) about women, rural development and land; Gaidzanwa (1985a and 1985b) about images of women in Zimbabwean literature, and about women and land, Muchena (1979; 1994) about women in agriculture, and May (1983) about women in law. These women authors too, perceive Shona women in positions, which are restricted by patriarchy, patriarchal ideologies and other so-called structures. Elisabeth Schmidt (1992), in her interesting book about 'Shona women in the history of Zimbabwe (1870-1939)', which is a good supplement to some of the

<sup>1</sup> Here, I do not intend to give a review of all Shona anthropological and sociological literature. I just refer to certain authors in order to clarify my argument. Literature references to the authors whom I mention here, and to other authors, who wrote about Shona people in Zimbabwe, will be made frequently throughout the book.

<sup>2</sup> For example Holleman acknowledges his wife as follows: 'to my wife, who has been my cheerful and courageous companion in the field, fell the dreary task of typing the final draft of the manuscript. What I owe to her devotion and encouragement I shall not even try to express. Rennie (1973) acknowledged his wife as follows: 'At every stage collection of material, analysing, drafting and typing, she helped as much and hindered as little as possible. Her encouragement has been most faithful and her help most indispensable'.



work of David Beach (e.g. 1980; 1994), emphasizes that resistance and struggle cannot be understood without reference to patriarchy, gender ideology and women's agency. She points out that women's agency needs to be recognised, as they also require economic status in their own right (1992: 181). She concludes (1992: 181) that 'women's voices, perspectives and actions were not in harmony with the general chorus'. For me it remains unclear what 'the general chorus' exactly means. The voices of women themselves are not really heard in Schmidt's book, because it is more 'about' women.

Considering the existing literature and the perspectives portrayed in it, is a justification for the present study, which can contribute in two ways to the existing literature.

- 1) The existing literature is good for description and for exploring the so-called common discourse and conventional models. However, it seems that those normative and value frames are not 'lifted', to look at what lies underneath, i.e. how those values, rules and norms are used, bent and manipulated by women and men themselves in their social actions and how, therefore, women and men themselves change practice and ideas. That is what this study tries to do.
- 2) This study is based on sociological-anthropological fieldwork among the Nda, whereas almost all existing studies were conducted among other Shona groups. The Shona people occupy the largest part of Zimbabwe and also part of Mozambique. Bourdillon (1987) argues that 'Shona classify themselves by their chieftaincy or their dialect group: Zezuru, Manyika, Korekore, Karanga and Nda. Those linguistic classifications do not exactly correspond with the boundaries of the groups (see appendix 1), but they do reflect the cultural patterns of Shona people and also to some extent their various histories' (1987: 16-17). Bourdillon, Lan, and Gelfand focused mainly on the Korekore Shona; Aschwanden, Weinrich, Gelfand, Werbner, Holleman, mainly the Karanga-Shona; Fry and Cheater focused mainly on the Zezuru-Shona. Only one study exists about the Nda and that is by Rennie (1973). However, that is a historical study, largely based on archival work with only one empirical case study.

### **Gender-Irrigation studies**

Authors Dey, 1980, 1981; Schrijvers, 1985; Carney, 1988; make women visible in irrigation and make clear that rural projects neglect women farmers. The studies are to a large extent evaluations of projects, in most cases implemented irrigated rice schemes, and their impact on women, especially in relation to land (Dey, 1980 and 1981), crops and labour (Carney and Watts, 1990, 1991) and chronic undernutrition (Schrijvers, 1985), reflecting for all cases a marginalisation of women. Marginalisation is viewed as 'a process in which one category of people, in this case women, are pushed out of those sectors in the production process which wield power, towards the periphery of the subsistence sector, the informal sector and the margins of the market economy' (Schrijvers, 1985:13). Dey (1990 and 1992) emphasises the rights and obligations with regard to household production and consumption, which help explain the negative impact on women. She indicates that more attention is needed to the dynamics of intra-household relations and to the lesser rights of women to productive resources (especially land and labour) and to the right of disposal of the products of their labour. Furthermore, women's overriding obligations to work on male controlled household or personal crops, means that women do not fully control the allocation of their own labour for the household or personal crops under their responsibility (Dey, 1992:32). Studies of rights and obligations, as Dey observes, mainly relate to land and labour. The rights and obligations emerging from formal (e.g. irrigation management committee) and informal (e.g. family/marriage/children) networks remain unnoticed. Additionally, negotiations between women and men, resulting in changing rights and obligations for both, need consideration along with a subsequent differentiation amongst women.

Not much in-depth research has been done on women and irrigation in Zimbabwe, as noted by Dikito (1993) who comments on the absence of sufficient documentation, empirical

research, data and evidence, in particular on women and irrigation. Some empirical studies on women and irrigation are carried out, such as those of Chimedza (1989) and Madondo (1992a,b). These studies are quantitative investigations and both show a deterioration in the position of women, for example, irrigation implies an intensification in crop growing, hence there is a greater demand for women's labour (Chimedza, 1989) which gives them more arduous tasks (Madondo, 1992a,b). However, such facts need relating to produced output, to increased income and subsequently to the women's say about that, their interests and their resistance. Chimedza's work indicates that women benefited from the produced output and gained control over income, especially on the local market, whereas women's position deteriorated regarding land and labour (Chimedza, 1989). In a more recent study, Mate (1995) uses an actor-oriented approach and shows that women farmers strategically organise their land, labour and control their income.

Thus, on an international scale and in Zimbabwe, the literature on gender and irrigation mainly focuses on the impact of projects on the position of women in relation to land, labour and crops. Koppen (et al 1995) made an impact study in Bangladesh and did not study how women negotiate and establish power positions for themselves. The impacts of irrigation projects are generally perceived in negative terms for women (see also for Zimbabwe Mvududu, 1993: 17). Negative in the sense that: 1) due to irrigation women's workloads increase, 2) women are denied access to land, 3) when women have land in an irrigation scheme, then men have better soils, 4) women usually have poorer access to water, 5) women do not benefit directly, but only indirectly from developments in irrigation. This could reflect 'the familiar models with their own implicit judgements' as Guyer points out (1995:44). However, in a recent irrigation study in Bangladesh, Jordans and Zwartveen (1997) show that various women benefit from irrigation. I have emphasized here that the different effects of projects on women and men (impact) are related to the focus of the conducted studies on gender and irrigation. These different effects can be explained because of the different position, responsibilities, rights and obligations of men and women in the society where the project was introduced. Consequently, these differences in position, responsibilities, rights and obligations between women and men will lead to different perceptions, practices, and contributions to negotiations and derived strategies, which form and change irrigation projects.

There is a tendency, in the gender-irrigation literature referred to above, for women to be perceived as passive victims of development. There is little focus on women as knowledgeable and capable actors, negotiators, managers and organizers, with their own perspectives and strategies in irrigated agriculture and farming. In addition most of the existing literature on irrigation does not seek to explain gender differences in irrigation by relating them to a wider context of farming and other socio-economic activities and to livelihood in general, or to formal and informal networks of social relationships, such as the Irrigation Management Committee, the family, or, for example, to church membership. Authors consider even less the connected rights and obligations, which emerge from these formal and informal networks. Furthermore, writers on gender-irrigation studies recognise even less the cultural valuations given to women and men; the perceptions of the women and men and their practices and negotiations in making strategic use of and shaping irrigated agriculture.

### 1.3 THE RESEARCH AREA

Every research area is specific and the area in which I worked is perhaps specific for three major reasons. 1) I lived with and studied the way of living of Ndau (Shona) women and men. 2) Resettlement had taken place in the village. 3) Women and men cultivated land inside and outside an irrigation scheme.

The location, Manesa village, lies in the Save river valley<sup>3</sup> (appendix 5 and 6) in Zimbabwe (appendix 2), Manicaland Province (appendix 3), Chipinge District (appendix 4) and Mutema chieftaincy (appendix 4 and 5). The village derives its name from the village head, Manesa, who looks after his people in the different homesteads that comprise the village.

Photo 1.1: Village Head Manesa



Homesteads are also called kraals and therefore a village head or village chief is also called a kraalhead. Village chiefs are 'lowest' in hierarchy of the chieftaincy. They are followed by a few headmen and a Paramount chief (see chapter 6). All chiefs are also recruited into government. Other government officials in the village areas are the councillors (Chapter 6). The colonial era lasted from 1890 up to 1980 when Rhodesia became Zimbabwe upon independence.

Village head Manesa is not the only kraalhead in the village. There are five others: Panganai, Nemashapa, Haugurwi, Mukokota, and Nedangura (appendix 6). The last four were resettled in 1953 from the Munyokowere area, which was designated by the Rhodesian government as the present Middle Sabi Reserve (see appendix 5). The resettled people also had to be allocated land and the government constructed in 1953, an irrigation scheme adjacent to Manesa village for that purpose (Chapter 5). Irrigation schemes are named after the place where the water inlet is constructed, which is why the scheme is named Tawona and not Manesa. Tawona irrigation scheme comprised 169 hectares and had 258 registered plottolders during the time of my research. Almost all the plottolders lived in Manesa's area. A few of them lived in the village areas of kraalheads Tawona and Mutema. I decided to select the Tawona irrigation scheme in Chipinge district because the scheme was to be extended and it would give me an opportunity to study that issue. Another reason was that a

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<sup>3</sup> The village surface is approximately 5 km<sup>2</sup>. When irrigation schemes and drylands bordering the Save river are included, the village surface equals approximately 13 km<sup>2</sup>.

woman headed the Irrigation Management Committee. By choosing the scheme, I also chose the village.

Manesa's area became densely populated due to the resettlement and the irrigation scheme. During the time of the research there were some 390 homesteads with in total around 2900 adults and children (village survey, Vijfhuizen 1995). Thus, on average, homesteads comprised seven people who were present and three people per homestead who were absent due to migration, work or schooling. There were twice as many women as men in the village.

The way people live together in a homestead varies enormously and this has implications for the decision-making and wielding and yielding of power in the various homesteads (see Chapter 3). A homestead has a clear boundary, sometimes a fence and/or small trees. In small and large homesteads, several households can be distinguished (Chapter 3). Thus when I use 'homestead'<sup>4</sup>, I refer to a group of houses in one yard and with usually more than one household<sup>5</sup>. Homestead drawings can be found in the appendices of Chapter three. People themselves say '*musha*' when referring to their homestead, meaning home (pl *misha*). *Musha* actually refers to several places, namely the homestead, the village, and the neighbourhood, but may also be used for country. However, a *musha* usually refers to a permanent home in the rural areas, for which no rent is paid. The house with rent in town is *imba* (house) and not *musha*, most probably because of its less permanent character.

From the village survey (Vijfhuizen, July 1995) several types of homesteads emerged (N=386), which I labelled to get an impression of how people are grouped and live together in a homestead. It must be clear that this labelling was not without problems. For example, homesteads without husbands or with absent husbands, and polygynous homesteads, often consisted of extended families. Thus the categories are not mutually exclusive. The next table 1.1 depicts the different categories of homestead.

Table 1.1: Types of homesteads in Manesa village

	WWH	WAH	PS	POL	PP	M	EXT	Tot
Total	102	51	29	52	55	70	27	386
	(26%)	(13%)	(8%)	(13%)	(14%)	(18%)	(7%)	

WWH: Women without Husbands

WAH: Women with Absent Husbands

PS: Polygynous Separate (wives in different homesteads)

POL: Polygynous at present and wives in one homestead

PP: Polygynous in the Past, but monogamous at present

M: Monogamous

EXT: Extended.

I labelled those homesteads where people said there was no husband, as homesteads of Women Without Husbands (WWH, 26% of the total). They were widows (79%), or divorced (13%) or had never married (8%). Sometimes married sons with their wives lived in these homesteads.

<sup>4</sup> Bourdillon (1987) also uses homestead. Other authors may use 'compound'. A 'homestead' can be compared with 'compound'. But I do not use 'compound' in this book, because Shona people usually use 'compound' for places where police officers or soldiers live together.

<sup>5</sup> In this thesis, 'family' and 'homestead' are multivocal notions; i.e. they refer to different functional groupings and different areas of activities and control. The matrifocal household in the homestead refers to one group, i.e. a woman who looks after her own children, but that single group is involved in different areas of activities and control, and therefore I use matrifocal household in this thesis instead of matrifocal group (see further conclusion of chapter 3).

Another category was homesteads with women whose husbands were absent through migration or for other reasons (Women with Absent husbands, WAH, 13%<sup>6</sup>). Thus these 'women's homesteads' are 39% of the total. If the perceived owner of the homestead was married to more than one wife, then that homestead was labelled polygynous. However, different types of polygynous homesteads can be distinguished, i.e.: a husband with more than one wife in one homestead (POL, 13%); wives of one husband in different homesteads (PS, polygyny separate, 8%); homesteads which were polygynous in the past but monogamous at present (PP, polygyny past, 14%). The last category I included in the polygynous homesteads, because usually children of former wives live in the homestead and if they do not live there, they often belong to that family. Polygynous homesteads in the village were 34% of the total. If the perceived owner of the homestead was married to one wife only, then that homestead was labelled monogamous (M, 18%). Extended homesteads (EXT, 7%), are those where the parents live with their married children in the same homestead.

Other general economic data related to homesteads shows that fifty percent of the homesteads (approximately 200) in Manesa village hold an irrigated plot of 0.8 hectares and on average also 0.6 hectares of dryland. The other fifty percent rely on dryland and gardens. People obtain cash by selling agricultural produce from the irrigation scheme; by working as non-plotholders in the irrigation scheme; from piecework in the village; by working as wage labourers in the Middle Sabi reserve; from migrating for work to the larger cities (remittances); from other sales per matrifocal household within homesteads (see especially Chapters 3 and 4). The cash income per month per household is approximately Z\$ 200-300<sup>7</sup>. It may be higher with remittances and for those with irrigated plots, or lower when people cultivate dryland only. But people are continuously in search of cash for several reasons, of which the following are the most important: agricultural inputs, schoolfees, soap, salt, cooking oil, bread, paraffin, and medical care. Women are the ones who usually cover such costs and therefore they work almost continuously on irrigated plots, dryland or gardens, to harvest the basic food crops of maize and vegetables.

#### 1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out within the framework of the ZIMWESI project (Zimbabwe Programme for Women studies, Extension, Sociology and Irrigation). I initially formulated the research problem as a focus on gender practices in irrigated agriculture, the use of resources, including water, and the institutional organisation and how this was all related to gender ideology and the life worlds of women and men. Field experience soon indicated that while agricultural production, land and irrigation were important, they were not of sole importance to people's livelihoods. After a few months of studying what the women and men told me was their '*magariro*', their way of living, other important 'life themes' emerged automatically, such as marriage of family members, bridewealth, divorce, levirate, and death, also from HIV/Aids. 'Traditional' religion also emerged in many cases, despite the fact that almost all people are members of the more recently established churches. They all believe in their still active ancestors and the influence of good and bad spirits (Chapter 7), which is why I have therefore focused on traditional religion in this book. However, the churches are also important, and they are embedded in the material dealt with in Chapters 3, 4 and 7. Court and law issues also emerged as important, as conflicts in relations usually ended up in the village courts ruled by village chiefs, or in the community courts ruled by presiding government officials. Many of the

<sup>6</sup> That percentage does not indicate the migration. Migrated men can be found in almost every homestead, and that could explain the high number of men who are absent from Manesa village.

<sup>7</sup> The approximate value of the Zimbabwe dollar (Z\$) was:

In 1994: 1US\$=Z\$8, 1Fl=Z\$4. In 1995: 1US\$=Z\$10, 1Fl=Z\$5. In 1996: 1US\$=Z\$12, 1Fl=Z\$6. In 1997: 1US\$=Z\$14, 1Fl=Z\$7. In the end of 1997: 1US\$=Z\$18, 1Fl=Z\$9

issues studied emerged during the years of my fieldwork. For example, plot registration for the new irrigation scheme (Chapter 5) was a big issue in Manesa village, especially in 1995.

The fact is that the researcher becomes a part of the world studied. Mbilinyi (1992) points out that the formulation of the problem setting, the choice of research techniques and the interpretation of the data are all affected by our multiple identities and discourses. De Vries (1992: 47) in similar vein, argues that establishing a research network happens through a process of mutual enrolment in which researcher and researched become active social agents. This counts for the period in the field as well as the period after during the interpretation and writing-up phases. In other words, both researcher and researched shape the outcome of a study, by the many decisions taken during fieldwork.

Participant observation, situational analysis and case study methods are appropriate techniques for understanding everyday life. According to Long (pers. comm, 1994), case studies are a slice of everyday life that can reveal the social dynamics and complexity of the ongoing social process. They highlight how everyday life is patterned by the sets of social relationships and networks people have. A first step is to identify relevant social actors and then to follow them in action, to place them in a wider scope of networks and relationships. De Vries argues that case studies are constructed through theory. Case studies, therefore, serve to establish the validity of a particular theoretical principle, not by achieving statistical significance but through their ability to elaborate a theoretical principle by confronting it with the complexity of empirical reality (1992: 68).

To build up case studies, different techniques can be used (see also N. Long, 1989: 250-253 and S.A. Long, 1992: 160-69). I mention four. 1) Life histories (see also Plummer, 1983 and Werbner 1991), which focus on critical life experiences. 2) Social network analysis (Mitchell, 1969) which focuses on how networks (e.g. genealogies) evolve over time and how different households, state agencies and relationships interlock. 3) Extended-cases and situational analysis are important techniques to provide a close view of social interaction and confrontation and is used to elucidate how structural forms and processes work themselves out in everyday life situations (see van Velsen, 1967; Long, 1968; Werbner, 1991; Arce et al 1992). Conflicts or everyday routines guide us to particular social actors (such as government officials) and their linkages are studied. 4) Andrew Long (1992: 165-69) argues that 'there are many similarities between van Velsen's formulation of situational analysis and Foucault's project concerned with the description and analysis of discourse'. With Discourse analysis it is crucial to describe and analyse the different perspectives and their interpenetration. 'The discursive forms can only be described in relation to what people say about their motivations, actions and statements, and how one observes the negotiations taking place. Interpreting discourse in this way enables us to examine how local actors use and assign meaning to their material and social world' (A. Long, 1992: 166-67).

In this study I used a mix of these four research techniques, with an emphasis on situational and discourse analysis. These techniques provided many details, which were verified in various ways, through checklists, cross-checking with other informants etc. Some surveys were also conducted to obtain quantitative material. The checklists and specific surveys are referred to in the various chapters. I also used key informants but throughout the research period I used the above techniques and interviews and discussions on various issues with many women and men both in and outside the village. All the qualitative material was entered into the Kwalitan computer programme. I was strict in entering all the many fieldnotes. The programme proved very useful in analysing the data.

I started the research by building a house of poles, mud and grass in the village (Chapter 3), so that I could live among the people in the village. The building of the house took place in July, August and September 1994 and I studied the building process and the networks involved, interviewing all the women and men who were a part of the process as well as other informants (see Vijfhuizen, 1994). In the meantime I tried to make a map of Manesa village and select a sample of the registered plotholders (258) in the irrigation scheme. While I was making a map and visiting homesteads, I became confused about headship in the different

homesteads. Thus, I decided in November 1994 to study first a homestead in detail, as a window for further research (see Vijfhuizen, 1995). I chose a polygynous homestead of those women who were also involved in the building of my house and with whom I had established good relations. That case study provided good perspectives and ideas for further research. For example, the different matrifocal households emerged in that polygynous homestead. In January 1995, I organised a '*chiutsi* party' (see chapter 3) in my homestead in the village. Many women and men from the village, chiefs, extension officers, schoolteachers and children came to pray, dance, drink and eat. In January and February 1995 I continued with a detailed study into the cultivation practices of eight selected irrigation scheme plotters and eight dryland farmers. I worked with the people on the irrigated plots and dryland and ate with them. Meanwhile I studied the organisation of consumption in the different types of homesteads and interviewed the people in those homesteads.

By March 1995 I had a reasonable knowledge about how women and men made their living in the village. I had also by this time established many good relationships with people in Manesa village. That was the time I started to carry out detailed case studies, which included the four mentioned research techniques. Case studies included divorce cases, court cases, gender conflicts over land, bridewealth payments, witchcraft cases, spirit medium and church sessions and the registration for plot allocation in a new irrigation scheme. During the time of the case studies, throughout 1995 and the beginning of 1996, I also studied in-depth three different types of homesteads (Female headed, Monogamous and Polygynous). They were selected from the eight homesteads where cultivation practices were studied. The remaining five homesteads were also visited regularly, in order to check details obtained from the three homesteads. Also one dryland homestead was studied in-depth. Many other women and men were regularly interviewed, usually separately, but sometimes in groups. A good number of interviews were also recorded in Ndau, in order to improve my language skills but also to have accurate recordings of discourse and interpretations in Ndau. The knowledge, beliefs and actions from the social actors in the field and village directed me to government offices, courts, archives and literature.

## 1.5 ORGANISATION OF THE CHAPTERS

The study attempts to depict everyday life in a Ndau village by exploring different fields. Each chapter focuses on a specific field. However, fields are not isolated from each other but overlap (Bourdieu, 1977). But despite the overlap, the following specific fields can be distinguished: social relations with specific reference to kinship and marriage; building of houses and running of homesteads and other networks; agricultural production and value of agricultural produce; allocating and holding the land; politics in the village and chieftaincy; spirit and witchcraft beliefs. 'Domains', that can be distinguished in each field, and which Long argues (1997:5) 'are central to understanding how social ordering works, and to analysing how social and symbolic boundaries are created and defended', emerge clearly in chapters 3 and 6.

In chapter two I explore marriage, bridewealth, divorce and levirate and show through detailed cases how both women and men shape, change and reproduce rules, beliefs and normative and value frames in practice and thereby shape those practices. Both women and men, but especially women emerge as important negotiators, arbitrators and mediators in social relations.

In chapter three I explore the establishment of homesteads. I distinguish four stages in the establishment process, i.e.: 1) the allocation of a place by the village chief; 2) the *kurova hoko* practice which literally means the hammering of a first peg into the ground. It shows that the homestead belongs to the patrikin and that has implication for headship in the homestead; 3) the building of houses. I explore the building of three types of house, my own house of poles, grass and mud, a stone, and a brick house; 4) I show how a homestead is officially established by organising a *chiutsi* party. Chapter three further explores headship by presenting the perceptions of women and men on the subject, and by looking into the practice of headship in

a polygynous and monogamous homestead. I show that 'the head' is of relative importance and that it is more a matter of 'multiple heads' and authorities within one homestead.

In chapter four I explore how different social actors organise agricultural production in Tawona irrigation scheme, the gardens and dryland. I explore how agricultural produce obtains its potential and realised value by the active negotiations and transactions of women farmers in their networks of relations. The women in the Irrigation Management Committee also contribute to the organisation of agricultural produce from an irrigation scheme and thereby also shape the economic performance of the scheme.

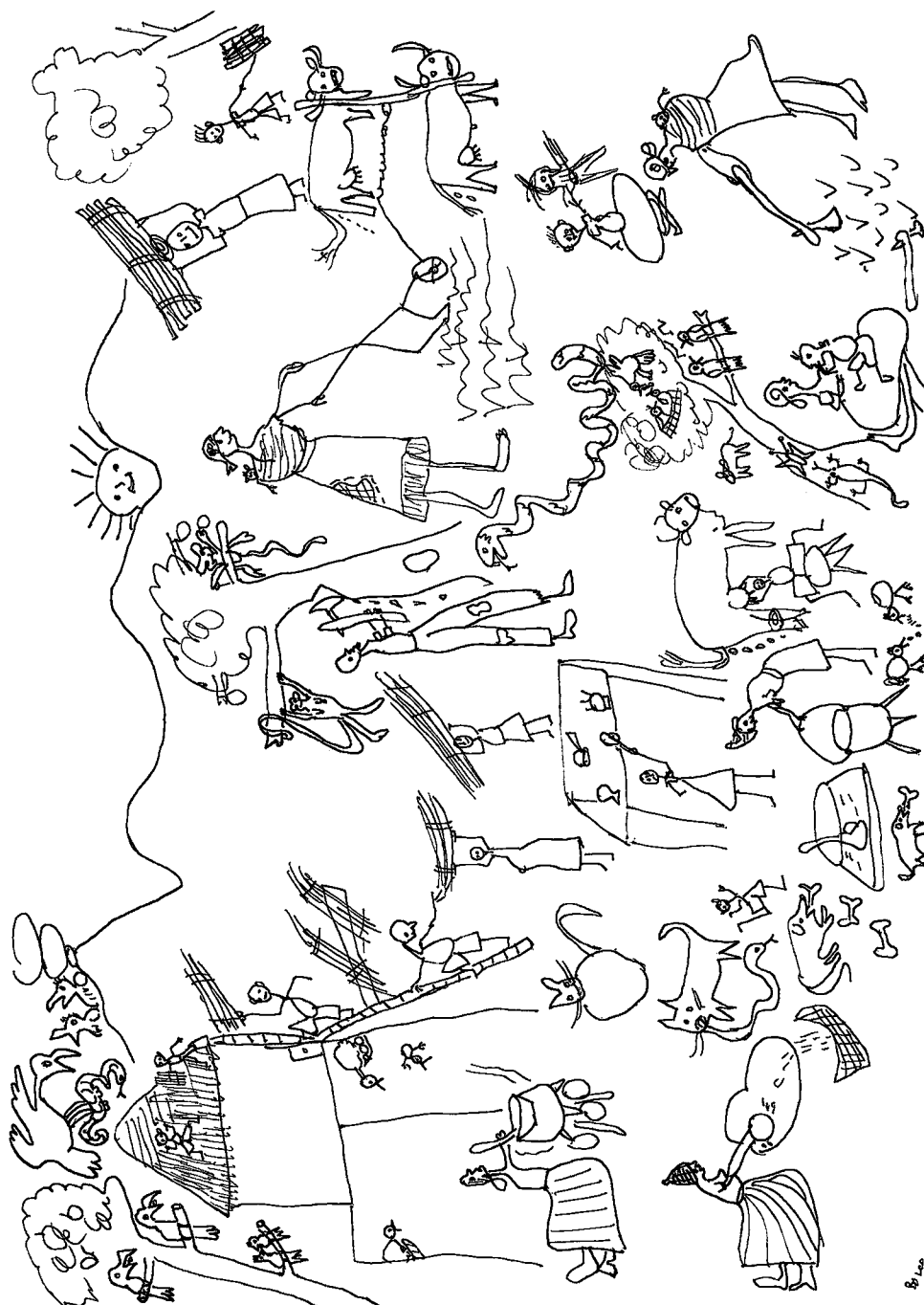
Chapter five is about the history of irrigated plot allocation and I show that non-resettled chiefs always remained in control of their land. I also explore the registration of plots in a new irrigation scheme under construction and show that all social actors, Agritex officials, chiefs and farmers - who are women and men - hunt for the plots and therefore how land issues are manipulated. I explore the present plot allocation and registration in Tawona irrigation scheme by exploring gender struggles over irrigated land. Lastly I look at the changes in control over land by considering the handing-over policy of Tawona irrigation scheme from Agritex officials to farmers.

Chapter six concerns the different authorities in Manesa village and Mutema chieftaincy. It explains how the first inhabitants of an area are perceived as the owners of the land and makers of the rain, and how that belief contributes to the present power struggles between the present village chief and the descendants of the very first village chief. I also explore other power struggles in the village between the non-resettled and the resettled chiefs; Agritex and Councillor; Agritex and chiefs. I show how the woman spirit medium of the chieftaincy mediates and arbitrates in power struggles and disputes and how she emerges as a power broker between the representatives of the chiefs and government.

In chapter seven I explore the beliefs in good and bad spirits and show how social actors strategically use, transform, bend and manipulate these spirit and witchcraft beliefs in practice, in order to explain, understand and prevent death/illness and to control resources and other social actors, especially women. *N'anga* (African doctors) are strategically used by social actors when they are ill and in their conflicts and power struggles. However, *n'anga* also strategically use their knowledge to treat, to arbitrate in conflicts, to control and to earn money.

Chapter eight is a retrospective tying together all the different themes and chapters while exploring the new perspectives which emerged from the study regarding gender, Shona and irrigation. A last comment before entering the main body of the work: Social actors in the village or at national level often said 'that is traditional' or 'that is modern'. They could have referred to those norms, values, knowledge and beliefs, which have a longer or shorter past. However, they reproduced and transformed these according to their interests, in their current social actions, for reasons such as survival and control. Hence my standpoint is that traditional and modern are intertwined and cannot easily be separated because of the social actor's strategic use of beliefs, norms and value frames in practice.





## CHAPTER 2

### BINDING THE MARRIAGE AND BREAKING THE BONDS

I mentioned in the introduction that a social actor must always be perceived in a network of social relations. Relations are essential in life and could be perceived as the foundation of the social actor. I therefore place relationships first in this first chapter. Furthermore, this chapter can also be perceived as a foundation for the other chapters in this book. This chapter focuses on kinship relations and relations established through marriage, since such relationships emerged as being of primary importance in daily life.

In order to shape a context for this and the next chapters some kinship terms are explained, such as clan, patrilineal extended kingroup (*dzinza*), family and place of birth (*chizvarwa*). Social actors use those terms in specific contexts, such as marriage. Some crucial marriage practices are also explored such as channels, virilocality, different types of marriages and some changes in marriage patterns, and the distinction between civil and customary marriage and polygyny. Bridewealth is also an important practice in marriage and the perceptions of social actors about bridewealth and sources for its payment are elaborated. Two bridewealth payment cases are then taken up in detail. By exploring these marriage practices, I show how relationships are established. However, relationships can also end. Three cases of divorce are considered, exploring who is involved in the divorces and examining the decision-making of chiefs in village courts and presiding officers in community courts; the so-called people's customary law and court customary law. Marriage can also end by the death of a husband. However, among the Ndau, widowed younger women are then expected to be looked after (*kugarwa nhaka*; levirate) by one of the 'brothers' of the deceased husband. I explore a levirate case in section 2.5. In all sections, the paternal aunt (*vatele*, HFZ/HZ) emerges as an important negotiator and arbitrator in relations, and the role of paternal aunt as social actor is also taken up.

The chapter shows that both women and men are important reproducers and transformers of marriage, bridewealth, divorce and levirate practices. They guard the continuity and shape the changes. The woman with the gender identity of aunt (HFZ/HZ) emerges as a particular authority in negotiating, shaping and maintaining relations.

#### 2.1 KINSHIP

There are several crucial kinship concepts which the Ndau women and men use in daily life. They require some explanation here as they shape a context for this and the following chapters. The three most crucial are clan (*mutupo*), patrilineal extended group (*dzinza*), family (*mhuri*) and its members, and place of birth (*chizvarwa*). The notion of 'Ndau' also requires some elucidation.

#### Ndau

Ndau people are called lowlanders or river-valley dwellers (Rennie, 1973: 86). Ndau also call themselves the people of the *gova*, i.e. dry river valley. They believe that the origin of the word Ndau comes from a greeting. As people enter a homestead they call in greeting knock, knock, knock (*go-go-goi*). Women and men who live in that homestead respond: '*ndauwe*', a greeting and an invitation of welcome to the homestead. Ndau literally means 'place'. Hence, 'Ndau' would seem to be related to the greeting and response '*ndauwe*'. Perhaps that explains why this group of low 'veld' Shona people were labelled Ndau, long before the 'White' Europeans came to Zimbabwe around 1890 (see Rennie, 1973).

### Clan (*mutupo*)

Clans refer to totemic groups who identify themselves by distinctive totems (*mitupo*), which according to Rennie (1973) are a part of ethnic identity. He maintains that the first chiefs, the founders of different Ndaу chieftaincies, were brothers who were given different totems through which their descendants could marry (Rennie: 1973, 90-91). The Manesa village Chiefs maintained that they came from one place (one biological root) and thus see themselves as a tribe. They explain the emergence of different totems as the result of disputes between brothers, fathers and sons. Those who moved away no longer wished to belong to their father's or brother's clan and therefore adopted another totem name. Among the Ndaу, totems names are mainly those of animals. A few exist of insects, such as the termite.

The totem of the Mutema chiefs is *mombe* (cattle) and there are therefore many with that totem name. For example, in Manesa village, 63% of the men and 57% of the women belong to the cattle clan (village survey, Vijfhuizen, 1995). But there are other totemic clans within the chieftaincy due to, for example, marriage and migration. Women keep their own totem upon marriage. Within Manesa village are the hippo clan (10% of the people), and those representing less than 10% such as wild dog (*sigauke* or *chihwa*), termite (*dhliwayo*), eland (*mhofu/shava*), bird (*shiri*) and zebra (*dube* or *mbizi*). The big clans, like cattle, are divided into sub-clans (*chidao*; pl: *zvidao*) such as leg (*gumbo*) and heart (*mwoyo*).

Ndaу women and men make use of their totems in jokes, in marriage and often in support of a particular side in the case of conflicts. When conflicts are complicated, and cannot be solved by those who are involved or by the consulted aunt (*vatete*), a person from a totem other than that of the parties in dispute is requested to negotiate. Usually the closest relative in another totem is chosen to become the negotiator, often the son of a *vatete* (*muzukuru*; FZS). Being from another totem, he is seen as being more neutral.

People of the same clan or sub-clan are not expected to marry each other. If they do, the husband's family (*vakuwasha*, sons-in-law) must pay a fine. The fine serves to cut or symbolically break the relation (*kucheka ukama*) between the two clans or sub-clans. In the past, the fine was a pure white cow. To find a completely white animal was always difficult, and the fine was therefore seen as a controlling mechanism against marrying within the same clan or sub-clan. Nowadays, the fine is money and no longer an animal. But there is another change. Some clans have grown very large and so from large clans such as 'cattle' (*mombe*) and 'monkey' (*shoko*), men and women are nowadays allowed to marry each other as long as they are from different sub-clans. Marriage from within the same sub-clan is still subject to a fine.

### Patrilineal extended kin-group or patrikin (*dzinza*)

The Shona are classified as a patrilineal people. Ndaу women and men use the concept *dzinza* when they refer to the extended kingroup. *Dzinza* includes patrilineal fathers, their children, their sisters and their forefathers and mothers (deceased wives). *Dzinza* thus represents the different generations and many different homesteads will belong to the same *dzinza* or extended patrilineal kin group. *Dzinza* refers to a common biological origin, as does the totemic clan. But unlike the clan the *dzinza* has no associated animal (*mutupo*). As marriage is virilocal women live in the husband's *dzinza* but remain members of their own natal *dzinza*.

### Family (*mhuri*)

A small family unit is referred to by the word *imba* (literally house) (Bourdillon, 1987: 31). Ndaу people can ask a woman: *mune imba here?* (Literally: Do you have a house?), meaning are you married and do you have children? In general women and men perceive a family (*mhuri*) as a husband, a wife or wives with children and other relatives who all live within the same boundary of one homestead. To that family also belong the women and men who originate from that homestead, but live elsewhere. Often children of a divorced or deceased

wife will stay on in the homestead and sometimes children of daughters or sons, who live elsewhere, will live there.

Table 2.1 depicts kinship relations (*hama*) among the Ndaou. The terms are both cognatic and classificatory and their abbreviations will be used throughout the book.

Table 2.1: Kinship relations among the Ndaou

Grandfather:	FF/MF; <i>sekuru</i>
Grandmother:	FM/MM; <i>ambuya</i>
Brother:	FB; <i>baba</i> , father; MB; <i>sekuru</i> , uncle
Brother's wife:	FBW: <i>mai</i> , mother; MBW: <i>ambuya</i> , aunt
Sister:	FZ: <i>vatete</i> , aunt; MZ: <i>mai</i> , mother
Son's wife:	SW: <i>muroora</i> , daughter in law
Daughter's husband:	DH: <i>mukuwasha</i> , son-in-law
Grandchildren:	<i>vazukuru</i> (single, <i>muzukuru</i> )

Father's brothers (FB) are also called fathers (*baba*; pl *madzibaba*). An elder brother is called *babamukuru* and a younger one *babamunini*. Father's brother's wives (FBW) are also called mothers (*mai*; pl *madzimai*). The wife of an elder brother is called *maiguru* and the wife of a younger brother is called *mainini*. The husband's father's sister (HFZ) and husband's sister (HZ) are called aunts, *vatete* (pl: *madzitete*). Mother's sisters (MZ) are called mothers (*madzimai*), also distinguishing elder sisters (*maiguru*) and younger sisters (*mainini*). The brothers of mother (MB) are called uncles (*sekuru*) and their wives, *madzimbuya* (single: *ambuya*). The father of parents is called grandfather (*sekuru*) and the mother of parents is grandmother (*ambuya*). Grandchildren are called *vazukuru*. Women who marry into the family are called daughters-in-law (*muroora*; pl *varoorra*) and men who marry into the family sons-in-law (*mukuwasha*; pl *vakuwasha* or *vakwambo*). Relatives are called *hama*, and that counts for relatives of both father and mother. Thus the sister or brother of mother is *hama*. It is not possible to marry FZS or MBD, because they are from both sides perceived as *hama* and *hama* cannot marry each other.

Thus, as Long says (pers. comm, October 1997) 'family' is a multivocal notion which refers to different groups or households who live within the boundaries of one homestead, or who originate from that homestead. Hence the notions 'family' and 'homestead' are closely related (see further Chapter 3 and its conclusion). The *dzinza* encompasses many different homesteads, and the clan embraces many different *dzinza*.

### Place of birth (*chizvarwa*)

Bourdillon (1987: 27) tells us that the old patrilineage of three to five generations of the descendants of one man is still recognised under the name *chizvarwa*. However, among Ndaou such a patrilineage is called *dzinza*. Ndaou people call a place of birth, *chizvarwa* (see Chapter 3). People who are born in the village (*chizvarwa*) should not have to pay for a place in the village to build a house. If *chizvarwa* was perceived as a lineage, then women and men would not be able to marry each other. However, Ndaou people of the same *chizvarwa* (place of birth) can marry. It is even a preferred marriage, because then they know each other's background and have knowledge about witches in each other's families.

Kinship notions of clan, *dzinza*, family and *chizvarwa* are particularly relevant in the case of marriage, and their use also shapes marriage practice.

## 2.2 ESTABLISHING RELATIONS THROUGH MARRIAGE

The most important reason for exploring marriage is that new relations are established through marriage. Here, I explore some of the rules, beliefs, and normative and value frames

which are used in shaping marriage practices, such as channels; virilocality; the different types of marriages recognised by social actors; some changes in marriage practices; officially recognised civil and customary marriages and polygyny. Bridewealth is also an important marriage practice and the chapter would not be complete without presenting views of the women and men about bridewealth and its payment sources.

### Channels

Marriage is said to be important because it allows the *dzinza* (patrikin) to grow; creates children; and provides security (*kuchengetwa*) in old age. People wish to have both daughters and sons, the first bring bridewealth and sons extend the *dzinza* (patrikin)

Before a girl and boy marry, they have usually known each other for some time. Many boys and girls know each other from school, church or have met at the places where they work. If they wish to marry, both have to follow certain channels (channel/s: *murandu*). Each must inform certain family members who send them to other relatives in their own patrikin. Thus it becomes a channel which is usually as follows. The girl approaches her mother, who instructs her to go to one of the aunts (FZ/HZ; *madzitete*) or to one of her uncles (MB; *sekuru*) or to a child of the aunt (*muzukuru*; FZS/HZS). The boy informs his own family. Usually, the father and his brothers (also fathers) are the last in the channel to be informed. Love tokens are exchanged where the channel has started, either at the place of the girl's or boy's *vatete*.

The channel for each marriage will differ. One young woman explained that she and her boy friend had to visit her *vatete* (WFZ) first, before her parents were informed about her relationship. 'The *vatete* is informed,' she said, 'when a final decision about marriage is made. If a girl comes with different boy-friends, exchanges love-tokens, and returns them again (divorce), then the *vatete* will be concerned about the future of her daughter.'<sup>1</sup>

She believed that only her young sisters and a friend knew about her relationship of three years. She was convinced that her parents did not.

'My boy friend and I had not yet informed my *vatete*. If my parents found out before the *vatete* informed them, then I can be chased from my homestead. My parents want to follow the channels. After the *vatete* informs them that I have a friend, then they want their money'.

After informing the girl's parents, and after a first bridewealth payment has been made, the daughter will go to live with the husband's family. However, nowadays, the girl is frequently already at the husband's homestead before anything is paid (see types of marriages below). If the husband is employed elsewhere, then the wife may also live there. However, she may return regularly to the homestead of the husband's parents, to help cultivate the land for example. Usually, the husband's mother is happy with a daughter-in-law, because she will relieve her of some of the more arduous tasks.

### Virilocality

As we have seen, women move to the husband's place of residence. If it is a nice place, it can be an extra motivation to marry him. As one woman pointed out:

'I just like John because he lives in a better area, near an irrigation scheme. That means having a lot to eat. In our area (Buhera) there is nothing to eat. We barter manure for tomatoes. We walk the whole day to exchange a few tomatoes. But now I live in a place where there are many tomatoes. You just have to marry into a place where there is a lot to eat'.

Another woman who met her husband when he worked temporarily outside Manesa village explained:

<sup>1</sup> An aunt (HFZ/HZ) calls the son and daughter of her brother, also son and daughter.

'I never visited this village before, but he had told me it was a good place. That people worked hard in the irrigation scheme and that they harvested a lot and earn a lot of money'.

The husband's place was considered a good place because of the irrigation scheme. The presence of an irrigation scheme can influence the number of marriages. I will come back to this point when I explore polygyny. The husband's are also happy since their wives will work in the irrigation scheme. They will sow, harvest, process and cook for him. But this does not always go according to the husband's ideas, as depicted in the following scene.

The husband: 'Why did you not cook? I told you this morning that I ate nothing last night, but you dare not to listen to my instructions. What is the purpose of marriage then? You have eaten and are satisfied, but I am hungry'. The wife: 'Who has already eaten? There is not even sugar for tea'. The husband became angry and hit his wife who started to cry. The husband left the house. He explained: 'I told my wife to cook sadza for me to eat when I come back, but she did not do it. Do you think this is a marriage? Now I have to cook sadza myself, while I have a wife'.

Hence a wife is expected to cook for the husband after marriage and after moving to the husband's homestead. She can come from within or outside the village. For example, in Manesa village 23% of the women present were born in Manesa. The rest came from in total 105 other villages, of which 30% were nearby. Sixty percent of Manesa men had been born in the village. The others 27 came from nearby villages (Village survey, Vijfhuizen, 1995).

It makes a difference if a person marries and lives in his/her natal village or comes from nearby, for they can frequently visit their natal homes, which they perceive as their real homes. Women who marry far away also visit their natal homes but less frequently, perhaps two or three times a year. When a woman marries, she leaves the parent's homestead (*musha*) but remains a member of her own family (*mhuri*). This implies that a marriage is a contract between two families rather than between individuals (see Holleman, 1952; Bourdillon, 1987: 40), as also clearly emerges from the bridewealth and divorce cases below. The wife goes to live in a homestead, which belongs to another *dzinza*. In times of conflicts, the practice of virilocality may decrease her ability to wield power in comparison to that of her husband (see Chapter 3). Usually, wives are buried where they live on marriage and husbands are buried in their natal villages. Regardless of the type of marriage, the woman will move to the husband's homestead.

### Different types of marriages

Ndau women and men distinguish the following eight types of marriages.

1. *Kutizira*, meaning to run away. This type of marriage is very common nowadays. Girls run away to the homesteads of their future husbands. Sometimes they are pregnant. Girls do so, with or without informing or having the consent of the recognised channels. When the girl stays at the husband's place, he and/or his family will make arrangements for paying the first bridewealth stage. Some boys' families want to pay the first stage before the birth of a child, because they believe that if the mother dies during pregnancy or delivery, without having made a payment, she will be an angry spirit to the husband's family. This could be viewed as a control mechanism for making sure the first bridewealth payment is made. Holleman (1952: 123-4) distinguishes between elopement (*kutizisa*) and flight (*kutizira*). 'Flight marriage', he explains, 'refers to the unilateral action of a girl without the prior knowledge of, or arrangement with, her suitor' (1952: 109). Elopement means that both families know something about the marriage and some arrangements are made (see Holleman, 1952: 109-15). However, in practice *kutizisa* and *kutizira* are very difficult to distinguish. *Kutizisa* means that the boy came and took the girl away. *Kutizira* means that the girl runs to the boy. People usually say *kutizira*, as if it is always the girl who runs away. In practice it may very well be that *kutizira* is *kutizisa*.

2. *Matorwa* or *mabvunziro*. The girl will be collected from her parent's place (*kutorwa*), by the husband's *vatete* (HFZ/HZ) after the first payment (*mabvunziro*) has been accomplished. This was the marriage most recommended in the past. The number of these marriages has decreased. Holleman (1952: 99-109) calls this marriage 'the regular proposal marriage'.
3. *Kuzvarira* or *kuputswa* implies that a poor family, who has difficulties to maintain themselves, gives a very young daughter to a family who will provide bridewealth, which enables them to survive. If the girl is mature, she will go to the family she has married into. If the father of that family is too old, then the girl will be given to a son (FS) or nephew (FDS). This type of marriage still exists, although forbidden by State law. During the 1992 droughts, *kuputswa* marriages increased or re-occurred in Chipinge District. *Kuputswa* means being broken. That can refer to the heart of the girl that breaks because she was given away. It can also refer to the relation that breaks if the girl runs away to the partner of her own choice. If the girl runs away, then the family, to which the girl was married, will claim their money back. Such *kuputswa* cases still occur in the village courts. Holleman (1952: 115-21) calls this 'a credit marriage' and Bourdillon refers to 'child marriage' (1987: 44).
4. *Chigara mapfiwa* (lit. to inherit the fireplace) refers to the property of the deceased. This marriage is also called *chimutsa mapfiwa*, (lit to keep the fire burning) or that cooking for the husband will continue, in other words, if a wife dies, her sister or the daughters of the deceased wife's brother can be given to the husband as a replacement for his wife. It can also be a wish of the deceased wife herself, that her children will be looked after by a sister or other relative, instead of another of the husband's wives. This kind of marriage still occurs. Holleman (1952: 188-9) calls it 'substitution marriage'.
5. *Kuga(r) wanhaka* (levirate) means that a woman is expected to be looked after by a brother (same father/same mother; or same father/different mother) or other male relative (for example FZS) of the deceased husband. The ceremony usually takes place a year after the death of the husband (see section 5). It still exists. Holleman (1952: 234) refers it as 'a succession marriage'.
6. *Kutemaugariri* means that a poor man, who is not able to pay bridewealth, will live and work at the wife's homestead for a period of time, providing his labour in lieu of paying bridewealth. When he has fulfilled the requirements he can settle elsewhere. This form of marriage seems to have disappeared. Holleman (1952: 124) and Bourdillon (1987: 44) labelled it 'service marriage'.
7. *Musengabere* means 'to carry a hyena and run away with it'. That refers to a man who rapes a girl in order to get her to marry him. He kidnaps the girl and takes her to his place. The following day he will order the girl to leave. The girl is then stranded. She cannot go back to her parents' place, because the parents will chase her away. Thus, she has no other choice but to stay with the man who abused her. This is a forced marriage and the girls' family will exact a very high amount of bridewealth.
8. *Ngozi* marriage (see Chapter 7). *Ngozi* is believed to be a revenging spirit of a person who was killed. People believe that such a spirit causes illnesses and other misfortune. The family suspected of a killing has to give a daughter to the family whose member was killed. That woman will be married in the name of the angry spirit. She is married to a male relative of the deceased, to bear children. People believe that through such a 'ghost marriage' the wish of the angry spirit is fulfilled and therefore illnesses and other misfortunes will be prevented. These 'ghost marriages' are forbidden by the government, but they still occur in Manesa village (see Chapter 7), although the number is small.

### Some changes in marriage practices

The frequency of the different types of marriages is changing. *Kutizira* is the most common type of marriage at present. The girl, whether pregnant or not, runs away to the homestead of the husband before anything is paid. Ndaus say that in the past it was unacceptable to become pregnant before marriage or to go to the husband's homestead before a first bridewealth

payment was made (*mabvunziro*). Elders promoted the *matorwa* marriage. They also tried to check whether youngsters were still virgin or not. Beliefs, such as parent's backs would break if the couple slept together before marriage, shaped behaviour. Holleman (1952: 113) claims that most marriages in the past were of the elopement type, thus without a first payment and cases of marriages where a first payment was made before the wife went to the husband's homestead were always few.

Thus in the past and also today, sons and daughters know how to escape the direct control of their parents. Today they go to school and migrate to other places. They usually earn their own money and are less dependent on their parents' contributions to bridewealth payments (see below) and are thus able to make more decisions themselves. Husbands no longer work at the place of the parents-in-law (*kutemaugariri* marriage). Another explanation for change in marriage practice is government interference. Certain forms of marriage (*kuputswa*, *ngozi* and *musengabere*) are prohibited. Another explanation is HIV/Aids, which has influenced a decline in *kugarwa nhaka* marriages (see section 5) and perhaps the increase in civil marriages (see next section). Women and men reproduce and transform their normative and value frames about marriage and thus marriage practices. *Kutizira*, *matorwa*, *kuputswa*, *chigara mapfiwa*, *kugarwa nhaka* and *ngozi* forms of marriage still exist. These are customary marriages, but when a marriage certificate is obtained the marriages become civil.

### Officially recognised civil and customary marriages

At present there are two types of officially recognised valid marriages in Zimbabwe: 1) a monogamous marriage (formal or civil marriage) under the Marriage Act (Chapter 37), and 2) a potentially polygynous customary-law marriage under the African Marriage Act (Chapter 238), whereby the husband can marry as many wives as he desires and he cannot legally commit adultery (Stewart et al, 1990: 172). The name of this Act changed in 1995-1996, to the Customary Marriage Act, Chapter 5:07.

A civil marriage is known in the village as *muchato*, or as a *matare*, courts marriage. A majority of people (70%) knew that a marriage certificate could be obtained through civil marriage. Not everybody knew that civil marriage excludes polygyny. Customary marriage is known as *kuroorana mumisha* (to marry in the homesteads) and has no certificate. Bridewealth has to be paid in both civil and customary marriages. Customary marriages are not necessarily registered, but they exist through bridewealth payments and the witnesses who are the negotiators during these payments.

Many, most of them married, said that if they had to choose for a civil or customary marriage nowadays, they would choose civil marriage, because those who knew it meant monogamous marriage, said it was better to stick to one partner during these days of HIV/Aids. The percentage of civil marriages in Manesa village in 1996 was approximately 20%, showing that the majority of marriages were customary. They gave three reasons why people mainly chose customary marriages: 1) shortage of money; 2) being uneducated; and 3) culture. Uneducated signified a lack of knowledge on the part of women and men about the procedures of a civil marriage and the consequences of a certificate.

Some of those not yet married or wishing to marry again said that they wanted a civil marriage. Some young girls said they would not accept polygyny or physical violence and therefore wanted a civil marriage. The girls argued that should the husband marry a second wife, they would have recourse to the courts since such a marriage excluded polygyny and as the marriage certificate would be signed in court, divorce had to be arranged through the court and property has to be divided. Such rules, however, can also imply that customary marriage will remain in the majority, due to the existing marriage ideology of a big *dzinza*, polygyny, money shortage, and unfamiliarity with civil marriage procedures. Especially the prohibition of polygyny in civil marriage seems to be difficult for men to accept (see Bourdillon, 1987: 291). Let us now look at the polygynous aspect of customary marriages.



### Polygyny: children and labour; jealousy and poverty

*Barika*, polygyny, literally means 'heaping together'. There are views expressed in its support and those that voice criticism. The majority of people (67%) in Manesa village says that polygyny is a good practice because it extends the *dzinza* (patrikin) by increasing the number of children and that polygyny increases access to labour. As one old man said,

'I want to marry another wife, because I have a big house. My daughters and sons are going to marry and move to their own houses. My wife and I will be the only one remaining. Who is going to sweep or live in my house? Nobody. Therefore I want to be married again'.

Thus the labour of an additional wife may be needed when children have grown up and start their own homesteads (see Cheater, 1984: 57). Den Ouden (1995) labels the marrying of more than one woman to have more children, as an 'old style of labour management'. He argues that this is changing because sons and wives feel exploited and therefore start their own independent enterprises. The new style of labour management is smaller nuclear families, working mainly with wage-labour.

Another labour factor is the work expected of wives. When wives do not meet the expected behaviour, it can be a reason for a man to marry a second wife. As the following scene depicts, both women and men influence women to perform to certain standards.

Some women came to a homestead to congratulate a man on getting married. The man responded that he was not married yet, because his wife did not sweep the house. She also kept dirty nappies for a very long time in a bucket, which made the whole house smell like a toilet. The women told the man to teach his wife, otherwise he would end up having a *barika* (becoming polygynous).

Polygyny is often approached from a functionalistic economic point of view. Boserup (1970: 37-52) argues that when more wives are available for agricultural production, yields will increase and the family becomes more wealthy. In Boserup's context there was enough land, but land is scarce nowadays in Manesa village (see Chapter 5). Scarce resources may influence the number of polygynous marriages. Bourdillon (1993: 23) argues that 'polygyny is declining due to an increase of cash needs, scarcity of land, and the husband who is not able to look after a big family any more'. It is questionable if husband's ever did (see below). Related to cash needs, it is evident (see Chapter 4) that cash earnings increase where there are irrigation schemes. Madondo, a Provincial Agricultural Extension Officer (PAEO) (pers comm, 1996) pointed out that polygynous marriage increases in irrigation schemes. Thus, the decline in polygynous marriage is situation specific and is perhaps only read from the rising number of civil marriages.

Buchi Emecheta thought in 1979 that polygyny was a decaying institution. 'It will disappear gradually as women become more and more educated and free to decide for themselves', she argued (in Bruner, 1983: 49). However, despite education and an awareness of the dangers of illnesses such as HIV and AIDS, only a minority of people (33%) in Manesa village in 1996, criticised polygynous marriages. The arguments of those that did were that polygyny creates jealousy and poverty. Men mentioned more often poverty, and women, jealousy. Jealousy in polygynous marriages was often a contributing factor to the power struggles that took place among women. Another factor was the sharing and dividing of resources (see Chapter 3). However, as I show below, wives within polygynous marriages are also supportive of each other. Associated with the poverty that arises from polygynous marriages, I also show that it is not the husband who feeds his family, but the wives who live in the homestead as matrifocal households. They are the ones who look after their children. Tambiah (1989) also argues that the support of husbands is often weak in conjugal dyads (marriage) in sub-Saharan Africa. Let me now explain the jealousy and poverty aspects of polygyny, by exploring the tales (*ngano*), ideas and social actions of the actors themselves.

*Jealousy*

When the husband decides to marry another wife, the wives usually are jealous among themselves, especially when they live in the same homestead.<sup>2</sup> Various folk tales explore jealous practices. These existing stories show the general awareness that polygyny creates jealousy or *godo*. *Godo* literally means a bone, and a bone is difficult to chew.

The first tale, about the roundnut, was told by a woman of twenty-nine. She had children and was divorced. As she narrated, she commented on certain aspects of the story:

'There was once a man who was married to three wives. The name of the first wife was Ndingoweini, meaning 'it should be me only'. She was loved a lot (*amaiguru*) by the husband and the two younger wives (*amaininis*) did not receive his full love'.

The narrator commented:

'If a man has more than one lover, he behaves differently to his lovers. He cannot share the same love equally among all his wives. In a polygynous homestead everyone campaigns to be loved best and the man will lean very much on what he calls the best person'.

She continued with her story:

'It happened that the first wife had to go to her natal home to attend a funeral, but it was the time of weeding and all people were busy in the fields. The first and most important wife also called Vahosi (the one in charge of the granary) asked the two younger wives: 'Would you kindly weed the roundnuts (*nyimos*) for me'. The two agreed to weed. The first wife left for the funeral. The two younger wives developed a plan so that the first wife would be neglected by their husband. They went to the field of the first wife, but instead of weeding the roundnuts, they covered the roundnuts with a lot of soil. They wanted the roundnuts to wilt, so that their husband, who liked roundnuts very much, would not eat roundnuts from the first wife'.

She commented:

'Men in a polygynous family eat different food depending on the foods cooked by different wives. If a wife is not a good cook, he will limit his love for that wife. The ones who provide nice food will be loved most. Thus the man forgets that he is the one who ploughs the field of hatred and sows the seeds of jealousy among his wives and children'.

And she continued:

'Lucky enough it rained a lot and the roundnuts did not die as the two younger wives expected. The first wife came back from the funeral and found her roundnuts covered with soil. She was very worried and asked the two younger wives why they did that. The two replied: 'the effort is less for what is not yours' (*chisiri chako masimba mashoma*), meaning that one does not give special care to what one will not benefit from. One of the younger wives said: 'the tail you send someone for, will not be as long as you would like it to be' (*muswe wekutumira haurebi*). She or he cannot do it in the way you might like it to be done. So you regret it that you did not do it yourself.'

'When the time to harvest came, it amazed the first wife to see that her roundnuts were very big and the roundnuts of the two younger wives were small. The husband liked to eat the big roundnuts and did not eat the small roundnuts of the two younger wives. So the first wife was loved very much. From that day to this, people have covered their groundnuts with soil in order to yield big, wholesome nuts'.

This tale shows how wives of a husband compete. Such jealous practices can also have unintended consequences, like the improved cultivation method.

<sup>2</sup> A husband can also decide to have different homesteads for different wives. Manesa village has 34% polygynous homesteads, of which 8% (30) are polygynous separate, like I have labelled them in the introduction (table 1.1).

It seems that 'beer' was also invented through such jealous practices, as an old man of approximately 75 years old and married to two wives told me:

'Two women who were married to one man were in competition with each other. One said, I am going to do good things for my husband so that I am going to be loved very much. Long ago wives usually brewed sweet beer (*maheu*) for their husbands. When a husband came home, he was given sweet beer while he curved hoe and axe handles, and waited for the sadza to be ready. Once, one of the wives took the leftover sweet beer and boiled it and kept it for two days. When her husband came home, she gave him that sweet beer to drink and he became drunk. He refused the sweet beer from his second wife. The man asked his wife how she had brewed this type of sweet beer. She told him how she brewed it and continued to brew the sweet beer in the way her husband liked it. Therefore he always went to the first wife's house. The second wife did not know what was happening. After the husband and first wife finished the beer they were drunk and were laughing. The second wife was surprised to see two drunken people dancing and singing. The neighbours joined and drank beer and enjoyed the dancing. The husband loved the first wife very much, because she had surprised the whole country'.

Both stories show how jealousy among wives can provoke strategies to attract the husband's love. Women and men use 'love potions' (*mupfuhwira*), a particular mixture of food or medicine, for the same reason and to increase the desire for sex. People believe that when they use *mupfuhwira*, they can keep their partner at home.

There is scheming to be the favourite. But women in polygynous homesteads may also assist each other to control or get the better of husbands, as depicted by the following account. A woman of thirty-six who had children and was a wife of a polygamist, heard noise during the night in her neighbours' homestead. The following day she asked one of the wives of her neighbour what had happened. She later told the story to one of my research assistants:

'Kenneth came home from the beer hall at 23:30 in the evening. Joly, his first wife, gave him water in a bowl to wash his hands. That bowl was sometimes used for sadza. Kenneth did not understand why Joly had put water for washing hands in a bowl, which was also used for food. He asked why she did not put water in a dish. Joly replied that she had taken that bowl, because she could not find the dish. She added that they are our own hands and the bowl is also ours.

Kenneth was drunk. He told Joly that he wanted to eat his sadza while she was awake. But it was late and Joly had slept already. Therefore, after giving Kenneth his sadza, she went to bed again. Kenneth said: 'you do not want to follow my rules or laws'.

After Kenneth had finished eating the sadza, he went to the bedroom where Joly was sleeping. He started to beat her and tried to strangle her. Joly screamed saying: 'yowe yowe, you want to kill me. Please people come and see I am dying now'. The second wife Sapi heard the noise from her own bedroom. Sapi was afraid to go to the scene, because she knew that if she tried to stop Kenneth from beating Joly, she would be the next victim. But Sapi had an idea. She suddenly started screaming 'Oh, oh, I have been bitten, open the door for me'. Sapi scratched her leg as if she had been bitten by something. Immediately Kenneth opened the door when he heard the noise. He stopped beating Joly and went to Sapi. Kenneth asked Sapi what was wrong and Sapi replied that she had been bitten by something she could not see. Sapi continued to scratch her leg. Kenneth, then, took a lamp and started to look for the thing. He thought it might be a scorpion. He looked in the house and the yard, but saw nothing. Kenneth went back to Sapi and asked her how she was feeling. He looked where Sapi was scratching, but did not see a wound. He wanted to remove all the poison with a razor blade. Maybe it was snakebite. He could not believe Sapi had been bitten, because there was nothing to see on her leg. Then Sapi responded: 'before you cut, let me first visit the clinic tomorrow'. Kenneth went to his bedroom to sleep. He did not beat Joly again. During the fight Joly had bitten Kenneth's finger. He could not sleep because it was painful. Kenneth asked for

his mother and said it would be best to commit suicide because he was bitten by a woman and both wives lied to him'.

Thus men also see reasons for rejecting polygynous marriages. A considerable number of men (35%) do so. Wives 'fighting' each other to be the favourite or supporting each other against the husband do not make life pleasant at home. But in general, women remain kind to their husbands, because they want their assistance to fight their poverty.

### *Poverty*

Wives from polygynous families usually do not know how much their husbands earn. Husbands tell their wives to work hard in the fields and earn money for clothes, food and medical care for themselves. Wives claim that it is never clear when or if the husband will provide anything and therefore it is better to work hard and be independent of him. Thus the different wives in a polygynous homestead, that is, the different matrifocal households in the homestead, take control of their own economic and other spheres (see Chapter 3). The following discussion illustrates the argument.

Sitting on the veranda of my house in the village, my research assistant listened to Samuel who was assisting Miriam to make a bench in my kitchen. Samuel explained that he was building an eight-roomed house for six wives. Each wife would have a room. The other two rooms were a room for himself and a spare one. Miriam asked Samuel why the husband of the house would have his own bedroom and not go to his wives. Samuel explained that the husband should not shift from one room to another. The wives should move to the room of the husband. They should do the moving because the husband needed to be respected and should not have to move around like a security guard. Miriam responded that such husbands do not want to buy clothes or goods for the house. That is why they don't want to visit all their wives. She said 'men find it easy to marry many wives but when it comes to supporting the family, men are lacking. Only a few will satisfy their wives' needs for food, clothes and school fees. When husbands see their family has grown large, they tell their wives to work and earn money themselves to buy food. The wives have to sell vegetables and tomatoes to be able to send their children to school'.

I do not know Samuel's response. Husbands do not always reply to such comments (see also next chapter). In general, husbands encourage wives to work hard and earn their living from the land, so that they can spend the money they earn on what they like. Of course the husbands need money to pay the bridewealth, though views on bridewealth and sources of payment for it vary.

### **Perceptions about bridewealth**

One such view is Stewart's (in Stewart et al, 1990: 171-172)

'a woman for whom bridewealth is paid, cannot be equal to her husband who has paid bridewealth for her. Thus, as long as bridewealth is paid as part of the marriage transaction, women will continue to be dominated and psychologically oppressed within the institution of marriage'.

From such a viewpoint, one might expect women to reject the practice and payment of bridewealth. However, in Manesa village, both women and men are convinced it should be paid. Both young and old women were of the opinion that men should pay, and their answers may be categorised in relation to three central issues: i.e. reciprocity, cash needs, and as evidence of established bonds:

1. Reciprocity and cultural notions 'women go to the husband's place where they work and bear children and that should not be for nothing' (40% of the women); 'it is our culture' (25%).

2. Cash concerns: 'to stop our poverty' (35%); 'To recover money which was used to raise our daughters' (20%).
3. To prove the marriage bonds: 'Evidence of marriage for both family and ancestors' (25%); 'to establish a relation between two families' (15%).

Women also said that without bridewealth: 1) women are also 'oppressed' in marriage; 2) men would marry more than one wife and they would divorce their wives easily. Women were convinced that with the existence of the bridewealth practice, a husband thinks twice before divorcing his wife, otherwise the bridewealth will not be returned.

Young and old men said that bridewealth should be paid and raised the same issues as the women, although in a slightly different sequence. Men argued that bridewealth should be paid:

1. To prove the marriage bonds: 'evidence that the daughter is married' (33% of the men); 'to establish relationships between families in order to consult and work with the wife's parents' (22%); 'to honour ancestors and parents' (14%).
2. Cash concerns: 'To recover money which was used to raise our daughter' (25%).
3. Cultural and reciprocity ideas: 'It is our culture' (19%); 'For bearing children' (14%).

Men also add other reasons for paying bridewealth, such as love (11%); a promise to stay agreeably together (11%); to prevent divorce (8%); a wife belongs to a husband (8%). The reason why men mention first the evidence and establishment of bonds between two families, could be that they have to consult and use such relations more frequently, for example, when husband and wife have problems or the wife passes away, the husband needs assistance from the wife's parents. Without the payment of bridewealth such assistance would become a big point of discussion between the two families. Also, people believe that if a wife passes away without any bridewealth payments, she will be an angry ancestral spirit (see cases below). Men are also convinced that bridewealth should be paid because women work and extend their *dzinza*, and the daughter's parents should not be left without anything.

The reciprocity issue also underlies other general views about paying bridewealth. For example, bridewealth needs to be paid in return for taking someone's child away from them (*Kutora mwana wemunhu*). A wife is called a *mutorwa*, meaning a person who is taken from outside (she remains a member of her own *dzinza*). Another generally held view is that bridewealth is a token for cementing the relationships between two families, or to request (*kubvunzira*) a relation (*ukama*), or to unite two families (*kubatanidza ukama*). This is also expressed by the *masungiro* goat. The husband's family provides a goat to tie (*kusunga*) symbolically the two families together. Among Ndau marriages, providing goats was a practice of the past, and is still practised among the Zezuru (see appendix 1 for Shona groups).

Thus, according to the Ndau, bridewealth means more than the various meanings anthropologists have assigned to it: i.e. rights in uxorem (sexual) and in genetricem (children). Bourdillon (1987: 41) explains that bridewealth contains two payments associated with sexual rights over women (*rutsambo*) and rights over children born to the woman (*roora*). That distinction applies for the Zezuru, but the Ndau do not use *rutsambo*. Ndau distinguish *mabvunziro* or *masungiro*, i.e. requesting for and tying relations between two families at the first payment stage. In Ndau language *mabvunziro* is called *mathlomo*. The second stage is *pfuma* (wealth), which can be money or cattle. Cattle are called *danga*. These concepts refer to payment stages or visits. Each stage contains several payments, as we will see below. Not only the parents but paternal aunts and other relatives also receive something from the bridewealth, depending on who helped to raise the girl and who will assist her when she faces problems in her marriage. The several payments in the different bridewealth stages symbolically reflect the raising of the girl (see cases below). 'If you teach your daughters good manners today, then you will earn later', is the women's opinion. Of course, good manners etc are also invested in boys, but they are not going to stay in another *dzinza*. The boy's family has to provide the bridewealth, otherwise the girl's family believes she will not be looked after properly. There is a general belief that 'something that is paid a high price for will be better taken care of than something

obtained for nothing'. However, it is not only the husband's family or the husband himself who provides the wealth. The wife herself can also contribute towards the payments through her work on the irrigated land.

### Sources of bridewealth payments

Before the introduction of money, scarce goods such as hoes, spears or beads were requested for bridewealth. Nowadays it is money, groceries and cattle. Some men complained that the amount is too high and that bridewealth is an African business nowadays. The young argue that bridewealth was much easier long ago, when only a hoe and/or beads were requested. However, such goods were extremely difficult to obtain in those days and people lost their lives to look for beads in South Africa. Bourdillon (1993: 37) argues that considering the difficulty in comparing the value of 'traditional objects in the past with monetary payments now, it is not clear that inflation in real terms has taken place'.

The young believe that marrying today is more expensive than in the past, but the old say marrying in the past was also expensive. They explained that bridewealth during the 1930-1940's was 30 pounds and an old lady pointed out that 30 pounds was difficult to get and would buy a great deal. Many groceries and cattle and goats. 'Nowadays', she claimed, 'bridewealth is thousands of Zimbabwe dollars, but you can only buy a few things for it'.

In the past, it was fathers who assisted their sons in paying bridewealth. At present, it is more often the sons themselves who pay the amount requested. However, I want to put that observation and practice into proper context. Irrigated agriculture was mentioned as the first cash source for paying bridewealth. But as we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, it is mainly women and wives who work in the fields and harvest the produce. That implies that it is actually women themselves who work for their own bridewealth (Vijfhuizen, 1996). In the two detailed bridewealth cases below, it emerges that both women and men contribute towards the payment of bridewealth and that both sexes obtain something from the bridewealth received.

I wish now to explore bridewealth payments and the time spans that can be involved during the different payment phases, by exploring two cases in detail.

### 2.3 NEGOTIATING BRIDEWEALTH

As we shall see from the two cases outlined, bridewealth is a negotiated practice and some major conflicts emerge from the practice. It takes long, usually more than ten years, before bridewealth has been paid completely. But first let me present three arguments that emerge from the literature on bridewealth.

The first deals with the image constructed in the Shona literature (Bourdillon, 1987; Holleman 1952 and 1974; Weinrich, 1982), that bridewealth is negotiated by fathers as heads of families. Negotiations about marriage are a man's and not a woman's affair. In the two cases, which I explore below, we will see that the bridewealth practice is more complex than this. Women as mothers, sisters of fathers (*madzitetete*), sisters of mothers (also referred to as mother), and wives, are all involved in the negotiations, before and during the actual payment sessions. Especially before the actual payment sessions, much is arranged by women. They are spokeswomen. However, we must keep in mind that every bridewealth payment session is different, because circumstances and events differ and the negotiating representatives of the wife's and husband's families will vary.

The second argument relates to the question of whether women themselves gain something from bridewealth payments. The literature constructs the image that it is fathers who receive the bridewealth for their daughters. But the cow for the mother (*mombe yeamai*) is usually recognised as hers (Bourdillon, 1993 and 1987). Older people in Manesa village explained that before and during the beginning of the colonial era, the rule was that the mother would receive *masungiro* (the goats), eight pounds, and later a cow. They said that women were not allowed to request money, but this changed during the colonial era. Then women also started to demand

money and goods. Those involved said that at present women present a good case during bridewealth negotiations. Women as mothers and paternal aunts will argue that they gave birth to the child and raised it, so they want their reward. One old woman said:

'In the past women were stupid, allowing men to squander all the money and themselves being contented with one cow. These days a woman is free to pick whatever she likes. If she picks a little, then that is her own decision. Women can take everything if they want'.

That women can take everything may be possible but, in general, mothers and sisters will leave the biggest share of the bridewealth to their husbands and brothers. Their actions are shaped by existing ideas that the husband is the *samusha*, meaning head of the homestead and that the children belong to the husband's *dzinza*. The woman who marries is also allowed to take some money from the plate, but usually she will take a little, because it is her husband who has to pay the bridewealth (see below).

The third argument relates to the fact that bridewealth is always presented as being two payments, i.e. *rutsambo* and *roora* (among Zezuru (see Bourdillon, 1987: 41; Holleman, 1952: 156) and among the Ndau as *mabvunziro* and *pfuma*). From the two cases below we will see that it is better to refer to bridewealth stages rather than payments. Stages contain various payments, all of which have their own meanings. Both families involved in the bridewealth negotiations carefully record what they receive and what is left to be paid.

### Case 1: After eleven years

In this case, the girl was dismissed from school in 1984, because she had become pregnant. That same year, the husband, Mike, twice paid Z\$300 (*mabvunziro* stage) as a first stage of bridewealth, after which the girl's parents did not meet him again for eleven years later, when in March 1995, now 34 years of age, he came back from Harare where he lived and worked, to pay a further part of the bridewealth (*pfuma* stage) at the homestead of his parents-in-law.

Hours before this second stage of the bridewealth negotiations started, the *vatete* (WFZ) was approached by Mike, who was her brother's 'son-in-law'. He informed her that he wanted to pay bridewealth and was looking for a spokesman. His *vatete* (WFZ) took him to an experienced spokesman to represent him in the bridewealth negotiations with the wife's family, in this case not a relative, but chosen because he was experienced in bridewealth negotiations. The spokesman, the *vatete* (WFZ) and Mike then discussed general bridewealth issues among the Ndau, as Mike himself was a Zezuru (see appendix 1). The *vatete* (WFZ) also went to her brother (WF) and informed him that his son-in-law had arrived to pay bridewealth.

It is not common practice among all Shona groups for the husband (H) or son-in-law to come and pay bridewealth himself.<sup>3</sup> The husband's family is usually represented by brothers and sisters of the husband's father. Among the representatives of the husband's family there is always a *samukuru*, an older person, or *munyai*, meaning an intermediary or spokesman, usually a male relative. The husband of the wife's aunt (WFZH) was supposed to represent the husband's family, but he was not in the village and therefore he was replaced by his son (*muzukuru* WFZS). These three men, the husband (H), the spokesman, and the son of *vatete* (WFZS) were called the *vakuwasha* (sons-in-law) and represented the husband's family. Thus, the husband did not come with his own aunt as is usually the case, but relied on the wife's aunt (WFZ). In addition, the wife's family was represented in the husband's family by the WFZS. That is also an unusual situation. However, Mike, the son-in-law, perceived it as follows:

'*Vatete* (aunt, WFZ) can be a sister to my wife's father. If *vatete* is the eldest sister (WFZ), then she is married to the most senior son in law of the family. I would like to call him 'my brother', because I am also a son in law to the family. So I can talk to the

<sup>3</sup> Usually the husband is represented by his kin. That this husband came himself, could have been related to the fact that he had to follow a course near Manesa village. He could have reasoned that he is near his wife's place and could therefore as well pay some bridewealth.

wife of 'my brother', which means the senior aunt. She has the role of negotiating on our side, and she negotiates at her brother's side (WF), because that is her family. She has a double role and tries to cool and soften the situation. She is the one whom you can cry with. She can support the 'father's side (WF), but if I take her out and say look here how can you do that, then she can come and change her mind here. She is 'a man'. I mean, the woman who can understand me. Actually, she is also on our side, because she is married to our side. She is taken from there, but according to their roles and (blood) lines she is that side. But now she mediates between that side and our side. We can control her here, because she is 'our wife'. We say look here, stop jumping around, that is ridiculous. How can you do that? Then she goes to her brother and explains that the situation is hard for the sons in law and then her brother (WF) changes. She can play there. You got the idea. Like a spy, like that. That is the role of the aunt. Hence, when I want to marry, I see the aunt (WFZ), because she is the wife of 'my brother'. He is not my real brother, but we are bothers because we are both sons in law who married in the same family. The aunt understands me. She says let's look for a suitable *munyai* (spokesman). You see this is how it is. So, the aunt cools all ends'.

He is at pains here to emphasize the negotiating role of the *vatete*. In this instance she is acting as go-between for the two families. She belongs to the wife's family, where she was born and to the husband's family where she was married. If the representatives of the husband's family come into conflict with the wife's family during the negotiations, then she has the authority and is given the power to arbitrate in the conflict. The representatives of the husband's family will talk through their spokesman (*munyai*), but also through their spokeswoman (WFZ). If the representatives of the wife's family set the price too high, then the spokeswoman (WFZ) is supposed to say that it is not a question of selling their daughter. She is expected to mediate between both families.

In this case the husband's family negotiated with the *tezvara*, the wife's family, who were: the father (WF); the spokesman of the wife's family who was a brother of the father (WFB; same father, different mothers) and he is also called father (*babamudiki*, 'younger father'); the sister of the father (WFZ; *vatete*); the wife's mother who was the first wife of the father (WM; *maiguru*, 'older mother'); and the second wife of the father (WFW; also called *maidiki*, 'younger mother'). The mother (WM) is also called *ambuyavaishe*. That literally means 'mother of the chief' and implies that the mother of the wife is a very important person. She gave birth to the daughter who now becomes a wife, and she is therefore seen as bearing children again. Hence the mother is important as she is the reproducer and head of the children and thereby extends the *dzinza*.

The wife's family was thus represented by five people. The daughter (W) was absent. Usually she is also present, in order for her parents to verify her health and happiness. The two fathers and the *vatete* sat opposite the husband (H), his spokesman and son of the *vatete* (WFZS). There was a small table in between. The mother (WM), together with the second wife of the father (WFW), sat on the floor, away from the small table. Table 2.2 depicts representatives of the two families who negotiated the bridewealth payments.

Table 2.2: Representatives of the two families negotiating over bridewealth

TEZVARA Wife's family	VAKUWASHA Husband's family
1. Father ( <i>baba</i> ); WF	1. <i>Samukuru</i> (spokesman)
2. Brother of the father (WFB): spokesman	2. Husband (H)
3. Sister of father ( <i>vatete</i> ) (WFZ): spokeswoman	3. Son of <i>vatete</i> (WFZS)
4. Mother ( <i>ambuyavaishe</i> ; WM)	
5. Second wife of father (WFW)	



The husband and spokesman arrived at the wife's parent's homestead at the end of the afternoon. They were left waiting outside for two to three hours. In the next case the representatives of the husband's family also had to wait a long time. In this case, a long time had passed between the two bridewealth payments and there had been a lot of suspicion and unhappiness at this, as became clear from the speeches. The husband's families were not warmly welcomed by the wife's families, and these bridewealth negotiations were not accompanied by big celebrations. In other African countries such as Cameroon, bridewealth payments seem to be big celebrations (see Geschiere, 1983). But the bridewealth negotiations among the Ndau in Zimbabwe, which I attended, resembled small battles.

When they were called inside the people greeted each other and talked a little, but the negotiations did not start. The wife's family offered the son-in-law a goat, which he was supposed to slaughter for the evening's relish. He responded that he could not slaughter a goat, but that he could assist the sons of the house. After the slaughtering, the actual negotiations started, while the daughters of the house were cooking.

The wife's father (WF) made it clear that he was not really happy with the bridewealth proceedings so far:

'We all know, why we are here. Since 1984 we have received the sum of Z\$600, from which the mother and *vatete* each received Z\$100. The money was spent and we were looking forward to seeing the son-in-law (*mukuwasha*) again. And from that time to this we have been waiting. Although our daughter was pregnant, there was nothing we could do with our anger. They comforted us by giving us money'.

The mother (WM) asked if *babamudiki* (WFB) was going to speak. The brothers whispered among themselves and then the brother of the wife's father (WFB) said: 'let's see what they have come with'. The husband's spokesman said: 'today you have told me what I did not know. For the second time, I am asking for a wooden plate (*ndiro*), so that I can speak to you'. Then the husband's spokesman put Z\$2 in the plate to be allowed 'to speak with his mouth' (*nditaure nemurumo*). The husband's spokesman informed the *vatete's* son (WFZS), who informed the wife's family about the Z\$2. The husband's spokesman continued: 'Thank you for the relish (the goat) you have given us'. He put Z\$10 in the wooden plate and said:

'I wanted to ask about the *masungiro* goat<sup>4</sup>. We cannot go to the Karoi to find one, it is too far from here. I would like to know the price of goats, so that money can be paid for it'.

The wife's spokesman (WFB) responded: 'goats are very expensive nowadays, Z\$100 each'. The *vatete's* son said that a goat was valued at is Z\$120. The wife's father decided that two goats for *masungiro* would be Z\$200. That is one for *amai* (WM) and one for *baba* (WF). The spokesman for the husband's family paid Z\$200. The *vatete's* son showed the money to the wife's father who nodded his head and told his sister to take all the money from the plate.

After Z\$2 for speaking, Z\$10 for thanking them and Z\$200 for *masungiro*, the discussions started about money and cattle. The wife's father mentioned Z\$1500. The brother of the wife's father (WFB) mentioned seven cattle as the *danga*. The *vatete* (WFZ) told her brother (WF) to stop talking and give a chance to the representatives of the husband's family. The husband's spokesman said: 'Karoi is far away. I want to buy the cattle here and know the price only'. The wife's spokesman, her father's brother (WFB) responded:

'Two important cattle are needed of those seven, a cow and a bull. Two live cattle. The

<sup>4</sup> For 'tying together two families', two goats are supposed to be paid. The goats are usually sent with the wife to her home when she is pregnant from the first child. The delivery is expected to take place at her home place. The wife should not go alone to her natal home, but is supposed to be accompanied by the *vatete* (HFZ or HZ). The two goats (a female and a male) are supposed to be killed for relish, after the delivery. I have indicated already that this *masungiro* is a custom of the Zezuru and that the son in law is a Zezuru.

other five can be paid as money. You can travel through Zimbabwe as far as Bulawayo, but the story will be the same'.

He gave the husband's family time to think before he finally said: 'Z\$500 for each cow. Five cattle in total are Z\$2500. And Z\$1500 for *roora* (*pfuma*) and two live cattle'. The *vatete* (WFZ) added that when the bridewealth was finalised they wanted clothes for the wife's parents. The husband's spokesman asked if the father needed a complete suit or a jacket. Or maybe the father wanted a suit without a hat? Father's brother (WFB) whispered with father's sister (WFZ). The mother (WM) said she wanted to write a list of clothes, since she had not been informed of the son-in-law's visit, and she requested Z\$200. Father's brother (WFB) told the mother (WM) to say what she would like, because when the son-in-law had gone, she might forget her wishes. 'Let us now see what they have', said the brother of the wife's father. The husband's spokesman replied:

'Thank you *vanababa*<sup>5</sup> for the beautiful story after such a long time. Today we must leave what we have. Marrying is to look for relations and nobody wants problems or quarrels tomorrow. For today I have Z\$600, but we are going to name the day when we will return with more money. You know that the son-in-law is a beehive (*mukuwasha mukoko*)<sup>6</sup>.'

Then the spokesman put the Z\$600 in the wooden plate. A bit later the *vatete* (WFZ) took the whole amount from the plate and put it under the cushion of her chair. The mother (WM) of the married daughter asked her husband's brother (WFB) 'you are not writing, whilst others are writing?' He replied: 'I will copy what they have written down'. The mother (WM) was given Z\$200 by the *vatete* (WFZ). In the end the *vatete* (WFZ) said to the husband (H): 'We are afraid you are going to take as many years as you did before'. Father's brother (WFB) added: 'Yes, would you please try to give us a day in the near future'. Table 2.3 summarises the total bridewealth payments according to the two stages.

Table 2.3: The total bridewealth (*pfuma*): stages with payments (Z\$)

DATE	STAGES WITH PAYMENTS	PAID	DEBT
1984	MABVUNZIRO ( <i>Mathlomo</i> )	300	
		300	
03/95	PFUMA (MONEY)	600	700
	<i>Murumo</i>	2	
	<i>Tatenda</i>	10	
	<i>Masungiro</i>	200	
Awaited	PFUMA (DANGA)		
	5 cattle in cash		2500
	2 live cattle		
	2 live cattle		
TOTAL		1412	3200

The Ndau usually refer to the total bridewealth as *pfuma*. Some say *roora*, but that is more commonly used among other Shona groups. Holleman (1974: 88) says that bridewealth in Southern Africa is commonly known as *lobola*. The total amount of cash involved was Z\$4612. The two live cattle and clothes were estimated at a cash value of Z\$1500. The total bridewealth

<sup>5</sup> *Vanababa* or *madzibaba* is plural for father, and refers to the wife's family.

<sup>6</sup> Here the husband's spokesman refers to the fact that the wife's family can continue to request more money. The son in law is usually referred to as a beehive, from which always fresh sweet honey can be harvested.

of this case is then Z\$7112<sup>7</sup>. The *masungiro* goats belong to the *mabvunziro* stage, namely to request for a relationship or to tie (*kusunga*) the two families together. However, the goats were never brought or paid for at that stage and therefore it was done at the *pfuma* stage, the stage which is both money and cattle (*danga*). The *pfuma* stage can be paid in several visits, but is usually paid in two, money first and later cattle. This bridewealth arrangement encompassed three payments: 1) the *mabvunziro*, 2) the money of the *pfuma*, and 3) the cattle (*danga*) of the *pfuma*<sup>8</sup>. Cattle are perceived as the real wealth. Women and men argue that 'you never pay everything at once even if you are able to do so. You first pay *mabvunziro* and then after some years, if the married couple have stayed together without problems and have children, the daughter's parents request the *pfuma*'.

However, if the husband has little money, many more visits can be made to pay bits and pieces of the *pfuma*. People say that if a husband has little money, he will never complete the bridewealth. But then problems may emerge between the husband's and wife's families in the case of divorce or death of either the wife or husband (see below).

Concerning what women gain from bridewealth payments, note that the *vatete* (WFS) in this case took almost all the money paid during this visit (Z\$612). Some years ago, the *vatete* and the wife's mother both received Z\$100. Now, the mother received Z\$200 and will later receive clothes and a cow (*mombe yeamai*). The father will also receive money, clothes and cattle. The cash from the *mabvunziro* and *pfuma* stages was thus divided among women and men. Especially the *vatete* benefited. The wealth from the *pfuma* stage may go two-thirds to the father and one-third to the mother.

Concerning the negotiations, each family had its own spokesman, and the *vatete* was supposed to negotiate for both families. She is already busy before the actual payment session starts. However, in this case the *vatete* (WFZ) negotiated more often for the wife's family, most probably because it is her own natal family, from whom she will receive her part of the bridewealth. Hence, apart from being spokeswoman for both families, the *vatete* in this case was also a stakeholder. That made the wife's family stronger in their negotiations, since they had two spokespersons, the *vatete* (WFZ) and the *babamudiki* (WFB). The father said very little but he took crucial decisions such as the price to be paid for the goats and the extent of the *pfuma*. The mother kept a close eye on the whole process and demanded her share.

The father concluded that this was a reasonable settlement. He said that other families charge 'damage money' if their daughter was pregnant before arrangements for bridewealth were made. 'Some families charged eleven animals', he said. The father did not want 'damage money', but he had hoped that his daughter would complete her education. To date the son-in-law had failed to arrange this and the father was not happy about it.

## Case 2: Establishing a bond

This second case of bridewealth negotiations, looks into the first stage, namely the *mabvunziro* stage of bridewealth (to request for a relation), and at the meaning of the different payments. Representatives of the wife's family (*tezvara*) were three of the wife's mother's brothers (WMB) of whom the third was the spokesman; a spokeswoman (wife's mother's sister, WMZ1) who

<sup>7</sup> Z\$ 7112 = Fl 1185 (1996: 1 Fl is Z\$ 6) and US\$ 593 (1996: 1US\$ is Z\$ 12). That is a lot for those who do not have a salary and earn their living from dryland agriculture. It is also a lot for those from Manesa village who earn a minimum wage salary of Z\$ 350, working as day labourers in government parastatals or general agriculture. In the commercial sector the minimum wage was Z\$ 731 (The Herald, 1 May 1997). But people who have slightly better salaries, like Z\$ 2000 and higher, also complain about the height of the bridewealth.

<sup>8</sup> Village survey, N=257 homesteads (Vijfhuizen, 1995): How many stages are involved in bridewealth?: 1 (3%); 2 (43%); 3 (25%); 4 (12%); 5 (4%); 6 (3%); 7 (4%); 8 (2%). Thus, many people said two stages, referring to *mabvunziro* and *pfuma*. But also a considerable number said three stages, most probably referring to the visits.

acted as the go-between for the two families; the wife's mother (WM); and a sister of the wife's mother (WMZ2). The wife's mother had no husband and therefore her three brothers were perceived and perceived themselves as the fathers. The husband's family (*vakuwasha*, sons-in-law) was represented by a *vatete* (HZ, husband's sister), a spokesman, and the pregnant wife Margret (W). The mother and daughter lived in town and the mother's relatives in the rural area (Nda). Table 2.4 depicts the representatives of both families.

Table 2.4: The representatives of two families negotiating over bridewealth

TEZVARA Wife's family	VAKUWASHA Husband's family
1. Mother's brother (WMB3): spokesman	1. <i>Samukuru</i> (spokesman)
2. Mother's brother (WMB2)	2. <i>Vatete</i> (HZ)
3. Mother's brother (WMB1)	3. Wife (HW)
4. Mother's sister: Spokeswoman (WMZ1)	
5. Mother ( <i>ambuyavaishe</i> ) (WM)	
6. Mother's sister (WMZ2)	

#### *Mabvunziro*

In January 1996, on the day of the first bridewealth payments, the husband's sister (HZ), the *vatete*, and the husband's spokesman, who was a friend of the husband's father, travelled together with 'their' wife to the homestead of the wife's mother's sister (WMZ). This was the first homestead of the wife's family they visited and therefore this 'mother' (WMZ1) became the intermediary or spokeswoman of the wife's family (*vatete-munyai*). She carried out the required *mirandu* (channels) together with her visitors, informing other homesteads in the wife's family that their daughter was married. She informed the husband's spokesman and the *vatete* (HZ) about the bridewealth practices in their family. Then she took the representatives of the husband's family to the eldest wife's mother's brother's homestead, where the bridewealth was supposed to be paid. While they were waiting for the brothers, and before the spokeswoman (WMZ1) joined the wife's family in their discussions about the bridewealth, the spokeswoman (WMZ1) requested Z\$30 from the husband's family. That money is called *simuro* money, meaning the money given for her to get up (*simuka*) and accompany the three visitors to the different homesteads. Hence, she was paid for being the intermediary between the two families in the bridewealth negotiations.

The *vatete* (HZ), the spokesman, and 'their' wife waited for more than 3 hours outside the respective homestead. In the meantime the husband's spokesman divided all his money among his different pockets, so that the wife's family could not see the actual amount of money they had. They waited for one and half-hours before the wife's family had gathered in one homestead and for another one and half hour while the brothers and sisters of the wife's mother were discussing the bridewealth. The women were then very vocal. The spokeswoman (WMZ1) came to inform the *vatete* (HZ) that the bridewealth negotiations could not start yet. The owner (*muridzi*) of the homestead was present (WMB2), but the owner of the plate (*muridzi wendiwo*), his wife (WMB2W), had not yet arrived. Everybody had to wait for her. Since she was alive, permission had not therefore been passed on for someone else to take the plate.

After the wife (WMB2W) had arrived, the *vatete* (HZ) and husband's spokesman entered the kitchen where the wife's family was present. The wife (HW) had to hide outside and would be collected later. The *vatete* (HZ) and the spokesman kept quiet for a moment and then the husband's spokesman told the wife's family's spokeswoman (WMZ1) with a low voice that he wanted a plate (*ndiro*). The spokeswoman (WMZ1) turned to her brothers: 'excuse me *vanasekuru*<sup>9</sup>, these people are requesting for your plate'. One of the mother's brothers (WMB1) relayed the message to his two sisters saying: 'you hear what is being said *madzitet* they said

<sup>9</sup> A mother's brother is *sekuru*; *vanasekuru* is plural.

we are requesting for your plate'. A woman went outside to request the plate from the owner, who then gave it to the mother's brother (WMB3) who sat near the door and who was holding a paper with the written amounts on it. Those amounts had been negotiated by the wife's family before the actual bridewealth session had started.

During the bridewealth negotiations the wife's family spokeswoman (WMZ1) sat on the bench with her brothers, which was next to the husband's spokesman. In other words she sat between the families, as a communicator and intermediary to both sides. The channel (*murandu*) which emerged during the payments was as follows. The husband's spokesman paid after he had informed the *vatete* (HZ). Then the spokeswoman (WMZ1) informed the brother (WMB1) next to her, who informed the second brother (WMB2), who informed the third brother (WMB3), who was the one with the paper and requested the cash amounts. The second brother (WMZ2), who heaped the money on the ground between his boots, informed the wife's mother (WM) and sister (WMZ2). Both families carefully recorded on paper what they were charged (husband's family) and what they received (wife's family). Let's now look at the different payments of the first stage.

#### Step 1:

The mother's brother (WMB3) handed the plate to his brother (WMB2) and announced that for requesting the plate, Z\$5 was needed. The spokeswoman (WMZ1) passed on this message.

#### Step 2:

The youngest wife's mother's brother (WMB3) said in a big harsh voice: '*muromo* (meaning literally to be allowed to open the mouth to speak) is Z\$10'. The husband's spokesman paid the requesting amount after informing the *vatete* (HZ).

#### Step 3:

Then the wife's mother's brother (WMB3) requested Z\$20 for *Kunongora nzeve*, (to clean their ears) so they could hear properly what the husband's family were going to tell them.

#### Step 4:

*Kufembedzana fodya* (sniffing together after exchanging the snuffbox) Z\$5, and the wife's mother's brothers said: 'whilst we are talking we should sniff our snuff'. Although the amount is low, this is an important payment. It serves to inform and unite the ancestors (*vadzimu*) of both families. It is believed that the ancestors should know each other and communicate well with both families.

#### Step 5:

Then the wife's mother's brother (WMB3) charged Z\$30 for *Mwanyarusoswa*, meaning jumping over the fence of our yard, or destroying the fence of our homestead (*musha*). Both meanings refer to a thief who stole their daughter. 'Why did you not jump over other people's fences, the wife's mother's brother asked. 'From town to here you passed many homesteads. Why did you not destroy those? You decided to come and destroy the fence of my homestead. So pay please. We are very cheap on that issue, because it is a case for court, breaking someone's fence' The mother (WM) went outside. The sister (WMZ2) and spokeswoman (WMZ1) stayed inside the kitchen.

#### Step 6:

*Mwakatinzwanaani* Z\$50, for telling how they heard who was staying here? Who showed them the homestead? Why did they not go to other homesteads, but brought themselves here<sup>10</sup>? The

<sup>10</sup> The husband's sister (HZ) explained later that the mother's brothers should have asked these questions in the beginning of the arrangements, when the husband's spokesman requested the plate. She explained

spokesman explained the visit and then the wife's mother's brothers intended to be surprised and asked: 'our daughter Margaret? But there are many Margrets in our area?' The husband's spokesman explained who Margaret was, and the wife's mother's brothers responded: 'we have been looking for this child for a long time and we became tired. We thought she had been murdered by people who go to South Africa and buy combie cars. We were very much troubled. We read newspapers and listened to the radio. But you are the people who have her. We comforted the mother by saying that Margaret is a grown up girl and that she may be staying with a man somewhere else. One day she will come here with that man. And now you are the people'.

#### Step 7:

*Kuoona mwana wedu* Z\$40 for identifying their child (daughter). The wife's mother's brother (WMB2) said: 'please go and collect her. If she is not our daughter then you will go back to your home'. The husband's spokesman paid and collected Margaret (HW). The spokeswoman (WMZ1) announced that Margaret had arrived and everybody declared: 'that is our daughter, exactly the one we were looking for'.

#### Step 8:

*Mafura Mutombo* Z\$500 (literally grazing medicine). The wife's mother's brother (WMB1) asked the spokeswoman (WMZ1): 'is our daughter alright' (meaning is she pregnant or not)? The husband's spokesman explained:

'If cattle break out of a kraal, it means they were hungry. If the cattle enter someone's field and eat everything, the owner of the field will harm the cattle'. In other words, if the boy (cattle) makes a girl (field) pregnant, the owner of the daughter (wife's family) will charge the boy (cattle). Then the wife's mother's brother (WMB3) charged the amount of *Mafura Mutombo* or *mushonga* (grazing medicine). A wife's mother's brother (WMB2) said: 'our child was cooking for us and for the mother while she was already pregnant. So she has done things which are not allowed. In doing so, she broke our backbones. Therefore we need Z\$500 to look for medicine to make our backs well again'<sup>11</sup>.

Then the *vatete* (HZ) and husband's spokesman clapped their hands and went outside. They were of the opinion that the amount was too high and wanted to discuss it privately. They concluded that they were running short of funds and that they had to negotiate and persuade the wife's mother's brothers to bring the amount down. They discussed how they would inform the spokeswoman (WMZ1). They would say that they had come to *kubatanidza ukama* (to consolidate bonds or relationships) not to destroy each other by charging high payments. 'We came here to appeal for relations and not to seek a battle', is what they would say. They entered the kitchen again and the husband's spokesman put Z\$1 in the plate and informed the spokeswoman (WMZ1) that the amount the wife's mother's brothers were asking was too high. The husband's spokesman requested that they lower it because he could not afford it. A brother (WMB1) replied: 'we have heard what you said. You should not be afraid to ask what you want. This is not a battle'. Then the wife's mother's brother (WMB3) decreased the amount to Z\$300 and announced that he was not going to make any other alterations. The husband's spokesman answered: 'we came here to seek bonds. We are here for the truth and not to cheat or make people angry'. And he then paid the money, which then followed the channel.

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that the wife's family cannot receive visitors and ask them for money without knowing their names and aims.

<sup>11</sup> This medicine is supposed to be obtained from an African doctor (*n'anga*), but these days people do not consult a *n'anga* any more. They just use the money for their own purposes and do not eat the medicine, which is supposed to heal symbolically the broken backbones of the parents.

These eight steps or payments comprised the *kubvunzira* stage. *Kubvunzira* means to request and in this case to request a relationship. The *mabvunziro* stage can have many other payments. For example, *matekenyandebvu* (playing with the father's beard); *matekenya chipfuwa* (sucking of the mother's breast); *dende rebota* (container which was used to put porridge in); *chibani* (referring to the lamp which was burning during the night when the woman became pregnant, and when the child was ill during the night) - none of which were charged on this occasion. It is up to the wife's family to decide what payments to charge.

#### The *pfuma-danga* stage

The *kubvunzira* stage goes on to the *pfuma-danga* stage when the wife's family starts to charge high amounts of money and also cattle. The present *pfuma-danga* stage continued as follows.

#### Step 1:

*Matsvakiraikuno* 'look for your child here'. Z\$1300 (US\$ 108) said the brother (WMB3). There was a silence and then he asked: 'did you hear what I said? Put the money in the plate. Now!' The husband's spokesman replied: 'We hear you, but I also have to count my money'. The spokesman and husband's sister went outside again to discuss privately the charged amount. When they came back the husband's spokesman put Z\$1 in the plate in order to persuade the brothers (WMBs) that the amount was too high.

The spokeswoman (WMZ1) intermediated between the two families and told her brothers (WMBs): 'The *vakuwasha* (sons-in-law) have said that you truly sitting on our heads and shoulders. We can no longer breathe. Please will you give us space to breathe'. The brother (WMB1) nearest to the spokeswoman (WMZ1) said: 'Hey men, we should not rush for money. We should not be interested in money only. We should first see how our daughter is living with the family and how the family behaves with our child'.

The amount was then reduced to Z\$1000 and the wife's mother's brothers said they would not change the amount again. The husband's spokesman paid Z\$100, leaving a debt (*ckikwerete*) of Z\$900.

#### Step 2:

One of the brothers (WMB1) told Margret (HW) that she had to show them that she really liked staying with the family she married. He asked her to pick out money to convince them that the two families were joined together as one family. Margret picked out of the plate Z\$25 and left in Z\$75. The mother's sister (WMZ2) asked how much she picked. Margret said Z\$25 and then mother's sister (WMZ2) asked: Is that all? The brothers (WMBs) asked how much Margret took and mother's sister (WMZ2) told them the amount. A brother (WMB3) made the same comment: Is that all? Margret replied that her husband had no job. The husband's family replaced the Z\$25 which Margret took and returned the plate with the Z\$100 to the brothers<sup>12</sup>. Then the husband's spokesman asked what stages and charges could be expected. The brother who charged the amounts (WMB3) told them he would not tell them

'because you have failed to pay the Z\$ 1000 cash which we requested. We ended here today. We will see you the day you are going to pay the balance of Z\$ 900. That day we tell you the other stages and amounts needed'.

He (WMB3) continued: 'you sit on our mats and you did not pay for that. Please give us Z\$5'. Then the husband's spokesman became angry and responded:

'We are not going to pay a fine for the mat (*bonde*), because you have tricked us. When we arrived, there was no other place to sit but on the mats. Do you expect us to sit in front of you, or in front of the women (*madzimai*), on the fireplace, or on the doorstep?

<sup>12</sup> Thus in theory the married wife can pick everything from the plate, but in practice she will not do that, because it is her husband who has to pay.

Tell me where you wanted us to sit. You can see that there was no possible place for us to sit. We would not have been allowed to remove the mats which were spread by the women, or we would have had to pay some other fine'.

The brother (WMB3) reacted by saying he was going to tie them up and make them pay. The husband's spokesman told him that he also knew where he was going to deduct the Z\$5 for the mat. WMB3 responded: 'when you come back, I will have to ask you the money for the mat'. The husband's spokesman paid Z\$1 for returning the plate of *ambuya* (MBW).

The brothers (WMBs) asked the husband's family to cross check the money they paid and wrote down. The two families checked the figures and it corresponded. After that the brothers (WMBs) asked the names of their visitors and where they came from. They shook hands and said 'we are happy to know each other'. Then one brother (WMB2) told Margret (HW):

'You have chosen your people. Separate with them by death only. It is your last flower you have picked from the plant. Do not have two faces with four eyes. You should stick to one flower and not behave like a wasp that goes from flower to flower. Please stick at one place; flowers of the world never finish (*ndapota gonyera pamwe; maruva enyika haaperi*). Also do not stand with one leg inside and one leg outside the house. Love the family of your husband, like the way you love your own family'.

Another brother (WMB1) said to the husband's spokesman: 'Come and sit on the bench. You are also a child of this homestead now. Feel free'. The spokesman thanked the brothers for their hospitality. Then the brother (WMB1) also expressed his concern towards Margret (HW): 'Be careful and hold yourselves. *Mukondombero* (Aids) is the disease which has spread all over the world and there is no medicine to treat it. It is killing many people'. Then the brothers left the kitchen.

The husband's family was not happy, because the brothers (WMBs) ended the meeting without the presence of the wife's mother (WM) and without hearing her wishes. The *vatete* (HZ) told their spokeswoman (WMZ1) to inform her brothers (WMBs), that the husband's family wanted to see their wife's mother (WM). The *vatete* (HZ) said:

'We want to know the charges from the mother (WM) herself, because death has no first born. If the mother dies before we pay her something, we will face a big problem and she will be an angry ancestral spirit to us. The spirit (*mudzimu*) of the mother is very important and does not want to be angered. Therefore we want to hear what the mother of our wife wants'.

The husband's spokesman said:

'If the brothers (WMBs; *vanasekuru*) do not want to do this then we will leave your child here. Then we do not want to see her in our homestead again'.

Then the spokeswoman (WMZ1) went to the brothers (WMBs) and returned quickly saying that the complaint had been heard. One of the brothers (WMB3) came back and said:

'Thank you for starting us. We also forgot to tell you that we want groceries when you come back again. The mother said she wants Z\$1000 for her clothes and her brothers want Z\$500 each to buy clothes'.

The *vatete* (HZ) asked him where their wife's mother (WM) was and that the husband's family wanted to see her and hear the amount from herself, because they did not know who had charged that amount. Then Margret's mother came and declared she wanted Z\$1000 for her things. The brother (WMB3) said:

'We told you this, but the other things we will tell you when you come back with the Z\$900 plus the Z\$1000 and Z\$1500. We want to see you here on 18 April 1996 with all the cash. Then you also come with groceries: a crate of coke, a crate of *chibuku* beer, a dozen loaves of bread, 2 kg of margarine and cooking oil'.



The husband's spokesman responded that groceries was a rule (*mutemo*) of the Karanga and Zezuru and that it was not a rule here with the husband being Manyika and the wife Ndau. The brother (WMB3) replied 'We were also asked these things when we married a wife from Masvingo. We want the groceries'. The husband's spokesman said: 'it is not good to take a rule from a homestead to your own homestead, but *kakara kununa kudya kamwe*', meaning that a creature can survive through feeding on another creature<sup>13</sup>. The total bridewealth payments are depicted in the following table 2.5:

Table 2.5: The total bridewealth (*pfuma*): stages with payments (Z\$)

DATE	STAGES with PAYMENTS	PAID	DEBT
12/95	<i>MABVUNZIRO</i>		
	<i>Ndiro</i>	5	
	<i>Muromo</i>	10	
	<i>Manongora nzeve</i>	20	
	<i>Kufembedzana fodya</i>	5	
	<i>Mwanyarussoswa</i>	30	
	<i>Mwakatinzwanaani</i>	50	
	<i>Kuoona mwana wedu</i>	40	
	<i>Mafura Mutombo or mushonga</i>	300	
Awaited	<i>PFUMA</i> (money)		
	<i>Matsvakiraikuno</i>	100	900
	Money for mother's clothes		1000
	Money for father's clothes		1500
	Groceries		245
Awaited	<i>PFUMA (DANGA)</i>		
	The total number of cattle, in cash or alive was not outlined		
TOTAL		560	3645

The husband's family had Z\$700 available for this bridewealth payment. During the visit they paid Z\$560. But the following amounts were also paid but not included in the books: Z\$30 for the spokeswoman (WMZ1); Z\$25 picked up by Margret (HW); Z\$2 for requesting to reduce the charges; Z\$1 for closing the plate; Z\$10 for Margret's bus fare; Z\$20 for the bus fare of the husband's spokesman; Z\$50 for the work of the husband's spokesman. The total amount spent was Z\$ 698. After this stage the bridewealth payments were never completed. The husband's family divorced the wife, because she delivered her baby far before the calculated date. Therefore the husband's family said that the baby was not theirs and divorced her (see divorce below). Usually, when the wife and her family cheat the husband's family, then the husband's family has the right to claim back all the payments they made in the different stages. In this case the husband's family also intends to claim their money back.

With respect to the part played by and the benefits gained by women in this case, we note that the wife's mother's brothers (WMBs) controlled the money and the procedures, unlike the first case where the *vatete* (WFS) played a major role. The brothers in the case more or less scheduled the mother for the next stage. However, there was not a next stage. The husband's sister (HZ) knew that the brothers (WMB's) were not involved in the expenditure involved in raising the wife (HW) and therefore she (HZ) interfered by asking the wife's mother's opinion about her bridewealth wishes. The husband's sister (HZ) brought her back to the 'negotiating table'.

Concerning the negotiations, the husband sister (*vatete*, HZ) did not talk during the negotiations in the kitchen. However, she had instructed 'her' spokesman before the negotiations

<sup>13</sup> That refers to what the mother's brothers are doing. They want a lot of money and things from the *mukuwasha*, their son in law, the *mukoko* (bechive).

started and she played a decisive role over the charges and negotiations as soon as they were outside the kitchen. The spokesman did what the *vatete* had suggested. The *vatete* (HZ) was also the person who had arranged the Z\$700 for her brother (H). Also the spokeswoman (WMZ1) played an important role as intermediary between the two families. She was respected accordingly. But her brothers (WMBs) wanted to control the husband's family and the bridewealth payments, acting as the 'fathers' who would be involved in solving future problems. They were and perceived themselves as heads and therefore the bridewealth receivers. They also wanted to control the husband's family by arranging the next bridewealth payment date and groceries. It is not usual for the wife's family to set dates. The husband's family is expected to suggest when they will come again for a second stage, because they are marrying the daughter (HW). The brothers (WMBs) also resisted to give information about later payments. The husband's family resisted several times. Also when the brother (WMB3) became annoyed and ordered the husband's family to pay for the mat. The quarrel about the mat shows inherently the emerging battles over bridewealth. Bridewealth is governed by indirect speech and channels and becomes a battle between two families over meanings and payments. Let us now look at some of these conflicts which emerge from bridewealth payments.

### Conflicts emerging from bridewealth payment arrangements

I wish here to discuss some of the conflicts that arise over bridewealth payments, in particular the amount charged and delayed payments, and death and the spirits.

#### *Amounts charged and delayed payments*

We have seen that conflicts emerge during bridewealth negotiations when the wife's family charges cash or goods regarded as too high by the husband's family. People say that the husband's family feels 'like a beehive (*mukoko*) from which nice sweet honey can be continually harvested'. This process of exploitation is reproduced, because the husband usually has daughters too and will also charge high amounts, like the wife's mother's brothers in case two, who argued that they also had to bring groceries when they married their wives.

From both cases also tensions arose between the two families, because of delayed payments and pregnancies. As I said before, it takes long, usually more than ten years, before bridewealth has been paid completely. Bourdillon (1987: 42) explains that bridewealth payments take a long time, because people first want to see if the wife can fulfil her obligations and bear children. While this are reasons, I wish to add two others given to me for why it takes so long to pay bridewealth. Firstly, women and men said that the wife's parents may not accept the payments before they have seen that the couple can live well together without having big problems. Thus, the length of time before bridewealth is paid is not related to obligations of the wife only. The wife's parents especially are anxious to see how the husband and his family treat their daughter (HW). If she is not treated decently in the husband's family, then the daughter may return to her parents' homestead. When that happens, the parents are not faced with having to return the complete bridewealth, because not everything was paid to them. The second reason for delayed bridewealth payments, is the strategy of the sons-in-law themselves. A son-in-law argued:

Paying bridewealth will never finish. If you finish they (parents of the wife) will come and ask you for money in other ways. Therefore you do not finish paying bridewealth so that they will continue to request bridewealth and nothing else. So it is better to stay with a debt'.

When I asked his wife why men delay bridewealth payments, she said: 'Some men do not have the money, but their hearts will trouble them very much. It is heavy for men to stay in debt'. That is this wife's opinion, but in general many people accept staying with the debt. The husband's family accepts the debt because they cannot pay the whole amount at once. The wife's family accepts a debt, because they first want to see how their daughter is treated to see that there will be no divorce and repayment. Even more important is the debt itself. When there is a

debt, there is a relationship. On the other hand, those who have a debt relationship of this kind can also be involved in struggles with each other when, for example, one of the spouses dies. Let's now turn to that issue.

### *Death and the spirits*

Upon the death of a wife, big conflicts usually arise over the delayed payments, not completed before her death. Her relatives will then request the outstanding amount from the husband, or the wife's children are expected to pay it. A woman told me that before the colonial era, people had their own strategies of dealing with bridewealth debts. For example, if bridewealth was not finished before a wife passed away, then the wife's parents boycotted their daughters' funeral by not going to the homestead of their son-in-law. Then the funeral could not take place, because the wife's father is expected to start digging the grave. Consequently, the wife's body would rot in the homestead where she was married. Delaying funerals, resulting in rotting corpses as a strategy to control the husband's family to complete the bridewealth, changed after the colonial government ruled that all deceased people should be buried immediately.

When a wife passes away while there is a debt, the husband's family is forced by the late wife's family to pay the remaining debt. But they might argue in return that they are not paying for marrying a wife, but for 'marrying a grave' (*kuroora guva*). One resolution is for the husband's family to request another daughter. The wife's family would then only agree to provide another daughter when the bridewealth for the first deceased daughter was paid and the procedure for bridewealth for the second daughter was begun.

Some believe that when there are bridewealth debts, a spirit can become angry and cause misfortune. If the husband's family refuses to complete the bridewealth after the death of a wife, then people believe that the parents of the deceased wife may worship the daughter's spirit. The woman's spirit will then be angry with the husband's family. Some also believe that parents who did not receive bridewealth for their daughter may also become angry spirits and cause misfortune to the families who refuse to pay the outstanding debt. People believe that the spirits, through a spirit medium, continue to demand the remaining bridewealth owed to the living (see Chapter 7; the section about *n'anga*).

If a husband dies before paying the negotiated bridewealth, then his family will be asked to pay the remaining amount. If they agree to pay, then the widow will usually be inherited and cared for by the 'brothers' of the late husband (levirate; see section 5). If the husband's family ignores requests to complete the bridewealth, then the wife may return to her parent's home with her children. However, if her children have grown up and want to stay and be part of their father's patrikin, then they themselves will be expected to repay the outstanding amount instead of the late husband's family. The children are also asked to repay the expenses incurred in their maintenance by the mother's family.

Sometimes a husband's family does not pay bridewealth for a wife. After the wife's family has made several requests without receiving payments, they will usually collect their daughter and her children, implying a divorce by the wife's family.

## **2.4 ENDING RELATIONS THROUGH DIVORCE**

Established relations also end. People say that there is no guarantee in marriage and perceive marriage as temporal. The chance of divorce occurring is an accepted fact. Below I explore briefly three divorce cases and show how both women and men are involved in decision-making about divorce. Furthermore, I look into the decision-making of chiefs in village courts and presiding officers in community courts, i.e. the people's customary law and the courts customary law.

### Three Divorces

Women and men are recognised as married when a first payment is made by the husband and/or his family. When spouses separate after something has been paid for bridewealth, then it is called a divorce. Social actors have two ways of expressing a divorce, i.e. *kurambwa*, meaning being refused or *kurambana*, meaning to refuse each other. There are several reasons for divorce. For example, if a husband continuously abuses his wife; when it is believed that the wife has bad spirits; when the wife delivers a full term baby before the calculated month, since then it is believed that the child is from another man; when the couple do not conceive children; when the wife does not behave as expected and for many other reasons (see Holleman, 1952: 265-277). Another reason for divorce is polygyny, which is not mentioned by Holleman. Perhaps Holleman did not include the women's perspectives on divorce and men may not mention polygyny as a reason because they regard it as their right to marry more than one wife. For example, van den Berg (1997) analyses the reasons for divorce among women and men. Women mentioned first infertility/infant mortality and then as the second most important reason, polygyny (1997: 271-5). And indeed, men did not mention polygyny as a reason for divorce. Their most important reasons were childlessness, a wife's neglect of marital duties, a wife having a too independent attitude, and the wife having a lover (ibid: 275-6). The number of divorces in Zimbabwe is increasing<sup>14</sup> for several reasons, one being the increasing resistance to husband's marrying another wife. However, families usually try to persuade their daughters not to separate, because of bridewealth. But some women simply decide to leave the husband's homestead and return the bridewealth themselves, especially when they have their own salaries. This was the reason given by one old grandmother for the increasing divorce rate. She argued that women had little money of their own in the past and it was therefore difficult to divorce.

The category 'women without husbands' in Manesa village is mainly represented by widows, as we saw in Chapter 1 (Table 1.1). Divorced women are very few in the village. That does not mean, however, that the divorce rate is low. Divorces take place in the village, especially when men marry more than one wife and one of his wives does not accept it and decides to leave<sup>15</sup>. These divorced wives remain in the village if that is their natal place. But usually their natal place is elsewhere and therefore divorced wives disappear from the Manesa village scene. However, divorced women who have their natal place elsewhere can also stay in the village where they were married. That is shown in one of the divorce cases, which I explore now.

A wife could not accept her husband marrying a second wife. It especially irritated her when her husband used the produce from the irrigated plot on which she used to work to pay bridewealth for the second wife. She and her husband were constantly in conflict, which finally resulted in a gender struggle over the two-acre irrigated plot (see Chapter 5). The wife wanted one acre (0,4 hectare) to be registered in her name. Finally the husband decided, together with his brothers, to divorce this first wife. On 14 October 1995 he took the case to the village court, which is usually under a tree in the village. There, he gave his wife a divorce token (*gupuro*; 10 cents) in the presence of the wife's brothers, because her parents had passed away. The village chief ruled that

'the children should stay with the husband (6 children) and the youngest son of one year old should stay with the wife; the husband should send every week food for that child;

<sup>14</sup> In the Sunday Mail (January 12, 1997), under the heading: Rate of divorce alarming, Emilia Zimondi explained that in 1996, in Harare, 658 marriages were solemnised and 244 were granted divorce (37%). The reasons varied, but adultery (mainly among men, but also among women) was most often the cause. Of the 534 marriage in 1995, 223 divorced before two years (42%).

<sup>15</sup> Of all homesteads in the village (see introduction) there was a category labelled 'polygyny past, but monogamous at present' (N=55). Those homesteads became nuclear through: divorce (64% of the homesteads (32)); death (15% (8)); women left (13% (7)); a combination of divorce, leaving, death and inheritance: 11% of the homesteads (6)). In these 55 homesteads, in total 41 women were divorced, 16 died, 10 left and 3 were inherited.

the husband should pay Z\$ 1800, because he never completed the last bridewealth stages; the plot should remain registered in the husband's name'.

After this sentence, the husband left for the place of his second wife, 20 km from Manesa village, where he used to stay.

Customarily, a wife has to leave the homestead of her husband after a divorce. The divorced wife in this case also left, and took all her belongings from the house with her, which included beds, wardrobes, clothes, and also produce. She stored everything at her brother's place in Manesa village and left the children at her husband's place. Her eldest son, who lived in another homestead nearby, was to look after them. This son explained that his father never supported the children and that his mother always worked and earned money and paid for maize to be ground at the mill. Now the mother was divorced, the children had to ask their father for money for the grinding mill. But whenever he was present and the children asked him money, he scolded them. The eldest son was convinced that the homestead would collapse without his mother and would turn into a ghost homestead.

The mother wanted to make her homestead in her parent's village (Mutema), but her brothers insisted that she should return to her children at their father's place in Manesa village. She returned to Manesa village and built her own house of stones (see chapter 3) not far from her previous husband's and eldest son's homesteads. When she had established her homestead, all the children came to her place to eat, and the youngest children also slept there. The mother explained that they were unable to stay at the ex-husband's place, despite the fact that the village court had judged that they were the 'father's children', because there was no food. Thus the divorced wife looked after her children again, but without the irrigated plot. She had to devise other strategies. For one season (half year) she sharecropped the 0,8 hectare irrigated plot of another woman. In return she could keep the produce of two *madhunduru* (0,08 hectare). Later she was allocated one *dhunduru* by the wife of her deceased brother (same father/same mother). The divorced wife went several times to the chief who ruled the village court, informing him that the husband was not sending food for the youngest child and that he had not paid the bridewealth which he had been ordered to pay to the wife's family. They were able to claim this because the wife had given birth to many children who would have remained with the husband and his family if he had been there to look after them. The brothers living in other homesteads did not take care of them either. Thus the divorced wife was obliged to look after them despite the fact that she had lost her access to the irrigated plot by the ruling of the village court. However, the rulings made in the village court, which was not adhered to by the husband, were not changed.

In another situation a husband divorced his wife and shifted to the homestead of a young second wife in the same village. The husband gave the wife's parents (her brothers) a divorce token (*gupuro*), with the message that their daughter had bad spirits. Customarily, after a *gupuro*, the wife has to leave the husband's homestead. However, this wife decided to stay with her children and claimed half of the irrigated plot in order to feed them. The chiefs and husband were convinced that the wife had bad spirits, which needed to be removed first (see Chapter 5 and 7). The wife tried to find recourse in the community court in the District capital (March 1995). She chose the community court, because the village court was ruled by the village chiefs, who believed that she had bad spirits, and that made them biased. Her choice of the wife to go to the community court, was not accepted by the villagers and chiefs, because by doing so she rejected the ruling of the chiefs. However, the presiding officer in the community court ruled that the wife should have a maintenance fee which was half of the plot or Z\$305 per month. The husband resisted the ruling of the community court since he did not want to give her the plot. He said that a divorced wife cannot claim registration rights on land, because bridewealth was paid for her (see Chapter 5 for registration rights).

Another divorce situation concerned a wife who was married and the *mabvunziro* had been paid. However, she gave birth long before the calculated date. In the first days the baby refused to suck milk and, according to African beliefs, this indicates that the child was not her

husband's. The husband's family therefore sent the wife back to her parent's place. However, the wife's family refused their daughter's divorce, and sued the husband's family in the community court for a maintenance fee. The husband's father refused to accept the involvement of the community court and preferred to work through the village chiefs. He expected the two families to talk in the village court, which was African practice, he said. However, the wife's family clearly chose differently. Most probably because they expected a decision by the presiding officer of the community court in their daughter's favour. The husband's sisters (*madzitetse*; HZ) assisted their brother by telling him what he should say in court. His sisters were less sceptical about the involvement of the community court than their father. Finally the presiding officer decided that, according to customary law, the husband could not pay maintenance for the child because he had no job or any other source of income.

The three divorce cases show that both wives and husbands rely on their own families in divorce, even though the 10 December 1982 'Legal Age of Majority Act conferred full legal capacity on all Zimbabweans above the age of 18, meaning that they have full contractual capacity and can enter into any contract and defend their legal rights without assistance' (Stewart et al, 1990: 170). A divorce always involves fathers, mothers, sisters (*madzitetse*) and brothers from both families. When wives (as daughters) and husbands (as sons) are involved in court cases, their fathers, sisters or brothers will always represent them and talk. It also reflects the fact that marriage is between two families and not individuals only. The three divorces went through different types of courts, which we now look at more closely.

### Community and village courts: written and spoken rules

In August 1995 I analysed the village court books of village head Manesa, reading through all the cases of the past 9 years (1987-August 1995). Many of the cases concerned marriage, bridewealth, divorce and bad spirits. Stewart tells us that with reference to the Law,

'Generally, the consequences of a monogamous marriage under the Marriage Act (Chapter 37) are governed by the general law, except the proprietary consequences which are governed by customary law. The customary-law marriage under the African Marriages Act (Chapter 238) is generally governed by customary law' (Stewart et al, 1990: 172).

But, then, what is customary law? Dengu-Zvogbo et al (1994: 250-274) argue that there are two principal categories of customary law. One is applied in the community court, which is constructed and written down. Anthropological research is also said to have been used in formulating the customary law of the community courts. They also argue (1994: 254 and 256) that the rules pertaining to customary law in these courts, are general, without variety, and fixed, therefore becoming ossified. 'The 'courts' customary law often exists in the corridors of the courts and has little or no impact on the way people live their lives' (Dengu-Zvogbo, 1994: 253). Such courts are also referred to as primary or magistrate courts and the court sessions take place in a court building in the capitals of Districts and Provinces.

The second category of customary law to be identified, consisting of 'the unwritten practices and customs, without rules' is the people's. Dengu-Zvogbo et al (1994: 254) argue that 'People's customary law favours negotiation and settlement on a give and take basis. The practices of the people are centred around the family within which notions of solidarity and mutual support are emphasised'.

I have to mention that the authors focused on inheritance. They found that in practice, people's customary law required people to negotiate over inheritance. It looked at who already had something and also gave part of that to the wife. The authors mention that 'the studied inheritance cases were all different and dependent on the situation and decisions of different people at certain moments' (p254). Thus, we could say that people shaped to a large extent the diversity in inheritance practice. Hence, people's customary law with its unwritten

rules, could be perceived as flexible in the case of inheritance, when compared with the written rules concerning inheritance in court customary law. The authors argue (1994: 256) that the laws of magistrate's court may have been constructed to increase control and authority over women. One might have thought it was done intentionally, since inheritance arranged by using court customary law leaves the wife usually empty handed, and makes the eldest son the heir<sup>16</sup>. But we have seen from the cases above that in practice the wife takes her things, a practice confirmed by Dow and Kidd (1994:V) who write of the 'dynamic nature of customary law, and how, despite the social conditioning that females have undergone over the years, they increasingly successfully assert what they feel to be their right: to inherit on an equal basis to their male counterparts'.

Holleman (1974: 78-9) refers to local courts as the African judicial process and he sets this against what he calls the Western judicial process. He argues that local courts preserve and restore harmony. Dengu Zvogbo et al (1994: 254) also tend to favour the people's customary law practice as mutually supportive and condemn the community court law for being oppressive to women. With respect to inheritance that may be correct, but there are other cases that may not support that view. Let us now analyse our divorce cases, by using the views presented of court and people's customary law. I have shown that the village courts with their people's customary law also did not support women's interests. There was not much give and take, or bargaining. The wives just had to accept it. Decisions by the chiefs in the village courts are shaped by existing normative and value frames that men should control resources and wives. Hence, in case of a divorce, community court laws may work out more positively for wives. However, in general, women and men from the village choose village courts to arbitrate for them, because they are nearby, save on travel expenses, and they are familiar with them. Maybe they also choose village courts because of the unwritten rules and flexibility, though the flexibility of spoken rules may favour husbands, which is perhaps why in the case of maintenance fees, wives rely on the community courts. However, in general, women and men deny that people find recourse to justice outside the village. There is clearly a moral barrier. Many in the village were of the opinion that a villager is not supposed to go to community court, and ought to accept the ruling of the village court, and the judgement of the chiefs, who clearly reproduce and construct certain normative and value frames in practice which do not always favour women.

I would like to emphasize, however, that people choose and use the chiefs' and community courts strategically. They may choose to consult one or the other or even both depending on which they think will favour a particular party. For example concerning inheritance disputes, men may choose to consult the community court to remain in control of the resources. In case of a divorce, the same men may choose for the village court, also to remain in control of the resources. Women may prefer to consult the community court in the case of divorce and the village court in the case of inheritance. Thus we see in practice that both women and men have the opportunity to use both types of court and laws, written and unwritten. Social actors can also manipulate legal norms and values to win their cases. Therefore, I cannot agree with Dengu-Zvogbo et al (1994:265) who argue that community court law has no impact on people's lives. I would conclude that both types of customary law have their impact, namely the opportunity for both women and men to choose. F. von Benda-Beckmann puts it (1988: 14-15) 'people interpret, and choose between or combine elements of both legal systems'. He referred to the two legal systems as that of state and non-state law. We have seen that in case of divorce, men tend to choose the village court and people's customary law. Women, on the other hand, tend to choose the community court for maintenance fees. But people do not always arbitrate through the courts in gender relations. There are other practices for ensuring maintenance as in the case of levirate, which I explore now.

<sup>16</sup> However, this law has changed on 1 November 1997, and now the wife with her children will be considered as the first heir.

## 2.5 A CONTINUATION OF RELATIONS THROUGH LEVIRATE

After the death of a husband, the marriage relationship has ended. However, usually both wife's and husband's families will look for a continuation of the relation. If the wife is still young, both families may agree to one of the brothers of the late husband marrying the widow. I will first look into some existing ideas about this so-called levirate practice and then explore a levirate case in which the widow emerges as an active individual who makes clear decisions. Finally, we listen to the widow clarifying some of the decisions she took during the levirate session.

### *Kugara/Kugarwa nhaka*

In Shona-Ndau language levirate is called *kugara/kugarwa nhaka*, meaning that the belongings of the deceased should be used and looked after. That also includes the wife, who then usually becomes the wife of a 'brother' of the deceased husband. When the woman chooses a husband herself it is called *kugara nhaka*. When she is chosen by a brother, it is called *kugarwa nhaka* (Dengu-Zvogbo et al, 1994: xv). Women are usually 'inherited' at the *kurova guva* ceremony (see Chapter 7) that takes place a year after a husband has passed away. Sometimes I will use the notion 'inherit', because that is how people in the village translate *kugarwa nhaka*. The notion is also used in the literature. Holleman (1974: 110) argues that 'levirate is the right of the husband's family because they provided bridewealth and therefore the woman's family will never interfere in this'. He (ibid.) also explains that 'if this appears to you a little hard on the widow, let me at once assure you that in practice there is comparatively little hardship, because she has the right to choose another husband from among an often considerable number of her husband's relatives' (see also Armstrong et al, 1993: 4). Bourdillon (1987: 215) argues that 'her objections to any particular kinsman of her late husband are respected and she is usually asked to choose her new husband, or if she objects to all her late husband's agnates, the marriage is readily dissolved'.

I have four reactions in relation to these two literature references. 1) In practice, if bridewealth, which is paid over a long period of time, is not completed, and should the wife of the deceased remain with her husband's *dzinza*, then his family is expected to pay the wife's family first. 2) Holleman says that the wife's family does not interfere in the levirate. However, in the case below we see that the wife's father steps in and assists his daughter, which is a common practice. 3) Both authors say that the wife of the deceased is free to object, true, but if she does object, the consequence could be to lose her children. She is thus in practice not free. She also may not be free to choose a husband. In the case outlined below the husband's family has instructed her to choose the one they think should be chosen. 4) The wife of the deceased is also influenced in her decision-making by the persuasions and flattery of the late husband's relatives before the levirate takes place.

With respect to these four different perspectives, we could say that among Ndau only *kugarwa nhaka* - one of the brothers choosing the wife - exists. It is not really the woman who chooses though she herself can make indirect decisions (see last part of this section). Dengu-Zvogbo et al (1994: 265) indicate that an overwhelming majority of the female respondents, widows or otherwise, rejected the institution of *kugarwa nhaka*. A majority of men likewise rejected it. Dengu-Zvogbo argued that in *kugarwa nhaka* cases women face difficulties, because the relatives want to have the property and argue that bridewealth was paid for her. Many women and men in Manesa village also expressed their unhappiness about the *kugarwa nhaka* practice. They indicated that neither women nor men are free to choose, but are made to choose by parents and relatives. An inherited woman explained:

'The parents of my late husband said: listen *muroora* (daughter-in-law), you should give the plate to the brother, because he is your *mwarumu* ('husband'). So it was not my wish (*kuda kwangu*). In general living (*magariro*; way of living), a woman never chooses herself. It is always the parents of the late husband who decide who you will marry, and say give the plate to such and such a person. If you stayed well with your husband, then



you give the plate to the brother. But if there were many quarrels you can decide to go home (*kumusha*, the place you are born), leaving your children behind. If the brother of the deceased husband refuses the plate, then you stay in that homestead to look after your children'.

Her husband said:

'The parents of the deceased man will decide for their daughter-in-law. I was not happy about it, but if you are told to do it, you should do it. *Nhaka* is not good. But because of problems you have to accept it. It is just if a person passes away then I have to look after his wife and children. Nobody is happy to look after somebody else's children'.

Despite the unhappiness about the levirate practice and despite the fact that women and men are not free to choose, many believe that wives should be inherited. That opinion and other norms and values regarding levirate emerge in the case below. However, I also show that social actors also have agency and both women and men can resist the levirate practice and at the same time transform the practice and in turn the normative and value frames.

### Case: the plate

During the *kurova guva* ceremony (see chapter 7) the spirit of the deceased is taken home. During that day, the relatives go to a *n'anga* (African doctor) and after that visit they will inform the public about who 'killed' the deceased. First I explain briefly what happened during this specific *kurova guva* ceremony and then I explore in detail how the inheritance of Faith, the *muroora*, or widow, was shaped by those who were present.

Early in the morning during the day of the *kurova guva*, the relatives grouped together behind the house of the deceased and discussed the findings of the *n'anga* (African doctor), whom they had visited the day before. The *n'anga* had told them that the young husband was killed by a relative. After this short meeting, the relatives entered the kitchen. Eight male relatives, the *muroora*, Faith (wife of the deceased) and the deceased's mother grouped together. They were believed to be the suspects of 'killing' the deceased. Many other relatives grouped around them until the kitchen was full. Then a woman became possessed of the family spirit. There was also a *n'anga* present in the kitchen and he cut the toes of a black chicken. He mixed the blood, which dripped from the toes with water and spread it on the people who were in the kitchen. The *n'anga* and the possessed woman together decided that one important suspect was innocent. After that all suspects went outside to confess that they were innocent, and all suspected men said that a family member killed the deceased. Faith, the wife of the deceased said:

'When we visited a *n'anga* yesterday, the *n'anga* said: 'everyone, including the relatives, say that you, Faith, are the one who killed your husband. But you are not the one'. I did not kill him'.

Then she cried bitterly and said: 'Why kill my husband who was helping me to look after the children'... and then she vomited and fell to the ground. A few women went quickly to Faith to comfort her.

After the confessing session the daughters-in-law (*varoora*) cooked food and the *vakuwasha* (sons-in-law) slaughtered two goats. When the food was ready, the relatives entered the kitchen again where the food was to be blessed. The woman became possessed again and a black goat was brought into the kitchen. One of the brothers of the father of the deceased poured beer on the goat. The goat was supposed to shake, which would be a sign that the deceased spirit had arrived home and accepted everything that had been arranged. After a long time the goat shook and everybody was happy.

At 17.00 hours in the afternoon the *kugarwa nhaka* took place. The widow, together with her *vatete* (late husband's sister), sat opposite six men. Slightly to one side of them sat the father

of the deceased, actually the father's half brother (different mothers). The father of the deceased had also passed away. Behind the six men gathered many other men, and opposite them and behind the two women, gathered other women. There was a long silence and then the *muzukuru* (son of the father's sister) spoke and said 'I am now leaving this case to the *vanasekuru*' (his mother's brothers). A father's brother stood up and said: 'you, *vatete* come here inside the centre'. The *vatete* and Faith sat right in the centre. The *vatete* said to Faith '*muroora* (daughter-in-law) take the plate and go to the father of the deceased'. The father pointed to the deceased's brother (same father, same mother). Faith had to go to him and give him the plate. She went, and knelt before him without speaking a word. Then the deceased young brother said:

'I do not take the plate because I have two other women whom I have inherited. So if I inherit this one again it would seem as though I am killing my elder brothers in order to take their wives. I do not want to. I have a lot of wives and children to look after. It is too much for me. I have no wife of my own, to whom I have proposed love myself. These two wives I have are of inheritance only. I do not want to. Please hear my plea'.

Faith was silent. Another man agreed with the brother who refused the plate and said: 'he has two other inherited wives, so it is not possible to give him another wife'. Faith looked silently at the *vatete* (HZ). The *vatete* said: 'go back to the father'. The father said: 'you go and choose one from the men who sit there'. Faith then responded that she would not move away from him. 'I am not able to do that again', she said (*Handichazvigoni*). Another man declared:

'You have to choose among these men here because they are your husbands. You cannot choose the father. You cannot be inherited by the father. It is impossible. You go to another man who is to be nominated by the father'.

Then Faith responded in a very harsh voice:

'I told you already that I am not going to move from here and I told you already that I am not able to do this again'.

The *vatete* asked 'were you involved in a *nhaka* case before?' Immediately the eldest half brother (same fathers, different mothers) of the deceased said:

'I do not applaud this woman saying she will not choose another husband among us because our younger brother said he could not manage it. The second thing is my younger brother's words. He said that he is not able to look after many children and wives. I want to cool his words by saying that the death of his elder brothers does not mean that he wants their wives. Whom can she choose? You are the blood brother of the deceased. Take the wife and forget about the family you have. If you refuse her, it means you have refused the children of your brother and you have refused your family'.

Another man said:

'If it is not possible, the plate should go back to *vatete*. It is not possible for the father to inherit the wife of his son and you should not give the plate again to the one who said he cannot manage it. He has wives and children. Look there is drought at this time. What do you want him to give his family?'

Then the father of Faith stood up and said:

'In my area (Marange, Manyika-Shona) the *muroora* (daughter-in-law) can give the plate to the father, *vatete* (HFZ) or brother of the deceased. You should not give it again to the one who has already inherited other widows. Did you listen carefully to what he said. He said that he has no wife to whom he proposed love. He only has inherited widows. That is not good. Please have sympathy for him. It means I will no longer have a son-in-law in this family, but that is that. All these are my family including the children who are sitting here. So my daughter, your husband is this *babamukuru* (the husband's deceased father's brother). So *babamukuru*, you have to look after our children, but not sleep with

my daughter, your *muroora*'.

Another man said:

'The young brother should have taken the wife. This woman is very young. She cannot live her whole life without a man. So please take the plate *munin'ina* (younger brother). If you refuse, it means that you do not want the children of your elder brother'.

The *muzukuru* (*vatete*'s son) said:

'You, acting father, take the plate. If she sleeps here with another man one day, we are going to catch that man. He will be a thief who is stealing. Please father take the plate'.

The father of Faith stood up again and said:

'The wives of this young brother are not wives of his choice and love. They are all inherited. So this young brother is quite right. He also wants a wife to whom he proposes love himself. So you *babamukuru*, are you going to tell me the reason why you are refusing to take my daughter? Leave this son-in-law of mine. He has a lot of problems. Even at our place (Marange, Manyika-Shona) it is not possible to just pile up widows on one man'.

Another man said:

'So you father take the plate. You should have arranged all your sons in line. *Baba* take the plate. It does not mean that holding a plate is sleeping with the *muroora*'.

The elder half brother of the deceased said:

'You are refusing the plate, father? That means you are also refusing the children and the woman. So you give the father of the widow a *gupuro*<sup>17</sup>. Then the father will take his daughter and the children. Please do not waste our time. We have many things to do and we cannot spend the whole day here. Please father take the plate or say to the father of the widow that you do not want his daughter, so they can travel to their home, while it is still light'.

Faith looked very troubled and did not move away from the *babamukuru*. Then the acting father of the deceased stood up and walked away. Faith said:

'I am not going to my *musha* (natal home). I will stay here with my children and look after them. If the first one refused me, why should I have to choose another husband, since he is the only blood brother left? I am not going to leave this house to choose another man from either *babamukuru* or *babamunini* sides (the deceased father's elder and younger half brothers). I am going to stay here with my children only. Not with a husband. I will live here for my children and also for my house<sup>18</sup>'.

Another man said:

'Let the *muzukuru* (eldest son of *vatete*) take over because he was the one who was handling all the things in this homestead after his *sekuru*'s death. Give the woman to the *muzukuru*'. The eldest brother of the deceased said: 'the *muzukuru* should not inherit the wife, because we are not all dead. There are many of us here'.

<sup>17</sup> Divorce token; money or something else which is handed by the husband to the wife, in the presence of her family or others, to show that the wife is refused (*kurambwa*; divorced). However, many divorces take place without a *gupuro*. That means that the divorce is not definite, and could be a strategy of the man to control his wife. Without a *gupuro* the wife is still 'bounded' and less free.

<sup>18</sup> *Ndinogarira vana wangu neimba yangu*. She recently accomplished the building of a nice big house, which is a topic below.

The acting father came back and he sat down. The widow stood up and went to sit near to him with her head bending to the side, and her eyes full of tears. Then the acting father took the plate and said 'this is not right, because I cannot inherit the wife of my son'. Then men clapped their hands and women whistled and clapped.

Another man said:

'Taking a plate does not mean that you are going to inherit your daughter-in-law. You are going to look after the illness of your grandchildren (*vazukuru*)'.

Another man went to the young brother of the deceased and said:

'I have never seen such a stupid man as you, refusing such a very young woman. I wish I were the one who was given the plate. The woman is still young. She needs a man to look after her. She cannot live without a man. It is very hard to stop forever sleeping with a man. It is not possible'.

Thus, Faith was not inherited by a 'husband'. But the acting father had accepted the plate and that meant that she could stay in the late husband's family and that he would be there to solve problems. Thus, despite the pressure of those who believed that the wife should be inherited, in other words those who reproduce the values and norms, the brother who should have inherited the wife and the wife herself, both resisted, and they were supported by the wife's father. The levirate practice is thus shaped by the social actors involved, who try to bring about an outcome in tune with their circumstances. But the outcome in the present case appeared not to be easy in practice, as she explained.

### Being watched

Three months later widow Faith explained:

'I do not feel free among the relatives of my late husband. It is difficult and very hard. *Babamukuru* (the acting father who took the plate) lives opposite my homestead. He is the *sababa* (big father of the *dzinza*). He looks after this homestead'.

But she decided to stay, because of her concern over how she would manage in the case of illness in her children. She says she can solve most things for herself, except illness because then she has to rely on the ancestral spirits of the husband's *dzinza*. That is also how men usually manipulate women into staying in their *dzinza*. They argue that if she returns to her natal home, they will not assist her when the children become sick. With respect to this ancestral spirit protection, Bourdillon (1987: 24) raises another point. He says 'if a woman inherits her husband's estate, the kinsmen may insist on her handing it over to them and otherwise threaten the woman that they will refuse to take any action with respect to family spirit guardians if the woman and her children become ill'.

Faith clearly faces problems with her late husband's father's brother, who is watching her and clearly restricts her room for manoeuvre. 'The acting father wants me to report everything', she said:

'I can't say it is *kutarisa* (watching). It is *kuchengeta* (to look after). Or *kutarisa* with jealousy. He follows every step. Or *kuchengeta* with hatred. The reason could be that he first refused to take the plate but was pressed not doing so by the male relatives. He says first I refused but then I was influenced to take the plate so now I have to really look after you'.

She might have expected the strict control and therefore we asked her why she did not give the plate to her *vatete* (HFZ). Faith explained:

'The *vatete* looks after you from the date the husband passes away to the time beer is brewed. Then she leaves it in the hands of men. In other areas and places, for example

where I come from, Marange (Manyika-Shona), the *vatete* will look after you if you do not want to be inherited by a man. That it is not possible here (Nda). That is the law in this area'.

Faith also explained why she chose the young blood brother of her deceased husband:

'The father said, you go to that one, because he is a real brother of your late husband. Therefore I put the plate in front of that person. I was told to do so, but I did not want to be inherited (*kugarwa nhaka*), because *nhaka* is very difficult. All these men have their own wives and the wives start to blame you for taking their husband and squandering money. So I did not want to be inherited, but I followed the *mitemo* (rules) of this area. If I had refused, the male relatives would have said to my father: she refused us, so she can go. Then they have to decide what to do with my children. People here say that the children will stay with the father's *dzinza*. If you go home with your children, they put the argument about your needing their support when the children become ill'.

Faith thinks that the younger brother should have accepted the plate, and then just kept an eye on (*kutarisa*) her homestead. He did not need to look after it (*kuchengeta*) in terms of sex and money. The majority of people said: 'he should have taken the plate, to watch (*kutarisa*) and not to take the widow as wife. She said she could have said to him if he should come knocking on her door that he had accepted to look after the children, not to sleep with her. Faith also added:

'I stay here because my husband said before he died, that I have to look after the small children in his homestead. Maybe it will change when people say things, which influence my life. Then I will say: I stayed for a long time and now I will go to my parent's home'.

She explained that some male relatives wanted to inherit her because of the house and the money of her late husband:

'After my husband passed away his company paid compensation. I used it to extend the house and the male relatives did not like it and took the case to the village court. They wanted the money to squander. I got the money as a widow and used it for the house. This homestead was built for my husband's mother, but the male relatives argued that the husband was their relative so this was their homestead and house. The personal manager of the company where my husband worked, wanted me personally to have the money and not the male relatives. The manager said: the relatives want property only, and not to look after the family. They should not know about the money and the house of your husband, otherwise they may kill you'.

We have seen that the aunt plays an important role in marriage and the levirate practice. Among Manyika-Shona, but not among the Nda, an aunt can inherit a young widow and look after her and her family. But even among the Nda, the aunt or sometimes her son, will look after the widow until the beer for the *kurova guva* is brewed (a year after the death). Let me now highlight some other aspects of the work of the paternal aunt (*vatete*).

## 2.6 BROTHERS HAVE SISTERS AND SISTERS HAVE BROTHERS

I start this section by arguing that almost every woman is a *vatete* (HFZ/HZ). I show that a *vatete* is an important negotiator and arbitrator, not only concerning bridewealth, divorce and levirate as we have seen above, but also concerning problems in marriage. But sisters are not only important for brothers. Brothers are also important for sisters. In the last part of this section I discuss those and other reciprocal bonds.

### Who is *vatete*

We have seen the importance of fathers' sisters (*vatete vakuru*) and sisters of brothers or husbands (*vatete vadiki*). The importance of paternal aunts (pl. *madzitete*) is due to their involvement in the marriages of their brothers and their involvement with brother's children. Aunts teach brother's daughters good manners. A *vatete* said: 'It is important to teach your daughters'<sup>19</sup> good manners, because then you will earn later'. Indeed, the aunt picks up money when bridewealth is paid. There can be a difference in the way the older and younger generation of *madzitete* teaches brother's daughters. An older *vatete* may change with the changing times but she is more likely than not to reproduce the norms of values, which have a longer past. For example an old *vatete* said:

'We teach our brother's daughters at the age of maturity. We explain that a husband is very important because he looks after the wife. Thus wives have no right to beat their husbands, because bridewealth was paid for them. Wives have to follow and respect the laws of their aunts, fathers, mothers and husbands'.

A younger *vatete* said:

'The aunts of nowadays, as there are equal rights in everything, will say to their daughters, if you are beaten, the best way is to fight back'.

Younger aunts may also reproduce norms and values of a longer past, but are more likely to have been influenced by changing norms and values. However, the importance of aunts is not only because of their involvement in the marriages of brother's children. She is also involved in the organisation of the brother's homestead. An existing perception is that paternal aunts symbolically build their brother's homesteads. A *vatete* also perceives the brother's homestead as her homestead, regardless of whether she was born there or not. For example, at the beginning of my research, I was helping a 58 years old woman to thresh maize in her kitchen. Her brother passed by and said the visitors had arrived. The woman explained that the visitors had come to pay bridewealth and that it would take place in the evening. I asked if I could join her. She replied: 'you can come and attend the bridewealth payments, because it is my homestead'. That confused me, because I knew that she had not been born in Manesa village. Sisters perceive their brother's places as theirs, because they are involved in the organisation of that homestead. Moreover, the influence of a sister in her brother's homestead increases when it was her bridewealth that was used by the brother to marry his wife. Then the sister, as *vatete* (HZ), is the *samukadzi*, meaning owner of the brother's wife (see also Kuper, 1982: 33). The practice is called *chipanda* among the Ndau. The sisters also perceive their brother's wives as their wives. They call them 'our wives' (*vakadzi vedu*). These two women have a special relation. The *vatete* is also called *bambomukunda* (big father is a daughter) or female father (*babakadzi*). Gombo (1986) argues that every Shona person has three parents, namely the father, the mother and the *vatete* (HZ/HFZ).

I have tried to show that the *vatete* is an important woman. But it is crucial to recognise that almost every woman is a *vatete*, because almost every woman has a married brother, especially when we consider that in Shona culture brothers are not necessarily from the same parents and that the father's brothers are also called fathers. That almost every woman is an aunt, also implies that every person has aunts. The wife and the husband, each have their own aunts. But because a wife usually shifts to her husband's homestead, the married couple usually relies in the first instance on the husband's aunts. The aunt is usually that sister who lives nearby. The age of the *vatete* as negotiator in her brother's relation is therefore less important. But if things do not really settle, then the wife can also consult her own *madzitete* (WFZ), despite the fact that they usually live at a distance from her marriage homestead. Thus, almost every woman is a sister of a father or of a married brother which gives the aunt her identity. On the other hand,

<sup>19</sup> Daughters of a brother and sister are also daughters.

when women marry, they are given the daughter-in-law (*muroora*) identity. In the end of this section I will come back to these gender identities, because first I have to explore some of the activities through which the aunt derives her authority and identity.

### Advisors and arbitrators

The arbitrating role of paternal aunts in relations should certainly not be underestimated. In Northern part of the world people consult friends, family, therapists and psychologists. But among the Ndau, the *vatete* (HZ/HFZ) remains very important even today. A married man said: 'the work of the *vatete* is to bring husband and wife to the conference table'. *Madzitete* (paternal aunts) call themselves *mhanga mhazano* (advisors), who negotiate and arbitrate in their brother's and father's homesteads.

But what are the activities in daily life from which the *vatete* derives her importance and authority? Or in other words, what makes her an owner and builder of her brother's homestead? In daily life the *vatete* is often consulted in cases of illness (see also Chapter 3). Usually a *vatete* is also requested to act as an advisor and witness in village courts, or she acts as witness in other cases. As an old *vatete* explained:

'A girl worked at her mother's brother's place. The work was very hard and the girl was tired. She earned very little money and sometimes she was not paid. So the girl decided to go back to her own home. Then she met a man who had a shop and he asked the girl to work there. The girl agreed, because her parents did not have a job. Then the mother's brother and wife called the *vatete*, to inform her that the girl had left their homestead and that if something should happen to the girl, the girl was not in their hands any more'.

Below are two examples of the negotiating role of the paternal aunt in her brother's relations. In both cases, the wife of the brother, thus the sister-in-law to the aunt, approached the aunt to ask her to negotiate in the relationship.

I once was travelling with a 29 year old woman who met her sister-in-law. The following discussion took place during that encounter, and depicts how the *vatete* negotiates in the relationship of her brother with his wife. She uses symbolic language and acts as if she was herself her brother, thus the husband in this case.

The *muroora* (sister-in-law) said: '*vatete* (read 'husband') you are not to be seen'.

*Vatete* (as husband): 'to be seen everywhere'.

*Muroora*: 'I did not come to live in your homestead just for sadza. We have sadza at our own homestead'.

*Vatete*: 'What else do you want besides eating and having sufficient?'

*Muroora*: 'Why don't you come home? You go to the homesteads of other wives, why? My husband it is a long time since I knew you'.

*Vatete*: 'I will come in June, but be careful about the results'.

*Muroora*: 'The results are a baby only. I do not take family planning tablets. If the result is a baby, then no'.

*Vatete*: 'If you don't want a child, start today and drink two tablets a day. I know that you my wife, you are the one I love in times of cold because you are a big heater for sure'.

*Muroora*: 'Please, I want my share'.

*Vatete*: 'Cool down my wife. June is very near. Just take your tablets, because I will be very hot the day I will meet you'.

*Muroora*: 'A child who does not cry, will die in the sleeping bag because of hunger'.

Thus here, a married woman complains to her husband's sister about the fact that her husband goes to other women and does not visit her any more. The married woman wants her husband's love, but she does not want a child. Therefore her husband's sister suggests to take birth prevention tablets. After this encounter, the *vatete* explained to me:

'My *muroora* (sister-in-law) told me this, because she cannot take her problems to the parents of the husband. The best way is to go through the *vatete* to complain and report what is happening in their house. The *vatete* will sit with her brother and solve it together with the *muroora*. My *muroora* tells it as a joke, but she really means it, that my brother does not come to her place. She reported it to me in a joking way so that the people around will think that they are just jokes. But I know my brother. I have to go and talk to him'.

The following example also is of a *vatete* helping her brother and his wife. The *vatete* explained:

'I am a builder of my brother's house. If they have problems my sister-in-law can come and say: 'your brother refused to eat *sadza*'. Then I go and ask the brother: 'why do you refuse to eat *sadza*'? The brother then says: ask the *muroora*. Then it becomes clear that there are problems in the bedroom. The *muroora* says that the youngest child is still too young, but that the husband wants it. I suggested she take tablets (*kunwa mapiritsi*) if she does not want to have more babies. For the home of my brother and his wife to be all right, I am a go-between'.

Here again the aunt mediates in the relationship between her brother and his wife. Her brother wants to make love, whereas his wife suggests they wait because the youngest child is still too young. But the aunt advises her sister-in-law to take contraceptive pills and thus not to refuse her brother.

Sometimes a *vatete* (HZ/HFZ) cannot or does not want, for one or another reason, to support her *muroora*. She, then, chooses clearly the side of her brother. If the situation becomes unbearable for the wife then she can rely on her own family (see next Chapter 3) and consult her own *vatete* (WFZ).

Another task of paternal aunts is worshipping the ancestors. The deceased women of a *dzinza* (patrikin) will be worshipped by the elder daughters who are the sisters of the fathers and sons in a *dzinza*. A *vatete* explained:

'When my family brews beer, they call me. I am the one who sees the elders to bless beer for the ancestors. The men will not do the worshipping when I am absent. They will not do it, because I am following after their dead fathers. If the beer and worshipping is for deceased men, then men do it. But if it is for worshipping *madzitetete*, I do it myself. Women worship deceased women (*madziteteguru*). That is what we do here'.

I have outlined (Vijfhuizen, 1997) that women's importance also comes from their role in worshipping ancestors. The woman here says that she is following, which means that the men first worship the deceased men and after that the women worship the deceased women. However, their importance in that context was not always recognised in Shona literature (e.g. Lan, 1985). Let us now look at bonds of reciprocity between sisters and brothers.

### A variety of reciprocal bonds

The paternal aunts are rewarded for their work and assistance. They often receive gifts from their brothers, his wife or wives and their children. These gifts can be money, agricultural produce from the fields, beer, but also a *dhunduru* (0,04 hectare) in the irrigation scheme. Usually, aunts are not rewarded at the moment of providing assistance, but will receive a gift once in a while (see chapter 3 and 4).

However, the brothers will also help their sisters when they face problems. The relations between brothers and sisters are reciprocal and the bonds are strong. In terms of my own fieldwork, I believe that the sibling bond is stronger than the conjugal bond. Of course the strength of bonds and reciprocity among sister-brother relationships vary and naturally there are also conflicts and jealousies among them. Blood brothers and sisters usually have the closest



relationships, than 'brothers' and 'sisters' of different mothers, who share less affection and problems. And not every sister is always consulted. It also depends on personal characteristics and on their proximity. The one nearest by usually acts as arbiter. Thus, age, as I have mentioned already, seems to count less.

Other family relationships are also important, for example, relations among sisters. Sisters of the same father/same mother have strong affective ties. They will visit each other and discuss and advise each other on many things, including marital problems. Sisters will encourage each other to go the *vatete* when there are problems. They will keep each other informed of how problems and their visits worked out. They will however only advise each other. They are not expected to follow up and help provide solutions. This is the job of the sister's *vatete*. If the *vatete* (HZ) chooses the side of her brother, then the sisters may advise their real brother or father, who will help the respective sister or daughter. Hence, brothers will assist sisters in times of problems, and also give a follow up on bridewealth payments. The brother will visit the homestead where his sister is married, to remind the husband's family to pay the remaining bridewealth.

The difference in the relations between sister-brother and sister-sister emerges clearly in the greetings. When a brother visits his sister and vice-versa, the first question will always be '*kwakanaka here?*', meaning is everything all right?. It is an invitation, especially for a brother, to relate any problem he may be having. But, sisters visiting each other is different. The first concern is not if the other has a problem in the homestead. Sisters just visit each other to exchange news and advise each other. Sibling bonds are thus important, and their importance may increase as they grow older and parents pass away. If parents are alive, we have seen that mother-daughter, father-daughter, father-son, brother-brother, son-in-law to son-in-law, daughters-in-law to daughters-in-law as co-wives, *vatete*-daughter-in-law are also important relations. In the next chapters other important relations emerge. For example in Chapter 3 we will see the significance of mother-son and mother-daughter relations. It is actually the situation, the topic and the people involved which shape the gender identity of a person and the ability of such a person to wield or yield power.

## 2.7 NETWORKS OF RELATIONS: A CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on kinship and marriage relations as being of primary importance in the social actor's life. In the establishment, continuation and ending of relations through marriage, bridewealth, divorce and levirate we have seen that both women and men are important. In this conclusion I argue that both women and men guard the continuity and shape the changes in bridewealth, marriage, levirate and divorce. Especially a woman as an aunt (HFZ/HZ) derives her authority and gender identity from advising, negotiating and maintaining relations.

### **Bridewealth in marriage**

Bourdillon (1993: 36-39) indicates three major changes in bridewealth payments: 1) Cash payments have increased. In the old days one of the functions of bridewealth was to compensate the wife's family for the loss of the woman's productive labour. Nowadays, considerable financial investment is required for a daughter to be productive. Apart from the costs of feeding and clothing, there is the cost of the girl's education. Since the fruits of this education goes to her new family, these costs need to be compensated for. Bridewealth now becomes compensation for the economic costs incurred in bringing up a daughter. 2) Cash is earned and owned by individuals rather than the family groups. This often means that the groom becomes personally responsible for the payments and the wife's family has little control over the husband. 3) The result of such change is that, instead of marriage payments binding members of families together, they create tensions in the marriage.

These are significant changes in the bridewealth practice, but they are also a continuation of what existed. Let's examine this in terms of each change. 1) We discussed the fact that the real value of the bridewealth paid in the past does not differ substantially from the value of the bridewealth paid in 1997. There may have been a shift towards more cash than goods, but both were always difficult to obtain and bridewealth was always regarded as expensive. 2) Although the husband is more often individually responsible for the payments nowadays, control does not necessarily decline. Husbands, as sons-in-law, were and still are controlled by brothers (WB) and fathers (WF), who remind sons-in-law of their debt. That debt indicates a relation. 3) Tensions in relations over bridewealth payments have always existed. During the actual bridewealth payment arrangements these tensions emerge and they continue to exist, even after the death of a wife for whom bridewealth may still be outstanding. Bridewealth payment arrangements were always small battles where some actors wielded and others yielded power.

Another change in bridewealth practice is that the *chipanda* practice is changing. Parents no longer always assist their sons in paying bridewealth. That means that parents use less often the wealth that was received for a daughter for the marriage of a son. Thus, the son's wife belongs less often therefore to his sister. That may imply that the status and authority of a *vatele* (HZ/HFZ) decreases in the brothers' homesteads. However, we must realise that even without the use of the sister's bridewealth, the sister remains an important head in his homestead (see next chapter). She is an important advisor and negotiator and mediator in her brother's relations with wife and children, from which she derives authority and is able to wield power. Another point is that if a sister, instead of her parents, assists her brother by giving him money to pay part of his bridewealth, then the wife belongs again to his sister. These days women also have paid jobs, so sisters may assist their brothers if it is necessary. Thus the practice of paying bridewealth may be changing, but that does not necessarily mean that women's authority as the paternal aunt will erode.

Another change in the bridewealth practice could be that women are beginning to claim their share and to shape bridewealth practice. Bourdillon (1993:36) argues that: 'bridewealth is a series of payments to the father of the bride in order to legalize the marriage'. Weinrich (1982:43) also refers to a 'transfer of the bridewealth to the woman's father'. But as we have seen the situation is more complex than this. The payments were not only made to the father. The arguments for bridewealth paid during bridewealth stages are related to 1) raising the daughter which is done to a large extent by the mother and aunt (WFZ); 2) arranging the marriage before the bridewealth payments start, which is done by the aunt (HFZ or HZ or WFZ); 3) arbitrating in conflicts during her marriage, which is mainly done by the aunts (HFZ/HZ/WFZ) and father, and part of the bridewealth is seen as compensation for this, and is therefore destined for the aunt and mother, and there are clothes and cattle, intended for both father and mother. It is actually the parent's care for the daughter, which is being compensated. Women have thus always had their own interests in bridewealth payments (see Geschiere, 1983), but in this chapter we have seen that women also express those interests, before, during and after the bridewealth arrangements and payments. The wife who marries can also pick money from the plate during the bridewealth payments, though she will only take a little, because it has usually been her husband who pays the bridewealth.

Both women and men want the bridewealth practice to continue, as it is seen as evidence of reciprocity, and establishing bonds between families and supplying cash needs. Bridewealth in this sense can be seen as a form of social security. Von Benda Beckmann argues (1988:10) that 'social security can be taken to refer to the efforts of individuals, kingroups, villages and state institutions to overcome insecurities such as having enough to eat, having money etc'. Rights over children are another important aspect of the bridewealth practice. If nothing has been paid, then in practice the children born out of a relationship belong to the wife's family.

We have seen that within the bridewealth payments and stages, social actors have scope to manoeuvre. Actually it is the social actors themselves who shape the bridewealth practice with the different stages and payments. The different stages and payments are a perspective sometimes lacking in the literature. Kuper (1982:26) argues that the fundamental rule was that

marital rights in a woman were transferred against the payment of cattle, and that if the wife remained childless or deserted her husband before bearing children, then the cattle had to be returned or her family had to supply another wife. Among the Ndaou we have seen that the cattle belong to the last stage of bridewealth payments and that both families have clear reasons and strategies for delaying that payment. We have seen how the social actors involved carefully give meaning to the different stages of the bridewealth payment practice. The first payment, for example, is for establishing a bond. Bridewealth, as a practice, does not necessarily restrict the actors' room for manoeuvre. However, by the way social actors assign meaning, bridewealth can become restrictive. The meaning of bridewealth is being reconstructed in various ways, for example, on wives working for husbands, on headship of the homesteads, on control over women's sexuality and resources such as land. In a virilocal patrilineal society, such reconstructions are more difficult for women to achieve. However, both women and men are controlled by the bridewealth practice and the norms and values associated with paying and arranging bridewealth. The husband is controlled as a son-in-law by the wife's family, who will remind him several times that there is a debt, because bridewealth is never paid at once. The husband increases control over his wife, by arguing that he paid bridewealth and therefore expects his wife to work hard and give him many children. These are crucial power struggles in life. Thus, we see here a reconstruction of the meaning of bridewealth - bridewealth as control. Men pay it to retain control over the house, labour, resources and reproduction of their wives. The *vatete* reinforces this by advising the wife of her brother to work hard because bridewealth was paid. Bourdillon puts it as follows (1993: 39): 'The husband feels that, after all his sacrifices, he has a right to everything that the wife produces. Such a beginning comprises an inauspicious start to married life'. But the changes in bridewealth practice and the increasing awareness of women concerning their rights may affect such relationships.

There is another power aspect associated by both women and men with bridewealth, and that is headship (see next chapter). Both give the same reason why women cannot be heads of homesteads into which they married and that is that the man paid bridewealth. However, if a man used his sister's bridewealth to marry his wife, then he may regard his sister as a more important head of his homestead than himself (see next chapter). She has an important position even if her bridewealth did not pay his bridewealth because of her important advisory role with children and in keeping relationships smooth. These aunts perceive themselves as heads too. And the same reasons for headship will be given whether bridewealth is completed or not. In certain relations the men will therefore control much, but not in all relations as we will see in the next chapter.

### **Levirate and divorce**

Both women and men guard the continuity of certain aspects of marriage, bridewealth, divorce and levirate practices. However, they also transform and manipulate, rules, beliefs, norms and values and thereby shape and change those practices. Those who resist and those who promote change have their reasons. For example, Bourdillon (1993: 26) argues that: 'Leaders of people may condemn the loss of traditional values. But they are usually the ones who have a political advantage to gain from maintaining the ties'. That does apply for leaders at village or chieftaincy levels, and also for leaders in a homestead, i.e. husbands and wives. Bourdillon (1993: 14-15) argues that 'people maintain culture because of identity, security, habit, material interests, existing ideas and values and for the interest of power and control'. But we must bear in mind that social actors can also change culture for the same reasons. Maintaining culture in this book is that women and men use, bend, reproduce, manipulate and transform knowledge, beliefs, rules, norms and values in practice according to their own circumstances, needs and beliefs thereby shaping and transforming it. Sometimes women and men devise clear and conscious strategies, but not always.

For example, changes in the levirate practice is due to the spread of the HIV virus and AIDS and an increasing knowledge about it, but also due to changing norm and value frames and

interventions. Thus in 1997, when a young husband passes away, his wife will not automatically be inherited (*kugarwa nhaka*). Today women also have an increased capacity to resist being inherited, as they increasingly are in a position to look after themselves through receiving the husband's work pension or through access to an irrigated plot, and if she stays in the late husband's *dzinza*, married or not, she will be looked after by one of the *dzinza* heads (see next chapter about headship). Both women and men help reproduce or change norms and values for their own purposes. There are ulterior motives in hoping a wife will stay. The men might argue that wife should be looked after, but there is also the question of the husband's property and the woman's children and childbearing capacity in the *dzinza*. They may also wish to control her sexual freedom through levirate, so that she will not be free to take a boyfriend, whom they would consider 'a thief'.

In case of divorce, women are assisted by their own brothers and/or parents and men are assisted by their own sisters and parents. Chiefs in village courts seem to reproduce the norms and values, which are more supportive of men, as they are given control over the children and land. Since decision-making in village courts deprives women of their social security in the case of divorce, wives tend to choose the customary law of the community courts presided over by court officers. That applies in the case of divorce, but in other cases, e.g. inheritance, women may also want to choose the village court and people's customary law. But now the inheritance law has changed (November 1997) women may want to choose the community court in case of inheritance.

### Gender identities and authorities

Negotiating and mediating in relations during marriage preparations, bridewealth payments and arrangements, divorce and levirate, is also clearly a woman's domain, from which she derives authority and is able to wield power. The *vatete* (HFZ/HZ/WFZ) helps relationships to survive, but when there is finally a divorce, the divorced wife will usually rely on her father and/or brother. Also in levirate cases the fathers of widowed daughters are important.

The woman as *vatete* has an influence on relations in general, and more specifically at the beginning of marriage, in bridewealth payments as a spokeswoman, in divorces as an advisor, in levirate as head and arbiter and in the relation between her 'brother' and his wife as negotiator and arbiter. She is also an authority and head in her brother's homestead and when her brother passes away she may assist his widow. Also the man as uncle (MB, *sekuru*) derives authority from negotiating in relations. Every woman or man has aunts. I mentioned already in 2.6 that the married couple, in a virilocal society, usually relies on the husband's sister or husband's father's sister (*vatete*: HZ/HFZ). But if the aunts in the husband's *dzinza* continuously choose the side of their 'son' and thus the wife's husband then another aunt or *vatete* of influence is the wife's father's sister (*vatete*: WFZ).

Multiple gender identities emerge from different situations, topics and relations. For example if we take a woman who is competing with other wives in a polygynous homestead about the produce from the land, then she may have yielded power if she was only allocated a small portion. But, for example when she is on her way to the shops in the village, she can be approached by her sister-in-law who complains about a problem with her husband. Then all of a sudden the wife of the polygamist is an aunt (*vatete*; HZ) and is supposed to advise and negotiate. In that encounter the aunt usually wields power. And if she, as the wife of the polygamist is accused of bad spirits and sent home, then her identity of daughter or sister becomes more eminent. However, some gender identities occur more frequently and largely depend on the people you live with. If a woman lives in a nuclear homestead then she is usually wife and mother. Those who call her *muroora* (daughter- or sister-in-law) live nearby or elsewhere. The wife will cultivate her fields from which she derives her identity as a farmer. But if a woman lives with her parents-in-law, and also with other wives of the same husband, then the situation is completely different. Then she is called *muroora* by those with whom she lives. Of course that *muroora* is also a *vatete*, when she visits her brothers place or when she is asked

to negotiate in certain conflicts. However, those identities are less frequently constructed and women may feel themselves more labelled by those they are living with. Despite the identity of 'divorced woman' being one of the worst images in Shona culture, it does not prevent women leaving their husbands. The divorce rate is and always was very high, also due to the practice of polygyny and the envy emerging from it. This is an issue that is taken up in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### HEADS OF HOMESTEADS AND COMPLEMENTARITIES OF POWER

I wish to explore in this chapter the relationships between and among women and men and how they live together and separately in a homestead. I explore four stages in the establishment of a homestead and analyse the building of houses: the construction of my own wattle and daub house (a house built of poles, mud and grass); the stone house of a divorced wife; and the brick house of a married couple.

I wish also here to explore perceptions about the notion of headship in homesteads. Husbands and their fathers (deceased or alive) are generally perceived as heads of homesteads. But aunts (HFZ/HZ) are also viewed as heads too. In practice, both sisters and brothers are consulted and assist in solving problems in the homestead, and this leads to their being considered as heads. To examine how headship emerges in practice, I explore the social dynamics of a polygynous and a monogamous homestead. Apart from this general perception of who has authority, other women and men have authority in certain circumstances and over certain domains or areas of social life, and therefore emerge as heads in practice. For example, the elder of two wives manages the polygynous homestead. She arranges consumption and storage and allocates the land to the wives of her sons who also live in the homestead, and thus emerges as a 'head'. The wives of her sons are seen as heads of their own households within the homestead<sup>1</sup>. An aunt, (HFZ/HZ) and a migrant son also emerge as heads in this polygynous homestead, even though they both live elsewhere, because they arbitrate in conflicts and assist people in the homestead. In everyday interactions in the monogamous homestead described, the wife emerges as a head. The husband is said to be the head but in practice the homestead is less his domain. Both wife and husband have their own domains from which they derive their authority and in which they might qualify for the notion of 'head'.

The chapter argues later that the notion of head and headship has been too narrowly conceived in the literature and that there is more than one head in a homestead. As the homestead embraces many domains of activity from which both women and men derive their authority, there are thus many kinds of head. Thus 'heads' may be perceived more specifically as authorities in some domain or field of activity. The women and men, who emerge as heads in practice, usually wield power by arbitrating, negotiating and enrolling others in their projects and domains. The different heads complement each other, though there are struggles and tensions.

#### 3.1 ESTABLISHING THE HOMESTEAD

There are four stages in the establishment of a homestead, 1) the allocation of a site in the village to build; 2) hammering the first peg (*kurova hoko*) into the ground; 3) building the house; 4) *chiutsi*, a celebration party with beer, food and ancestors. At each stage gender specific practices and perceptions are to be observed.

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<sup>1</sup> In this book, 'family' and 'homestead' are multivocal notions; i.e. they refer to different functional groupings and different areas of activities and control. The matrifocal household in the homestead refers to one group, i.e. a woman who looks after her own children, but that single group is involved in different areas of activities and control, and therefore I use matrifocal household in this thesis instead of matrifocal group (see further conclusion).

### The allocation of a place in the village

The first stage is to look for a suitable site and to get permission to build. The site and permission must be sought from and given by the village head. I explore this activity and the social relations involved by describing how I myself, a divorced wife and her son, and a married couple were allocated places to build a house in Manesa village.

#### *My place*

I arrived in Manesa at the end of June 1994. As the research was related to irrigated agriculture I was introduced via the local Agricultural Extension Service, Agritex. I had chosen Tawona irrigation scheme, which also implied that I had chosen Manesa village. During the first week, the Irrigation Supervisor of Agritex asked a female extension worker of the Mutema irrigation scheme to assist me. I expressed to her my wish to build an adobe or wattle and daub house with a thatched roof. I wanted a place of my own, and I had built such a house before when working in Zambia (1990-1993). We discussed who should be approached for this and since the extension officer knew as little as I about the Scheme or the village, we decided to approach the Chairlady of the Irrigation Management Committee (IMC) whom we had both met before. She assumed I would be staying in the Manesa guesthouse or in the caravan at the Agritex office and was surprised that I wanted to live among the people and build my own house. She promised to discuss the subject with the village head Manesa and indicated that she expected no problems (*hazvishupi*).

Manesa allocated me a place, and on the day it was to be given to me, the chairlady informed me that I must pay Manesa for the site and we set off to find him. We met him on the way to his irrigated fields and he invited us to visit his homestead. After the usual greetings and explaining the purpose of our visit, Manesa told me that for the adobe house I would need to write to the District Council to get permission to cut trees in the neighbourhood of the village. He suggested a house of stones instead, since stones were plentiful in the area. Water and safety were his two main concerns over choosing the site and he showed me four places, all located in the area under his authority in the village. This was the first time I realised that beside himself, there were five other kraalheads within Manesa village (see Chapters 1 and 6) who allocate sites in their areas in the village. I chose the quietest place offered, farthest from the road. I paid Manesa Z\$60 for it.<sup>2</sup>

I was a newcomer (*muenzi*) in the village. All newcomers, including villagers from outside Manesa village, must first approach the kraalhead of the particular village area or kraalhead. I did so through the IMC chairlady. Other newcomers I was told approach the head through one of his policemen. All newcomers have to pay for the site to build. Usually they pay money, but they can also pay in kind, perhaps with a chicken. Villagers, who shift residence within the village, do not always pay and I examine here how those who live already in Manesa, are allocated sites.

#### *Sites for other villagers*

Villagers also shift within the village to build new homesteads. In the case of divorce, for instance, the wife has to find another place. Sons and daughters grow up and marry and although some may want to stay in their parent's homestead, others will want their own. The following account shows how a divorced wife, her son, and the daughter of another family organised the building of a house in the village.

We know Miriam from Chapter 2. She was divorced and stored her belongings at a brother's place in Manesa village. She then moved to her brother's in Mutema village, where she wanted to build her house and she cleared a site in preparation. However, another brother

<sup>2</sup> That was a reasonable amount, because later in my study I discovered that other newcomers paid Z\$ 60 in 1993. Due to inflation, village head Manesa could have asked me a higher amount (1994; 1 Fl = Z\$ 4-4,2; 1 US\$ = Z\$ 8.1-8.5).

(same father, different mothers), was a kraalhead in Mutema and did not want to allocate her a place there as he thought she should return to Manesa so she could look after her children, who had remained with their father in Manesa. Miriam had no other choice but to return to Manesa. She already had a place in mind there on which to build and establish her new homestead. She chose a place on the stony hillside, near the homestead of her eldest son Stanley. She then informed her brother in Manesa that she had found a place and he informed Panganai, the kraalhead of that specific area within the village. She later went with her brother to Panganai's court where they discussed the issue, and he agreed to the site and requested Z\$40, a sum paid by Miriam's brother. She built a house of stones, as we shall see later.

Miriam's eldest son Stanley was married with a child at the time of his mother's divorce. Before the divorce his father had told him to look for his own place to live and he looked for a place within the area of kraalhead Mukokota, the same area as his father in Manesa village. He preferred to live near the water tap, but the place was already too crowded, so he chose a place on the hill, on the stones. He did not consult his wife, because his wife 'knew nothing about the area'. He had Mukokota's permission to build his stone house but paid him nothing because, as he explained, he was a *chizvarwa* there, that is, he was born in kraalhead Mukokota's area. His mother, however, had to pay because she moved from kraalhead area, namely from Mukokota to Panganai. Moreover, she was not a *chizvarwa* from Manesa.

Hence the divorced wife and the married son chose places themselves and had them approved by the respective kraalheads. However, daughters of families in Manesa village who marry in the village, also sometimes choose a place themselves, as depicted in the case of Zama, a woman from Manesa village, married to a man from the village who was employed in Harare. The husband was supposed to look for a place to build a house near to his father's place. However, in this case, Zama looked for a place herself. She chose a place near her own parents' homestead in Manesa. This place was not on the stony hillside but on earth, with a type of soil used for making bricks. She used this material to build her house. Village head Manesa approved the place. They did not pay anything, because both wife and husband were born in Manesa village, in kraalhead Manesa's area.

Generally, according to the *kurova hoko* practice, explored below, a new homestead should be established near the husband's *dzinza* or patrikin, and people find it strange if it is established near the wife's parents, as in the case of Zama. It is taken as an indication that all is not well between the members of the husband's and wife's family.

### ***Kurova hoko*: the place belongs to the patrikin**

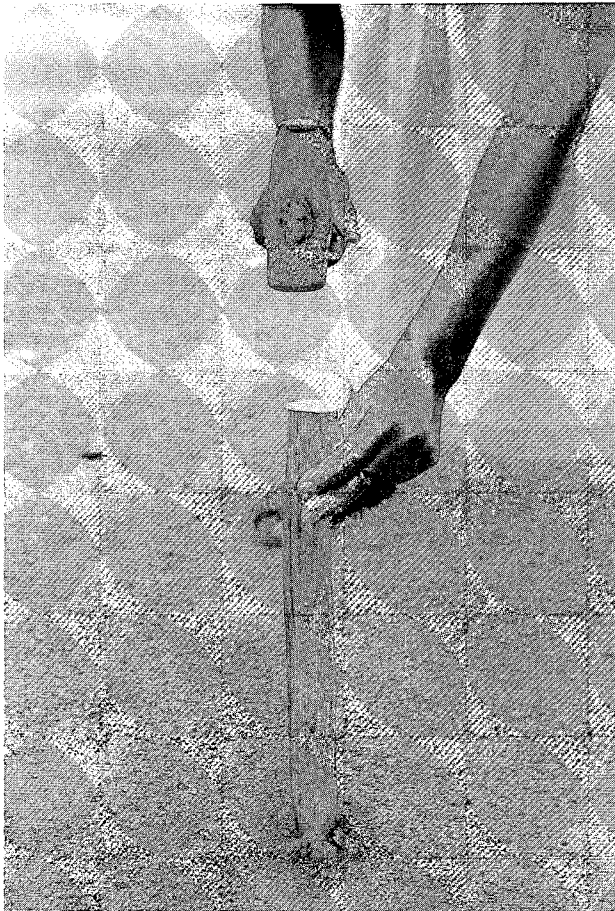
I have distinguished the practice of *kurova hoko* as the second stage in the establishment of a homestead. It literally means to hammer a peg into the ground to start the building of a house.

*Kurova hoko* can also be performed in another way, as I explain below. It is an important ritual that is usually carried out for every homestead. Men usually perform *kurova hoko*: the husband himself (30%); their fathers (55%) and brothers (15%).<sup>3</sup> In a very few cases an older aunt (HFZ) can represent men when they are absent. *Kurova hoko* actually means that the new homestead (family) will belong to the patrilineal extended kin group (*dzinza*) and ancestors, of the representative who performs the *kurova hoko*. Elder representatives of the patrikin will also act as heads of homesteads once they are established. They will be informed and/or consulted in times of major problems. If they find it necessary, they will consult the ancestral spirits for advice and protection of families who have problems.

I will now describe the *kurova hoko* performed for my own homestead and those of Miriam, her son Stanley, and Zama. We will see that the social actors involved associate *kurova hoko* with authority in the homestead and thus with headship.

<sup>3</sup> Survey September 1996, 55 homesteads; stratified sample.



Photo 3.1: *Kurova hoko*

When I started to build my house of poles, mud and grass in July 1994, I was not aware of the *kurova hoko* practice since I attached no significance to the builder putting the first pegs into the ground. In Miriam's case, she explained that her brother, who lived in Manesa village, paid for the site and performed *kurova hoko*, which means that the place now belongs to her own *dzinza* (patrikin). If she leaves the homestead, somebody else from her own family could come and stay there. 'It is my homestead', she pointed out,

'because my parents gave it to me (through her brother). I am the owner (*muridzi*) of this homestead because everything stands or waits for me (*kumirira ini*). I am not the head (*mukuru*) because if I face major problems, I will consult my brothers'.

Hence in the cases of divorced women, representatives of their own *dzinza* will be consulted. She also perceived her deceased father as a head of her homestead. But for Miriam's married son Stanley, his father did *kurova hoko*, because he believes that the children belong to the father. He explained:

'In our culture we consider the father (*haba*) as the person of the homestead (*munhu wemusha*). *Kurova hoko* is another way of worshipping ancestors (*kupira vadzimu*),

informing them that your child lives here. If I face problems, then I go to my father because he did the *kurova hoko*'.

Stanley perceived himself as the owner of the homestead and also as a head. He explained: 'I am a head because I solve problems myself. But if I cannot solve them then I go to my father'.

In marriage, members of the husband's *dzinza* who perform the *kurova hoko* are usually the ones consulted over problems, but not always so. For example, for Zama's homestead, her husband's father inserted the first peg, but he described the *kurova hoko* as a ritual, because he does not expect to be consulted when problems arise in the house. 'They may not consult me,' he said, 'because my sons' wife chose a place near her parent's homestead and her family also built the house'. He thought that the wife's family would be the ones to be consulted, even though he had put in the first peg. He commented: 'my son acts as if he is the daughter-in-law (*muroora*)'.

*Kurova hoko* normally involves hammering in a peg, but it can also be accomplished in other ways, for example, by an elder member of the patrilineal kin group starting the building process by clearing the site or by some other activity. The husband and/or wife will then perform a private *kurova hoko* to protect their homestead from witches and other things believed to be bad. It is considered private because others should not know the secrets of such protection. The protection of a homestead is also called *kusunga musha* (lit. to tie the homestead) or *kugadzira musha* ('to prepare' the homestead for protection). Some use 'medicine' dug in or around the homestead and others consult African doctors (*n'anga*). I was asked if I had protected my homestead, but I said that I was not aware of such practices.

### Building houses: Gender specific tasks and perceptions

When the place is allocated and the *kurova hoko* performed, then the building can start. I saw the building of houses as the third stage of establishing a homestead. People in Manesa village build in three materials. They usually build in brick when they live on soil, which is suitable for brick making (the western side of Manesa village). They build in stone when they live on the stone-ridden hillside (the eastern side of the village). Centuries ago (1200/1300 AD), the people were already building in stone. Zimbabwe literally means a huge house of stones.<sup>4</sup> A third type of house in Manesa village is the pole, mud and grass house, though the practice is declining because of the scarcity of trees and the need to get permission from the District Council to cut trees in the village. Termites are also a big problem in pole and mud houses. I experienced their unwelcome consumption for myself. Today, the three different types of houses are still to be found in almost every homestead in Manesa village. On average, there are three to four brick houses in each homestead, one or two stone houses and one pole and mud house.<sup>5</sup>

I now explore the building of my own pole and mud house, the stone house of Miriam and the brick house of Zama. I wish to show that in practice both women and men are builders and that gender specific tasks differ according to the type of house. After exploring building practices, I look at existing gender ideas and values about house building. We will see that practice and ideas sometimes differ.

#### *A house of wattle and daub*

How my house was built and who became enrolled in the building process was for me an enlightening experience and a window on many local practices and skills. One of the water controllers took me to a builder who made an appointment to meet me next day at the farmers' meeting place in the irrigation scheme. I arrived with my research assistant and an

<sup>4</sup> From the Shona language '*Ziimba remambe*' (see also Garlake, 1982: 13).

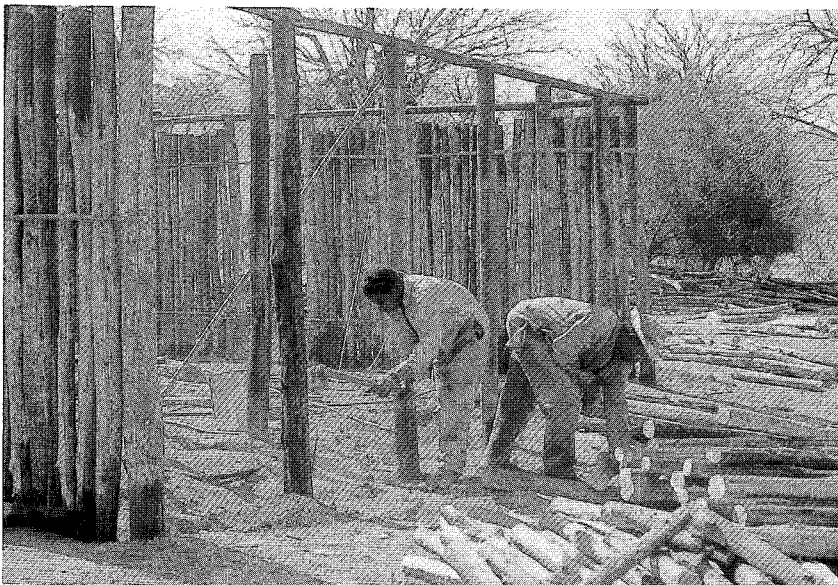
<sup>5</sup> Checklist September 1996, 55 homesteads; stratified sample.

Agritex extension official. Three men, including the builder, were seated on the edge of the canal. They presented their quotation on a small piece of paper. The Z\$3500 (US\$420) estimate was for the labour costs for building a house of stone or bricks. They were not experienced in building wattle and daub houses. Who then could build my house? When we drove back to my allocated place, I saw a young man eating sadza in front of his mud house. He was almost my neighbour and I decided to ask him if he could build a wattle and daub house for me. He agreed and said that he had a friend who could assist him. He also knew women who could daub-plaster the house. He looked at my site and I drew the plan for the house in the sand, which included a main room and three bedrooms, one for myself, one for my son who was two years old at the time and one for visitors. The builders later asked Z\$1200 (US\$150) for building the main house and I agreed.

The next task was to look for building materials. The builders, research assistant and I travelled to Chipinge (50km from Manesa) to a tree plantation of the Wattle Company. The builders cut the wattle trees to provide the long thin sticks (*hasha*), the main wallpoles (*masika*) and the minor wall-poles (*chidziro*). The poles were transported by someone from Mutema, the neighbouring village - two loads for Z\$1200. He had a small truck but it would have been too expensive to have him transport everything. An Agritex official told me that the Agricultural Rural Development Authority (ARDA, a parastatal in the Middle Sabi Estate), had large trucks and I was able to negotiate their transporting the poles for Z\$400 per load and also to pick up the grass for thatching the roof in Bonde, a village along the Chipinge road. I had arranged for the grass there with a man who came from a beerhall. He promised to cut me a lot of grass. Later his wife explained that she had cut the grass, and alone, because her husband spent his time drinking in the beerhall. My research assistant paid the man because she found it difficult to pay the woman in the presence of her husband. Later we found stronger grass at the market in Chipinge and bought the bundles from two different salesmen.

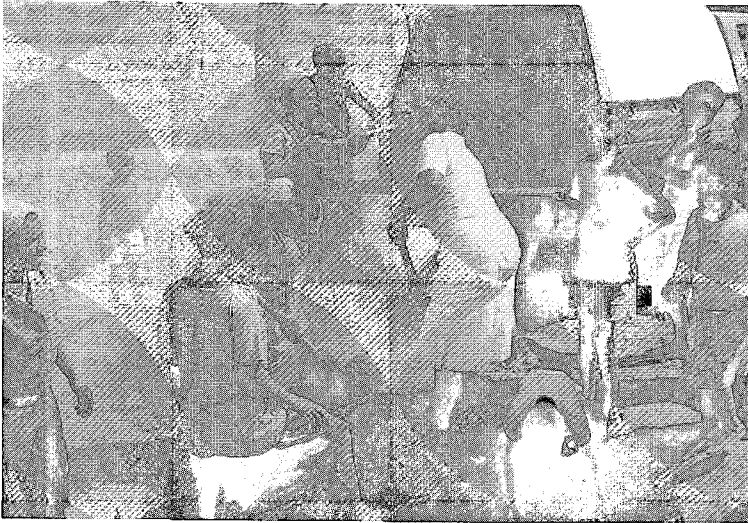
The building started 13th July 1994. The two men dug deep holes with an iron bar for the main poles of the house. They dug a trench to insert the wall poles, which were later joined together by long thin sticks.

Photo 3.2: Men building the walls of my pole house



After two weeks, on 1 August 1994, the two men started the roof and women came to plaster the walls with mud. One of the male builders had approached his late mother's sister who was his neighbour. He called her mother (*mai*). His 'mother' mobilised in her turn her daughters-in-law (*varoora*) who were the four wives of three sons and the third wife of her husband. These women all lived in one polygynous homestead. One of the male builders' wives was also involved. The builder's 'mother' was the head of the group of seven women and she negotiated the payment immediately. She wanted Z\$700 for plastering the house and I agreed. The women dug the grey and red soil nearby and carried it in buckets on their heads to the house.

Photo 3.3: Women digging soil for plastering my house. I am assisting them with my car.

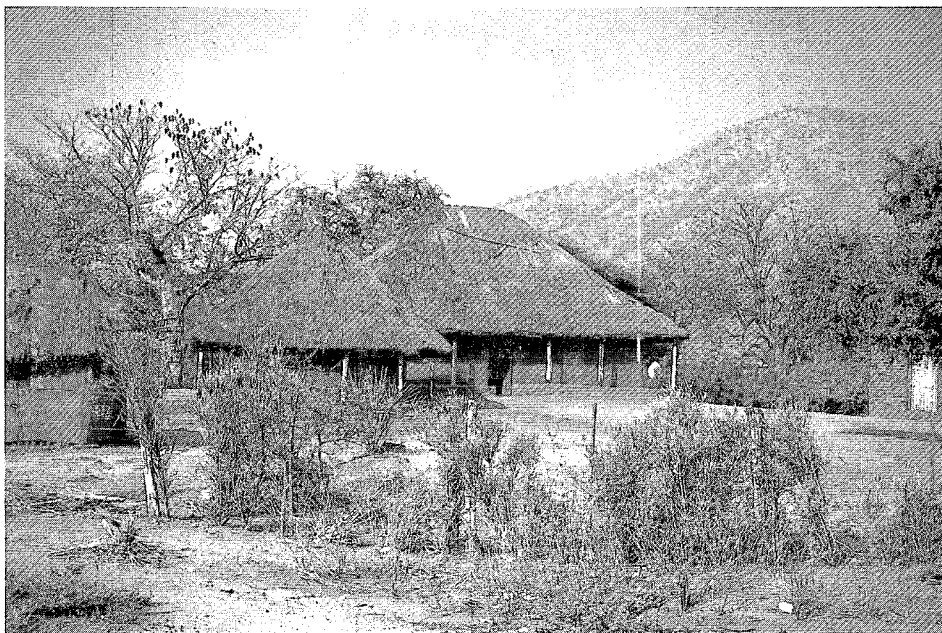


They mixed the red and grey soils in small quantities and added water to obtain a smooth mixture, which they applied to the pole walls with their hands. These women requested food for lunch during the first day of plastering, but were told it had not been part of the agreement and they must arrange it for themselves. The men never asked, most likely because they simply walked home for food prepared by wives and mothers. The women consequently took it turns to stay home to prepare the food. The women were occupied for three weeks with plastering the main house.

While the women were plastering, the men did the roofing. They asked for murara grass for thatching. Murara is a thick leaf, which is used for tying the bundles of grass onto the roof. We visited a lady who travelled frequently to the other side of the Save river. People were not allowed to visit the game Estate, but the murara grass there seemed to be better and more abundant. We bought the grass and the men boiled it to make it suitable for tying. From another woman passing by, I bought greenish powder for painting the walls. I accompanied her home to see how she made it. She obtained the greenish stones from a pit somewhere in the mountains, which she then soaked in water to soften. She then pounded them in a mortar and sieved the results to obtain a fine powder. The builder's 'mother' painted the walls inside green on top and red below. The red 'paint' was obtained from the red soil nearby. The women told me that a veranda was needed around the house and we therefore needed bricks. Both women and men make bricks for sale. We bought the bricks from a male relative of one of the male builders. The women built the veranda around the house by placing the bricks a small distance away from the house and filling in the space with sand and broken bricks and

smearing mud on top. A last layer made of a mixture of cow dung and water was then applied to the veranda. When the kitchen and the bathroom/toilet were also completed, I indicated where I wanted to have the boundaries of my homestead.

Photo 3.4: The house, kitchen, toilet/bathroom and stone house in my homestead.  
(photo M. Leneman)



The research assistant arranged for two men who were experienced and had tools to make the fence. One of them was employed by Agritex to maintain the fence around the irrigation scheme. The fence was needed to prevent the cattle, passing by in the morning and evening to and from the Save river, from eating the grass from the roof. People more often use asbestos sheets for roofing, as is the case for the house of stones which I look at now.

#### *A house of stones*

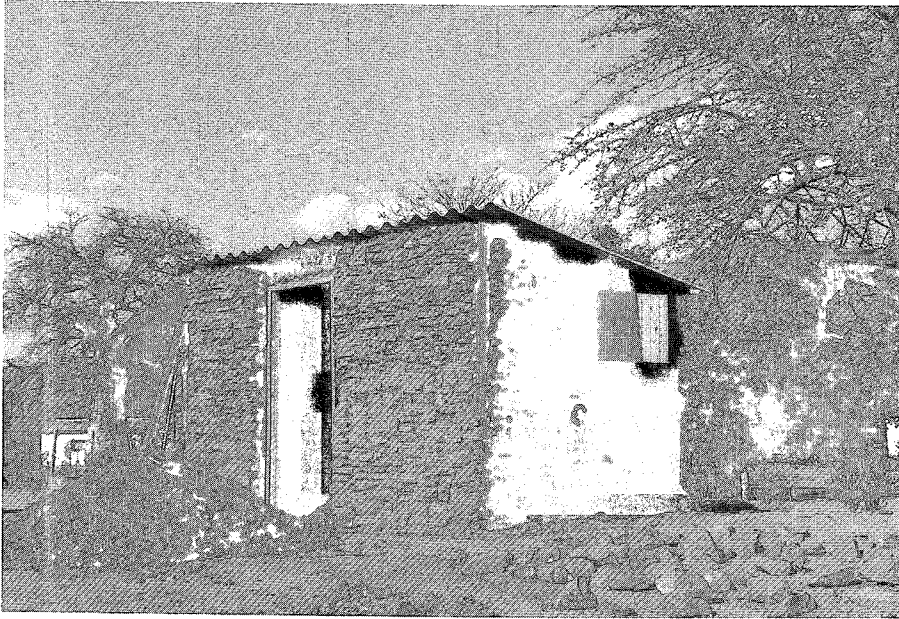
Miriam built a house of stones and arranged the building herself. I organised the labour first, but Miriam arranged the material, because her own family and children provided the labour.

Miriam bought twenty poles at Z\$4 each from her *vatete's* son (FZS) and paid him Z\$80. After that she bought nine roofing poles (*nhungo*) from him at Z\$9 each. She paid him Z\$50 cash and left the remaining Z\$31 owing. Later she paid him back with a bucket of maize worth Z\$30 and a dollar in cash. He later spent that dollar on three cups of traditional home-brewed beer. The six asbestos sheets for the roof were gifts, three from her brother in Mutema and the other three from her brother in Manesa.

Miriam and her four children transported the poles from the homestead of her *vatete's* son (FZS) to the homestead of Miriam's son. The remaining poles were transported by a male relative of Miriam's own *dzinza* who owned a scotch cart. Miriam paid him Z\$10. I used my car to transport the asbestos from the brother's homestead in Mutema to the brother's homestead in Manesa village, from where all six were collected by Miriam's sons. The place Miriam had chosen was full of stones, so the basic building material was not difficult to

obtain. Soil for plastering the walls was easily obtained from where the ground was less stony.

Photo 3.5: A house of stones (photo B. Schat)



On 13 November 1995, Miriam started to build her house with the five children of her brother who lived nearby, and her own three children. They started enthusiastically, bringing water to the homestead. Two of her elder sons, her daughter-in-law and a brother's elder son assisted with the building by gathering stones and soil. Kraalhead Panganai came that first day to inspect the site and later Miriam's brother's wife came and helped Miriam to fetch water. Miriam had to attend a funeral and was there the whole afternoon. In the evening she instructed her three older sons and her brother's elder son to come before sunrise the second day to gather stones, soil and to begin building. She helped them to gather stones and the girls to fetch water. The sons and Miriam built the stone walls and the sons put on the roof poles and fastened the asbestos sheets to them. On the third day, Miriam and her daughter-in-law plastered the inside walls. They managed to finish building the house on that third day. Then they started the kitchen. It took much longer to finish the kitchen, because her children were losing interest. The same happened in the building of my house.

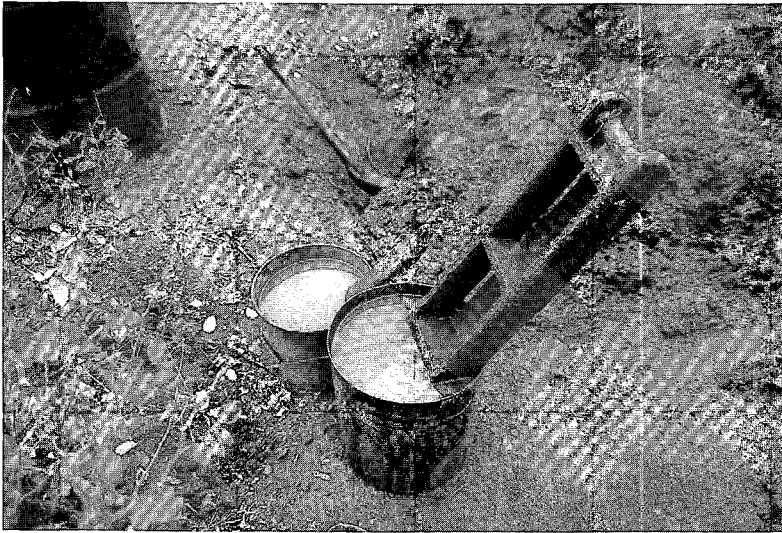
In April 1996, Miriam was bemoaning the fact that building a homestead is never finished. The main house, a round kitchen and two small cattle kraals were finished. A granary and a toilet were still on the building programme.

#### *A house of bricks*

We now look at the building of a brick house. Zama moulded bricks with her mother, the second wife of her father, with her father's third wife and the four wives of her brothers.

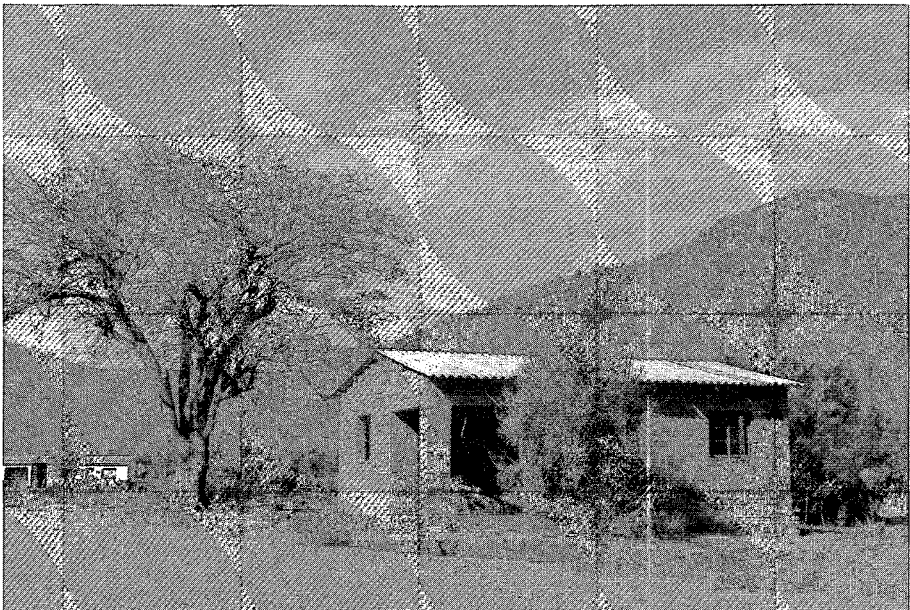


Photo 3.6: *Foroma*, a moulding tray for bricks



These women also collected firewood from the bush for Zama's brothers to bake the bricks. Her brothers' children transported the bricks and water using the oxen and scotchcart of Zama's parents. The brothers collected river sand. The builder, a neighbour of Zama's parents, was recruited by Zama's husband. He wanted Z\$600 for laying the foundation, Z\$600 for building the walls and Z\$600 for making the roof. Zama and her husband bought the door and window frames and her eldest brother helped them buy asbestos sheets and cement.

Photo 3.7: A house of bricks (photo B. Schat)



### Gender specific tasks in building

In the three different types of houses women were the organisers of the building process. Both sexes were involved in building, each having their specific tasks, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Three types of houses: gender-specific tasks in building

The wattle and daub house	
MEN	WOMEN
Cutting trees for poles	Cutting grass
Transporting poles/grass	Transporting grass
Constructing walls	
Constructing roof	Digging loam soil/anthill soil
	Transporting soil
	Fetching water
	Plastering
Thatching	Cutting murara grass
	Making paint
	Painting walls
Cementing floors	
	Constructing veranda
Fencing	
House of stones	
MEN	WOMEN
Cutting trees for poles	
Transporting	
	Fetching water
Gathering stones	Gathering stones
Digging sand	Digging sand
Constructing walls	Constructing walls
Making the roof	
House of bricks	
MEN	WOMEN
Cutting trees for firewood	Cutting firewood
	Collecting firewood
Digging river sand	Digging brick soil
	Moulding bricks
Arranging the brick oven	Arranging brick oven
Baking bricks	Baking bricks
Transporting bricks	Transporting bricks
Transporting water	Transporting water
Constructing foundation	
Constructing walls	
Cementing the floors	
Making the roof	

In terms of the gender division of labour it seems that building stone houses is less gender specific than building in wattle and daub or brick. Women's involvement in the building activities reduces from stone, to pole-mud, to bricks.

Concerning the organisation of labour and material women played the major role. Miriam relied on family labour and relatives who also provided the building materials that could not be obtained from the environment. I relied on casual workers and obtained the building



material from outside the village. Zama relied on family labour and received building material from her brother.

In terms of the costs involved in the different types of house, we see that my costs were higher due to the transport of building materials. Building a brick house is also expensive, but Zama's eldest brother assisted her. Thus the cash investments differed. Whereas Miriam spent Z\$200 (US\$24) building her stone house, I spent 50 times as much, namely Z\$10,000 (US\$1200). This was due to the fact that people requested reasonable salaries for their labour, and the materials and transport were expensive. For the brick house, the labour costs were around Z\$2000 and the cost of asbestos sheets was approximately Z\$3000. The door and window frames were provided by the brother, and he provided transport. Hence, an approximate cost for the brick house was Z\$6000 (US\$720).

So far we have explored some actual building practices. Let us now look at some gender perceptions concerning house building.

#### *Gender perceptions about building houses*

In general, men are perceived as the builders of houses. 'When people talk about builders, you think of men', was a general reaction. 'The men are the main builders', said one woman. 'because they do the thatching and *chidziro* (poles for the walls). Women only do the plastering'. This hardly fits the facts, as we have seen, for women organise and help gather together the materials for the house and certainly in wattle and daub houses the plastering or daubing is as important as the wattling.

Photo 3.8: Women plastering my pole house



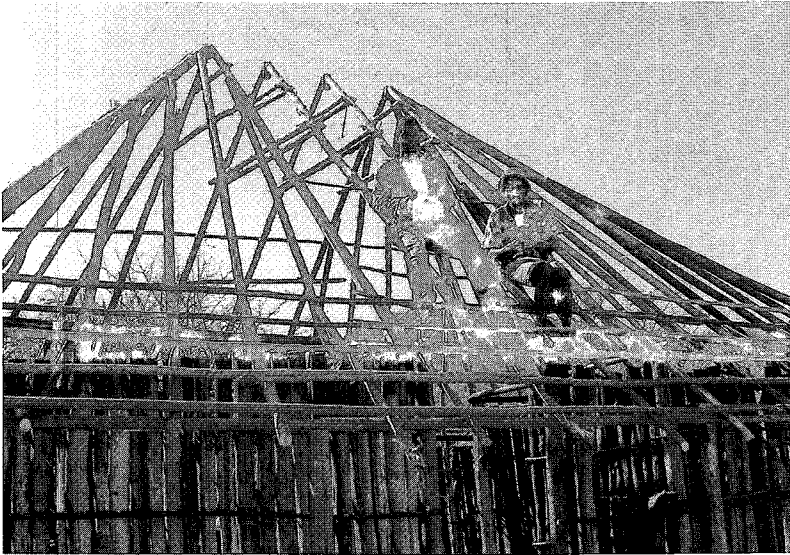
But many women said women are also builders in the sense that they can build houses without the help of men. They need men only for the roofing as one woman confirmed when she said: 'Women can build houses of stones or poles on their own and then look for somebody to make the roof. Women do not make roofs, because then they would need trousers', meaning of course that it is embarrassing for women to be up ladders with only a cloth wrapped around them (*mazambia*) or with a dress or skirt.

Thus the roof is a typical building activity which is done by men. Another woman confirmed this as she pointed to a house in her yard.

'That house was built by my eldest daughter-in-law. The *muroora* made the foundation and she finished the walls. She only left the roofing'.

Hence, the roof is expected to be constructed by men. If women are seen on a roof, then people will react and say: 'Come down, can't you brew beer?' (Vijfhuizen, 1994). The comment refers to the fact that if women are not assisted in the construction of a roof by casual labourers, sons or relatives, as in the three cases I have explored, then they are expected to brew beer. Men will come and do the roof for women in exchange for beer. Organising labour this way is called *humwe* (see Chapter 4).

Photo 3.9: Men on the roof of my house



Thus in terms of division of labour, both women and men distinguish between different types of houses. Women were usually perceived as builders of stone-houses, and men as builders of brick houses. In villages and towns men build houses with foundations and bricks. This may be the reason why in general men in the first instance are seen as house builders, because they can build all types of houses and can be involved in most building tasks.

### ***Chiutsi*: beer, food and ancestors**

I perceived the *chiutsi* party as the fourth and last stage of establishing a homestead. *Chiutsi* means smoke. When villagers see smoke rising from a newly established homestead, they will express surprise and wonder who is living there. Thus some form of public announcement is seen to be needed and hence every family in a new homestead is obliged to organise a *chiutsi* party. Sometimes it can take a year or longer before the family organises the party. The party is also called *mabiko* from *kubika*, to cook. A lot of food and beer is needed for the party, since villagers are invited to come and eat and drink, and secondly, the ancestral spirits are also honoured by offerings of beer and food. The ancestors must be honoured for people believe that the ancestors will then protect the families in the respective homesteads from illness and misfortune. After the *chiutsi* party women and men obtain several rights and obligations. Such a right, for instance, is to be able to demand fire and salt from neighbours.

I organised a *chiutsi* party on 21 January 1995. At that time I did not realise exactly what kind of implications it would have. I will discuss below how women and men are involved in such a party and briefly indicate some of the rights and obligations that emerged from becoming a part of the village.

### *The party*

Among the Shona, it is women who brew beer, thus I requested Manyepa to do the job for me. Manyepa and her daughters-in-law had helped to plaster my house. She started brewing at the end of December 1994 and brewed two big drums of beer. During the beer brewing it rained a lot. That was a good sign for the people in the village who said 'the ancestors have accepted the party'. Manyepa and her 'women's group' were also responsible for cooking sadza and vegetables.

Early in the morning on the day of the *chiutsi* party, my research assistant collected two goats and a cock. Village head Manesa and Haaperi, Manesa's advisor and Manyepa's husband waited impatiently. At 8.30 I was called into my round kitchen where Manesa and two of his wives, Haaperi and his wife Manyepa were present. We all sat on the floor before four big claypots of beer. The two men clapped their hands, and the women followed suit. Women are always present when men worship ancestors. Manesa praised Manyepa for doing a good job of brewing the beer. Everybody in the kitchen had to taste the beer. Haaperi finalised the ritual by saying: 'The beer is very good, you did a great job'. Haaperi went to the claypots and knelt down saying:

'This is a benediction to the ancestors that Carin is staying here, in this area, as all other people. If Carin goes back to her country she will say that she is going.<sup>6</sup> There should be Carin's pot of beer, for her ancestors too'.

When Haaperi moved back to his place, village head Manesa declared that two pots were for Carin's ancestors and two for Manesa's. He explained that all the pots would be worshipped together so that their different ancestors would reply or receive the benediction. Manesa said: 'To pray to God or to worship ancestors, everything goes to God' (*kunamata Mwari, kupira vadzimu, zvose zvinoenda kuna Mwari*) and he invited me to pray to whatever I believed in, God or ancestors. I went to the claypots, knelt down and sat there for a while, wishing that my child, family, friends and I would be healthy, that my relations would be good and that my research and writings would succeed.

Village head Manesa and his advisor clapped their hands when I was back. Then Manesa knelt down in front of the beer pots with the fowl in his hands. He moved his lips and nodded his head. Haaperi said suddenly: 'oh, you have forgotten to take snuff'. Manesa took the snuffbox offered to him and said:

'My ancestors and all others here, we come to tell you about this child of yours, Carin, who is staying at this place. We ask you to take care of her also and to guide her in her studies and the way she stays here, at her place'.

Haaperi also put snuff in his nostrils and said: 'look after those who come here and let them live well with others'. Manesa handed the fowl to his advisor. The fowl was called *gocha*, which meant it should be roasted. The two men, then, discussed whether it should be roasted or cooked. Manesa suggested that it should be cooked, because if people saw the bird roasting they may think a difficult benediction was taking place. Manesa added that the worship here was not the same as for big chiefs. At the place where the elder chiefs are buried the cock is always roasted and that when cooking the vegetables no seasoning would be added for long ago chiefs did not use salt. If people put salt in the food today, the ancestors would not like it. Meanwhile, the people outside wanted their beer and became

<sup>6</sup> On 28 February 1998 we organised a big party in the village to inform the people that the research was over and that I would come back with the book.

restless. Two small pots, Manesa's and mine, were carried outside the kitchen. These small pots were called: *nhanga murandu*, meaning literally to begin the channel, or in other words, to start off the beer drinking.

Many villagers had arrived and also my colleagues from the project and Universities of Wageningen and Harare. We were approximately 200 in number, including 20 kraalheads from neighbouring villages. Village head Manesa opened the party with a prayer and said 'let us walk with each other'. After that I gave a speech introducing my visitors and gave presents to village head Manesa, the Councillor and the Chairlady of the IMC, who all assisted me in establishing my place. Others were then invited to speak. A headmaster of a school explained that everybody wondered about the white lady who stopped everywhere and wrote things down. However, now they all understood and were very willing to co-operate. After the speeches<sup>7</sup>, primary school children, followed by adult men from the village, performed the traditional dances (*muchongoyo*). And the women sang songs.

During lunchtime I was again called into the kitchen by Manesa and his advisor. The food, i.e. the chicken and sadza needed to be offered to the ancestors. Manesa took the chicken and a plate of sadza and knelt in front of the pots of beer. He talked in a low voice, informing the ancestors that this was the meat and sadza that they should accept and that the food was ready for the people to eat. The shoulders and heads of the slaughtered goats were brought into the kitchen and offered to the ancestors for their blessing.

In the afternoon all enjoyed the beer and sang songs. A woman explained that these songs would inform the ancestors that their families were well and that wives and husbands were enjoying life together. By early evening the beer was not yet finished, but I decided to end the party because our young children had to sleep and visitors wanted to get back home. Manesa and a few others poured the leftover beer into plastic containers and took it to their homesteads.

#### *Some rights and obligations*

I often heard people say that I was a villager because I had my own homestead and had organised a *chiutsi* party. Then I knew that something else was about to follow, something I was expected to do (an obligation), or was allowed to do (a right). Let me give a few examples of these obligations and rights. Many people of the village passed away during the years I was there, often due to HIV/AIDS. I was more or less obliged to attend funerals when I was present in the village, and had to pay a condolence fee. Another obligation was to greet chiefs in a certain way, to sit like all the other women in the sand and clap my hands. Not all chiefs expected this of me, but one chief would have liked me to greet him this way other women did, but later excused me from the obligation and accepted a hand shake, as he could see I had difficulties with it. Men remained standing and only had to lift their hand or shake the chief's hand. Another obligation was to buy beer for the chiefs or give them other presents.

On the other hand I had the right to attend all ceremonies and parties in the village. I also had the right to have land, but never requested it because of land scarcity. Village head Manesa suggested once that I make a garden under the baobab tree in front of my house. But I never did, for I did not consider myself to have time for gardening.

### 3.2 PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HEADSHIP

We have seen that *kurova hoko* is an important practice when establishing a homestead. The practice is related to the notion of homestead headship. Husbands, fathers and their sisters are

<sup>7</sup> Other speakers were: the councillor who introduced all the kraalheads to the gathering; The vice-chairman of the IMC who presented green mealies and a doormat as gifts to me; the Agritex Irrigation Supervisor; Semwayo, one of the 'bigger' chiefs of Mutema chieftaincy (see chapter 6). Everybody mentioned and appreciated the fact that I lived among them.

perceived as heads. Women without or with absent husbands do not perceive themselves as such, though men in the same situation do. Married or not, women certainly do not see themselves as such in the place where they marry and live. Thus perceptions about headship differ and here we explore some differences.

### Homesteads in the village

In the village survey (Vijfhuizen, July 1995) I asked 'who is head (*mukuru*) of this homestead'? Both women and men answered the questions, but women were in the majority (74%) as against men (26%) (N=314 homesteads). They usually indicated one person as head of the homestead where they lived. Heads of homesteads are depicted in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Heads of homesteads

N = 314	WWH 81	WAH 34	PS 23	POL 46	PP/M 46	M 62	EXT 21	TOTAL
HF	26	17	8	22	11	33	6	123; 39%
H		6	12	20	29	26	14	107; 34%
HFF	4	5	2	2	2	2		17; 5%
H (dec)	16							16; 5%
S	12						1	13; 4%
F	6			1	3			10; 3%
Herself	6	1						7; 2%
HB	1	2		1				4; 1%
God/Spirits	1	1			1	1		4; 1%
Mother	2		1					3; 1%
HF (dec)	1	1						2; 1%
MB	1							1
HS	1							1
FF		1						1
FB	1							1
B	1							1
Self/F	1							1
?	1							1

dec: deceased; H: Husband; F: Father; B: brother; S: son; M: mother; HF: Husband's father;

HFF: Husband's father's father;

FF: Father's father;

?: Don't know;

WWH: Women Without Husbands;

WAH: Women with Absent Husbands;

PS: Polygyny Separate (wives in different homesteads);

POL: Polygyny at present and wives in one homestead;

PP/M: Polygyny in Past, but Monogamous at present;

M: Monogamous;

EXT: Extended.

Table 3.2 shows that both husbands' father and husband (in total 73%) are perceived as homestead heads. The husband's father is more often mentioned as head. Table 3.3 depicts that aunts (HFZ/HZ) are also perceived as heads of homesteads. The question was: Is *vatete* also head (*mukuru*) of this homestead? (see abbreviations from Table 3.2).

Table 3.3: *Vatete* (HFZ/HZ): head of homesteads

N = 303	WWH 81	WAH 34	PS 23	POL 46	PP/M 46	M 62	EXT 21	TOTAL
YES	67	31	20	43	36	51	20	268; 88%
NO	13	0	1	3	10	7	1	35; 12%

Thus, two types of head seem to be emerging, older ones usually living outside the respective homestead - the husband's father and husband's sisters (aunts), and younger ones who live at the homestead - primarily the husband. Let's now look a little closer at these two types of heads.

1) Older women and men, usually outside the homestead, are the so-called '*dzinza* heads'. They should be informed of any problems and be involved in mediation and negotiation in the homesteads of their *dzinza* (patrikin). In practice, '*dzinza* heads' are indeed informed and consulted about severe problems, for which they usually also have to worship their ancestors (*vadzimu*). People mentioned the following as problems for which they inform and consult the *dzinza* heads: death, illness, court cases, ancestor worshipping, marriage payments; conflicts between husband and wife which usually emerge from problems in marriage; borrowing money/animals; inheritance; consulting *n'anga* and *kurova hoko*<sup>8</sup>. *Dzinza* heads who advise, assist and negotiate in problems are both women and men<sup>9</sup>, as depicted in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: *Dzinza* members who assist

B:	56%
HFZ:	44%
HZ:	25%
F:	14%
FB:	11%
HZ children:	6%
S:	6%
D:	6%
W:	3%

Thus *dzinza* heads who assist in difficult problems are sisters (HFZ+HZ 69%), brothers (B+FB 67%), and fathers (F and FB 25%). This again relates to reciprocal ties between brothers and sisters.

2) The second type of heads are women and men in the homesteads who also solve their own day to day problems. That is also a reason why husbands are perceived as heads, by themselves, their wives and others in the homesteads. Almost all married men (97%)<sup>10</sup> said they largely solve problems themselves. All of them they consult *dzinza* heads when they cannot solve the problems alone. How, then, do women as mothers and wives perceive themselves in the homesteads where they are married and live? Are there also female heads? Let's now explore that issue.

### Female heads?

It is remarkable that women without husbands (WWH; 26% of the homesteads; mainly widows), women with absent husbands (WAH; 13%), and women who have husbands in

<sup>8</sup> Checklist September 1996; mentioned in sequence of importance.

<sup>9</sup> Checklist September 1996; stratified sample; 20 women; 35 men.

<sup>10</sup> Checklist September 1996.

other homesteads (PS, polygynous separate; 8%), in general do not perceive themselves as heads of the homesteads where they live. Women with absent husbands and women in the 'polygynous separate homesteads' perceive their husbands as heads. Table 3.5 shows who the widows perceive as heads of the homesteads where they live.<sup>11</sup>

Table 3.5: Heads of homesteads of widows

Late H:	40%
Late HF:	15%
S:	15%
Herself as widow:	10%
Widow's father:	5%
HB:	5%
H:	5%
HZ:	5%

Thus only a very few widows perceive themselves as heads, like an old widow explained:

I solve all the problems myself. The problems (*nhamo*) knock on my door and not on the door of the *dzinza* (patrikin). Those widows who say that they are not heads (*vakuru*) are foolish, because they solve many themselves. How can you be left in a homestead of somebody else, doing nothing?"

Sixty percent of the widows said that they usually solve their problems alone, 10% with the help of sons (10%), and 35% said they had help from other people (35%), but the majority did not perceive themselves as heads. The view of the old widow above is in the minority. The main reason for not seeing themselves as heads is that they were or are married and therefore live in a homestead, which belongs to the husband's patrilineal kin. Thus when there are big problems, the heads of the husband's patrikin should be consulted so they may consult their ancestral spirits. All women without husbands said that they consult the (late) husband's '*dzinza* heads' in case of illness, death and worshipping ancestors. However, 20% of the women said they consult the husband's *dzinza* but they do not help them. The rest said that in severe problems the late husband's brother helped (40%); or his sister (20%); their own children (15%); and the wife's father (5%).

Thus, when women say they are not heads because they take problems to the late husband's *dzinza*, they mean that in serious trouble they depend on his patrikin to consult his *dzinza*'s ancestors, because their children belong to the husband's *dzinza*. Many women feel this as a form of continuous control (*kutarisa*). They are obliged or at least expected to inform the patrikin even when they are unlikely to get help, because the husband's patrikin often 'also have their own problems'. If problems are not severe, but are about day to day matters such as food shortage, then 70% of the women said that they usually consult their own children, 15% their own parents and brothers, or they are not assisted by anyone (15%). Thus, women without husbands, or with absent husbands do not live without men.

It is not only out of respect or common discourse that women as wives and widows do not mention themselves, but husbands and fathers as heads of the homesteads where they marry and live. It is common practice to consult and they are expected to consult the (late) husband's *dzinza*, because the homestead belongs to his *dzinza*. If, as divorced women often do, the women live in homesteads with their own *dzinza*, then they perceive their fathers or brothers as heads, because they are the ones they consult if they have real problems. Women as sisters, perceive themselves<sup>12</sup> and are perceived as heads in the homesteads of their own

<sup>11</sup> Checklist September 1996; 20 women, mainly widows, stratified sample.

<sup>12</sup> Are you a head (*mukuru*) in the homestead where you were born? No: 25%; Yes: 75%; Checklist September 1996

*dzinza*. Brothers will rely on their sisters when they have severe problems in their homesteads.

That married women do not perceive themselves as heads of the homesteads where they marry is not only related to the husband's ancestors and children, but also to ancestors of their own *dzinza*. They continue to remain members of their own *dzinza* and they keep their own totem. It is believed that the snuffbox in the bridewealth payment, 'makes the connection' between the ancestors of the two *dzinza*. Women thus perceive their natal home as their real home. Both women (68% (N=277)) and men (80% (N= 200)) said that a woman's ancestral spirits reside in her own place of birth. Thirty-two percent of women said that their ancestral spirits were in both natal and marital homesteads. Both said that married women have their own place (meaning their natal place) for worshipping their ancestral spirits. Consequently, the wife's roots are seen as being elsewhere, which is why they are seen, and see themselves, as strangers or outsiders in the husband's *dzinza* (*vatorwa*, those who have been taken from outside). However, the belief is that the women's own ancestral spirits will protect and accompany them independent of the place they stay. Women make small offerings to their ancestral spirits in the homestead when they brew beer for the ancestors of their husband's *dzinza*. However, they usually travel home when their own ancestral spirits are worshipped or when major problems arise in their own family or with themselves. A woman is thus not entirely dependent on her new home in times of trouble. As we have seen in this and the previous chapter and we shall see again below and very clearly in Chapter 7.

Although women do not perceive themselves as heads in the homesteads among their husband's *dzinza*, some husbands see their wives as heads because 'they do everything in the homestead....without a wife it would not be a home', they said. That refers to a proverb in Shona culture namely *musha mukadzi*, meaning that the success of a homestead depends on a woman. Also several men perceive divorced or widowed women as heads since they organise everything in the homestead themselves. Men were often of the opinion that both women and men are heads of homesteads because men depend on women, they said. A man explained:

'Upon a husband's death the wife will remain in the homestead to look after the children.

But if a wife dies, the husband cannot live alone and he will look for another woman'.

Despite what men might say, married women tend to see themselves more as workers (*vashandi*), farmers (*varimi*) and organisers (*varongi*). They commonly associate heads (*vakuru*), rulers (*vatongi*) and leaders (*vatungamiri*) with husbands. But in the broader sense, both women and men are perceived as heads, as they rely on sisters as aunts, brothers as uncles, on fathers and husbands. Thus the gender identity associated with specific relationships is of crucial importance in relation to notions of headship. Let us now see how these notions work out in practice.

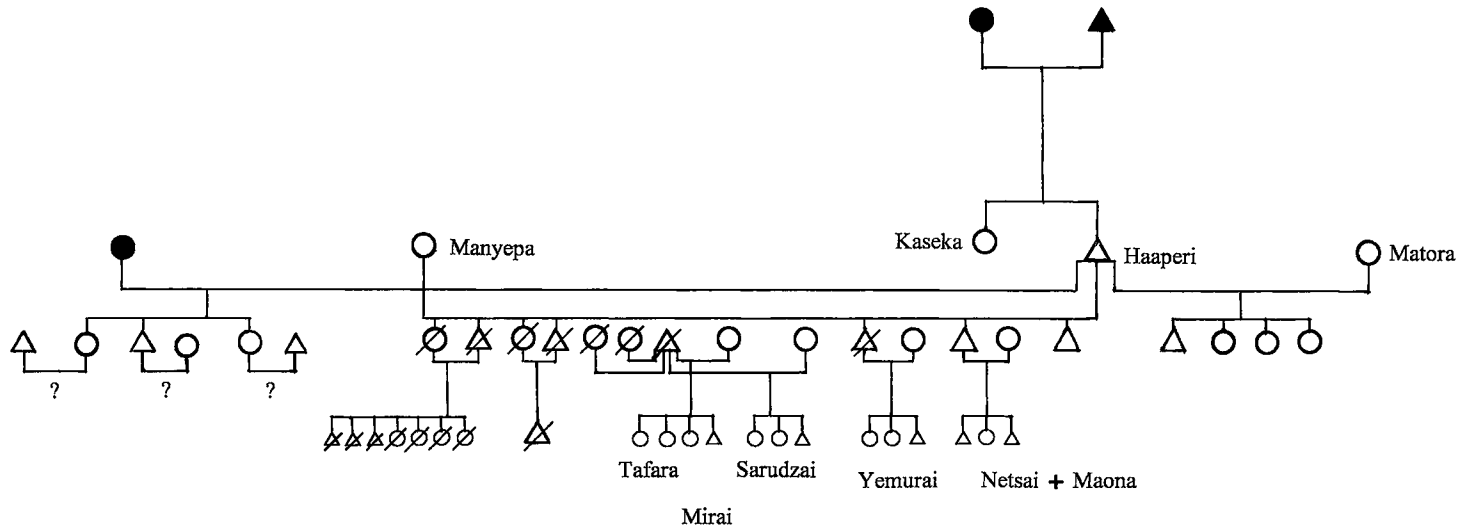
### 3.3 HEADSHIP IN PRACTICE: A POLYGYNOUS HOMESTEAD

The way people live together and alone in homesteads is enormously varied, resulting in broad heterogeneity between homesteads (see Table 1.1 in the introduction). It is not possible to explore every variation. I give here only two examples, i.e. a polygynous (3.3) and a monogamous homestead (3.4). In these homesteads I explore the interaction, areas of activity and the power struggles among women, among men, and between them. Each woman and man has a position in the homestead's hierarchy, which is also historically shaped. By exploring these homesteads, I show that in practice more than one head emerges within a homestead.

#### Production, storage, distribution and consumption

Genealogy 3.1 depicts the names of the social actors mentioned in the analysis of this polygynous homestead.





▲ = deceased men

△ = man

○ = woman

⊗ = absent women and men

● = deceased women

○ △ = (grand)children

This polygynous homestead was built in the late seventies, after the family had moved for the third time. By this time the first wife of husband Haaperi had passed away, leaving behind three children. The second wife, Manyepa, had four sons and two daughters. The eldest daughter was married elsewhere and the youngest daughter was married in Manesa village. The eldest migrant son, Tafara, had also married several wives, of whom two, Mirai and Sarudzai, lived in the homestead in Manesa village. The other two sons, one a migrant, were each married, and their wives, Yemurai and Netsai also lived in the homestead. One son was still single. The sons with wives have children who are still young. Husband Haaperi married a third wife, Matora, and he has three children by her. They all live together in one homestead (see appendix 7).

I now explore the interactions and dynamics of decision-making in such a polygynous, extended homestead. Haaperi is in his seventies and he is seen as head of the homestead. Manyepa is fifty-eight and also is seen as a head in the homestead. The following encounter depicts how Manyepa organises the collective consumption of the homestead with her daughters-in-law.

Manyepa greeted Netsai who had returned from the hills with firewood. Then she asked Mirai if she had cooked breakfast for the people. Mirai replied that she had not baked bread because she did not have sugar. Manyepa asked why she had not informed her earlier.

Manyepa keeps goods such as sugar for collective consumption in her bedroom or granaries. The two granaries in the homestead belong to her since she was the only wife when the homestead was established. That historical fact has an important impact on the present, giving her control over food and its distribution in the homestead. Manyepa carries the key of the granary on a string around her neck, as do many of the women. 'I am the one who looks after the food in the granary', she said, 'but when all the food is finished I go to *baba* (father, meaning her husband) to let him know we have no food left'. The father is then supposed to help by buying food.

There were four kitchens in the homestead, two of which belonged to Mirai and Yemurai the daughters-in-law of one polygynous and one monogamous son, and two belonged to Manyepa (second wife of Haaperi) and Matora (third wife). Daughters-in-law Sarudzai and Netsai did not yet have their own kitchens and cooked in the kitchen of Manyepa. Netsai will get her own kitchen when Manyepa's youngest son marries. The new *muroora* will then be expected to cook with Sarudzai in Manyepa's kitchen. Manyepa organized it that way so there are always two women available and responsible for the cooking in her kitchen. Manyepa explained:

'We work together (in the fields) and we eat together. When the maize is harvested from all the fields the women carry it home and heap it in my kitchen. After threshing, we put the maize in bags and I divide the bags among the women (the four kitchens). The remaining maize is stored in my granary (*hozi*). When their bags are finished, they come to me and I tell them they can collect maize from my granary, bucket by bucket'.

Mirai stored her maize in her room of the main house and had one bag left in November 1994. Yemurai kept the maize in her own house and had 3 bags in November. She still had a considerable amount because she had been away for some months, staying with her husband in Harare. The third wife of Haaperi, Matora, kept her maize on the right hand side of Manyepa's granary and she had two bags in November. Sarudzai and Netsai, the two wives of the eldest son, kept their maize in their own rooms of the main house. They had finished their three bags and were using the maize kept on the left hand side of Manyepa's granary.

Each kitchen provided a daily evening meal. The woman to finish cooking relish first, i.e. the vegetables or meat, would shout *chitereka*, meaning 'put the pots on the fire for the

sadza.<sup>13</sup> In that way all the women would finish cooking at the same moment and would bring the cooked food in plates to Manyepa's kitchen. From there the food would be divided between three different groups: the men, who ate in the main house, the women, who ate in Manyepa's dining room, and the children who ate in her kitchen. Hence, everyone said 'we eat from the same plate'.

The same principle of 'working and eating together' not only applied for maize, but also for wheat. Bread was baked in turns (*maduties*) and every day one of the women baked bread of the wheat harvested from the fields they had worked together. Manyepa claimed that every week they took one bucket of wheat from her granary (*hozi*) and the one on duty informed her it had been taken. Each woman paid for her bucket of wheat to be ground at the mill. The ground wheat was then kept in Manyepa's kitchen. The women who baked bread took a tin of the ground wheat from the bucket until it was empty. The first wheat had been harvested from the fields of Mirai and Sarudzai and only two buckets were left in November. Manyepa explained: 'When we finish their wheat we will tell Yemurai it is finished and Yemurai will say: 'let us eat as usual'. We harvested 3.5 bags from Yemurai's field. None of us sell our wheat'. Women were responsible for their own relish and all of them cultivated vegetables on their allocated plots and in the garden of Maona, Manyepa's third son.

Related to production, storage, distribution and consumption of agricultural produce in homesteads, in Manyepa's polygynous homestead the women worked individually and collectively on the land, harvested and stored the produce collectively and individually, and distributed the produce among themselves and between the different kitchens. The remaining produce was stored in the granary of the eldest wife, but it was accessible for everyone when their own supply was finished. The eldest wife was in charge of the granary and kept the key. In the example of the monogamous homestead (3.4) the wife also controlled the granary and kept the key. However, I checked control over the granary in other polygynous and extended homesteads and found that both women and men controlled distribution of produce from the granary. In 50% of the homesteads<sup>14</sup> it was mothers/wives who had control and kept the key and in the other 50% it was fathers/husbands who kept the keys. In the polygynous homestead above they consumed their food in three different groups, men, women, and the younger children, boys and girls. Almost all homesteads, big or small, eat in these groups. There are very few homesteads where men, women and children eat in one group and from individual plates.

Apart from controlling and organizing the consumption and distribution women, as did Manyepa, also look after the children in the homestead.

### Children: schooling and health

Manyepa closely monitors all her small grandchildren (*vazukuru*) in the homestead as the following encounter shows.

Sarudzai told Manyepa that tea was ready and Manyepa called all women into her dining room. Manyepa entered first and the others followed. Manyepa asked Mirai, her daughter-in-law, what she had prepared for her daughter to take with her to the boarding school that day. Mirai responded that she had prepared rice and peanut butter. Manyepa said she should also buy a piece of meat from Chicororo butchery. The mother-in-law stressed that a mother ought to be prepared to sacrifice for her children and that meat helped to keep the mind fertile at school. 'Do something for your daughter', said Manyepa. Mirai replied that she wished she had the money. Manyepa responded, 'no child will go without from this homestead'.

<sup>13</sup> First grain (maize or millet in this homestead) must be pounded and grinded. Next, this mealie meal is cooked until a very thick stage, the sadza, which will be eaten in lumps.

<sup>14</sup> 11 polygynous and 7 extended homesteads

Manyepa also organises issues related to health. One day a grandchild (*muzukuru*), the two-year old son of Netsai, stood near Manyepa's dining room unable to walk because of wounds on his legs. Manyepa asked Netsai why she did not take him to the clinic. She said that she was also surprised to see that the child could not walk unaided. Manyepa picked the child up and told Netsai to visit the clinic that day, which, after bathing, she did.

Manyepa also looks after her old husband Haaperi. Haaperi feels this and once whimsically said to me, 'I hold nothing. It is Manyepa who has all the powers. I just wait for my sadza'. But the couple can often be seen sitting and talking together on one of the verandas of the houses in the homestead. 'When we are together', he explained,

'We discuss how the children can best survive, what we can do for the family, what to do when there is no sugar or other necessity. But for agriculture, I have given all control to Manyepa. We need food to support our children. If a man and a woman do not organize together, then that homestead will get nowhere'.

Haaperi had a pension and that could also have been a reason for discussing the homestead's collective consumption with him. Sometimes he travelled to the district town Chipinge to buy the various goods. Haaperi was perceived by all the women and men in the homestead as its owner and head, and was thus usually informed by Manyepa and his sons about their (planned) activities. He usually agreed with their plans, as he explained:

'Manyepa sells salt and paraffin. She told me that she was going to do that and I agreed. She does that to support my family. Not her own family over there.

Haaperi says that Tafara and his second wife organize the homestead. He seems to be satisfied with this, but the other women, such as his third wife and daughters-in-law criticize their management.

### Land and cash: maintaining the households

Many power struggles are about land issues, and often relate to efforts to obtain irrigated plots (Chapter 5). Power struggles among chiefs are also often related to land (Chapter 6). Having usufruct rights to irrigated land is important to the households within a homestead, and they will often compete to control such land because the produce from it means food and cash. Manyepa controls the allocation of land in the homestead and sometimes also the cash from it and this can cause rancour.

The organization of land and cash in this polygynous homestead is as follows. Haaperi was registered for an irrigated plot of two acres.<sup>15</sup> From this land, Manyepa allocated nine *madhunduru* to herself, six to the third wife Matora (6), and five in total to Mirai and Sarudzai, the two wives of her eldest son Tafara. The wife of the second son, Yemurai, had an irrigated plot of one acre to herself, which she had been given a long time ago when she became the first daughter-in-law in the homestead. That plot was registered in the name of a son of the deceased first wife of Haaperi. Yet although the plot was recognized in the homestead, as Yemurai's, her maize was put with the maize from the other plots and redistributed by Manyepa. The same applied to the wheat from the plot, which was kept in her house but was used collectively. Yemurai decided independently about the tomato produce from that acre, but was expected to contribute if the homestead needed assistance. Netsai, wife of the third son Maona, used the garden registered in Maona's name. She explained to me while eating sadza under a banana tree in that garden. 'When the schools are open, I am always here. On Saturday's and Sunday's the children will come to chase away the goats and monkeys'.

But all these different pieces of land were still not enough. Manyepa also actively rented irrigated land (*madhunduru*), because, as she explained,

<sup>15</sup> 20 *madhunduru*; one *dhunduru* is 0,04 hectare.

'The plot of Haaperi is not mine. I cannot be proud of it. The produce from that plot is to look after the family (*kuchengeta mhuri*). I can be proud of the plot I rented last season. I earned money by selling maize and groundnuts from it and I bought a wardrobe. I can also be proud of my garden. I earn money by selling bananas'.

This 'individual' land allocation by Manyepa should give an indication of the collective and individual activities and responsibilities one might expect of each woman. However, the land was not really exploited individually since it was Manyepa herself who controlled it and made decisions about the produce from her husband's two-acre irrigated plot, and even controlled the cash from the tomato harvests raised by the women. Manyepa gave Haaperi a small amount of the cash from the tomato sales. That Manyepa redistributed the cash created envy among the women. The third wife, Matora, complained that she had six *madhunduru* of her own,

'but now I cultivate only three. Manyepa said that since we have a shortage of water (1995), it is better to cultivate only one acre and then divide the income from it.<sup>16</sup> Manyepa gave me Z\$150.40. I have Z\$100 right now. I gave Z\$40 to my brother as credit. I think I will buy a towel for my daughter. From the Z\$100 I want to buy shoes for my son and myself. She gave me a second sum of Z\$225.27, but I don't want to use it. I want to buy something big with it but I don't yet know what, but I am thinking of something special. All of us, we were given the same amount'.

'I don't usually see what's going on when we pick tomatoes or know how many boxes are mine. We just work. I received this time only a very small amount of money because we were pushed into working together. I thought Manyepa would give me the chance to work for myself on the three *madhunduru*, but I was surprised. I planted tomatoes and when the tomatoes were about to ripen, I heard Manyepa tell us not use our own name to send the tomatoes to the company, but to use the registered name of the plot. I was shocked. Manyepa has upset me, because I had set my mind on a certain sum. I just don't have the power to say anything. I can see that they are not fair to me. In other homesteads you are given *madhunduru* and you work for yourself and then only later will the elders ask to see the money from the company. We sold for cash (to private buyers) three times, and I was only given Z\$40 each time. The second time there were fifteen boxes but Manyepa's daughter told us there were only eight. However, the woman who bought the boxes told me she had bought fifteen. Yet I did not question it. I always keep quiet. Now I have been given Z\$225 from the company for July. I was told to buy fertilizers and chemicals and yet it is a very small amount. Think of it. I have to buy salt and pay for the grinding mill and all the other things. With such a small sum I can do nothing. It is so difficult for me. I am not going to buy fertilizer. It is not my concern. I am going to buy clothes for my children or anything else I want. I know we still have three tonnes of tomatoes to come. Manyepa is going to use that money for what? She heaps work on us, as though we were men. We can afford nothing. And then Manyepa's daughter is always here on the plot. She picks tomatoes and steals some to sell to private buyers. Right now she has a lot of money. I was given three *madhunduru* and there were nice tomatoes on them. Manyepa saw that I was heading for a good harvest. Then she was clever enough to combine my three *madhunduru* with hers and work together with me. To tell the truth, things are not going well for me. I cannot even get Z\$200 out of three *madhunduru*. If I was alone I could get Z\$200 in one morning. I try to take issues as far as I can, but I get no help. Even if I tell *vatete* Kaseka (her HZ), she won't say anything. The funny thing about Manyepa is that no one can change her. All the daughters-in-law say that she is unfair. Sometimes she spends the money before dividing

<sup>16</sup> During the tomato cultivation in 1995 (March-September) there was a shortage of water in the irrigation scheme. Therefore Agritex' extension officials only allowed farmers to cultivate one of their two acres.

it. The money is given to the daughter before we sit down to share it. Sometimes Manyepa uses it without informing me she has done so. It is always difficult for us to see what is going on in our homestead'.

'Now I work very hard, but when it comes to money, things are not clear. We agreed last time to buy chitengas (cloth to use as wraps for skirts, called *mazambia*). The others were afraid, but I was brave enough to tell the person who sold them to keep four chitengas for us. That is for Mirai Sarudzai Manyepa and me. I just pressed the order without Manyepa's knowledge. When I told Manyepa about it, she kept quiet for a long time and then she said okay. I then bartered the tomatoes for them. It does not make any sense for me to say I have six *madhunduru*, because Manyepa interferes so it is very hard to actually see and plan my own things. It is simply oppression (*udzviniriri chete*)'.

'For building my house, I looked for the builders alone and bought grass to thatch it. I had to pay all these people with the money I got from selling a goat. I plastered alone. I also bought a door and window frame. I buy my children clothes with the money I earn from the work on the Middle Sabi Estate.'

'In most cases Manyepa receives the money from the tomato company and just tells Haaperi what she plans to do with it. Manyepa usually divides the money and then tells Haaperi 'we have decided to give you this amount'. It is Haaperi who controls that, no. So I can say without doubt that Manyepa is in full swing in this homestead. She can exercise all her powers and nobody opposes her'.

Sarudzai, the second wife of Manyepa's eldest son Tafara explained:

'Looking at the things, we never seem to come out equal. Even when work is hard, there is a big difference between Matora and me. Matora is said to have three *madhunduru*, and myself, I have only one. It sounds queer that we shared equally. But Matora should know that she did not buy chemicals and fertilizers. Matora is aware of this, because each time we arranged to buy chemicals and asked her to contribute, she said she had no money. So Manyepa is making sure all the women get the same amount in the end'.

Mirai, first wife of the eldest son Tafara, also felt disadvantaged about the allocated land and cash:

'From the sum in June from the tomato company, Sarudzai and I were given Z\$120 each and we bought salt, soap, and body lotion. The rest of the money went to Matora and Manyepa, because they have bigger parts in the irrigated plot. The rest, something like Z\$200, went to Haaperi, the owner. We are the users. Sarudzai and I are disadvantaged, because we had to buy fertilizer and chemicals ourselves. There is no profit then for us. Manyepa and Haaperi will buy things for collective use like sugar and will help when a child becomes ill'.

Women are always in search of a little cash and as we have seen earn it from the land and working for the Estate. But we might ask whether migrant husbands assist their wives with money. Tafara, provides school fees and buys the school uniforms of children in the homestead. But concerning the 'day to day expenditures' (grinding mill, foodstuffs, soap, vaseline and medical care), he was of the opinion that the wives should earn the money themselves from agriculture. Tafara's eldest wife, Mirai, said:

'We do not know his salary. Tafara told us to work for ourselves. Buying clothes for the children, food and visiting the clinic is our own look out. It is better now, because we are used to ways of getting money, selling vegetables to buy maize or cooking oil. That is why we are resolute enough to go as far as Madhuku (dryland area 50 km from Manesa) to sell our produce. We sell shorts (second hand clothes) and we go to the Middle Sabi Estates to pick cotton, to earn money for the grinding mill. Tafara does not buy clothes for the children or me. But I am better off than his other wives because I am helped by my sisters and brothers who give me clothes'.

Thus although these wives and daughters-in-law and their children are part of an extended polygynous homestead, they are more or less independent as matrifocal households who control their own income and expenditure. However, there is a clear hierarchy among them that I now explore.

### Social actors shape positions

Each of the wives and daughters-in-law has a clear place in the homestead's hierarchy. That place is to a certain extent related to age. Positions of status, respect, authority and power are different for a young daughter-in-law (*muroora*) and a grandmother (*ambuya*), for example, whose parents-in-law have died. She will have 'lost' her *muroora* identity. The sister of Haaperi, thus the aunt in this polygynous homestead (HFZ/HZ *vatete*) explained:

I am called *ambuya* (grandmother) by the children of my children. I should be respected as *mazvarira*, that is the one who has born the children. I should be respected as *tezvara*, as parent-in-law, after my children have married. I won't respect a young woman of 20 years, because she is a child to me. But it will change. If she gets a child named Violet, then I will say *amai* (mother) Violet. I will call her by the name of her child. She has born my *muzukuru* (grandchild), so I should not call her by her own name as if she was still a virgin. That is the way I will respect the young woman, by calling her by the name of her child<sup>17</sup>.

Differences in position, status, authority and respect have implications regarding decision-making and work in the homestead. Mirai said:

*'Isu tiri varoora* (we, we are daughters-in-law). We cannot call ourselves *varimi* (farmers) because we do not have our own fields. I am a *muroora* (daughter-in-law), *mukadzi vakaroorwa*, *kugara netezvara* (a woman who was married and lives with her parents-in-law). You are there to work for the *tezvara* (parents-in-law) and to cook for them (*Vakabikira*). You are sent to do anything they want you to do'.

Thus, the importance of women and men and their ability to wield power increases as they grow older and have children. But that acquired status, authority and influence can be disrupted, because their position is to a large extent shaped by the people they live with in a homestead. A woman can be neglected completely by the people she is living with, though she can be an older mother of children and grandchildren. According to Mirai whether you are important or not as a woman depended less on age and more on whether you were liked by those you were living with. Dislike was often related to an event in the past. Mirai gave an example of such an event:

The school certificates of *vatete* (my HZ) were found torn in my house in Harare (1990). After we completed extending two rooms, my husband fell in love with another woman who already had two children. Then my husband began to study again and I was sent to his homestead in Manesa village. There was no money there for the grinding mill or buying food so I went back to Harare, where I found that woman, a nurse, in my house. She did not greet me when I arrived, and as my husband was away studying we both stayed alone in the house. When I washed and ironed my husband's clothes, she took them again to the dry cleaner. I could stand it no longer and reported the situation to my *mubereki* (parent), my brother from Chikwekwe (her parents had passed away). I told him that I could not stay with someone who behaved as she did and that we did not talk

<sup>17</sup> For example, a very few people in the village called me Carin. The majority always called me 'mai Boudewijn' and more often 'mai Boude', meaning the mother of Boudewijn. I got used to that and if somebody called me Carin, I felt indeed the difference, which could be the respect. People also called me '*ambuya*' or '*vatete*' when I assisted them by giving advises and solving problems.

to each other. My brother came to collect me. The certificates were later found torn. Only *vatete's* (HZ) certificates were torn, whereas my registration form for O levels and my form two certificate were not though they were all in the same bag. My husband wrote to me in Chikwekwe accusing me of tearing the certificates. I was pregnant at that time. I informed my brother and went back to Harare. When I arrived I found the other women was also pregnant. I asked about the certificates, and my husband said that he had been told that I tore them'. When I came here to Manesa (1991), the news was already circulating that I was the one who tore the certificates. I argued that if it was me I should have taken my own particulars from the bag. I believe that the second wife tore *vatete's* certificates. It was her strategy to be able to stay in the house in Harare'.

This conflict arose from polygynous relations. The two wives were jealous and competed over the husband. The pregnancy option did not work out because they were both pregnant. Thus, one tried to gain the other, assuming that tearing the certificates of the husband's sister (HZ) would make the husband angry and make him divorce the suspect. The husband suspected Mirai, and wanted to divorce her, but hesitated because they had children. The event made Mirai the most disliked daughter-in-law in the homestead. They, especially the mother-in-law Manyepa, neglected and suspected her. Mirai said:

I once thought of committing suicide, because if anything was missing in this Manesa homestead, then they came to me and threw the clothes of the children outside and wanted to hit me with sticks. That nurse was able to support the family and therefore it was difficult for them to suspect a working woman of doing such things. So it was me they suspected. As a result, they see me as a person who lives here only to look after my children (*munhu agarawo kuchengeta vana*). They do not see me as a *muroora*. I am no longer important in this homestead. No one else was concerned about the certificates of *vatete*, only Manyepa, who wanted money from a working daughter'.

Mirai here refers to the fact that her mother-in-law, Manyepa, dislikes her because she believes that if the certificates had not been torn, the *vatete*, her daughter, would have then been able to get a good job and give her money.

Living in such a way became very difficult for Mirai and she was finally divorced in December 1996, despite the fact that a *n'anga* (African doctor) told the family that Mirai had not been the one to tear the certificates. Mirai went to another brother in Harare. She found a job as pump attendant at a fuel station but had to leave her four children behind in her husband's *dzinza* in Manesa village. Apart from *n'anga* (see chapter 7), migrant sons and paternal aunts also negotiate in the homestead disputes.

### **Negotiators and intervenors from outside**

It sounds cosy 'working and eating together', but those who live closely together, also live with tensions and conflicts. These conflicts and disputes need to be discussed and solved for the homestead to survive. In the present case it was *vatete* (Haaperi's sister; HFZ/HZ) Kaseka, and the eldest migrant son Tafara<sup>18</sup> negotiated and arbitrated in conflicts.

#### *Vatete (HFZ/HZ)*

Kaseka negotiated in conflicts that arose among the women and between the husbands and wives in her brother's homestead. Haaperi argued that his sister Kaseka is a more important head in his homestead than himself. One of the reasons, he explained, was that he had used the bridewealth of his sister to marry Manyepa. In turn, Kaseka perceived Manyepa as her 'wife' for this reason and was 'happy about what my wife is doing. She can say *vatete* and

<sup>18</sup> There may be others, but I have focused on these two negotiators because they emerged to be important.



then I can say 'my government' (*hurumende yangu*). She called Manyepa, her brother's wife, 'government'<sup>19</sup> because Manyepa looked after her. Manyepa and her sons gave *vatete* Kaseka produce from their fields and sometimes money. It must then be questioned whether Kaseka can act as a neutral *vatete* in this homestead. For example, the third wife complained to her that Manyepa did not share the cash from the tomatoes equally among the women. But *vatete* did not interfere. Maybe because she chose the side of 'her wife' (*mukadzi*).

Aunt Kaseka, apart from once in a while acting as mediator, also represented her brother Haaperi when he was absent. A *vatete* is therefore also called *baba-kadzi* (female father from *baba*, father and *kadzi*, the stem of the word for woman *mukadzi*). Kaseka claimed that there was 'no difference' (*hapana musiyano*) between *vatete* and *baba*. 'If he is not there, I will be there. You have a father (*baba*) and you can call her'.

For example, Haaperi was absent for several months at the beginning of 1995. He was visiting his eldest son in Harare. In those months, aunt Kaseka was called on several times, once when her brother's third son Maona was involved in a court case (May/June 1995).

The charge was read by the secretary of Manesa village court one Sunday morning as follows:

'Maona made love with Mavis between 1983-1985. In 1987 they were no longer lovers. He made love with another lady (Netsai, his present wife) and she became pregnant. Later Maona became ill and went to a *n'anga* (1). That *n'anga* told him that he was disturbed by Mavis who had taken Maona's clothes to a *n'anga* (2) who provided magic so that they could be lovers again. Maona went to Mavis to ask for his clothes'.

Those representing Maona, including *vatete* Kaseka, then adjourned the case in order to go to a *n'anga* for advice. Kaseka was seen by everyone as representing Maona's father and as thus having the right to visit a *n'anga* to seek advice. In the absence of the father, aunt or other representative with authority, such visits to *n'anga* are postponed until they are present.

The court case continued the following Sunday. The court secretary told everyone that the *n'anga* (3) had said that Mavis had been to a *n'anga* (2) to ask for magic and she had disturbed Maona with that magic. Mavis was accused, not the *n'anga* (2) who provided the magic. Then Kaseka argued that Mavis should be present so that Maona could be healed. Others, including village head Manesa, agreed with Kaseka that Mavis should be brought. Then the court was dissolved. Maybe the case will have an open ending, since there was no other follow up in 1997.<sup>20</sup>

#### *A migrant son and husband*

The migrant son and husband, Tafara, had his own opinion about how the homestead should be organized. He believed day-to-day matters, in agriculture at least, should be managed by his brother Maona. But he also saw the reality, namely, that his mother took the leading role. His explanation for that is that his brother 'is weak'.

Tafara was 38 years old and two of his three wives lived in the homestead in Manesa village. He fought in the liberation war and was away from home between 1974 and 1980. Between 1980 and 1995 he was again absent, working for several international organizations and obtaining a degree in social work at the university of Zimbabwe. He believes that Zimbabwe needs educated people. He told me that there are two phases to the liberation struggle: 1) independence from 'white' colonialism and 2) economic independence, which requires educated people. 'I need to contribute to the second struggle', he said, 'and I want to lift myself from the life my parents lived'.

He tried to advance himself by engaging in several new projects, for which he gave four major reasons. 1) In 1996 he planned to do a Masters degree and he therefore needed the

<sup>19</sup> This is not such a strange notion, as people in general expect that the government looks after them.

<sup>20</sup> But Maona did not recover. Here, we see that a woman is accused to cause Maona's illness. In chapter

7 I will explore why it is usually women who are the accused.

projects to supplement his monthly pension as a war victim. 2) He was the leading person in his father's homestead and was thus expected to help his family. 3) He had completed his house in Harare and now had time to complete several projects in his father's homestead. 4) He had found it difficult to develop his business in Harare because of a problem over the required licenses. He had had a bottle store in Harare from 1981 to 1987, but could not extend the shop without a license. He therefore thought it better to start a business in the village, because there were almost no legal requirements there. He would be able to use his Harare house as collateral security for a loan in Harare.

His projects actually started in 1992, when he bought a welding machine, a car, and a grinding mill. He said that the ancestors were with him because he was able to buy everything for a very low price. At the beginning of 1995, he hired people to construct a building to house the grinding mill, two kilometres outside the shopping centre of Manesa. When the foundation had been laid there were no bricks left, which delayed the building. Luckily he was able to rent a shop from a man in the shopping centre of Manesa, who was then willing to sell it to him. He planned to buy the shop to house the grinding mill. He also wanted to finalise the construction of the building already started since he intended to buy a second mill. He also planned to build a tavern on the site. Tafara made his youngest brother responsible for the grinding mill in the shopping centre. He also constructed a small shop in the area of kraalhead Panganai. In 1997 he also had plans to renovate the derelict cooperative building and re-organize the cooperative, which had collapsed in the 1980's.

He stayed in Manesa during the second half of 1995 and was engaged in several projects for his family. In his father's homestead he started a fenced garden. He made another brother responsible for that. Tafara also constructed a large chicken pen with another 'brother' (MZY). This project was for the daughters-in-law of the homestead, including his own two wives. Through rearing chickens the women would be able to earn money to buy clothes, food for the children and medical care. He also established a fishpond, a rabbit pen, and planted fruit trees, all of which the youngest brother was to look after. This brother was also sent on a driving course. A small duck and chicken pen were constructed for his mother. He made a cattle and goat kraal and planned to start goat rearing, for which he bought five goats in Chiredzi.

Tafara helped his sister to build her house, and sent another of his brothers, who stayed in the Harare house, on a welding course. The brother returned to the village at the end of 1995 to start a welding business next to the Tafara shop and grinding mill. Tafara also bought a bicycle, television, a scotch cart and sewing machines. He planned to employ women for the sewing project. The sewing machines were not for his wives. He believed his wives should not own assets because upon their deaths everything would go back to their natal homes. If that practice was abandoned then the wives would become angry spirits (*vadzimu*). To avoid such a situation, he argued that wives should not inherit the husband's house if he died first since the wife would then bring that house to her parents. Tafara believed that all resources should remain in the hands of men and their families.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, eldest son Tafara enrolled his family members in his activities. I will explore that point further in the conclusion of this chapter. But members of a homestead also enrol themselves in other networks in the village, such as, for example, the Irrigation Management Committee, and the Church. Let me explain this as a last aspect of this polygynous homestead.

### Some networks outside the homestead: IMC and church

As we saw in the case of Mirai, a married woman relies heavily on her own family network in case of marital problems. Other networks outside the homestead are also important, for

<sup>21</sup> However, when a wife dies, usually her brother will be put in charge to divide the property of his sister. Usually her children will receive the goods and little goes to her own family.

example for securing access to some land, for engaging in economic activities, or for general support. Manepya was a member of the Irrigation Management Block Committee.<sup>22</sup> She also controlled the water distribution in the irrigation scheme (see Vijfhuizen, 1995). She was a member of a savings club, though these usually had a short life in Manesa village. Women would form groups to start an activity such as buying and selling fertilizer, or making clothes, but the groups usually dissolved because members did not attend or did not pay their contributions.

Another network was the church. Almost all women in Manesa village were members of different churches. Manesa village counted twenty different churches or religious groups. The Zion and the UCCZ (United Christian Church of Zimbabwe) had the highest membership. The Zion church included thirty percent of the homesteads (N=389; village survey, Vijfhuizen, 1995) and the UCCZ, ten percent. All other religious groups counted a membership of below 10% of the homesteads.<sup>23</sup> Manyepya was a member of the UCCZ. She usually went to the church services on Sundays with her brother's wife, who was Chairperson of the Irrigation Management Committee. That is how she obtained a lot of information, including information about the irrigation scheme. In describing the monogamous homestead below, I will explore the issue of churches further. Let me now finalise my analysis about headship in practice in a polygynous homestead by drawing some conclusions.

### Concluding notes about the polygynous homestead

The organization and operating of this polygynous homestead could be considered an example of multiple headships in a homestead. There are five heads, representing the homestead in different domains:

1. Husband and father (in-law) Haaperi is perceived by the people in the homestead as the head. He is informed about activities, actions and problems, but the decisions about them are taken by those who inform him. He is responsible for worshipping the *dzinza* ancestors and he is an advisor both in and outside the homestead. He is also an advisor of village head Manesa.
2. The *vatete*, Haaperi's sister, is also an important head. Haaperi perceives her as more important than himself.
3. Manyepya, the eldest wife and mother (in-law) in the homestead, acts as head in the day-to-day running of the homestead. She allocates land, labour and cash among the wives of her sons, and maintains important networks outside the homestead.
4. The eldest migrant son and husband is also a head in the homestead, where he has started various projects including a chicken project. He has thus made it a little easier for his wives to earn cash to maintain their own households.
5. The sons' wives and daughters-in-law emerge as heads in their own areas of activities, i.e. in their households.

Heads are now and then involved in struggles and tensions, which mainly arise from polygynous relationships and the need for cash. But they also manage together to keep the homestead going. Heads can wield power through the specific relations they maintain, or in other words by enrolling others in their own projects and areas of activities. For example, the eldest wife and mother of the homestead had a son with money, who became important not

<sup>22</sup> For management purposes, Tawona irrigation scheme (169 hectare) is divided into 5 blocks (A,B,C,D,E), and each block has a committee of farmers. The whole scheme is managed by a general committee, the Irrigation Management Committee (IMC) (see next chapter).

<sup>23</sup> Some of these small church groups were for example: Jerusalem/StLuke; ZAOGA; ZCC; Zvishamiso; Mugodhi; Ivhangeri; Roma; Guta raJehovha (see also Bourdillon's interesting chapter 11 about churches, in 'The Shona Peoples', 1987).

only to the homestead, but also to the village.<sup>24</sup> She was able to influence him to withdraw support from those who did not obey or agree with her, and even to divorce or get rid of those wives she did not trust or suspected of bad practices. Thus multiple heads emerge from the specific domains and relationships that form the fabric of Ndau families and society, such as husband/wife; mother/son; mother/daughter; mother/daughter-in-law; co-wives; sister/brother etc.

Lastly, we have seen that heads can also strengthen their position, or wield power by reproducing certain traditional beliefs (see also Chapter 7). For example, the migrant son is quite forward-looking in terms of his business activities, but when it comes to inheritance and the ownership of goods and capital by wives, then he espouses traditional beliefs about the dangers of angry spirits, thus making it difficult for his wives to control the resources that would give them real independence. He believes in the economic independence of his country Zimbabwe, but he does not want his wives to enjoy real economic independence. However, he wants them to be able to provide for the costs involved in raising children, and for their health care. But the result is that women are obliged to invest the money they earn to maintain their households and are therefore less able themselves to invest in capital assets and land through which they could secure a better livelihood. This keeps them to a certain extent economically dependent.

Let us now explore headship and related issues in a monogamous homestead.

### 3.4 HEADSHIP IN PRACTICE: A MONOGAMOUS HOMESTEAD

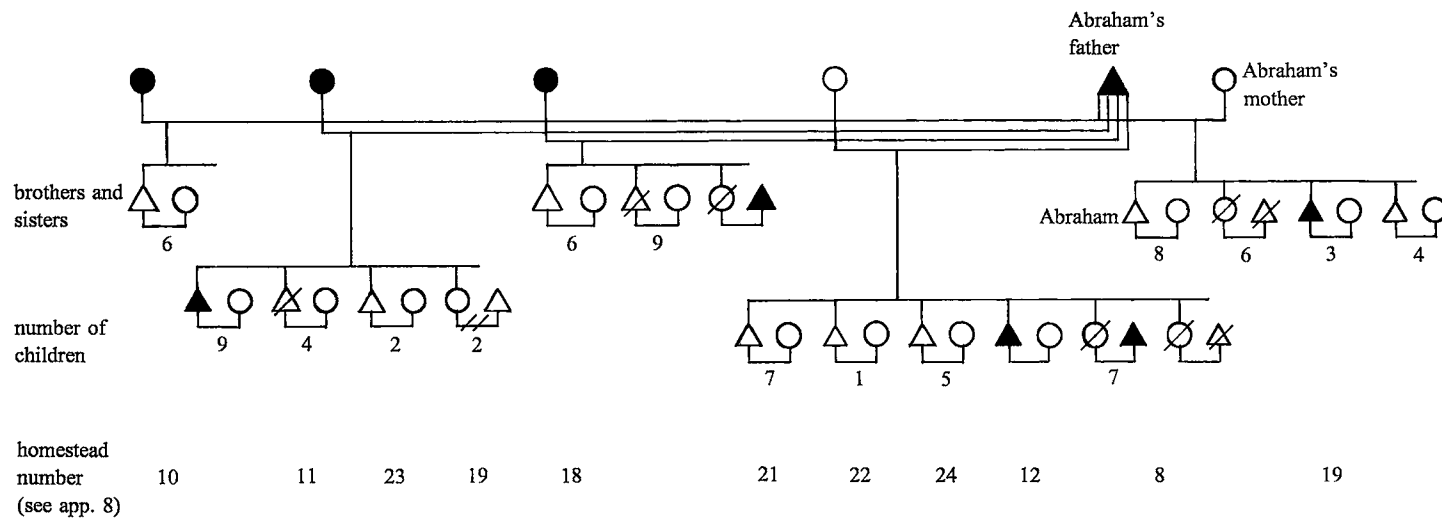
Abraham and Janet married in 1972. They lived in one homestead with their eight children, four daughters and four sons. The children were not yet married in 1995-1996. The eldest was 21 and the youngest, a year old. Due to the fact that Abraham's mother was one of five wives, Abraham had many brothers and sisters, who are depicted in genealogy 3.2 (p.92).

Some of Abraham's brothers lived nearby. Almost all his sisters were married elsewhere. He interacted a great deal with his brothers, the eldest of whom (same father, different mother) was one of the '*dzinza* heads' and responsible for worshipping the *dzinza's* ancestors. Sometimes this eldest brother was involved as mediator in problems within the homestead. Abraham's sister was also a negotiator in the homestead conflicts. Wife Janet usually interacted with the wives of her husband's brothers. Their homestead was surrounded by homesteads with which they were almost all related in one way or another (see appendix 8). Both Abraham and Janet have their own areas of activities and networks.

#### **Husband's piecework**

Abraham was a builder and four or five times a year did piecework in Manesa village. Together with six other men from the village, he was a member of the Gazaland Building Association. Four of his six colleagues were related to him. All had a specific position in the Association. One of them was Abraham's eldest brother. He was the secretary. Abraham called another colleague uncle (*sekuru*) because the mother of his wife's father had been born of that family. This uncle was the treasurer. Another member, also called uncle (*sekuru*) because his father's mother was born into the man's family, was the Association's chairman. These three relatives of Abraham managed the Building Association. The remaining three were not involved in its management. Abraham did not consider them to be builders. Two were labourers (*daga* boys). Abraham called one of them *mukuwasha*, son-in-law, because he was the husband of one of his sisters. The third was an assistant builder and a friend. Abraham, number seven in the Association, perceived himself as a labourer, and for the construction of roofs as an assistant builder.

<sup>24</sup> See Den Ouden (1997:34) who mentions that in many cases educated migrants become go-betweens or brokers between the village and for example state officials or government organisations.



Not all of them were involved in the work when the Association obtained a contract. For example, at the beginning of 1995, Tafara asked the Gazaland builders to construct the building for the grinding mill, and for a toilet. Abraham was involved, but piecework stopped at the foundation level in early March when they ran out of cement and bricks. Four members of the building society carried out piecework in September 1995 on renovating a roof on one of the shops in the Manesa shopping centre. On 3 October Abraham was on top of the roof removing nails. Two builders watched him and waited until he had finished. One of them told me what they would earn on the job and how the money was to be distributed:

'Repairing the roof is a big job and we charged the shopkeeper Z\$1500. Twenty-five percent of that (Z\$375) will be put in the building society's account at the bank. Abraham will be paid Z\$200 and the other assistant Z\$150. The amount left (Z\$775) will be shared by the two builders involved'.

Thus the Association had a clear hierarchy, with the chairman, secretary and treasurer recognised as its managers and builders and they arranged the contracts. They would arrange the schedule of work and call on assistance when it was needed. They also decided on who was to be paid what. The assistants were paid at the third stage, at the roofing stage, after the foundation and walls were completed. Abraham gave some of his earnings from this work to Janet. He said he bought nothing for the family.

'My wife is my bank. My wife buys everything. I buy only tobacco (shamrock) and beer. I give some of the money earned to my wife and she buys what is needed in the homestead'.

### Other activities of the husband

Apart from piecework, in 1995 Abraham did some of the agricultural work requiring oxen. In February he transported the maize home with the scotch-cart. He did the same for his mother's plot. In March he slashed weeds<sup>25</sup> on the household's irrigated plot, before the ploughing for winter tomatoes. His sixteen-year old son did this. Ploughing two acres usually takes a morning. Sometimes they hired someone with oxen. At the end of March he removed manure from the kraal where a married sister lived and transported it by scotch-cart to the irrigated plot. In May, he spent several days near the Save River, clearing trees in preparation for a garden.<sup>26</sup> In June he was involved in loading tomato boxes onto trucks belonging to the Cairns company.

Janet and Abraham had planned to build a brick house with a roof of asbestos sheeting. In September, while Abraham was also working on the Manesa shop roof, they started moulding the bricks. The bricks had to be baked, which took Abraham on several trips in September and October to the Save River to cut logs, which were carried home by his wife and daughters. In September and October his days looked as follows. In the morning, brothers might pass through his homestead or to the place where he worked to discuss matters. His piecework started at 7-8 am. At 11-12 am they stopped work and would go to the bar or bottle store. Some time later he went home to eat and sleep. From 4pm-6pm he cut firewood for burning bricks. He might also spend the day visiting homesteads with his brothers where beer was brewed for *kurova guva* or other ceremonies. Virtually daily he visited the bar and asked his wife for money to buy beer.

Thus, Abraham was involved in preparing the land for cultivation and slashing weeds on the irrigated plot and cutting trees for a garden, but he was not involved in cultivating crops on the irrigated or dryland and garden. But that changed as the following encounter shows. On 3 January 1996, Janet took her hoe and was about to go to the irrigation scheme, but first she went to the bedroom where Abraham was still in bed and admonished him, saying:

<sup>25</sup> Weeds grow while the maize is growing. After harvesting the maize, these weeds are slashed.

<sup>26</sup> It is not allowed to cultivate near the river because of erosion, but many farmers neglect that rule.

'You always say you want to go to work to build, but you contribute nothing. We have no soap here, and you haven't the money to buy it, yet every afternoon you go to the beer hall. You come and eat but you do not work on the land. You are now grown up and should be able to think for yourself.

Abraham made no reply. Janet took her hoe and went to the irrigated plot to weed. Then, Abraham got up and took a hoe and followed her. The next day Abraham irrigated the plot. He usually only does that once or twice a year. He also went with Janet to the dry-land plots to sow and weed during January and February.

Cultivating seems generally the wife's task, as is harvesting, storage and distribution of agricultural produce among family members or through barter and sale. These areas, plus the task of allocating the land and organising labour will be described as well as one of the other areas in which Janet was involved, i.e. the church.

### **Wife's agricultural production, storage, distribution and beer**

Janet was always busy, cultivating the irrigated land, dryland, gardens and to a degree shaping the value of the agricultural produce (see next chapter). She kept the granary key and thus controlled the distribution of agricultural produce. The key hung on a cord round her neck, or it was hidden in a secret place. She entered the granary several times a day as she prepared lunch and supper. In the beginning of October 1995 she had in her granary 7 bags of maize, one bag of groundnuts, two bags of millet for beer, tomatoes laid out on an empty bag, 3.5 bags of fertilizer, pots, 3 door-frames and one empty drum. Janet said the maize would last until January 1996. When only one bag was left, she would tell Abraham that the granary was finished and ask him to look for and buy mealy-meal (maize flour).

Abraham was unable to enter the granary. Sometimes he suggested giving someone a gift, but Janet decided on how much and whether to give or not. She took almost all decisions related to agricultural production and produce.

'I can discuss the things I do', she said, 'but after I have done something, he mostly approves. If I like something, he will also like it. I am the one who talks and he listens. *Kurima* (cultivating) is the basis of our homestead. If we fail to cultivate, then we die. How much piecework does Abraham have?'

Janet also makes the decisions regarding distribution. When she was at home, women, the *dzinza* daughters-in-law would pass through the homestead. Sometimes they gave Janet vegetables, and she would give tomatoes in return. Janet decided herself what she would do with the produce. She bartered (see chapter 4) tomatoes in the township with private buyers. She did the same with maize. But she claimed that she told Abraham after she had done it. Winter tomatoes were not only bartered but were also sold to a food processing company (see next chapter). The tomatoes, and thus also the cash, were registered in Abraham's name, because usually the company recorded the names used in the irrigated plot registers. However, the eldest daughter usually collected the cash when the farmers were paid in the village (see next chapter). The cash was then handed to her mother. Janet and Abraham decided together how to spend the tomato earnings. Janet said:

'I paid the plot tax, the school fees, and fertilizer. The remainder was for salt and soap. My husband said that I should keep the rest for I knew when the salt was finished and who needed medicine'.

When Janet is in urgent need of cash she can also brew beer. In 1995, she brewed three times, once for worshipping the ancestors of her husband's *dzinza*, once for a spirit to be appeased and once to earn money. Beer brewing to earn money was in December 1995. She exchanged maize for the sorghum needed for the beer. It takes seven days to ferment. She brewed three

drums and sold it for 30 cents per cup and was able to earn Z\$370. While waiting for the beer to cool, Janet complained to her husband's brothers wives who lived next to Janet's homestead:

'My husband should come and hold the plough and not just spend his life drinking beer. He should not just boast that he has an acre, because the acre does not bring food or money on its own. Someone has to work!'

That was said in December 1995. In January 1996, as I related, she approached Abraham directly with more or less the same message. Abraham got the message and assisted in cultivating the land. Let us now explore how she organised the labour and the land.

### Janet's organisation of land and labour

Janet allocated parts of the irrigated plot to others. She rented one *dhunduru* (0.04 hectare) for two seasons to a non-related woman, in exchange for three loads of firewood. In the past three years she rented a *dhunduru* to Abraham's brother's wife. In exchange, the brother promised to help in building a brick house. However, in 1995 he found a job near Vumba and was unable to keep his promise. Janet sighed that there was nothing she could say,

'because he is the younger brother of my husband. If it was another person he would have to pay me. But I arranged it and now there is nothing I can do.'

Abraham's sister was also interested in her brother's irrigated land. But Janet decided about the renting. Abraham's sister (*vatete*), whose husband had no irrigated land, asked her brother for two *madhunduru*. Janet heard her *vatete's* request, but decided to give her only one *dhunduru*. She argued that she had too many children herself and could therefore not spare more. But she could not ignore *vatete's* request completely, because *vatete* also assisted Janet. For example Janet relied on *vatete* in cases of illness. One day I saw her send one of the children to the *vatete* because the baby was ill. *Vatete*, in her thirties, said she would be there after lunch. First she had to look for medicines in the bush. In the afternoon she arrived with the roots of a particular tree. She told Janet to boil the roots for ten minutes and let the baby drink the infusion. After some days the baby recovered.

Janet also organised the labour for all the activities of the agricultural cycle. In 1995, she worked with a woman whom she called her work mate, who in fact was a wage labourer, who she sometimes paid in cash and sometimes in kind. She also worked with the older children on the irrigated plot and assisted her mother-in-law on her plot, together with wives of two other brothers of Abraham. During January, February, March and April, the major agricultural activities were harvesting maize and groundnuts, preparing the tomato nurseries and transplanting the tomato seedlings (see next chapter).

When it was not so busy on the land, in May before harvesting tomatoes and in October after sowing the maize, Janet collected firewood with female neighbours. Firewood was needed for cooking, making tea and heating water for bathing. When Janet came back from collecting firewood in the early mornings, she immediately put water on the fire for tea. She then fed her two youngest sons. The daughter of six also ate. This child looked after her two young brothers when her mother went for firewood. During the latter part of the year, after sowing maize and groundnuts on the irrigated plot, Janet started to cultivate her dryland, usually assisted by her children.

Janet not only organised agricultural, but also organised the labour for building the brick house in their homestead. We have seen that women are important organisers in the building of houses. Janet moulded bricks in August and September 1995. She organised her husband to cut firewood for baking the bricks. She borrowed money from me to buy the remaining asbestos sheets for the roof. In March 1996, her husband and two of his brothers started to build.

Janet usually attended meetings in the irrigation scheme. She was mostly at home, but she sometimes also left the village. For example, in 1995 she left the homestead three times for a



few days: to go to the District town Chipinge for the elections; to visit her natal homestead and family in Birchenough Bridge; and to a meeting of the Church of Zion. The church was very important in Janet's life.

### **A network outside the homestead: the church**

Janet usually went every Wednesday and Friday evening and on Sunday's to the Zionist Church in Manesa village. Being a member of the Church of Zion meant a lot both in terms of religion and social security.

Church members combine the teachings of the Bible with different spirits and witchcraft beliefs (see Chapter 7). Bourdillon (1987: 292) calls such churches 'new independent churches', and refers to Daneel (1971), who calls them 'spirit-type' churches. The largest is the African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke. Bourdillon argues that historically such churches are related to the 'Zionist' movement in South Africa and 'ultimately to Zion city, Illinois, in the United States of America, and 'have managed to combine traditional ways of thinking and acting with the new international religion based on a high God' (p.297). When Janet attends the church services, she usually wears a white gown with green crosses. This, she said, represented her status as a 'dreamer', someone who could be chosen any time by the spirits to become a healer. Bourdillon (1987: 292) claims that faith healing and prophecy under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit are two central features of 'spirit-type' churches. Daneel (1970, cited in Bourdillon (1987: 303), believed healing to be their most specific power of attraction and that 'sickness and its cure is a common reason for religious mobility'.

However, it is not only the combining of beliefs and their supposed power of healing that encourages these independent churches to grow. Community cooperation, from which economic cooperatives sometimes arose, is also important (see Bourdillon, 1987: 293). These social security aspects were also important for Janet. For example, if she was ill, church members could come and help her to cultivate the fields. Also at times when she was not ill but when the agricultural work was heavy, she could request help from Church members. The *humwe*, groups organised to work collectively, was usually organised by the churches. Those who were absent from the *humwe* without good reason, for example, the ill health of a child, would be fined by church members.

I joined Janet at a church service one Sunday. She usually went with '*vanamaiguru*', the elder wives of her husband's brothers. The church building, a round hut, was a five minutes walk from her homestead. Women and men wore differently coloured church clothes of white, green, red, and blue. These colours were related to the spirits which the different church members were believed to have (see Chapter 7) and to their duties in the church. During the church service, a male preacher read from the bible and another would explain the verses. In between the explanations, the drums were beaten and men danced, following each other in a circle. Women also danced in a circle, outside that of the men. After dancing, another male referent explained to the twenty men and forty women present, that each must contribute money to renovating the church building. He argued that everyone was supposed to come and help with the renovation. Janet said that she would participate. During the service, a man stood up and said that women were supposed to wear something on their heads, referring to the cloth the women use for this purpose. He may have been referring to my research assistant and me because the male referent replied 'today the church members are happy to have visitors who cannot know the rules of this church'.

In the conclusion of this chapter I come back to the churches, but before I reach that point, let me first give some concluding remarks about this monogamous homestead.

### Concluding notes about the monogamous homestead

Both wife and husband have their own areas of activities with associated relationships, values and norms. Or, in other words, they have their own domains from which they derive their gender identity and authority and are able to wield power. Abraham is involved in piecework, beer drinking, transport, ploughing, cutting trees, clearing fields. His brothers form an important network for him. Janet is involved in the irrigation scheme, cultivation of crops, the valorisation, distribution and consumption of agricultural produce, raising children, and beer brewing. The homestead is more her domain. She controls the earnings and expenditures. The daughters-in-law of her husband's *dzinza*, the church and her own *dzinza* form important networks.

We have seen that tensions and struggles emerge between the different domains, but that domains also complement each other. Domains overlap in joint decision-making, for example, over the cash from the tomato harvest and over supporting relatives by giving land and produce and when the food in the granary finishes. Husbands and wives not only have conflicts, but share the same interests. Let's now explore headship and domains further in the conclusion of this chapter.

### 3.5 HEADS ARE AUTHORITIES: A CONCLUSION

In this conclusion I will first explore the notion that a homestead has more than one head. I then argue that women and men are heads of specific domains from which they derive their gender identity and authority and are able to wield power. Finally I look at the complementarities of power.

#### Multiple heads

I have shown that the notion of 'head' in homesteads is relative. It is more a matter of multiple heads in one homestead. Headship emerges from complex processes of interaction and inter-relationships, from norms and value frames in areas of activity in a homestead. Thus, heads derive their gender identity and authority from specific domains. Heads are authorities who are able to wield power.

The *kurova hoko* practice means that the homestead belongs to the husband's *dzinza* and thus husband's fathers and this is the reason that husbands are generally perceived of and said to be 'heads' of homesteads (Table 3.2). But representatives of the patrikin are informed, and women as sisters and men as brothers and fathers in the *dzinza* (patrikin) are consulted for help in solving severe problems. That makes them also 'heads'. Women as aunts (HFZ/HZ)) usually arbitrate in conflicts in their brother's homestead and in relationships (Chapter 2). Likewise, the older women and men of the *dzinza* will be informed who worship the ancestors. The practice of worshipping the ancestors makes this elder a head too, and this ensures that the practice will not easily be abandoned. Women receive ancestral support from the husband's *dzinza* in relation to their children.

But a wife and mother herself belongs to another *dzinza*, and in the case of problems, wives will also receive support from their own *dzinza* representatives and ancestors. They usually receive material support from their own children, brothers, sisters and parents, and in her turn, as an aunt, she will also assist them. Hence, in practice, every woman is a potential head, although not of the homestead where she is married and usually lives. Married or widowed women do not perceive themselves as owners and heads of the homesteads where they are married since that place belongs to their husband's patrikin. However, in the homestead where they are married, they can be heads of a specific domain. Thus, it is not only out of respect or common discourse that men are the first to be indicated as heads. But the reality is more complicated than that as I have shown. The *chiutsi* party gives another angle on headship of homesteads. In practice in the establishing of the homestead there is

more than one head. First the village chief is considered head since he allocates the site, second there are heads as mentioned above who are among those who will live in the homestead, and third, the *dzinza* elders outside the respective homestead, dead or alive, may be considered heads. The *chiutsi* party is for honouring the ancestors, who are believed to look after the newly established homestead.

We also have to consider the concept of owner. One of the women or men, having established the homestead, will be considered its owner. That person will be the one who was allocated the site by the chief and the one who also built the houses and organised the *chiutsi* party. This may be recent but many homesteads have been long established and the original owners long dead. But ownership is a difficult concept in the African context. For example, if an owner troubles others, s/he can be chased from his/her homestead by the village chief who allocated the place. The chief could be perceived as the overall owner of homesteads. As Gluckman (1965:36) argues 'what is owned in fact is a claim to have power to do certain things with the land or property, to possess immunities against encroachment of others on one's rights in them, and to exercise certain privileges in respect of them'. Gluckman refers to 'a claim to have power'. Let us now look at these power issues.

### Heads of specific domains

What we have seen is that headship emerges from people's practices, beliefs and normative and value frames. Those who are consulted in times of problems are recognised as heads because of their status in the *dzinza*. They are respected and have authority. We could say that those who emerge as heads are able to wield power in specific domains through decision-making, enrolling others in specific areas of activities, through authority, influence, ownership of homesteads, *dzinza* and resources. My own data agrees with the assertion of Villarreal (1994:224) that 'power is fluid and constantly negotiated' and that 'those wielding power also need to subordinate themselves to discourses, social beliefs and the wills of others'.

Thus power is constantly negotiated and heads also have to subordinate themselves to others from time to time. It will depend on which social relationships are involved and which situation and which domain. I use here Long's definition of domain to be 'areas of social life that are organised by reference to a series of interlocking practices and values which, even if they are not perceived in exactly the same way by everybody, are nevertheless recognised as a locus of certain 'rules', norms and values implying degrees of social commitment, often with some spatial markers' (1997: 5).

Thus we could say that in practice, married women organise the homesteads and emerge as heads of their own domains and wield power accordingly, as for example in agriculture where women allocate land, labour and cash. However, there are several domains. For example the homestead is a multivocal notion, meaning that there are different functional groupings and different areas of control, distinguished by symbolic boundaries. Within the homestead, I have distinguished those different groups by labelling them as matrifocal households, i.e. where the mother looks after her own children. But this single group is involved in different areas of activity and control. For example, Matora, the third wife of Haaperi, the husband and father in the homestead, explained that she had built her own house in the homestead without the support of others. She had to sell one of her goats to obtain cash needed and she also borrowed money from her brother. She clearly had her own household in the polygynous homestead, and therefore her own domains. She is also head of her own household, making decisions about building, borrowing and using money. That is also one of the reasons why she complained bitterly that she was not allocated enough land by the eldest living wife to grow tomatoes and she was not happy that the eldest wife also controlled the cash. Clearly this eldest wife emerges as one of the heads of the homestead. She, Manyepa, had authority because she was the eldest wife of the man perceived by those living there as homestead head. He was also an authority in Manesa village, being advisor to the village

head Manesa. But this old man Haaperi, himself perceived his sister as head of his homestead, because he had paid bridewealth for his wife with the bridewealth obtained through his sister's marriage.

Headship is less related to age. For example, Manyepa is not only head because her husband is old and she is eldest wife. She has always been a head, because her husband was for a long time absent. So both of them know that the wife is the experienced person in managing the household and homestead. Manyepa arranges and manages the domains of consumption, health, land allocation and agricultural production. She enrolls others in all those different domains (e.g. consumption), and wields power accordingly. Her eldest son also contributes to Manyepa's authority. This son has money and he enrolls his brothers in his domains. However, as I indicated already, heads also have to subordinate themselves in specific situations and relations. That means that power is also a matter of identity in specific domains. The woman as an aunt (HFZ/HZ) wields power when she is involved in a problem in her brother's homestead. The same woman, as a daughter-in-law in the homestead where she is married, may yield power or resist the practices of the other women in that homestead.

Thus the ideas of some authors that women are controlled by men in the homestead, or controlled by patriarchy invested in elder men (Sacks, 1996: 6), needs some modification. Or in other words we have to look beyond the conventional model of generalisations about patriarchal families. Women as wives are heads of their own domains in the homestead, and as sisters they are heads of their brother's homesteads. Husbands want their wives to be independent as far as agriculture and reproductive expenditures are concerned, and in that domain, women are indeed independent and powerful (see Kaberry 1952, and next chapter). Another point is that if wives are obliged to spend that little money they have on children and medical care, they will be less able to invest money, which leaves them to a large extent economically dependent. One might even think it a deliberate strategy of working husbands, to keep money for themselves and leave the responsibility for agriculture and maintaining the households in the hands of their wives. In the African context, however, women have always cultivated the land and maintained the children. Thus matrifocal households within homesteads have always existed. With migrant husbands who earn a salary, the matrifocality<sup>27</sup> of households does not necessarily change. Women are, to a certain extent, purposely made heads of those households, in all types of homesteads, be they polygynous or monogamous.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the observed conflict of interests between women and men regarding the use of household income (see Jones, 1986: 109) may not be that conflicting. The wife does not work for her husband, as many authors, including Jones (1986: 111) assume. The wife works for herself and her children. Women work deliberately for their relative independence, because they know that, in the context of Manesa village and the irrigation scheme, their husbands do not support them in the day to day running of their households. Unless they work, their husbands do not have money, and if they have it, they prefer to keep it to themselves or use to marry more wives. They assist in times of trouble only, when the granary is empty or in the case of death and severe illness.

Women need to be strong to survive in the rural areas of Zimbabwe. Wives look after their husbands in terms of food and agriculture, and thus economically. But the perception generally reproduced is that husbands look after their wives and children. But the concept of 'looking after' might bear several meanings. A nice example is the birth of a girl or a boy in the chief's family. When a woman informs the family about the birth the following metaphors are used. '*Mauta ayene baba ndiwe*', means that a boy has been born and that he owns arrows (*mauta*) to protect the family in the homestead. '*Makuyo ayene baba ndiwe*', means a girl is born and that she owns grinding stones (*makuyo*) to look after the family. The daughter will inherit the grinding stones from her mother and the son will inherit the arrows from his

<sup>27</sup> James (1978), in her chapter 'matrifocus on African women', speaks about a matrifocal orientation, referring to the relative economic, political and sexual freedom of most African women.

<sup>28</sup> That may have implications for the plot size per homestead (see chapter 5).

father. Hence the existing ideas that men are the economic household 'heads' may be misleading and inadequate. Women are, in the context of Manesa village and the irrigation scheme, the economic household heads – they literally inherit the grinding stones to look after their families, i.e. to feed them. Bossen (1989: 341) criticises the use of the word 'head' since she believes the concept 'implicitly diminishes the economic roles of women, placing them in the category of economic dependants.'

In 'development discourse', a distinction is generally made between male- and female-headed households (see van Driel, 1994). And it follows that to perceive patrilineal homesteads as male-headed, and to introduce or design interventions accordingly, may be neither wise nor adequate, since such a homestead entails different domains with different heads and patterns of authority and responsibility. Assuming men take on overall responsibility may lead to problems for both partners. Peters has explored the uses and abuses of the concept of 'female-headed households', and points out (1995: 96-97) a tendency to equate female-'headedness' with poverty and disadvantage, whereas the female-headed households are quite heterogeneous. She argues that the emphasis on female-headed households also made women invisible in male-headed households. She spells out that distinctions are made between 'female-headed' and 'female-maintained' (i.e. supported primarily by a woman's efforts whether or not the household is formally 'headed' by a man); between 'de jure' (no husband) and 'de facto' female-headed (absent husband). In the smallholder irrigation support programme (Republic of Zimbabwe, 1997, working paper 4: 3) another label emerges, that of female-managed households, where in most communal areas the households are nominally male-headed, but many are female-managed. Between 18% and 33% of the households were managed by women, while about 18% were female-headed. This chapter shows that women are heads in practice, thus all homesteads could be perceived as female-managed. Then we have seen that women do not perceive themselves as heads in the homesteads where they marry, but that there are female heads in male-headed households. I believe that we should skip the concept 'heads' when we label homesteads. We should just label homesteads according to the way people live together in a homestead, i.e. whether it is monogamous, polygynous, or there are women without husbands, and women with absent husbands. In addition women should be seen as having authority and being the authority in and of homesteads.

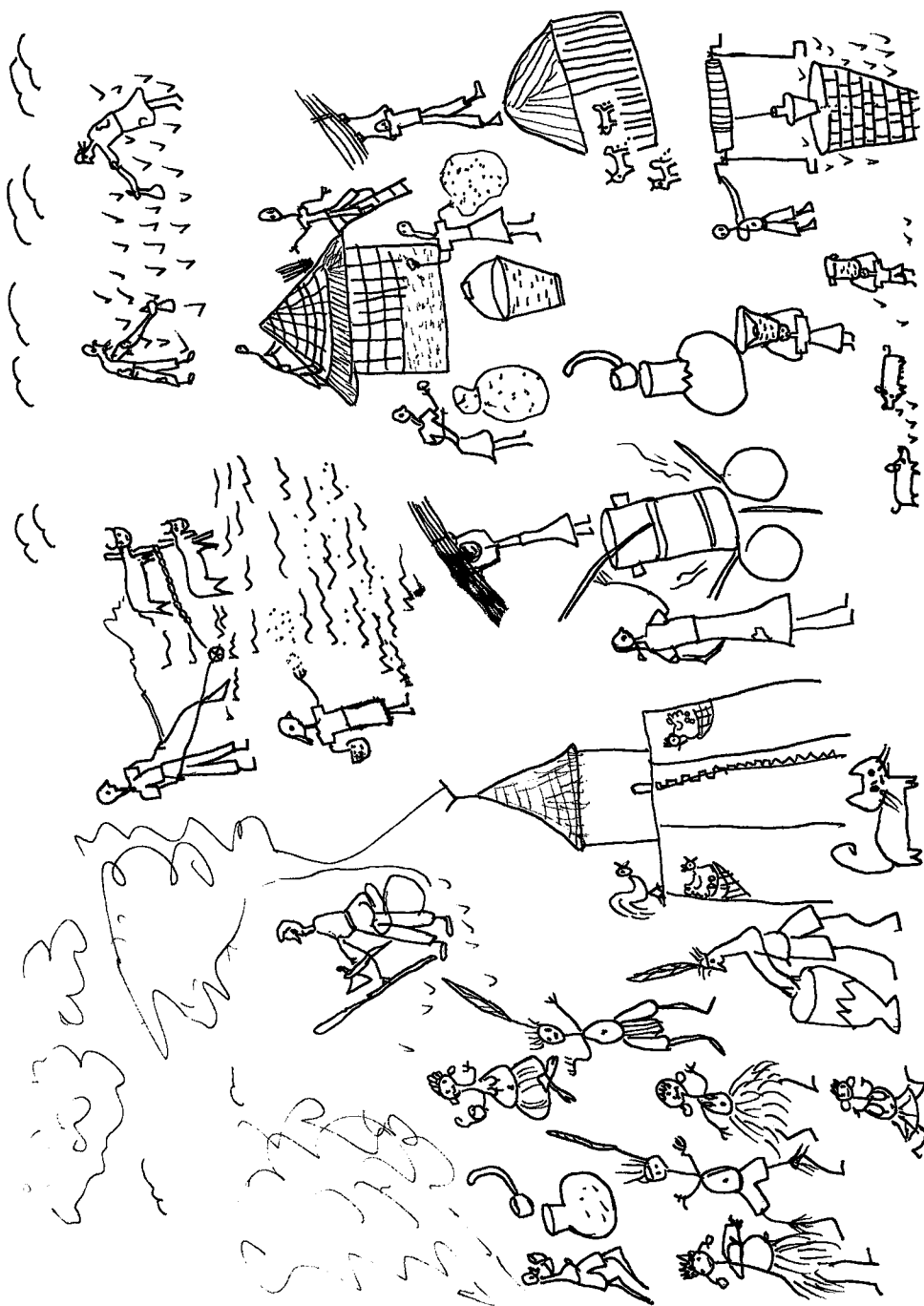
### **Complementarities of power**

Guyer and Peters (1987) indicate that for a long time it was assumed that the household (in my case homestead) was a place of complementarity, and a place of altruism and one which had joint utility functions. But she emphasizes that the 'household' too, is of variable structure, both outcome and channel of broader social processes and a site of separable, often competing, interests, rights and responsibilities.

We have seen that despite the tensions and struggles in a homestead, there is complementarity. Or we could say that power relations emerge from different domains in a homestead and that a certain hierarchy is necessary to maintain unity, or to make a homestead a successful family enterprise. Thus, women as heads in their matrifocal households with their own allocated pieces of land, earnings, expenditures and responsibilities, contribute to a larger operating homestead with other heads. Hence, they complement each other and there are thus also struggles among women, and between women and men, between husbands and wives, as a result of these different domains. Janet tried to pull her husband into her domain of agriculture, because she felt that she was carrying complete responsibility for maintaining the family in the homestead. She had to remind her husband of his adult responsibilities, while other women argued that men always remain children, who need looking after. But husband and wife also share interests and make joint decisions and show they trust each other. If we consider women's and men's areas of activities as separate then we see in both cases hierarchies and power struggles. For example in the polygynous homestead there was a

clear hierarchy among the women. In the men's domain, the Building Association, we also saw a clear hierarchy. These hierarchies are universal in the homesteads and in networks outside the homestead. They may, on the one hand, be restrictive for particular social actors, but on the other they are what makes a homestead or Association operate. There is also a clear hierarchy in the church. Moss (1988) argues that Christian churches in Africa can be seen as women's movements. There are indeed usually twice as many women as men in the churches. However, men preach and are usually the authorities in the church. It is usually men who reproduce certain beliefs, rules, norms and values in these churches. Thus they cannot truly be women's movements. The number of women in African churches could be explained by the fact that it is women who look after the sick, especially in the present situation of high illness rates through HIV/Aids. Hence membership of faith healing churches grows.

Kabeer (1995) believes the homestead can be seen as a primary site for the construction of power relations. I would argue that power relations must be seen in the proper contexts or domains. What we see in the homestead, is that both women and men restrict each others room for manoeuvre and also give each other space. Women restrict each other's room for manoeuvre, and give each other space. For instance, the eldest wife and mother-in-law in a homestead to some extent restricts the room for manoeuvre of her sons' wives, by controlling the land and cash, but she also allows them to pursue their own activities. Sometimes women seriously restrict each other's room for manoeuvre, as in Mirai's case. A woman's space can be limited further if women as mothers choose the side of their sons, or as sisters choose the side of their brothers or as wives choose the side of their husbands. We see men often supported by their mothers, who control their wives. As mother-in-law she allocates land and cash, so that the daughters-in-law can maintain their own households. Sisters also control their brother's wives. Thus, women themselves reproduce limitations on their room to manoeuvre. This can lead to friction and power struggles among women. However, women also assist each other in agricultural production and other tasks, as I will show in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 4

### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS AND VALUE SHAPERS

This chapter focuses on the organisation of agricultural products. Women are the agricultural producers in Manesa village and the Tawona irrigation scheme. The produce they grow provides them with food and cash. It is regularly emphasized (Madondo, 1992) that women do most of the work in the fields and are the agricultural producers. However, what is often neglected in the literature is that women also benefit from and actively shape the value of agricultural produce, as do the companies and buyers who live outside the specific context of Manesa village.

Long argues (1997: 234) 'that commodity relations and values are generated, and challenged through the active strategizing, network building and knowledge construction of particular producers, retailers, consumers and other relevant actors'. This is the theoretical perspective that I take to underpin this chapter, though I am less concerned here with the other social actors. My interest is in how the women farmers of the Tawona irrigation scheme shape the value of the different agricultural products of the scheme.

In the first section I outline the context for the cultivation of crops in Manesa village, and in doing so consider its history, gardens, dry and irrigated land, and explore some forms of labour organisation. I have defined as 'small-scale', crops cultivated on less than 0.2 hectare, and crops grown on larger areas as 'larger-scale'. Women farmers cultivate both small and larger-scale crops and to a great extent they shape the value of both. In order to demonstrate this, I explore in 4.2 and 4.3 how small-scale groundnuts and larger-scale winter tomatoes obtain their value. Women farmers individually control the cash obtained from small-scale crops. For the larger-scale winter tomato crop they have individual and also collective control over the cash with their husbands. In 4.4 I describe how it was the women of the Irrigation Management Committee who organised tomato production in the scheme in 1995. In 4.5, the concluding section, I explore the valorisation and commoditization of agricultural produce. Further, I examine the gender of small- and larger-scale crops; the economic performance of irrigation schemes; how extension officials shape women's cultivation practices; and as a last point I look at change and continuity in gender specific domains of rural life.

#### 4.1 CULTIVATING CROPS

This section, on cultivating crops, serves as a context for this chapter. I first look briefly into the history of agricultural production. Then I explain which crops are grown inside and outside of the irrigation scheme. Lastly I look into some forms of labour organisation.

##### **A historical perspective**

In Manesa village, old Ndau women and men talked about the past as if it was yesterday. They described how, at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, men went hunting and women fished. The people also had land on which they cultivated sorghum and millet using a three-year rotation in a system of shifting cultivation (see Richards, 1939). Old women explained how while fishing or cultivating millet they trapped small animals and caught birds. During those days the general gender division of labour in the Ndau chiefdoms was that men cleared the land and took care of defence and offence. Women stayed at home and were responsible for production, distribution, storage and consumption. Women gathered fruits, cultivated crops, fished and hunted. Thus historically also, women were the food providers among the Ndau. Bossen (1989) makes this point and reminds us it is incorrect to perceive men as the major food providers. She writes about foragers, and it is appropriate to quote her arguments here because the Ndau were also foragers, long ago,



before they started to cultivate fields. Even today, Ndaou women gather food in the bush. As Bossen argues:

'the early model of man-the-hunter implicitly and explicitly presented men as the chief providers and decision makers for foraging populations'. 'Gathering and fishing have been seriously underrated by the man-the-hunter model of foragers... the presumed universal role of men as primary providers for the family is a myth, as is women's presumed dependency. Detailed observations show that women generally do the bulk of the food gathering'. (1989: 319-320)

Among the Ndaou, women were always the major food providers, and are no doubt a reason why, even with today's irrigation scheme, agricultural production remains predominantly a woman's domain.

### Outside the irrigation scheme

Not all homesteads in Manesa village have access to an irrigated plot. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the homesteads (N=318; village survey, Vijfhuizen, 1995) had no irrigated plot and relied on land outside the scheme, i.e. dryland, and gardens alongside the scheme, its main canal and the river banks. Homesteads with irrigated plots (47% of all homesteads) could also use other land and forty-nine percent of them did so. The other 51% cultivated their irrigated land only. Before analysing production on the irrigated plots, I examine cultivation on land outside the irrigation scheme, concentrating first on the different kinds of gardens and then on cultivated rain-fed or 'dryland' areas.

#### Gardens

People cultivate gardens situated in different locations. We can find them along the irrigation scheme. These scheme gardens are 48 in total and have an average size of 0,5 hec and are registered in people's names. They are located outside but adjacent to the irrigation scheme, thus these gardens do not receive water officially. Irrigation plots inside the scheme receive water by turns. Other gardens can be found along the main canal of the irrigation scheme (main canal gardens) and along the Save River (Save River gardens). The users of these gardens are both irrigators and dryland farmers, as depicted in the Table 4.1:

Table 4.1: Cultivators of gardens according their use of irrigated plots and dryland. (March 1996; end of summer season; Vijfhuizen, 1996)

	Scheme Gardens	Main Canal Gardens	Save River Gardens	Total
Irrigators	41 (85%)	5 (11%)	10 (21%)	56 (40%)
Drylanders	7 (15%)	40 (89%)	37 (79%)	84 (60%)
Total (N)	48	45	47	140

The scheme gardens are usually cultivated by farmers with rights to an irrigated plot. Sixteen percent (16%) of the 258 plot holders cultivated their scheme garden. The canal gardens and Save River gardens are mainly cultivated by those who only have rain-fed or 'dryland', the 'drylanders'. Both women and men have gardens, as depicted in the Table 4.2:

Table 4.2: Cultivators of gardens according their gender, and the size of the gardens (March 1996; end of summer season; Vijfhuizen, 1996)

	Scheme Gardens	Main Canal Gardens	Save River Gardens	Total
Men	39 (81%)	18 (40%)	12 (25%)	69 (49%)
Women	9 (19%)	27 (60%)	35 (75%)	71 (51%)
Total (N)	48	45	47	140
Average size (ha)	0.48	0.046	0.05	

Only the scheme gardens, with an average size of 0.48 hectares, are officially registered with Agritex (Agricultural and Technical Extension Service), and they are mostly registered in the names of men. Main canal gardens, with an average size of 0.046 hectares, are held by both women and men. Save River gardens are also small (0.05 hectare) and are mainly held by women. Regardless of the gender of the landholder, it is usually the women who cultivate the crops in whatever type of garden. Table 4.3 depicts the different crops cultivated in the three different types of garden.

Table 4.3: Crops in the gardens (March 1996)

	Scheme Gardens	Main canal Gardens	Save River Gardens	Total
Fruit trees	31	23	6	60
Maize	21	1	1	23
Tomatoes	14	2	-	16
Vegetable	9	39	37	85
Sugarcane	8	10	-	18
Sorghum	4	-	1	5
Sunflower	2	-	1	3
Cassava	1	-	1	2
Tobacco	-	-	2	2
(Fishpond)	2	-	-	2
Main crops	Fruit Maize Tomatoes	Fruit Vegetables	Vegetables	

Thus canal and river gardens are used largely for cultivating vegetables. On the scheme gardens, farmers grow the same crops as in the irrigation scheme. However, the scheme and main canal gardens have fruit trees, and trees are not allowed in the irrigation scheme. Because the gardens are outside the scheme, the farmers cultivating them do not have to stick to Agritex planting dates. It also implies that they get no irrigation turns and therefore no water. They take water from the scheme though strictly speaking it is not allowed and the Irrigation Management Committee are supposed to oversee water use.

Farmers cultivate the main canal gardens throughout the year. They irrigate their crops by taking water in buckets from the canal. Women farmers cultivate the river gardens from April to July and dig holes in the riverbed from which they fetch buckets of water to irrigate the vegetables in the gardens. These women are usually dryland farmers. Plot holders in the irrigation scheme only start a river garden when there is a water shortage in the irrigation scheme, which was the case in July 1995. However, they usually abandon the gardens as soon as water returns to the scheme. They do that for two reasons. Firstly, because the irrigated plots are near their homesteads. They must walk from between 30 to 60 minutes to the river

gardens. Secondly, it is easier for farmers to irrigate vegetables with syphons<sup>1</sup>, and this is only possible from the canals. Usually, everyone abandons the river gardens at the end of the year, because vegetables are then available from their dryland and irrigated plots.

In some cases men were involved in the disposal of the produce from the scheme gardens because of the large sums of money involved (see Vijfhuizen, 1995). But in general, regardless of the location of the gardens, women were involved in transactions over produce disposal from the gardens. For example, two women farmers had a garden. For two months they grew vegetables along the Save River, but after two months they shifted, because village head Manesa had allocated them a garden along the main canal of the irrigation scheme, which was near their homestead. They grew vegetables from January to July, which they consumed or bartered. Almost every week they sold vegetables to local traders. The average earnings per week were Z\$28<sup>2</sup>, with which they bought sugar, salt, cooking oil, soap, vaseline and toothpaste. They also used the money to pay for having their maize ground at the mill.

### *Dryland*

One hundred and sixty-nine homesteads (53% N=318, village survey, Vijfhuizen 1995) in Manesa village had no irrigated land and needed to rely on dryland. Kraalheads give the usufruct rights to dryland to both women and men. Farmers cultivated an average of 0.6 hectares of dryland, from November to March. In November they ploughed and sowed matikiti (pumpkin leaf) cucumber, sugarcane, sorghum, and millet. In December, they ploughed and sowed maize and sunflower. On 50% of the dryland plots, farmers cultivated maize with millet, sunflower or sorghum. Twenty percent of the farmers who cultivated maize, grew maize only. On 45% of the dryland plots, farmers cultivated millet in combination with sorghum, maize and sunflower. Sorghum was grown on 30%, and sunflower on 20% of the dryland plots. Farmers harvested in March.

The value of dryland crops is shaped by the decisions and transactions of women farmers. Maize and vegetables are mainly for consumption as are the sorghum and millet grown by farmers who have access to dryland only. Women farmers use sorghum and millet to brew beer when they need cash, or when they organise ceremonies. Sunflower seeds are sold.

Half of the homesteads with irrigated plots, thus some 75 in total, also make use of dryland. Irrigators are not usually restricted by time or labour to use dryland and many would like access to (more) dryland, but all the land in the Manesa village area is occupied by or has been taken from farmers for the construction of a new irrigation scheme (see next chapter).

### **Inside the irrigation scheme**

As seen in the previous chapter there is more than one household in a homestead. Sometimes the different households have irrigated plots of 0.8 or 0.4 hectares, so that homesteads often have more than one irrigated plot. On average homesteads hold 1.7 irrigated plots (village survey, Vijfhuizen 1995). It is usually the larger homesteads (polygynous or extended) that hold more than one irrigated plot because a son or a wife will also be a registered holder (see next chapter). I indicated already that approximately half of the homesteads in Manesa village, some 150 in total, have irrigated plots (village survey, Vijfhuizen 1995).

The summer season in the irrigation scheme is from September/November to March. During that season farmers cultivate maize, summer tomatoes (since 1995), groundnuts and cotton. During the winter season from March to September, farmers grow tomatoes, wheat and beans and onions. Farmers grow vegetables in the irrigation scheme at the end of the summer and beginning of the winter season. The cultivating practices per crop are depicted in the Table 4.4.

<sup>1</sup> Pipes of approximately 3 metres. Farmers put them in the canals of the irrigation scheme to extract water that flows on the land in the scheme.

<sup>2</sup> In 1995, the Dutch guilder was Z\$5 and the US\$ was Z\$10.

Table 4.4: Crops and cultivating practices inside the irrigation scheme

Month	SS	SS	SS	SS		WS	WS	WS
	Maize	Grn	Tom	Cott	Veg	Tom	Wheat	Bs/On
OCT	P+S+I	P+S+I						
NOV	W+I	W+I	N+WP+ I+P+T	WP+P+ S+I	IC maize S+I			
DEC	W+H+I	I	T+W+I	W+I	IC Maize H+I			
JAN	H	I	W+H+I	W+I	IC Maize H+I			
FEB	H	I	H	I	P+S+I+ W	N+WP+ I+P		P+S+I
MAR		H		H	H+W	N+T+W +I		W+I
APR		H		H	H	W+I		W+I
MAY					H	W+H	P+S+I+ W	H
JUN					SEEDS	H	I	H
JUL						H	I	H
AUG						H	I	
SEP						H	H	

SS= Summer Season (September to March)

WS= Winter Season (March to September)

## CROPS:

Grn= groundnuts

Tom= tomatoes

Cott=cotton

Veg= vegetables

bs/on= beans and onions

## Cultivating practices:

(W)P= (Winter) Ploughing

S= Sowing

W= Weeding

H= Harvesting

IC= Inter Cropping

T= Transplanting

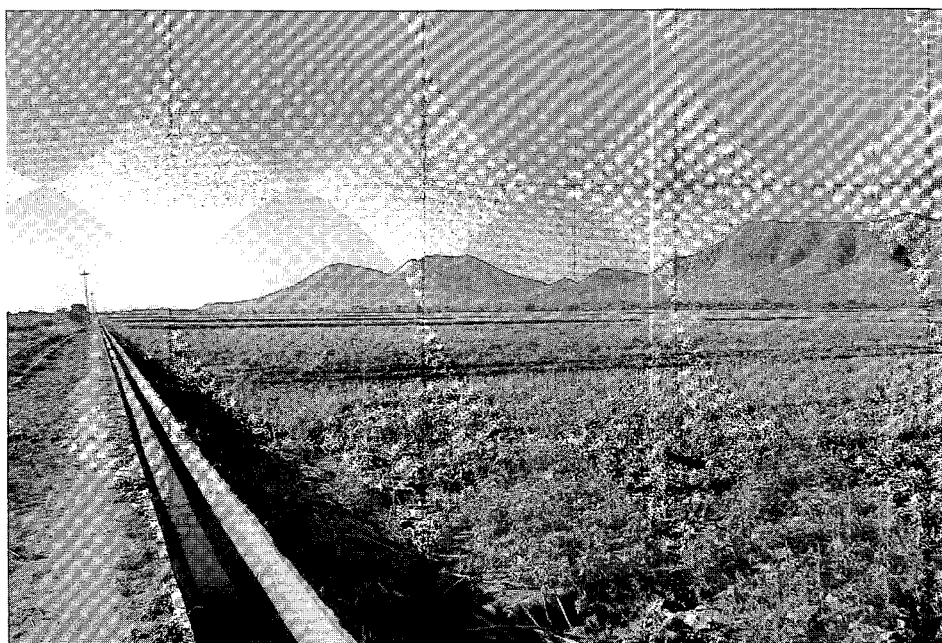
N= Nursery

I= Irrigating

The irrigated plots in the Tawona irrigation scheme are 0.4 and 0.8 hectares in size (that is one, or two acres: 10 or 20 *madhunduru*). In this chapter I will use the *dhunduru* (0.04 ha) because farmers always refer to and talk about *madhunduru*. During the years of my research, Tawona irrigation scheme was known to be 169 hectares (4225 *madhunduru*) which may also have included the roads and canals. In 1994, 1995 and 1996 the scheme had 258 registered plottolders of whom 38% were women and 62% men (see next chapter).

Some crops in the irrigation scheme are grown on a larger area. I thus distinguish small- and larger-scale crops. Based on the counting of the *madhunduru* during the study, small-scale crops refer to crops covering one to five *madhunduru*. Larger-scale crops are those grown on more than five *madhunduru*. During the summer season (September to March), maize is a larger-scale, and groundnuts, summer tomatoes and cotton are small-scale crops. In November 1996, *madhunduru* were counted in order to know the scale of these different summer crops.

Photo 4.1: Tawona irrigation scheme in the Save river valley (photo: B. Schat)



We counted 162.7 hectares (4068 *madhunduru*), divided into 189 two-acre and 27 one-acre plots (in total 216 plots). The next table 4.5 depicts the scale of the summer crops in November 1996.

Table 4.5: Scale of summer crops (September-March) in November 1996 in Tawona irrigation scheme. (Madhun = *madhunduru* (0,04 ha) 10 *madhunduru*: 1 acre (0,4 ha); 25 *madhunduru*: 1 hectare)

	MAIZE	TOMATOES	GROUND-NUTS	COTTON	TOTAL
Madhun hectare	3,393.5	473	159.5	42	4,068
	135.7	18.9	6.4	1.7	162.7
Percentage of the land	83.4	11.6	3.9	1	100
Madhun/ farmer (N=258)	13	1.8	0.6	0.16	15.56

In the 1996 summer season (September-March) maize occupied the largest area (80%) of land in the irrigation scheme. About 20% is dedicated to small-scale crops.

Farmers start to grow vegetables in the irrigation scheme at the end of the summer (December) and beginning of the winter season (until July). I have depicted these vegetables in Table 4.6. During the winter season from March to September, tomatoes are the larger-scale crop, and wheat, beans and onions the small-scale crops. In May and June 1997, we measured the scale of the winter crops on 149 hectare. Table 4.6 depicts the scale of these winter crops in May 1997.

Table 4.6: Scale of winter crops (March to September) in May 1997 in Tawona irrigation scheme (Madhun = madhunduru (0.04 ha), 10 madhunduru: 1 acre (0.4 ha); 25 madhunduru: 1 hectare, Veg = vegetables; tom= tomatoes)

	VEG	TOM	WHEAT	BEANS	ONIONS	PAPRIKA	TOTAL
Madhun hectare	178 7.1	2,304 92.2	737 29.5	298 11.9	138 5.5	73 2.9	3,728 149.1
Percentage of the land	4.7	61.8	19.7	8	3.7	2	100
Madhun/ Farmer (N=258)	0.7	9	2.9	1.1	0.5	0.3	14.5

The table shows that small-scale crops in the winter season occupy a considerable percentage of the land, i.e. 40%.

Although Tables 4.5 and 4.6 only depict the summer of 1996 and the winter of 1997, they give an indication of the scale of crops grown. Outsiders influence the scale. For example, the Cairns food processing company, which buys the farmers' winter tomatoes (see below), gives each farmer a one-acre contract only, to cultivate winter tomatoes. Government officials, such as the Agritex extension officers, also influence the scale. At the beginning of 1995, they told the farmers to cultivate one acre only, due to the shortage of water in the scheme. The larger-scale summer crop maize was introduced a long time ago. The scale may have been reduced by one or two *madhunduru* with the introduction of the small-scale summer tomatoes at the end of 1995 (see below).

Farmers seem to experiment with these small-scale crops in order to earn extra cash. In 1995 the experimental crop was the small-scale summer tomato (see below). In 1997, several farmers tried to cultivate the paprika in the irrigation scheme. From Tables 4.5 and 4.6 it emerges that the different small-scale crops taken together occupy a considerable scale. I argue later that small-scale crops also provide considerable value. However, Agritex officials disregard the value of small-scale crops, as they only consider the value of larger-scale crops in their calculations. Thus the economic performance of irrigation schemes may be better than is generally assumed. Before we look at that issue in the conclusion of this chapter, I must first explore some valorisation processes, i.e. how crops obtain their value by the active strategizing and network building of women farmers with relatives, other farmers, private buyers and companies (sections 4.2 and 4.3). Before we go to valorisation, which also includes produce in exchange for labour, I explain briefly some forms of labour organisation.

### Some forms of labour organisation

Women and men in Manesa village recognise three different forms of labour organisation, i.e. *mushandirapamwe*, *humwe* and *kushandira*. They are practised mainly during the harvesting of specific crops. For example, *mushandirapamwe* (to work together) often occurs during the harvesting of maize, when farmers assist each other by working in turn on each other's plots. Thus *mushandirapamwe* involves labour exchange.

*Humwe* is another form of labour organisation. It can be referred to as a 'work party'. For example churches may organise a *humwe* for the cultivation, harvesting and processing of crops. A person who belongs to the church and needs assistance may then get help from fellow church members and provide food for them after the work is done. Farmers themselves may organise a *humwe* for the construction of cattle kraals or chicken pens. The one who organises the *humwe* slaughters a chicken or goat and makes a few buckets of home brewed beer available to those who assist. That is also how women can mobilise men to put a roof on their houses. Thus in principle, everybody from far or near who wants to work for beer and

food can participate in a *humwe*. But, in practice, we see that the participants in a *humwe* usually know each other through the church, family or village.

*Kushandira* is the form, which occurs most frequently and is usually organised for the harvesting of crops. It means 'to work for something'. Thus workers are given something in return for their labour, usually some of the produce they harvest or sometimes money. Who will harvest will differ according to the crop. Let me give three examples. 1) In the case of groundnuts, summer tomatoes and wheat, it is family members, relatives, friends or neighbours who assist. 2) Winter-tomatoes are usually harvested by unrelated people. They are dryland farmers from the village, or people from outside Manesa village who come from 'behind the mountains'. Farmers usually rely on labourers for picking the winter tomatoes because it involves a lot of work over a long period. 3) In the case of vegetables, beans and onions, the buyers themselves pick and select the crops. The crop owners are present to measure the produce and to negotiate over the price.

In the next two sections about the valorisation of summer and winter crops, we will see that it is mainly women who organise the agricultural labour. It is also predominantly women who sow, weed, harvest, intercrop, transplant, make tomato nurseries and irrigate. For example, if I counted ten people who were busy in Tawona irrigation scheme, then usually seven would be women and three men. Thus 70% were women. In the Smallholder Irrigation Support Programme, working paper 4 (Republic of Zimbabwe, 1997:3), it was said that 'In total as much as 80% of the irrigation labour force is female'. For this reason I speak of women farmers instead of farmers, except for those cultivation practices carried out by men, such as ploughing. But as I have pointed out in the introduction of this chapter, the emphasis should not always be on the aspects of 'the increasing labour-load through irrigation schemes', but attention is needed for the way women farmers shape the value of agricultural produce and benefit from it. That is the focus of sections 4.2 and 4.3.

## 4.2 SUMMER CROPS

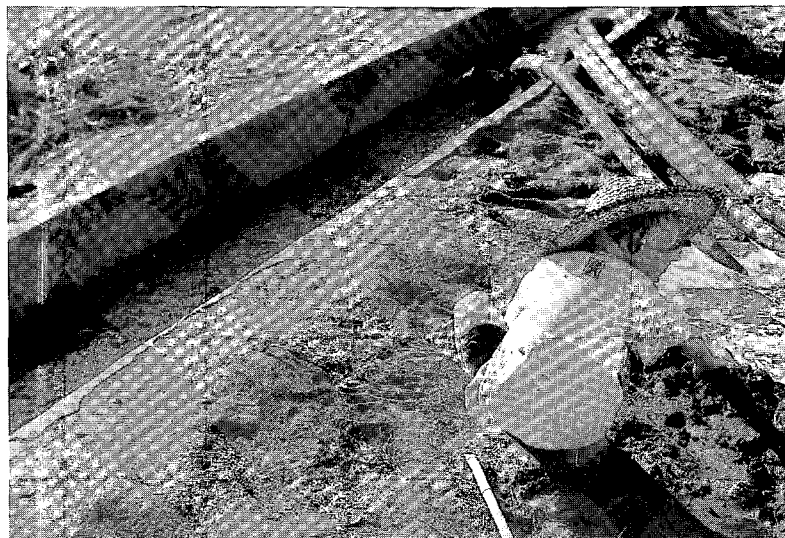
In this section I explain the cultivation practices of summer crops in the irrigation scheme by taking the example of Janet, whom we met in a previous chapter. I start with the cultivation practices of groundnuts. Then I explore the valorisation process, i.e. how the groundnuts obtain their value by Janet's active strategizing and network building. I show how she enrolls others in her groundnut production and distribution and thereby shapes the value of the crop along with others who make decisions about the produce (see also Vijfhuizen, forthcoming). For example, Janet sells, barter, exchanges groundnuts for labour, uses groundnuts for gifts, consumes the groundnuts with her family and others, and selects seeds for reproduction. The way the groundnuts are valorised by Janet is further discussed in the conclusion of this chapter. In the third and fourth part of this section I explore briefly the cultivation practices and valorisation of two other summer crops, namely maize and summer tomatoes. In this section I show that summer crops are cultivated and valorised by women farmers.

### Cultivation practices of groundnuts

Women farmers cultivate groundnuts from October/November to the beginning of April. In that period maize, their staple food, is also grown and therefore women farmers only dedicate a few *madhunduru* to groundnuts. They like to grow groundnuts for eating and for roasting, or for making peanut butter (*dovi*). They said: 'groundnuts are good for all people because they contain oil (*mafuta*)'. When women farmers want to start to grow groundnuts, they usually obtain the seeds from a farmer for whom they harvested or through seed exchange. They often exchange seeds among themselves. After their first harvest, they will continue to grow groundnuts from their own seeds. Usually their sons plough and the women drop the seeds one by one into the furrows behind the plough. In that way, two *madhunduru* can be sown very quickly. Women farmers only weed once and at the same moment they cover the

roots with soil. They usually weed with their sons and daughters. They apply the fertilizer and irrigate the groundnuts themselves. Their children sometimes assist in irrigating the crop.

Photo 4.2: Irrigating the crops by using syphons



Women and their children also harvest groundnuts for fresh consumption. The final harvesting of groundnuts is a labour intensive process. First they irrigate the plot in order to make uprooting the plants easier. After the women and their children have uprooted the plants, then they can start to pick the groundnuts from the roots. They are then assisted by women who have also married into the *dzinza* (the patrilineage), or by friends and neighbours. For example in Janet's case, there were seven women in total who harvested two *madhunduru* in six days.

### Valorisation of groundnuts

I will now explore how Janet cultivated and valorised her groundnut crop in 1995. Janet and her husband Abraham had eight unmarried children in 1995. She planned to grow groundnuts in 1994 because: 'If you have your own groundnuts you do not have to envy (*kuyemura*) those of others'. But Janet had not cultivated groundnuts before in her husband's place, so she had no seeds. She received some from *maiguru* (wife of an elder brother of her husband) when she helped her for one week harvesting groundnuts in 1994. She was given one bucket of unshelled groundnuts as payment for her labour. She shelled the nuts and used some of them to sow two *madhunduru* (0.08 ha). Janet with a daughter and five other adult women, harvested the groundnuts in six days, from 29 March to 3 April 1995. Decisions concerning exchange of groundnuts for labour, for consumption, for gifts and barter all took place in April. Sales (exchange for cash) occurred at the beginning of May and the selection of seeds in October 1995.



The total net quantity of groundnuts harvested from the irrigation plot amounted to five bags (approximately 200 kg).<sup>3</sup> Because of the multiplicity of transactions, and the sometimes casual way in which these were performed, I only managed to get information of how 125 kg (60% of the harvest) was valorised. I will come back to this point later. The following account of the various destinations of Janet's produce only refers to the recorded transactions. I will first detail those transactions involving labour, consumption, barter and gifts. I then look into sales, and to those groundnuts set aside as seed for the next season. The section ends with a brief discussion of the yield obtained.

### *Labour*

Janet paid the groundnut pickers in kind. She told me:

'harvesting is a lot of work. I paid them in groundnuts (*Ndabhadara nenzungu*). I did not tell them before the work what they would earn. I decided that for myself after observing how they worked. The women just came to help. I had no specific reason to work with them. They just came and helped me, because they like to have groundnuts. They did not want money'.

Janet paid three women one bucket of groundnuts each for six days harvesting. One of the women was Ndaabari, who was not related to Janet and her family. Janet called her 'my worker' (*mushandi wangu*). In 1994 Ndaabari approached Janet in the scheme and said: 'let me help you to do your work so that you give me something'. Janet agreed, because Ndaabari did not have an irrigated plot. They have worked together since 1994 and intended to continue doing so. Sipwa, the mother of Janet's husband also received a bucket of nuts for her work. The third woman to receive a bucket was Madinda. She was not related to Janet, but was a neighbour and a friend. She asked Janet if she could help harvest the groundnuts. Janet gave two *maininis* (both wives of husband's brothers) half a bucket each, because 'they arrived when we were about to finish' said Janet.

In total Janet paid four buckets of groundnuts for labour. That was 22% of the monitored harvest.

### *Consumption*

On the first day of harvesting, the pickers consumed two cups of nuts on the irrigated plot and the family consumed one cup at home. On March 30, two cups were consumed on the plot and 2¼ cups at home. On 31st March the workers on the plot consumed three cups. April 2nd, Janet, her husband and eight children consumed three cups. On April 4, 7 and 8, the family consumed three cups, on April 9 two cups, and on April 20 one cup was used for making peanut butter for the family. On May 7, Janet gave Mrs Chikwanda, her friend, half a cup of groundnuts which were roasted and consumed in Janet's homestead. On June 18, Janet used two cups to make peanut butter for the family.

In total 21 cups were consumed on 13 occasions. When Janet prepared groundnuts for seeds in October 1995, the family consumed another 8 cups. Thus Janet used 22% of the monitored harvested groundnuts for consumption.

### *Gifts*

On the 3rd of April Janet gave two cups of groundnuts to a woman who was not related to her. The woman had given Janet a bottle of cooking oil earlier in the year. Janet explained that:

<sup>3</sup> In the local volumetric exchange system, one bag contains six buckets, and one bucket equals seven enamel cups. One enamel cup with dried unshelled groundnuts weighs approximately 950 grammes. So, according to this system, a bucket should weigh 6.7 kg; and a bag contains 40 kg of dried unshelled groundnuts.

'the woman had received cooking oil for free from the *povo* (lit: mass; drought relief) which she gave me. Later I had to give that woman two cups of groundnuts. It was to show her that I was happy with what she had done for me 'Akandibatsira nedambudziko rang'u (she helped me with my problem). I do not measure that in money. It was *kubatsirana* (helping each other)'.

Also on the 3rd of April, she gave 1¼ cup to a wife of a younger brother of her husband. She gave the wife of another husband's brother one cup of groundnuts a day later.

'They are given because they are *maininis* and because they have none themselves. I was also given groundnuts by *maiguru* (wife of an elder brother of her husband) when I had no groundnuts', Janet explained.

On the 4th of April Janet gave Mr Sithole 1¼ cup, because she said that he was a friend. Later he gave her dried meat and a basket. The husband's sister (*vatete*) received three cups of groundnuts

'because she is *vatete* (HZ). *Vatete* also provided three scotch carts of manure at the beginning of this year. The three cups was just a gift. She gave me manure and that is expensive if you have to buy it from other people. She said her brother had no money to buy fertilizer. We are just helping each other (*kubatsirana*)'.

I highlighted these reciprocal ties between Janet and her husband's sister in Chapter 3. Janet gave her husband's sister also a *dhunduru* of the irrigated plot registered in her husband's name, and *vatete* advised Janet when her brother's children were ill.

On the 7th of April Janet gave me two cups of groundnuts. I could not remember having given her something earlier in the year, but her daughter was one of my research assistants. Maybe the mother was happy about her daughter's employment. On the 5th of May, Janet gave two cups to Mrs Chikwanda. She was Janet's friend. Janet said: she gave them to her because she also gives her many things'.

When Janet selected her groundnut seeds in October 1995, she gave away another four cups. Thus Janet used 13% of the groundnuts monitored as gifts. It should be noted that more than half of these gifts remained within her husband's *dzinza* (patrikin) and was given to wives of her husband's brothers. All gifts could be traced to be reciprocations of earlier gifts received by Janet. In the conclusion of this chapter I will discuss the gift further.

### Barter

On the 3rd of April Janet bartered 3kg of groundnuts with one plastic cup of vegetable seeds. She bartered with Isaac, a son of Ndaabari's husband. Ndaabari was her workmate in the field. Janet and Isaac knew each other very well. Janet said:

'Isaac came to me because we are used to each other (*kuwirirana*). *Tinotamba tose, nekunamata tose* (we play and pray together)'.

Janet and Isaac were both members of the Zion church. Janet explained the barter as follows:

'Isaac had a small cup of vegetable seeds which had a value of Z\$10. I gave him a *poto* (size 6 pot, almost half a bucket) of groundnuts, because that was more or less Z\$10'.

Thus here the equivalence was established based on cash value. Both Janet and Isaac were aware of those prices and therefore agreed with each other about the deal. In the conclusion of this chapter I come back to the establishment of equivalences. This was the only barter Janet made. As Janet said, Isaac needed groundnuts and she needed vegetables. 'I cannot finish a *hozi* (granary) simply with *kuchinjanisa* (barter), because I also want to bathe', meaning that she bartered a little (2% of the monitored groundnuts), because she also wanted to sell groundnuts to buy soap to bathe.

### Sales

Isaac also bought 1½ bucket of groundnuts from Janet on March 30, for Z\$45. He sold them in small portions at a school football match. Janet explained that he needed groundnuts whereas she needed money to buy salt and soap. On May 1 and 6, Janet sold two buckets and 2¾ bucket, for Z\$45 and Z\$48 respectively, to a buyer who came to Manesa village. The buyer wanted only big nuts and selected them with the farmers in their homesteads. The buyer came from Birchenough Bridge, 12 km from Manesa village. The buyer's mother's sister appeared to be the real trader. In Manesa village and adjacent areas, the traders in groundnuts were mainly women. The buyer explained that she used the small groundnuts for peanut butter and she cooked the bigger ones with two cups of salt in a *hari* (claypot) for an hour. She used a claypot because groundnuts would discolour in a tin pot. After boiling, the groundnuts were dried in the sun and later measured into small plastic bags. She and a friend then sold the groundnuts at the market place in Birchenough Bridge for Z\$1 a bag. One bucket of groundnuts was equivalent to 54 small plastic bags of Z\$1. The trader bought the groundnuts from farmers for an average price of Z\$24 per bucket. The trader made a good profit.<sup>4</sup>

In total Janet converted 42 kg (34% of the groundnuts monitored) into Z\$163 cash through selling (equivalent to nearly Z\$4 per kg). She spent the money mainly on consumption goods for the family (sugar, soap, etc).

### Seeds

By October 1995, three buckets of groundnuts were left. In the third week of October Janet shelled the groundnuts for seed. She selected the best, the rest were consumed (an estimated eight cups) and given away (an estimated four cups). Thus, Janet set aside 7% of the total monitored harvest as seed for the next season.

### Yield

The quantitative data from these transactions are summarised in Table 4.7. Janet harvested gross six bags and one bucket from two *madhunduru* (equivalent to over 3 t/ha). After drying and selecting the groundnuts, five bags remained. Janet perceived those five bags as her harvest, because it was these groundnuts that subsequently were exchanged and used in various ways. This amounts to a net yield of 2.5 t/ha. The extension service point out that for cultivating groundnuts a learning curve must be taken into account. Therefore they use a projected yield for groundnuts that increases during the first three years of cultivation and obtains a maximum at year 4 of 2.14 t/ha (see Vijfhuizen, forthcoming). Thus Janet's net yield was very good.

Table 4.7: Valorisation of groundnuts (0.08 hectare: 2 *madhunduru*)

	WEIGHT(kg)	PERCENTAGE	FREQUENCY OF TRANSACTIONS
Sales	42	34	3
Labour	27	22	1
Consumption	28	22	13
Gifts	16	13	7
Barter	3	2	1
Seeds	9	7	1
Total accounted for	125	100	26
Unaccounted for	75		

<sup>4</sup> The trader's net profit was much lower, as she incurred costs: transport to the village (Z\$6 per person and Z\$6 per bag), firewood (Z\$30 per week), claypot (Z\$10 per week); 2 cups of salt for every cooking (Z\$2.40), plastic bags, and an unknown reward to the trader's assistants. (1 US\$= Z\$10).

As indicated earlier, it was not possible to observe exactly how all the five bags obtained their value, because my research assistant did not manage to follow all her mother's groundnut transactions. She may have missed some gifts and barter deals. I observed often that women coming from the fields with their vegetables, passed through Janet's homestead to give her some of their produce. Janet then would respond by giving them some groundnuts. Janet may have forgotten to inform her daughter of some of these quick and regular groundnut deals.

For comparative reasons I wish to discuss briefly another groundnut transaction. Two wives of one husband also recorded how they distributed groundnuts, which they harvested from one *dhunduru* (0.04 hectare). The husband had a permanent job and they had a two-acre plot (0.8 ha) in the irrigation scheme. The two wives also cultivated a garden along the Save River from which they sold vegetables. That husband's job and their sale of vegetables could be reasons why the two women did not sell their groundnuts. The groundnuts were eaten by the family (two wives, many small children and the husband) or were given away to the wives of their husband's brothers and sisters (*madzitete*). These two women bartered more often than Janet did. On three occasions, they bartered a cup of groundnuts for okra plants, watermelons and millet. Half a cup was bartered for vegetables and two cups for one kilo of tomato seed. Just like Janet, the two women farmers had no problem mobilising labour to harvest the groundnuts. Husband's wives and sisters helped with the harvest. They gave those who helped groundnuts in return, but said that they had not been given a lot since they would otherwise have been left with nothing. Let us now look at the larger-scale summer crop maize.

### Cultivation practices and valorisation of maize

The way women farmers organise labour to cultivate and harvest is enormously diverse and largely depends on the type of crop and the type of homestead. Farmers are not allowed to sow maize before Agritex extension officers announce the planting date. The officers wait until all the farmers have finished harvesting their wheat. This is usually at the end of September or beginning of October. Farmers who plant before the planting date set by Agritex, will be denied access to water by the water controllers who are also Agritex officials. At the beginning of November almost all the farmers had planted their maize. Agritex officers prohibit intercropping with maize, but despite this all the farmers cultivate pumpkins, cucumber and sugarcane between the maize. Women farmers obtain maize seed from the government. They receive 10 kg, which is enough for one acre (0.4 ha). If women farmers want to cultivate more than one acre, then they will buy the maize seed in the shops. They first irrigate the plot and their sons, still at school or school leavers, plough while their mothers sow every other row. The average 13 *madhunduru* dedicated to maize, can be sown in one morning. At the same time women apply fertilizer. Agritex officers prescribe one bag of compound D fertilizer per acre.

The cultivation practices in maize are largely shaped by the type of homestead involved. For example, in a polygynous homestead (see Chapter 3) the *madhunduru* of an irrigated plot are usually divided among the women of that homestead. Subsequently, the women will work collectively and individually on the irrigated land. Irrigation is organised collectively and done in turns. Each woman will individually weed her own allocated part, and will also harvest the intercropped sugarcane and vegetables of their 'own' piece. However, harvesting maize is a collective job and they will take turns to help each other on their *madhunduru* (*mushandirapamwe*). They have two different methods for harvesting maize. Most common is to cut the stalks with big knives and heap them together. When the stalks are all cut, they break the cobs from the stalks with their hands. Only a few farmers removed the cobs before cutting the stalks. Four women farmers spent fifty minutes to harvest one *dhunduru* by using this method. In an extended homestead the work can be organised in another way. For example the two daughters-in-law of an extended family cultivated the irrigated plot together

(2 acres) and did not thus divide the *madhunduru* between them. They harvested with relatives who had no irrigated plot. The relatives were given maize in return (*kushandira*). In monogamous homesteads where there are parents with unmarried children, the crops, including maize, are usually cultivated by the mother and children and sometimes a labourer. They mostly harvest the maize with the help of female relatives who work in turn on each other's plots (*mushandirapamwe*). The number of women in a *mushandirapamwe* varies. For example, four women and a man who lived in Manesa village, used three *madhunduru* each in a plot registered in the name of a man who worked in South Africa. Thus, there was one plot holder and five plot users. Those who usually worked together on these *madhunduru* were two daughters-in-law of the plot holder's family; the daughter of a plot user; a sister of a plot user and the daughter of the plot holder's brother. Women without husbands or with absent husbands organise the work and labour usually in the same way as those in monogamous homesteads. They usually wait until Saturday to harvesting, when their children are free from school. Sons or hired young men work with oxen. They plough and transport the harvest home. The maize stalks are stored near the homesteads as cattle feed. Women who have no oxen carry the maize home on their heads. They burn the stalks on the plot, despite the fact that Agritex workers prohibit burning. Some hire a scotchcart with oxen to transport the maize home for which they usually have to pay one twenty litre bucket of threshed maize per load. So far I have described the organisation of and cultivation of maize. Let us now explore briefly how women farmers valorise the maize.

In general maize is not sold, or as one woman farmer said: 'we usually don't sell maize because we want to get through the year'. But there are some farmers who sell maize when they need cash to buy chemicals and fertilizer for the cultivation of winter tomatoes immediately after the maize harvest. Sales of maize also depend on the size of the family and the harvest. A husband and wife with eight children consume one bucket of threshed maize a week. The bucket has a volume of twenty litres. That corresponds to approximately fifty buckets per year. Five buckets is equivalent to one bag. Hence ten bags are consumed in that family. Usually, one *dhunduru* yields one bag of threshed maize. The average thirteen *madhunduru* maize, thus will yield thirteen bags of threshed maize. Thus in this family of parents and eight children, three bags can obtain their value in a way other than consumption. Maize is also exchanged for labour when it is harvested. Women farmers also exchange maize for claypots. A claypot filled with maize is the payment for one claypot. The same practice is applied for baskets. Or women exchange a cup of milk or sugar for a cup of maize. Another common practice is that women farmers barter a bucket and a gallon (500 grammes) of maize for a bucket of millet or sorghum. Women farmers also exchange maize in March and April for bottles of chemicals to be used in tomato cultivation. In the conclusion of this chapter I will discuss the establishment of equivalencies in case of barter. Women farmers also use maize for gifts or beer brewing. Larger polygynous and extended families usually finish their maize in September-November. That is a few months before the fresh maize can be harvested in January. Until then, families have to buy maize from other farmers or as mealy-meal (ground maize flour) from the shops. Let's now look at the last summer crop, which I describe in this section - summer tomatoes.

### Cultivation practices and valorisation of summer tomatoes

The summer tomatoes are cultivated as follows. The *madhunduru* are winter ploughed<sup>5</sup> by sons, husbands, relatives or hired young men. In the mean time women make the tomato nursery. Women farmers transplant the seedlings from the nursery to the irrigated plot at the end of November or beginning of December, after the field has been ploughed again in order to make the ridges. The seedlings are planted by the women along every other ridge. The soil of the 'empty' ridge will be used later to cover the ridge with seedlings. Women fertilize,

5 A first ploughing is called winter ploughing.

weed, irrigate and harvest the tomatoes, usually with family members. The crop is mainly sold to private buyers (80%-90%) and the rest are consumed and exchanged for labour. Barter and gifts occur less than with winter tomatoes, because women prefer to sell due to the high prices. At that time of year there is a general shortage of tomatoes in the country, prices are high, caused by the general shortage of tomatoes at that time of year. It is not regarded a favourable time for growing tomatoes as a tomato-expert, a Cairns sales manager explained. The company provide the seed for winter tomatoes (March to September), but not for summer tomatoes (November-March). Cairns do not want to stimulate growing during the summer because of the risks. 'It was not Cairns who started summer tomatoes,' he said,

'It was Agritex officials. The best time for tomato production is February-March. That is the ideal time. Those who grow summer tomatoes in November, December, January and February must be very capable. It takes a lot of hard work. It needs fertilizer and a lot of spraying. It is very risky, due to wet conditions during those months. If it is wet in November and December, then it is bad news, because there will be blight'.

Despite the disapproval of Cairns, women farmers adopted Agritex' summer tomato intervention on a small scale, because they also grow their maize in the summer. Women farmers obtain the seeds from their own winter tomato plants. Thus, in fact indirectly from Cairns. They put the winter tomatoes in a claypot, leave it rotting for a few days and then press the seeds out and dry them in the sun. The reason why women farmers take the risk to grow summer tomatoes and reduce the *madhunduru* of groundnuts or maize, is the large amount of cash they can earn. A woman farmer carefully recorded the earnings from the summer tomatoes. She earned from two *madhunduru* of tomatoes in the 1995-1996 summer season, a total of Z\$2225. In the same season in 1996-1997, she earned Z\$ 2340. Spraying costs were approximately Z\$100. That means that if the weather remains good, women farmers can earn relatively more from these few *madhunduru* of summer tomatoes than they can from the larger-scale winter tomatoes. Let us now turn to the larger-scale winter tomatoes.

### 4.3 WINTER CROPS

We have seen that women cultivate, shape and realise to a large extent the value of the summer crops. That is the case for winter crops also, except for winter tomatoes. In this case, both women and men cultivate and shape to a certain extent the value of the crop. Another value shaper of winter tomatoes is the Cairns food processing company. They have a fixed price per season (see below). But women and men can also sell to, or barter with private buyers. Or they try out other crops, for example paprika, which also brings a good return. That men are also involved in winter tomatoes, is most likely related to the fact that the crop is known as the major cash crop in the Tawona irrigation scheme.

I will first look at cultivation practices and then explore the valorisation of the crop by focusing on the Cairns food processing company, the private buyers, and the women/men who control the cash earnings from the winter tomatoes. In the third and fourth part of this section I look at cultivation practices and valorisation of two other winter crops, wheat and vegetables.

#### Cultivation practices of winter tomatoes

The nurseries for the winter tomatoes are prepared before the farmers start to harvest their maize. Farmers receive from Cairns 125 grammes of tomato seed per acre in February. They mix it with some of their own tomato seeds, though this is strictly not permitted by Cairns. But farmers reduce their risks by mixing so that they can plant again if the seedlings are eaten by ants or die otherwise. By mixing, they have enough seeds to make a nursery for a second

or even third time. The tomato nurseries are mainly prepared by the women farmers. Transplanting of the seedlings from the nursery to the irrigated plot can only start after Agritex officials have announced the transplanting date. The consequence is that all the farmers need water at the same time to irrigate the area to be transplanted. As might be imagined, conflicts about water distribution emerge at such a time. But it is the set planting date by Agritex, which causes the water shortage. Farmers walk up and down the canal to adjust the gates, which results in conflicts and a lot of shouting. Some farmers transplant before the planting date. This is possible if they have received their water turn or if they are friends with the water controllers.

Agritex officials only allow farmers to grow tomatoes if the farmers can show that they have the necessary chemicals (*mushonga*) to prevent the tomato plants from the 'red spider mite' disease. Farmers manipulate this rule also and devise alternative strategies. One strategy was to borrow chemicals from another farmer who could afford to buy it, and show this to the Agritex officials to get permission to cultivate before returning it to its owner. In June 1995, the American Ball worm attacked the tomatoes. Chemicals were only available in five litres tins for the price of Z\$400. Farmers said it was too expensive. Agritex officials suggested to farmers at a meeting that they should organise themselves in small groups to buy the chemical collectively. Some farmers did so.

After winter ploughing, farmers irrigate the field and plough again at the end of March to make the ridges for the tomato seedlings. The transplanting is usually done by women farmers with their daughters and sons. After transplanting, the farmers apply fertilizer at the beginning of April. Some farmers apply cow dung if they cannot afford fertilizer. Harvesting begins in May. Female day labourers hired for the picking who are not related, usually earn Z\$0.60 cents per box (20kg). On average they harvest twenty boxes per day, earning Z\$12 per day (1995). Relatives are usually paid in kind, with tomatoes.

### **Valorisation of winter tomatoes**

Winter tomatoes obtain their value through the transactions of the private buyers, the Cairns food processing company, and the women and men who control the cash earnings from the winter tomato crop.

#### *Private buyers*

In May, the first tomatoes are usually sold to private buyers who come to the scheme and offer high prices, because tomatoes are scarce at that time. The price for one box (20 kg) is Z\$50. That drops quickly to Z\$30 in June, when the supply is increasing. Farmers try to control the price at Z\$30 in June by agreeing with each other during meetings not to sell below that price to private buyers. Those who do so would be reported to the Irrigation Management Committee (IMC) and subsequently fined. But farmers cannot control the price for very long, especially during the peak of the harvest in July and August. The price for a box then drops to Z\$15. The money from the sales to private buyers is mainly used for consumption items such as salt, sugar, paraffin and soap. However, at the end of July and August, private buyers no longer exchange tomatoes for cash, but for goods such as containers, plates, clothes, wheelbarrows and bicycles. It is usually women who barter in the early mornings at the Manesa village centre with the private buyers. Exchange for goods seems to be more profitable for private buyers. However, the farmers are not deceived. They see the private buyers as cheats, because they believe the goods to be of a lower value than the cash value of a box of tomatoes at that moment. The farmers see the uneven exchange but they barter because they want the goods and the tomatoes might otherwise rot if not collected by Cairns on time.

*Cairns*

Cairns is a food processing company from Mutare. Their trucks collect tomatoes from the scheme in June, July, August and September. The company works with a contract signed by the chairperson of the Irrigation Management Committee (IMC). The 1995 contract covered 60 hectare. Agritex officials decide the scale for tomato cultivation on the basis of crop rotation. Members of the IMC choose the farmers for the contract. There were 251 farmers in total in the 1995 contract. The farmers in the contract receive hybrid tomato seeds from Cairns and are obliged to deliver their tomatoes to Cairns. Cairns, in return, is obliged to collect their tomatoes. The Cairns manager also writes the expected yield into the contract. He recorded the low yield expectation at 10 tonnes per acre (25 tonnes per hectare). Thus for the 60 hectare in the 1995 contract, 1500 tonnes of tomatoes from Tawona irrigation scheme were expected. According to the sales manager, the farmers are told that if they cannot produce 10 tonnes per acre<sup>6</sup>, the tomato production is not useful and they should choose another crop. A better yield is 40-50 tonnes per hectare and the top is 75-80 tonnes per hectare. However, farmers grow tomatoes for cash and do not know precisely whether they reach the ten tonnes or not.

The 251 farmers who were in the 1995 contract were guaranteed collection by the Cairns trucks. The sales manager explained the usefulness of the contract by giving the following example. A few years previously they had had a shortage of cans and thus limited collection to farmers in the contract only. On the other hand, if the company experienced a shortage of tomatoes it was free to buy them from non-contract farmers and private buyers. I had observed that the Cairns trucks collected from everybody, regardless of whether they were in the contract. To verify my observation, I analysed the tomato delivery sheets of IMC members. In total, 506 different farmers were recorded during July, August and September 1995, 255 more than the 251 who were registered in the 1995 tomato contract. The 506 farmers who had delivered tomatoes to Cairns, were 198 women (39%) and 308 men (61%). Thus apart from the farmers in the contract who were the registered plottolders on those 60 hectare, non-registered plottolders also delivered their tomatoes to Cairns and were paid accordingly. In the next chapter we see that 38% of the registered plottolders in Tawona irrigation scheme were women.

IMC members record the number of boxes per farmer as the boxes are collected by the Cairns trucks. The farmers are paid by Cairns according to the number of boxes on the tomato delivery sheets. The price of the boxes is established after the truck, with its load, is weighed at the company premises in Mutare. The average price was Z\$500 per tonne in 1995 (1000 kg). A box weighs approximately 20 kg. Hence the farmer received Z\$10 a box in 1995. In 1996 one box fetched Z\$12. The price is set by Cairns. Farmers in the Tawona irrigation scheme have no choice but to accept it. Even if all the farmers from the scheme decided not to deliver their tomatoes to the company, it is most unlikely that the company would change its price. A representative of Cairns said that there were enough schemes from which they could get tomatoes to keep their factory at full capacity. IMC members visit the company once per month during the tomato season (June up to September) to collect the cheque to cover the cash for the month, and to collect the lists with the calculated earnings per farmer. They then go to the bank to cash the cheque and travel with a bag full of money in the bus to Manesa village. IMC members did not like to travel by bus with so much money. They were afraid of being robbed or of even losing their lives. Back in the village the IMC paid the farmers.

Farmers want to be in the Cairns contract, even though Cairns usually collects the tomatoes of non-contract holders too, and the price from private buyers is usually higher. Farmers gave three major reasons for this: 1) Cairns collect all the tomatoes whereas private buyers only choose the bigger ones. 2) Farmers have a guarantee that their tomatoes will be collected, even in July when tomatoes are abundant. 3) Farmers perceive the delivery to

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<sup>6</sup> Twenty-five tonnes per hectare. However, contract farmers are only allowed to grow one acre (0.4 hectare) of winter tomatoes for Cairns.



Cairns as a kind of saving. They receive a certain amount every month, which they can spend on rent for the plot, school fees and fertilizer for the maize crop.

#### *Cash earnings and control*

It is both women and men who organise the cultivation and harvesting of tomatoes and shape to a certain extent the value of winter tomatoes through their various transactions. Farmers shape the potential exchange value (see conclusion of this chapter) by deciding how many boxes to put aside for collection by Cairns and how many boxes or buckets to sell or barter with private buyers. Although farmers are only allowed to cultivate one acre of tomatoes for Cairns, some cultivated more than that. They argued that they also grew for private buyers. Table 4.8 depicts tomato transactions with private buyers and Cairns in two monogamous and one polygynous homestead. Total earnings are not shown, but the frequency and amount exchanged in a particular period are depicted.

Table 4.8: Valorisation of winter tomatoes: number of boxes and cash earnings (Z\$) with private buyers and Cairns (1995) (Priv B: Private Buyer)

Monogamous (wife) From 19/6-21/8				Monogamous (son) From 5/6-12/8				Polygynous (2 wives) From 6/6-29/7			
Priv B		Cairns		Priv B		Cairns		Priv B		Cairns	
Boxes	Z\$	Boxes	Z\$	Boxes	Z\$	Boxes	Z\$	Boxes	Z\$	Boxes	Z\$
1	40	10	149	1	30	1	14	-	4	2	24.32
10	300	18	216	2	60	2	22	2.5	100	21	315
5	100	24	242	5	150	10	120	18.5	560	9	108
10	150	48	507	10	300	June	256	5.5	160	39	468
2	30	41	433	2	60	3	45	12	240	12	144
2	30	61	633	1	30	9	86	3	60	63	630
				1	30	8	72	-	7.60	3	30
				3	75	July	395	32	barter	3	30
				5	barter			6	barter		
				4	60			4	barter		
				5	75			7	barter		
				3	39			2	barter		
				5	50						
30	650	202	2,180	47	959	33	1,010	92.5	1,132	152	1,749

In the first case the wife organised the labour, being assisted by her children and a labourer who received tomatoes in return. In the second case the son relied on the labour of his wife, mother, brothers and sisters. In the polygynous homestead the two wives received assistance from their children, the wives of their husband's brothers (also *varoor*) and from the aunts (HFZ). They were given tomatoes in exchange for their labour. Cash was not used by these farmers, only produce. Let us now look at three other cash aspects of winter tomatoes: 1) the amount earned; 2) the expected earnings from Cairns and the value of winter tomatoes; 3) the spending of and control over earnings.

1) Concerning the amount earned let us look at Table 4.8. In the first case, sales to private buyers in May and at the beginning of June were not recorded, but based on what we were told, she earned an estimated of Z\$1000 from private buyers. The last September payment from Cairns was usually around Z\$ 400-500. Thus it is estimated that she earned approximately Z\$3500 from one acre in total. Thus approximately 28% of the earnings came from private buyers. The second farmer's August and September payments from Cairns were not included. These were approximately Z\$1000. Thus, he earned in total an estimated amount of Z\$3000, of which 33% could have come from private buyers. In the polygynous

homestead, the September payments from Cairns were not included. Hence, these farmers could have earned an estimated Z\$3300 per acre during the winter tomato season. Thirty percent of the earnings could have come from private buyers. Thus, the average cash exchange from about one acre of winter tomatoes was somewhere between Z\$3000 and Z\$4000. The costs of fertilizer and chemicals, approximately Z\$300, and labour costs, approximately Z\$210, need deducting.<sup>7</sup>

2) How much cash could farmers earn from Cairns? The Cairns sales manager expected 10 tonnes of tomatoes per acre. At 0.50 cents per kg (1995) the total would thus be Z\$5000 per acre. He mentioned that private buyers collected some of the produce, but assumed that 75% of the tomatoes would be delivered to Cairns. Thus Cairns expected to pay Z\$3750 per acre per farmer. However, the sales manager did not consider that tomatoes were also exchanged for other than cash. Cash exchanges appeared to cover approximately 80% of the total production. The other 20% was used for gift giving and consumption, and exchanged for labour (*kushandira*), firewood, manure, and other goods. Thus from the expected Cairns payments, Z\$1000 of the total production should be deducted for these exchanges. Thus, on average, a farmer would earn from Cairns an estimated of Z\$2750 per acre.

From my findings, it emerged that cash exchanges, which were an estimated 80% of the winter crop, were approximately 30% with private buyers and 70% with Cairns. Thus, of the total winter tomato produce an estimated 24% realized its value through sales to private buyers, 56% through sales to Cairns and 20% through labour, sales to others, gifts, barter and consumption. Thus actually, Cairns received less tomatoes from the farmers than they had anticipated in their tomato contract. However, as we have seen above, Cairns also collected tomatoes from many other non-contract farmers in the scheme, and thus collected what they expected from the scheme or even more. And if production in Tawona irrigation scheme was lower than Cairns officials anticipated, as for example in 1996 when the crop failed (see 4.4 below), then Cairns would collect from other irrigation schemes to supply the capacity of their factory in Mutare.

3) Who, then, spends and controls the cash from the winter tomatoes? The registered plottolders usually have final say over the cash. Thirty-eight percent of the registered plottolders are women. In 'women without husband homesteads', 'women with absent husbands' and 'divorced women homesteads' it is mainly women who spend and control the cash. But what happens when husbands are present? We then see that part of the cash is controlled by wives and husbands individually and part of the cash is in their 'shared control'. In fact, controlling and spending of cash from the winter tomatoes appeared to be both an individual and collective process. Women spent the little they received from private buyers on consumption goods. The larger cash amounts from Cairns were used to pay the rent for the plot, school fees and fertilizer. Wives and husbands usually agreed about the earnings and expenditures from the tomato cash crop. However, when husband and wife were already in conflict, then the cash from the tomatoes also became a point of dispute. And in such circumstances, the husband was usually more powerful because he argued that he is the owner of the plot and therefore controller of the cash (see Vijfhuizen 1996 and the next chapter). However, when conflict is absent, wives usually control part of the cash, and have a 'shared control' over the rest. The women are in the fields, actively involved in transactions. They are value shapers. They realise the value for some of the winter tomatoes by sales and barter to private buyers, labour, gifts and consumption. Women decide on the quantity to go to Cairns and in that way shape the potential exchange value. Maybe it is a women's strategy to allocate only half of the tomatoes to Cairns, because they know they have only shared and not individual control over the cash realised from Cairns.

<sup>7</sup> The earnings per 0.4 hectares of winter tomatoes was an estimated Z\$3500. That equals 350 boxes of tomatoes. If the tomatoes had been harvested by day labourers, then the costs would have been Z\$210. I took that amount as an estimation of a farmer's own labour costs during the tomato season.

### Cultivation practices and valorisation of wheat

Women farmers cultivate wheat from May to September, on an average of almost three *madhunduru* (see Table 4.6). They cultivate wheat mainly for consumption, usually obtaining seed from other farmers after helping each other harvest. Men plough and women sow the seeds by broadcasting. Women irrigate and weed. *Kushandira*, labour in exchange for wheat, is the common form of labour organisation for wheat. It usually takes a week to harvest one acre of wheat. The women pull the wheat out of the soil so that the stems remain long and can be used for thatching. They bind the wheat together in small bundles for threshing. Some people thresh in the scheme, after making a threshing place with cow dung. When the cow dung is dry, groups of women farmers beat the small bundles on stones to remove the ears of wheat. They then use long sticks to remove the chaff. In the last stage they winnow and grind the wheat, ready to bake bread. Farmers who do not thresh in the scheme, transport the wheat bundles home to be threshed there. Four buckets of wheat are obtained on average from one *dhunduru*, and thus the women obtain approximately twelve buckets of wheat. Some is given to those who helped them to harvest and thresh the wheat. The rest is usually used for consumption in the homestead.

### Cultivation practices and valorisation of vegetables

Women farmers try to have vegetables available throughout the year. They manage in the following three ways:

1) Despite its prohibition by Agritex, all women farmers intercrop maize with water melon, sugarcane, cucumber, wild okra and pumpkin leaves (*matikiti*). In December, January and February families consume these vegetables. Women farmers also sell or give away sugarcane and water melons. As a woman farmer told me in February 1995, 'I sold four water melons for a dollar each. We also sell sugarcane. Each stalk costs ten cents. This morning I also gave water melons to the water controllers'.

2) Women farmers usually harvest one or two *madhunduru* of maize earlier than the rest, in order to start the cultivation of vegetables in February, which is the second method of having vegetables available. They use their own vegetable seeds or buy or exchange with other farmers. They usually grow rape (*chembere dzapondana*), and a few cultivate a *dhunduru* of onions. They weed the vegetables in February and March. They start to consume and sell rape in March when the buyers and local traders come to harvest the crop for themselves while the women measure the bundles and negotiate the price. Rape is consumed and exchanged for cash or goods in March, April and May. In June the rape becomes too old for fresh consumption and the vegetables are then harvested for drying. It becomes the dried vegetable, the so-called *mufushwa*. Small quantities of the dried vegetables are sold to local traders, or the women will travel to dryland areas to sell them themselves. I once joined two women farmers on a trip to a dryland area 50 km from Manesa village. We walked for a whole day in the hot sun, passing through homesteads to exchange cups of dried vegetables for plates of millet or cash. Table 4.9 shows the transactions of dried vegetables. In total 26.5 cups of dried vegetables were exchanged for 17.5 plates of millet and nine times Z\$1 cash. The transactions took place in eight homesteads, and twice on the road. Thus in twelve homesteads (60%), people did not want to exchange or buy dried vegetables.

Women mainly cultivate vegetables and exchange them for small amounts of cash or use them for consumption. Only in a minority of cases do men claim the little cash from vegetables as the following encounter depicts.

'A son used five *madhunduru* from his father. He dedicated four to tomatoes and one to vegetables. On a certain day in May his wife borrowed Z\$4 from a relative and sent her *vatete* (HZ) to Birchenough Bridge with the bus, to sell the vegetables. The young *vatete* returned with Z\$20, and handed the money to her brother's wife. Her brother saw that and told his wife: 'Bring the money to me. If you refuse, you are not going to eat sadza

here today. It was me who planted the vegetables and applied fertilizer. If you do not want to be beaten up, then bring the money to me'. The wife gave him the money, even though she had also weeded the vegetables. She would otherwise have been harassed. She cried and begged for the Z\$4, which she wanted to return to the relative.'

Table 4.9: Transactions of dried vegetables

Number of Homesteads passed	Exchanged	Number of cups With dried vegetables	Exchanged for plate(s) with millet	Exchanged for Z\$
1	Yes	2	1	1
2,3,4,5,6,7	No			
8	Yes	2	2	
9	No			
10	Yes	6	5	1
11	No			
12	Yes	4		4
13	Yes	3	3	
14	Yes	1	1	
15	Yes	1.5	1.5	
16,17,18,19	No			
20	Yes	3		3
On road	Yes	2 times 2	2	2
Total		26.5	17.5	9

3) In July, women farmers obtain seed from the rape vegetables in the scheme. After that, farmers cultivate and obtain vegetables from the gardens along the scheme, the main canal and the Save River. This is the third way of ensuring a supply. They cultivate the gardens until December when drylands and irrigation scheme can provide vegetables again. Thus in these three ways, the women farmers manage to have vegetables (*muriwo*) available throughout the year.

#### 4.4 TOMATOES AND THE CHAIRLADY OF THE IMC

The Irrigation Management Committee (IMC), whose members are farmers, manages the irrigation scheme with Agritex officials. The major tasks of the IMC members are to organise meetings to inform farmers about planting dates; to collect cash from farmers to buy syphons; to organise agricultural days; to look into issues about water distribution; and to fine farmers who do not weed or whose cattle or goats are found wandering in the scheme. Another important task is to organise the collection of the winter tomato production of the scheme. They also choose the farmers for the Cairns contract, a duty that allows them a degree of control over the farmers. For example, if a farmer does not weed in the irrigation scheme or if s/he does not stick to the agreed sale price to private buyers, the IMC can exclude that farmer from the Cairns contract. With respect to the selection of farmers in the contract, the sales manager of Cairns said that they tell the IMC members to choose people who will give them few problems, and to 'identify your friends carefully'.

In the Tawona scheme the IMC members had always been men. But in October 1993, the farmers elected a woman as Chairperson, for the standard term of two years. At the same time, another six women and one man were elected to the main committee. The man was chosen as vice chairman. The Agritex Extension (Irrigation) Supervisor, had encouraged the farmers to elect women to the IMC. It was a trial he said, because he faced problems with the men in the IMC. These problems largely related to financial issues. The sales manager of Cairns claimed that:

'women do a better job in the IMC, because women do the agricultural work. When men are in the IMC there is a lot of competition. Boxes of tomatoes go missing and men take the money after cashing the cheques'.

The chairlady of the IMC explained:

'Men were weak in the IMC, because they were keeping the *upfumi* (wealth) themselves. They have elected women because women are unable to keep the *upfumi* themselves. Men spent the money of the committee on beer. They did not use the *upfumi* properly'.

The Smallholder Irrigation Support Programme, working paper 4 (Republic of Zimbabwe, 1997: 8) indicates 'most IMC's are male dominated, though women often hold the position of treasurer, presumably because women are seen to be less likely than men to be dishonest with money'.

The IMC chairlady organised tomato production in the irrigation scheme in 1994 and 1995. She was assisted by other IMC members and by block committee members of the irrigation scheme (see below). They said it was a great deal of work, especially in 1995, when there was a very good tomato harvest (see Table 4.10). Each day, they visited the fields and investigated how many tomatoes would be ready for collection by the Cairns trucks. Then the chairlady phoned Cairns to let them know how many trucks to send to the scheme. The Cairns sales manager explained that 1995 was the best tomato year since 1985 when Cairns first became involved with production in the Tawona irrigation scheme. He attributed those good results to the chairlady of the IMC, who organised everything very well. 'She did a very good job', he said. Table 4.10 shows the winter tomato harvest of the past five years.

Table 4.10: Tomato yield Tawona irrigation: 1992 - 1996 (source: Cairns)

YEAR	QUANTITY (Tonnes)	UNIT PRICE	GROSS VALUE Z\$
1992	169	37	62,530
1993	63	40	25,200
1994	425	45	191,250
1995	1,591	50	695,500
1996	317	60	190,200

The good organisation of tomato collection from the scheme by the women and chairlady of the IMC without doubt contributed to a better result. In 1994 the women also did a good job in comparison with the two previous years. People also believed that the women were more honest in handling the money. However, the weather remains an important factor in crop yield and in 1996, the gross value was lower again, because we experienced rains in May and the persistently wet conditions caused disease in the tomatoes.

Organising the collection of winter tomatoes from the irrigation scheme is a heavy job. The IMC chairlady said that IMC members were paid Z\$5 per day by the farmers. They recorded farmers' boxes of tomatoes and plot numbers on the Cairns delivery sheets. She thought Z\$5 was very little for a day work, just enough to buy two bottles of Coca cola (Z\$2 per bottle in 1995). She was of the opinion that Cairns should reward the IMC members for doing a good job. But the sales manager of Cairns argued that the farmers themselves should organise something for the IMC members. The IMC chairlady argued that at the end of 1995, the vice chairman should be elected to be chairman. She would act of the vice, because 'it was a lot of work for nothing'. This is indeed what happened. The vice chairman was elected chairman and the chairlady became the deputy.

Farmers elected another five men and three women to the IMC main committee. Besides a main committee for the whole scheme, the irrigation scheme is also divided into blocks (A,B,C,D, and E). These blocks have their own committees. The gender of the block committees in the irrigation scheme was four men and five women in block A and E; seven

men and two women in block B; and six men and three women in block C and D. Thus the total scheme was managed by thirteen women (36%) and twenty-three men (64%), between October 1995 and October 1997.

#### **4.5 WOMEN FARMERS SHAPE THE VALUE: A CONCLUSION**

In this conclusion I explore five issues: the valorisation and commoditization of agricultural produce; the gender of small and larger scale crops; the economic performance of irrigation schemes; rules and new ideas of extension officials; and change and continuity in gender specific domains. I will deal with them in order.

##### **Valorisation and commoditization of agricultural produce**

There are three important reasons why it is mainly women who work in the fields of the Manesa village area and negotiate value. First, as I showed in the previous chapter, men encourage women's economic activities in the homestead so they can maintain their households and pay among other things, for medical care. Second, twice as many adult women live in the village than do men. This can be explained by migration and is why we see younger sons helping their mothers with the ploughing and transporting of produce from the fields. Third, smallholder agriculture, regardless of the transformations brought about by the irrigation technology, remained a woman's domain. They continued as before, combining the scheme's two-acre plots with the cultivation of dryland and gardens.

Thus it is that women farmers cultivate and valorise agricultural produce. They influence the exchange value, but do not determine it completely. Some economists say that exchange value is shaped by supply and demand. To a certain extent that is true. Cairns food processing company sets the price. If farmers in certain schemes did not agree, then there are many other irrigation schemes where Cairns can collect the tomatoes for the price they set. With respect to supply and demand, we also see that the price given by the private buyers goes down when tomatoes are abundant. However, others argue that kinship is important in shaping exchange value (see van der Pas et al, 1985). In this chapter, we have seen that both supply and demand and kinship are important in shaping the value of agricultural produce. Thus value is also a social phenomenon and cannot be entirely explained by economic considerations only. Verschoor (1992: 178) argues:

'commoditization processes -how goods obtain exchange value-, then, should not be seen as the sole outcome of external forces impinging upon individuals, households or enterprises. Rather, I view these processes as social constructions subject to constant negotiation by social actors in specific time-space situations'.

Long (1997: 234/5) argues that:

'Commoditization processes take place through the actions of a diverse set of interlinked social actors and are composed of specific constellations of interests, values and resources..... Commoditization constitutes a label we apply to ongoing processes that involve social and discursive struggles over livelihoods, economic values and images of 'the market'. Commoditization is more a way of looking at things than clearly defined special category of things....[it] cannot be reduced to some abstract notion of 'market forces'.

In fact, the market is everywhere. The moment that women farmers search for and open up opportunities to valorise their agricultural produce and negotiate over it, they contribute to constructing the markets, together with private buyers and Cairns.

We have seen that agricultural produce obtains not only exchange value in terms of cash through sales, but also through labour, barter and to a certain extent gifts. In addition the use-value of the produce is obtained through consumption and seed for reproduction. Long (1997:

235) argues, however, that these different types of values are not opposed to each other, as what value emerges depends on the context and specific moments in time,

'...like people, things have biographies composed of different sets of circumstances, wherein at some points or in some arenas they are accorded the status of commodities (i.e. attributed with exchange value, either potential or realized), whilst in other contexts they are not. In this way things are seen to move in and out of the status of being considered a commodity or are viewed by the same or different persons as simultaneously embodying both commodity and non-commodity values'.

That goods have different values at different moments in time, is especially true, as we have seen, for agricultural produce from the Tawona irrigation scheme. The distinction between potential and realised exchange value is also interesting. When farmers decide to put aside boxes of tomatoes for collection by Cairns, then that could be perceived as potential exchange value. When the Cairns trucks have collected the boxes for a price of Z\$10 (1995), then the exchange value is realised. Let us now consider the above perspectives in terms of gifts, barter and equivalencies, sales and prices. Gifts have an ambiguous position in the 'exchange context', at which we will look at first.

### *Gifts*

Gifts are not a one way and free transaction as economists (e.g. Sithole, 1995: 55/6 and 122) or as geographer Kay, (1964: 5/6) assume. Gifts are reciprocal and can be regarded as delayed payments. From the farmers' point of view reciprocal gifts are recognised as being perhaps unequal in terms of monetary value ('do not balance'); but are not valued in terms of cash; are exchanged at different moments in time with no negotiations attached. The counter-gift is typically delayed. Bourdieu (1990: 105-6) observes that 'the counter-gift must be deferred and different, because the immediate return of an exactly identical object clearly amounts to refusal. The interval between gift and counter-gift is what allows a relation of exchange'. The fact that no overt negotiations take place over the exchange value, implies that gifts do not take place in a market-like context. Gifts, therefore, cannot be perceived as commodities (see Kopytoff, 1986; S.A. Long 1992: 149). Farmers say that a gift is based on helping each other (*kubatsirana*) and the love you feel for each other (affection value<sup>8</sup>). Thus gifts occur between people who already know each other. In this chapter we have seen that gifts usually occur in the husband's *dzinza*. In Janet's case, the *vatete* (HZ), the wives of the husband's brothers and the mother-in-law received groundnuts. Janet also gave groundnuts to her friends. A gift is perceived to have a strong normative element, as it is interpreted as an act of helping out or an expression of affection. Cheal (1996: 98-99) observes that gifts are mainly practised by women, and that a 'part of women's work consists of 'the work of kinship'. Kinship work is an important part of family life. It is necessary for the maintenance of extra-household ties to significant others'. Thus, the social meaning of gifts is to establish or maintain relationships, including relationships of mutual dependency. Komter (1996) reviews different perspectives about gift exchange and argues (1996a: 3-12) that:

'Gift-giving creates the expectation or obligation to give in return, but is also perceived as a means to achieve a common culture and social cohesion. Gratitude is, just like faithfulness, a powerful means to establish social cohesion. Gratitude is, in the sociologist Simmel's words 'the moral memory of mankind', and as such, essential for establishing and maintaining social relations. A gift is an instrument to assign symbolic meaning to fundamental dimensions of personal relations, such as love, power, or dependency'.

<sup>8</sup> A Shona proverb says: *Kandiyo kanoenda kunobva kamwe*, which means literally: A plate goes where another plate comes from. In other words, a kiss deserves another kiss

Elsewhere Komter (1996b: 120) says that 'women's autonomous role in gift exchange and their concomitant strategic power position have remained unrecognized by most anthropologists'. I would say that it is not only the role of women's gift-giving, which remains, unrecognized but also that women are important value shapers of agricultural produce. From that domain of activities women derive their gender identity as farmers and their authority, and are able to wield power. Gift-giving can be perceived as an important strategy devised by women to ensure the household's food security.

Kopytoff (1986) labels non-commoditized transactions as gifts and does not explore the meaning context of gift-giving itself. The three following perspectives on gifts show that the context of a gift needs defining in order to depict and acknowledge its significance. Let us go back to the groundnut transactions of Janet and explore three different types of gifts and their giving. The first is related to labour. In the case of labour, Janet did not talk about gifts. She said that the groundnuts were a payment for the labour provided by the women who helped her. Thus labour was exchanged for produce. Janet did not negotiate with the women over the exchange. She decided herself what to give. I do not know if a bucket of groundnuts was generally perceived as being equivalent to six days of labour, but those who came late received only half a bucket. The ones who had assisted with the harvest also received groundnuts weeks after the event. The point here, is that payment and gift are intertwined. The problem of how to reward multistranded relations exist everywhere in the world. It is difficult to pay money to family members or people you know well. It is difficult because of the asymmetrical relations created by the payment of money. Therefore the payment is in kind after the job is done. Then people will say that it was a gift, and they can say 'we were just helping each other'. The second type of gift is helping each other out. Janet did not have cooking oil and another woman gave her a bottle. Later in the year Janet gave her groundnuts. This could be viewed as balanced reciprocity. The third type of gift is for example when a baby is born. This is not a balanced gift. It is a gift to maintain and extend relationships (ceremonial fund). All three gifts are different in nature, but all are non-commoditized. Only the first type could be converted into money. When gifts are diversified, then we also see that social actors devise different strategies at different moments in time.

### *Barter and equivalencies*

When women farmers barter, they negotiate at that moment over the relative value of the products. They can express the value in cash terms, or use volumetric size or weight to establish equivalence. When the negotiating parties who barter express the value in cash terms, then they look for a proper balance between the cash value of the different products in the exchange. For example, according to Janet, Isaac's small cup of vegetable seeds were worth Z\$10. Isaac agreed. Then the vegetable seeds were exchanged with a size 6 pot of groundnuts which they also gave the cash value of Z\$10. Thus they certainly are active in deciding the amounts bartered, but do they always have as much say about exchange equivalence? In the case of the groundnuts bartered for vegetable seeds, the parties knew the cash value of both goods. However, when farmers barter with private buyers they can feel cheated if they view the goods provided in exchange for tomatoes to have a lower cash value at the time, than their boxes or buckets of tomatoes. Nonetheless farmers barter, because other factors are also at play. They want the goods and at that moment tomatoes were abundant. When you know that the tomatoes could rot if they were not valorised that very day then the equation changes.

The cash value of produce or goods is not always used when equivalencies are established. For example in case of maize exchanged for sorghum or millet, the weight establishes the equivalence - in the case described it was one bucket of millet for one bucket + one gallon (500 grammes) of maize. In that way the weight of the crops is equivalent. Such weights are common knowledge among the farmers. Farmers can weigh their produce on the scales in the shops. Another way of establishing equivalence is volumetric size. For example, women farmers exchange maize for claypots. A claypot filled with maize is payment for one



claypot. The same practice is applied to baskets, or women exchange a cup of milk or sugar for a cup of maize. The volumes are thus equivalent, though not, of course, the weight. Thus in the case of barter, equivalence is determined by a farmers' generalised ideas of the value of one commodity against another in the context of their own social and cultural values and way of living. They barter on the basis of 1) their knowledge about the cash value of goods and agricultural produce; 2) the weight of agricultural produce; 3) the volumetric size of the goods. Farmers do not appear to negotiate much in the case of barter, since the establishment of equivalence is common knowledge, which they have shaped themselves. Negotiations may be more frequent in case of sales, when there is a price involved to negotiate about (see sales below). Farmers see barter as independent of love and assistance, and it can therefore take place with any person. Barter occurs when both exchanging parties are in need of something. Farmers explain that barter (*kuchinjanisa*) and gift (*chipo*) both fall in the family of *kupa* (to give), but remain different. One farmer said that *zvakatifananei*, meaning that barter and gift are alike, but not identical (*zvakafricanana*).

### *Sales and prices*

The sale of small-scale crops is in principle undertaken with anyone, providing the farmer who sells has a need for cash to buy essential items such as sugar, salt and soap. Janet had to sell groundnuts for cash to purchase such items. At that moment she had no alternative source for obtaining the cash. One third of the harvest she thus sold. The price of groundnuts is negotiated by the women farmers with those who buy. The buyers usually come from nearby, from the village or surrounding villages. The established price relates to the size of the groundnuts. Local traders want the large groundnuts only, expecting to obtain bigger nuts after they have shelled them. Thus they bought for an average price of Z\$24 per bucket, whereas the farmers in the village bought a bucket of groundnuts for Z\$30. These prices are not closely related to external groundnut markets, but the price of maize is. Farmers increase the price of a bucket of maize in the village, after National Foods Limited increased the price of mealy-meal (maize flour). Food companies buy their grain from the Grain Marketing Boards (GMB) and these Boards buy from farmers. The GMB usually increases the price during periods of drought for example. National Foods Ltd increase their prices when they in turn have to pay a higher price for the grain (maize) and when the electricity price and salaries increase. Thus, in case of the larger-scale maize crop and the small-scale groundnut crop, farmers have room for manoeuvre in setting the price.

When, in the case of the larger-scale winter tomatoes, the price is set by the Cairns food processing company, then there is no room for manoeuvre or for negotiating the price set by Cairns. Farmer representatives of the Irrigation Management Committee simply agree with Cairns' price, because otherwise Cairns will go elsewhere. It is good that donors help to construct many irrigation schemes, but it is the food processing companies, which also finally benefit. Thus, farmers cannot influence the exchange value they realise from Cairns. However, farmers do have some say in the potential value of winter tomatoes, by deciding which proportions to valorise through Cairns and which through private buyers etc. We should also not conclude that farmers can never influence the price of winter tomatoes. They can affect the price to some degree at particular moments in time. For example, farmers tried to keep high the price of sales to private buyers at the beginning of June. Those who undercut the agreed price were reported to the IMC. But farmers could not determine the price in June for long, for when tomatoes became abundant, the price drops.

If farmers want to earn more cash, then they will experiment with new crops. We have seen that women farmers earn a considerable amount (Z\$2200) from summer tomatoes. They also started to cultivate a new paprika crop in 1997. The farmers were able to earn more cash from a *dhunduru* of paprika (0.04 hectare) than from a *dhunduru* of winter tomatoes and therefore gave some of their land over to this crop. But most likely they will face the same problem they met with Cairns. The company which buys the paprika will set the price,

especially if the crop is taken up by many of the irrigation schemes, giving the company a plentiful supply and choice of where to buy.

### The gender of small- and larger-scale crops in irrigation schemes

Women farmers decide about cultivation practices on their irrigated plots, gardens and dryland throughout the year. In the majority of cases that land is 'owned' by men, but we could say that the crops and produce are 'owned' by women (see also Kaberry, 1952). That means that women decide what proportion of the produce to give away as gifts, to barter, sell, or consume. They also decide on how to use the cash earned from the produce. They did so for small-scale crops, those crops grown on less than five *madhunduru* (< 0.2 hectare) and for the larger-scale crops (> 0.2 hectare). Women also made decisions about the cash earnings from the larger-scale crop of maize, but not entirely on their own about cash earnings from the larger-scale crop of winter tomatoes. In this case women individually and collectively controlled part of the earnings and expenditures of winter tomatoes. Expenditure on collective issues were for example the rent of the plot and schoolfees. Maybe there were a few homesteads where men were in individual control of all earnings and expenditure of cash from both small- and larger-scale crops, but I did not come across any such homesteads. The statement of the Smallholder Irrigation Support Programme, working paper 4 (Republic of Zimbabwe, 1997:3) ...'to give a more equitable and greater stake in and rewards relating to the proceeds from the land to those who currently perform most work on the land', carries an implicit assumption. The assumption is that women do all the work in the fields but gain little. However, I would emphasize, based on the findings represented in this chapter that women are strategic actors and they certainly do not work for nothing. Sometimes women farmers include their husbands in the decision-making processes about the valorisation of agricultural produce. But more often than not they decide on their own and inform their husbands later. Thus it was not the scale and type of exchange which determined women's involvement in agricultural production. It was more the type of produce during a particular period of the year that seemed to shape the type of exchange. For example, women farmers cultivated summer tomatoes on a small scale (1 or 2 *madhunduru*). They did that during a time when there were few tomatoes due to the difficult cultivation conditions. Because they were in scarce supply they earned a good price for them. They earned almost the same amount as for the larger scale crop (10-14 *madhunduru*) of winter tomatoes.

The point I wish to make therefore is that women not only work in the fields, but also shape the value of produce. They decide to sell to private buyers or deliver to Cairns. Women's involvement in all crops is maybe a reason why farmers do not perceive small-scale crops as women's crops and larger-scale crops as men's crop. Thus, in the context of the Tawona irrigation scheme, those crops which are mainly sold for cash are also women's crops. This is in contradiction to Boserup (1970) who argues that crops which are mainly sold for cash (cash crops) become men's crops. Some authors (e.g. Chimedza, 1989) also distinguish in this way between formal markets (for cash crops) and informal markets (for subsistence crops). Formal markets are thus often related to cash sales and informal markets to barter. Then it is usually assumed that women deal with informal markets and men with formal markets. However, as we have seen for the Tawona irrigation scheme, women operate in all markets, which they themselves also help to reconstruct. Moreover, subsistence crops also bring cash and cash crops are also used for labour and barter.

Boserup's (1970) influential book is the first to analyse the position of women in socio-economic development. She argues that when agriculture is modernised, e.g. through the use of ploughs, cash crops and irrigation, the agricultural production system will change from being predominantly female to predominantly male (Boserup, 1970: 15-36). She argues that as a result of the attitudes of the extension services, who only approach men and teach them the modern methods of cash crops, the gap between the labour productivity of men and women continues to widen and as a further result, women will want either to abandon

cultivation and retire to domestic life, or migrate to town (Boserup, 1970: 53-56). In accordance with Boserup's thesis, Mvududu (1993: 22) and Dikito (1993) did indeed find in the Zimbabwean irrigation context that training and extension services were usually offered to men. Other authors on gender and irrigation (see introduction, 1.2) have also pointed out that women are marginalised by an irrigation intervention. But from this chapter another picture emerges.

The transformation of agriculture through the irrigation scheme has not resulted in women abandoning agricultural production and retreating to the domestic sphere, nor have men taken agriculture over. The reality is that women practice agriculture and almost 40% of them are registered plottolders. And therefore women claim the monetary income and handle the cash. Agricultural production remains predominantly female. It is therefore not surprising that extension workers say they mainly work with and teach women farmers. Women operate here in public spheres. We could also say that through irrigation, women have become more important in terms of agricultural production, namely as diversifiers of cultivation practices and value shapers of agricultural produce. From these domains they derive authority and are able to wield power, especially in the homestead, as we have seen in Chapter 3.

### **Economic performance of irrigation schemes**

Table 4.5 depicts that during the summer season (September-March) maize occupies 80% of the land in the scheme. Almost all of the other 20% is dedicated to small-scale crops. The table shows that during the winter season, small-scale crops occupied 40% of the land. However, the yields of these small-scale crops are not recorded by the extension service. Not only the production of groundnuts is ignored in the statistics, which was 9% of the land in the 1994/95 summer season, but also that of other small-scale crops such as winter wheat and onions, summer and winter vegetables, and the summer tomatoes. Moreover, these small-scale crops are not included in calculations of the scheme's economic performance, despite the fact that, taken together, they represent considerable value. For example, small-scale summer tomatoes provided almost the same cash income as larger-scale winter tomatoes, which are recorded.

Thus the only yields recorded in the Tawona irrigation scheme are those of larger-scale winter tomatoes, and maize in the summer season. For the larger-scale tomato cash crop, the farmers' sales are recorded. All the other transactions in which the larger-scale tomato crop obtain value are excluded. The maize crop is the only food crop in Tawona irrigation scheme for which production data are collected by the extension service, and again because it is the only food crop grown on a larger scale. The extension service records the yields by asking farmers how many bags they harvested. Farmers and Agritex officials both know that the number of bags reported for this smallholder irrigation scheme in Natural Region V, is always lower than the number actually harvested. One reason is that farmers who have irrigated plots, do not want to be excluded from the *povo* (literally: mass, referring to drought relief) by the government. Thus they strategically do not reveal what they really harvested, and why should they? In sum, in a smallholder scheme such as Tawona, much more is produced than is officially recorded. Hence its overall performance is much better than the figures compiled by the extension service, and the economic reports based on these data would have us believe. The performance of irrigation schemes may be significantly underestimated, as well as the returns for individual farmers. Moreover, in discarding the small-scale crops, and ignoring the complex transactions made, the official picture dismisses those dimensions that are so much valued by farmers themselves: the crops and transactions that are crucial ingredients for food security in the households and homesteads, and for maintaining networks of relations.

The income that farmers can earn from their land depends in the first place on the size of the plot. The plots in Tawona irrigation scheme are 0.8 hectares and in block E, 0.4 hectares. The Smallholder Irrigation Support Programme, working paper 4 (Republic of Zimbabwe,

1997: 7) reports that most irrigator's incomes were estimated to be between Z\$1000 and Z\$15000 per annum. For Tawona irrigation scheme we could say that for 0.8 hectares, while considering the commoditization processes regarding cash exchanges in this chapter, the following estimated cash earnings per year emerge:

$Z\$3500 + Z\$1800$  (1.5 acres of winter tomatoes) +  $Z\$2200$  (summer tomatoes) +  $Z\$1000$  (cash exchanges from the other products from the irrigation scheme) =  $Z\$8500$ . In the next chapter we will look at the handing over of irrigation schemes to the farmers themselves. Handing over also implies that the farmers have to pay for the electricity and water they use. The costs per year per 0.8 hectare is then  $Z\$852$  (see next chapter). That would imply that a farmer in Tawona irrigation scheme would have to dedicate approximately 10% of the cash earnings to the operation of the irrigation scheme.

### **Extension officials shape women's cultivation practices**

The Smallholder Irrigation Support Programme, working paper 4 (Republic of Zimbabwe, 1997:3) argues that

'about 80% of the actual irrigators are female. Thus in farming terms, the registered landholders are frequently absent when the work on the land has to be performed, and extension is given to their proxies while overall veto power remain with the registered landholders'.

The implicit assumption here is that women do the work, while the men are absent, but that the men still have the overall decision-making power over the land registered in their name. I do not agree with that view. The women present in the Tawona irrigation scheme, whose names are registered on 38% of the irrigated plots, make the decisions regarding cultivation practices, also in consultation with Agritex officials. Agritex officials approach women, because women are usually in the fields and attend the meetings. Agritex officials have an impact in the irrigation scheme by the rules they formulate and adhere to and by the new ideas they introduce. Let us first look at some of their rules and then into some of their new ideas.

The rules of Agritex determine women's work, especially since farmers must adhere to Agritex planting dates. Water controllers are also Agritex officials and they refuse to give water to those farmers who plant before the set dates. Also if a woman farmer does not stick to other rules of Agritex, for example she does not buy fertilizer and chemicals for the cultivation of winter tomatoes, then the water controllers will not register her for the syphons and she will not receive water on her scheme plot. However, rules are not only sanctioned by Agritex officials. Farmers also control each other, for example, in buying chemicals, because red spider mite is a regular disease in tomatoes and spreads easily. However, farmers are not always happy to be controlled by Agritex. They would prefer to choose the crops and time of planting themselves. And when they are free to choose, as for example in the gardens alongside the scheme, then they tend to cultivate the same crops as in the scheme. But in the gardens alongside the scheme, the water is not regularly available, and maybe this fact also shapes the cropping pattern in the gardens.

Agritex officials also come with new ideas and farmers are free to choose whether to implement it or not. For example, the summer tomato was a new idea and intervention by Agritex officials. Despite the risks of growing the crop in the wet season, farmers experimented with it because they could earn a lot of money with it during a time when the supply is generally scarce. They live in the Save River valley where it is usually hot and dry, and that reduces the risk of crop failure in summer tomato. Another new idea and intervention of an Agritex official was to choose women to be involved in the Irrigation Management Committee. The Agritex Extension (Irrigation) Official in 1993, was frustrated by the men in the committee who blackmailed him and stole money. Therefore he wanted to work with

women, believing them to be more honest than men are. Maybe he was also influenced by a consultant who also argued that there should be women on the Committee (Dikito, 1993).

### **Changes and continuity in gender specific domains**

In the past in rural areas, men had clear 'domains of activities' from which they derived their gender identity and authority. For example, they were hunters of wild animals, they were warriors defending the chieftaincy and they prepared land for cultivation by clearing the bush. All those activities have disappeared to a large extent. Men are still the cattle keepers, but only a small percentage of the people own cattle. Women foraged for food, fished, cultivated crops, cooked and looked after the children. Ndau women in Manesa village still do those activities. Women are responsible for food, cash and the health of children in the homesteads. From those domains of activities they derive authority and are able to wield power. When women have access to resources such as land, labour, cash, and water, then life may not be that difficult for them in the rural areas. I disagree to a certain extent with Sachs (1996: 3) who argues that rural women's lives are worse than city women's lives. Rural women can earn their money and gain homestead independence (Chapter 3). Both aspects change in an urban setting.

Thus we could say that women have kept their 'domains of activity', but that men's 'domains of activity' have largely disappeared. Thus men's authority and ability to wield power has been eroded, whereas women's authority and ability to wield power have been maintained. Nowadays men go to towns to look for jobs. If they are in the villages, then they regularly visit the beerhalls. Maybe it is also the loss of their specific domains of activity that make men resist major changes that empower women. Men simply want to prevent their potential power position continuing to erode. Therefore they use and manipulate rules, normative and value frames in practice through which they increase their control over resources, for example the land, which we are going to explore now, in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ALLOCATING THE LAND AND HOLDING THE PLOTS**

This chapter explores the allocation, holding and use of irrigated land. For people in Manesa village, land is an important resource because they obtain their food and indirectly their cash from it. In the previous chapters I defined three different types of land, i.e. irrigated land, rain-fed or dryland, and gardens. Land in communal areas, in one of which Manesa village is located, is not privately owned. Both government and chiefs maintain they 'own' the land, and both to some extent control the allocation of it. For example, irrigated plots are usually allocated by the state agency Agritex (Agricultural and Technical Extension Service), sometimes in consultation with village chiefs (or kraalheads) and farmers in the Irrigation Management Committee (IMC). Dryland plots and gardens are allocated by the village chiefs who lived in the area before resettlement took place (see below). Both women and men have usufruct rights to land, though they maintain they 'own' their irrigated plots, gardens and dryland. The main social actors in the 'field' of land are representatives of: Agritex, the non-resettled and the resettled chiefs, the Irrigation Management Committee (IMC), Councillors, District Council, Community court, Village court, and village women and men. All of them have their own interests and ideas about land ownership and the use and holding of it, and they act accordingly.

The chapter has five sections. First it explores the resettlement and history of plot allocation in the Tawona irrigation scheme. I show that non-resettled chiefs originally controlled all the land, the irrigated plots, the dryland and the gardens of the area. In the second section I explore the registration of plots in a new irrigation scheme under construction, showing how all the actors - Agritex, chiefs, and farmers - have their own agendas and strategies for realising their interests concerning the newly irrigated land. The third section explores plot allocation and utilization in the Tawona irrigation scheme, by analysing gender struggles over irrigated land. I show that gender ideology, i.e. existing gender images, values and norms, influences the practice of plot allocation and women's access to irrigated land. The fourth section looks into the policy of handing-over the irrigation scheme from government to farmer control. My intention here is to show that when irrigation schemes are handed over to farmers, control over land also changes. In such a case, the ability of farmers to cover the costs involved needs consideration, but also arbitration over plot utilization and allocation.

The concluding section focuses on the manipulation of land issues. The social actors transform, bend and manipulate norms, values, rules and ideas and thereby shape the practice of land use. Land means survival and therefore the social actors concerned need to control it.

#### **5.1 RESETTLEMENT AND HISTORY OF IRRIGATED PLOT ALLOCATION**

Food and resettlement were the aims of constructing the irrigation schemes discussed here. The Tawona scheme was constructed alongside a resettlement programme of people from the Munyokowere area (the present Middle Sabi Estate, see appendix 5) into the Manesa village area. Nowadays people in Manesa village are of the opinion that the original plots were first allocated to those being resettled. However, in contradiction to such beliefs, in practice, the majority of the irrigated plot holders, as we will see, were the non-resettled people who lived there already.

### Aims of constructing irrigation schemes

The first formal<sup>1</sup> irrigation scheme in Zimbabwe was constructed in Mutema village, the neighbouring village of Manesa (see appendix 6). The Mutema irrigation scheme was constructed in 1930, at the instigation of an officer<sup>2</sup> of the colonial regime who in Roder's words (1965: 105):

'defended the construction of irrigation projects in the 'Low Veld'<sup>3</sup> as necessary to provide a source of grain in years of crop failure and food shortage. In 1933, this same officer, Alvord, claimed that the Mutema project had alleviated famine'.

Alvord and the then Paramount chief of Mutema chieftaincy, Zarura, collaborated in the construction of that first formal irrigation scheme. However later, as Roder (1965: 114-116) argues:

'The government's main aim in expanding irrigated areas was making land available for the resettlement of Africans from areas designated as White. The development of irrigation projects was advocated as an effective means of implementing the Land Apportionment Act<sup>4</sup>.

The Tawona irrigation scheme was constructed adjacent to the Mutema scheme and began to operate in 1953. Between 1950 and 1953 the government resettled the people from the Munyokowere area, which became the present Middle Sabi Estate (see appendix 5). Nowadays, half of this Middle Sabi Estate and its irrigation scheme (covering 4000 hectare) is run by the parastatal Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) and the other half (4000 hectare) is owned by several private farmers. Although most of the people in Manesa village today believe that the Tawona scheme was constructed to augment food supplies, the scheme also served the purpose of resettlement. In the Agritex files of the 1960's, irrigation schemes are called irrigation settlements. That is also an indication that the schemes were constructed for resettlement.

### Beliefs about plot allocation

Since the resettled kraalheads and their people came from outside Manesa village, they were to be given irrigated plots, because they had no access to (dry) land in Manesa village. But were they allocated the irrigated land? People of both sexes in Manesa believed the irrigated land was given to the resettled people since they had no land and the non-resettled (the original inhabitants of the Manesa village area) rejected the scheme and refused to work there. The explanation people today give for this is that the non-resettled viewed the resettled people as slaves of the government who were forced to construct the irrigation scheme; and they saw irrigated agriculture as tiresome and labour-intensive. They did not want to work the whole year and argued that without irrigation they could plant what they wanted, and from May until October they could do what they wanted. 'We want time to work and time to play', they said.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Formal' irrigation, refers to schemes initiated and constructed by the government, which are either government or community managed. However, even long before government constructed schemes, farmers had developed their own irrigation furrows (Bolding et al. 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Alvord started the agricultural extension system in Zimbabwe (see Bolding, forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> 'Low Veld' refers to the Save River valley, where villages such as Mutema and Manesa are located.

<sup>4</sup> Under the Land Apportionment Act (1930) about half of the country was reserved for Europeans (the now large-scale commercial areas). The other half was reserved for the black majority (see Moyo, 1995).

Another reason given today for the rejection of irrigation by non-resettled people is that they had sufficient dryland, and that cultivating both an irrigated and dryland plot during a time when land was not yet scarce, may have caused a labour shortage<sup>5</sup>.

### **The practice of plot allocation in the Tawona irrigation scheme**

Let us now examine some figures related to the origin of the plot holders in Tawona irrigation scheme, in order to verify present views that the resettled were allocated the irrigated plots and the non-resettled ran away. Table 5.1 shows resettled and non-resettled kraalheads with their people who obtained irrigated plots after the scheme was established in 1953 and extended in 1954 and 1956. The figures are derived from a 'combined personnel and livestock register Mutema-Tawona irrigation settlements', dated 31st March 1960. This was the only list I could find in the Agritex files concerning the initial plot allocation in the Tawona scheme. The list contains the names of plot holders but does not indicate whether they were male or female. But it did indicate how many years a specific farmer had held a plot in the scheme. The 1960 list also makes a distinction between T (Tawona) plots and TE (Tawona Extension) plots. The Tawona plots numbered 105 in total, of which 24 were vacant. The majority (72%) of the farmers who held a plot had been seven years in the scheme, that is, since the scheme started to operate in 1953. These farmers had four acres. Those who held Tawona Extension plots (62 in total) had been six years (since 1954) in the scheme. Forty-eight of the 62 farmers (77%) held a four-acre plot. The other 14 TE farmers (23%) had held their plots since 1956 and had been allocated two acres. Table 5.1 shows the number of plot holders for each resettled and non-resettled kraalhead in 1953, 1954, 1956 (list from Agritex' Provincial file, dated 31st March 1960). Table 5.1 also depicts the plot holders per resettled and non-resettled kraalhead in 1994.

We see in Table 5.1 that the people of the non-resettled chiefs, i.e. those who had always lived in Manesa village, did not turn their backs on irrigation as suggested, but were the ones to obtain the very first irrigated plots. And one year later the people of the non-resettled kraalhead Tawona<sup>6</sup>, were also allocated many plots. Thus sixty percent (60%) of the plots were allocated between 1953 and 1956 to the non-resettled, or local people. The resettled people and their kraalheads were allocated a few plots in 1953, even though the scheme was initially constructed for them. In 1954 and 1956 the resettled people of Haugurwi were allocated irrigated plots, and thus in the first few years of the scheme the resettled people were allocated forty percent (40%) of the irrigated land.

The initial size of the plots was four acres (1.2 hectares), and many of the first plot holders were given plots of this size to clear (cutting trees and bushes). However, in the Tawona Extension (1954 and 1956) two-acre plots were also allocated to the farmers. By the seventies, all of these four-acre plots had been subdivided among the children and the 1,2 hectare standard size had been reduced to 0.8 and 0.4 hectare. Therefore, we see in 1994 a higher number of plots. Sixty-nine percent (69%; 174 plots) were in the hands of non-resettled people and thirty-one percent (31%; 80 plots) were occupied by resettled people.

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<sup>5</sup> At present irrigated plots are small and dryland plots too. Therefore the people from a homestead can combine these two methods of cultivation without real problems.

<sup>6</sup> Tawona is a neighbouring village where the inlet of the irrigation scheme is constructed. Therefore the scheme is named Tawona. The village is ruled by kraalhead Tawona.



Table 5.1: Number of plot holders per resettled and non-resettled kraalhead in 1953, 1954, 1956 from the 1960 list; Agritex Provincial file (gender not indicated).  
In 1994: Survey Vijfhuizen (1994) and from lists used by Agritex water controllers (see section 5.3 for the gender of plot holders).

KRAALHEADS IN MANESA	Plotholders since 1953	Plotholders since 1954 and 1956	Total 1953,1954,1956	Plotholders 1994
<b>RESETTLED</b>				
Haugurwi		35	35	8
Nemashapa	10		10	40
Mukokota	10		10	30
Nedangura	2		2	2
Nukuayaya	2		2	-
Total Plots for resettled people			59 (41%)	80 (31%)
<b>NON-RESETTLED</b>				
Panganai	32		33	81
Manesa	25	1	25	75
Tawona			26	5
Mutema-Kraalheads or Department	0 1	26 0	0 2	13
Total plots for non-resettled people			84 (59%)	174 (69%)
Total Plotholders	81	62	143	254

Hence, only a minority of the resettled hold irrigated plots. That seems to be in contradiction to the construction aims of the scheme and the actors' present views. Obviously, what actors say and believe about irrigated plot allocation and holding, does not necessarily correspond with past and present practice. A reason for the low number of resettled holding irrigated plots in the beginning is probably their low number at that time. Their number grew rapidly, but the percentage of irrigated plots allocated to them decreased (from 40% to 30%). A major reason for the resettled holding fewer plots, is that the non-resettled kraalheads controlled and still control land allocation in Manesa village. In the next chapter I will explore the power struggles between non-resettled and resettled chiefs in Manesa village. But in the following section, which concerns plot registration for a new scheme, we will see that there is almost no difference in the number of plots registered to people of non-resettled and resettled kraalheads. Could we say then that non-resettled chiefs lost control over their land? Before jumping to that conclusion, let us first look into the registration process for irrigated plots in the proposed new scheme.

## 5.2 PLOT REGISTRATION FOR A NEW IRRIGATION SCHEME

Registration took place between March 1994 and August 1995. Unfortunately I was unable to look at who was finally allocated the plots because construction on the new scheme was delayed. When my research was finished and while I was writing, I kept an eye on the possible plot allocation but was told by Agritex field officials that the first plots would be allocated in June/July 1998<sup>7</sup>. But even without the final plot allocation, the analysis below shows how the registration process works out in practice. It shows that Agritex officials are

<sup>7</sup> I left Zimbabwe in March 1998.

very important in shaping plot registration. They adhere to a few selection criteria only. Chiefs and farmers have their own criteria.

### **A new irrigation scheme: removing trees except the sacred ones**

On 14 March 1994, a group of 63 men from the villages of Mutema, Manesa and Tawona, were temporarily employed by Agritex to cut trees in what was to be the new scheme, adjacent to the Tawona scheme. Water for the existing Tawona scheme is pumped from the Save River and flows by gravity through the canals to the plots<sup>8</sup>. The same will apply for the new scheme.

The area where the new scheme was constructed became known as '*magobo*', from *kugobora*, meaning to dig out trees. More men were employed later in 1994, adding up to 200 men. Men did the work as piecework, from seven a.m. to 2 p.m. while their wives and mothers cultivated the crops at home. The clearing of the site was almost ready in January 1995 when the first temporal workers were sent home. All the trees had been cleared except for the trees of the sacred forest of Mutigwe (see next chapter), which was located in the middle of the new scheme. The bulldozers and tractors were delayed getting to the site to level the soil and construct the canals until September/November 1996. The bushes and small trees started to grow again. Thus at the end of 1996, men were employed again to clear the area. The construction of the scheme was again delayed in December 1996, due to the breakdown of tractors and bulldozers. People believed that these problems were caused by the ancestors of the village area, and therefore in December 1996, the kraalheads went to the sacred forest in the new irrigation scheme area, to worship their ancestors (see next chapter). After worshipping, people claimed that no more problems were encountered in the construction work. The new irrigation scheme would cover an estimated 100 hectare area. Some of the Agritex officials at field level assumed that plot sizes in the new scheme would be one hectare. However, later in 1997, the Agritex Extension (Irrigation) Supervisor told me that plot sizes were envisaged as 0.8 hectare per family. This meant that 125 names could be registered.

### **Formulated criteria and a selection for registration in 1994**

The following selection criteria for irrigators are recorded in the smallholder irrigation support programme, working paper 4 (Republic of Zimbabwe, 1997:2).

In the communal areas, irrigator selection on government-initiated schemes is directly related to the issues of whose land has fallen into the arable area designated for irrigation and who has been displaced by a scheme. In theory, all irrigators are supposed to be selected through consultation by Agritex with district councils, local traditional authorities and farmers' representatives and organisations. Only those farmers who meet the following criteria are supposed to be considered for membership:

- Membership of a master farmers' group
- Possession of a master farmer certificate
- Aged between 18 and 50

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<sup>8</sup> Thus the new irrigation scheme will have the same water intake as the existing Tawona irrigation scheme. A few extra engines will be placed next to the old ones and the canal will be widened. That implies that the new scheme is an extension of the existing Tawona scheme. Thus in fact I should refer to an extended scheme and not to a new scheme. However, I talk in this chapter about a new irrigation scheme, because it has clearly its own area and it was for a long time not clear where the water for the new scheme would come from. Agritex officials always speculated about bore holes or new places along the Save River. Neither option worked out well. Thus the builders of the scheme decided later in 1997, to choose the present Tawona pump house for the water intake of the new scheme. It is envisaged that the scheme will be ready in July 1998.

Possession of basic farming equipment and draught power

Possession of adequate labour to utilise irrigated land.

In practice, those people whose land falls within the irrigation area are automatically included in smallholder schemes, regardless of whether they meet the above criteria. If there are plots left over, other farmers in the vicinity of the schemes are then invited to join the schemes if they meet the criteria outlined above. In irrigation schemes farmers are given permits to hold and farm the land. The plotholder is officially registered on the permit'.

The Derude policy document (1983:14) states that:

'the selection of farmers in every irrigation scheme which is planned with the aim of creating a new living community with roots in the new soil ... involves bringing together not only experienced farmers, but also others with initiative and an ability to learn onto schemes to give the highest possible economic gains and social stability. To achieve these goals, consideration should be given to the following:

Good health and physical fitness

Aged preferably between 18-50 years with dependants

Effectively landless or with dryland holdings insufficient to provide for family's maintenance

Agricultural suitability and having other skills

Businessmen and those in wage employment specifically excluded

Zimbabwe citizenship

Priority will be accorded to qualifying people who will be displaced by the development of the scheme, followed by locals and then others'.

I will return to this Derude policy document at the end of this section. I am now going to explore how the registration worked out in practice. As we will see, criteria can be formulated, but this does not mean that they will all be adhered to.

Agritex field officials asked the kraalheads in 1994 to compile lists of their people who needed an irrigated plot. Their criteria for registration was that the person to be registered should be poor and present in the village. As one of the kraalheads, Nemashapa explained:

'The Agritex officials do not know the people who are suffering. We know the homesteads. For example, there are three sons who are married and they eat something from their father's acre. That is starvation'.

Village head Manesa likewise said, 'We know the people who have large and very small dryland plots. Those with small plots should have preference for registration'.

Agritex officials requested Semwayo<sup>9</sup> to screen the kraalheads' lists, to prevent too many kraalheads' sons being allocated irrigated plots. These screened 1994 kraalheads' lists went to the Agritex offices at field level. The names of the people per kraalhead and their gender are depicted in Table 5.2 (see p.139).

Table 5.2 depicts the names of women and men proposed by the kraalheads for a plot in the new scheme. We see that some kraalheads are more gender sensitive than others. The total percentage of women for new plots was 11%. The kraalheads provided the names, but they were not actually involved in selecting the names on these 1994 lists. That was done by the Agritex Extension Irrigation Supervisor (AES). He cancelled some names using the criteria of age and employment. People who had jobs and were older than 50 years were removed from the lists, because they were not supposed to be allocated an irrigated plot. However, some names were erased from the lists without a clear reason. The names selected for a plot were

<sup>9</sup> Semwayo means 'the one who follows the Paramount', meaning that he was a chief with a higher status than village chief and headman. His ruling area was the low fields of the Mutema chieftaincy (see Chapter 6).

written on separate small papers. He planned to invite them to the Agritex office in 1995 to fill in a 'socio-economic survey questionnaire' (see below). He made it clear in 1994 that he and nobody else would make the selection of farmers for plots in the new scheme. But age and employment were not the only selection criteria. Being 'displaced' was another criteria, which emerged in 1995.

Table 5.2: Number of people and their gender per kraalhead on the 1994 kraalheads' lists

NON-RESETTLED KRAALHEADS	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	SEX
		W=women; M=Men
MANESA	54	W=3; M=48; ?=3 (6% W)
PANGANAI	37	W=2; M=35 (5% W)
TAWONA	Not recorded	
RESETTLED KRAALHEADS		
MASHAPA	35	W=4; M=31 (13% W)
HAUGURWI	33	W=7; M=26 (27% W)
MUKOKOTA	15	W=4; M=11 (36% W)
NEDANGURA	14	W=0; M=14 (0% W)
TOTAL	188	W=11%; M=89%

### A call for the displaced, 25 April 1995

On 25 April 1995, an Agritex official explained at a meeting with farmers that Agritex at field level wanted to have the names of people who were cultivating dryland in the area designated for the new scheme. These farmers were going to lose their dryland to the new irrigation scheme and were therefore labelled 'the displaced'. The Agritex official said that kraalheads should provide the names of these displaced before 27 April 1995, the day people were going to be registered on the 'socio-economic survey questionnaires'. During the meeting the official also explained the criteria for selection for registration for a plot. The person selected should be married and between 18 and 49 years old, and he added 'we will first give land to those people who are displaced'.

Thus another criteria emerged. However, I want to emphasize here that specific circumstances need to be considered. I have explained above that the proposed new irrigation scheme was adjacent to the existing Tawona irrigation scheme. Thus we might expect that those who cultivated dryland in the designated area, already had irrigated land in the Tawona scheme. We approached<sup>10</sup> 144 farmers who represented their homesteads and cultivated on average, 0.6 hectare of dryland in the designated area. Of these 144 homesteads, 61 already had an irrigated holding of, on average, 0.5 hectare, that is, 42% of the so-called 'displaced families' representing their homesteads.

<sup>10</sup> These figures were derived from a survey conducted in March 1996, when the farmers were still cultivating dryland in the area which was designated for the new irrigation scheme. The construction had started at the far southern end. We managed to approach 144 farmers who represented their homesteads. They also mentioned other people who cultivated on dryland. We found an estimated 188 homesteads which made use of dryland in the designated area. That is almost 50% of the homesteads in Manesa village. In Chapter 4 we saw that 50% of the homesteads have an irrigated holding. That means almost 200 homesteads. 50% of the homesteads with irrigated plots, also cultivated dryland. This means that approximately 100 homesteads cultivated both an irrigated plot and dryland plot (Survey, Vijfhuizen, 1995). This survey, in March 1996, gave 61 homesteads that cultivated dryland in the designated area in combination with an irrigated plot. The other 39 may have cultivated dryland elsewhere, or had already left the designated area, or were simply not counted.

This call by the Agritex official for new lists with names for registration confused the kraalheads in the village. What about the lists they had submitted in 1994? The kraalheads had different explanations for the request. For example, Nemashapa thought that the 1994 lists had been cancelled. Haugurwi and Semwayo were of the opinion that the 1994 lists were still in use, but that they needed the names of those who would lose their dryland. Panganai said that he had heard that the 1994 lists had been eaten by ants. Despite the different opinions about the 1994 lists, it was clear to the kraalheads that 27 April 1995 was the registration day for plots in the new irrigation scheme.

### **Tricks and surveys: registration on 27 April 1995**

Many representatives of homesteads had put their sons on the 1994 lists, because in many cases the parents who lived in Manesa village were older than 50 years. Thus on 26 April 1995, many farmers phoned their sons to come on 27 April 1995 to register for an irrigated plot. Some from Manesa village travelled to where their 'brothers' or sons were working, to inform them that they had to come and register.

On 27 April many people arrived at the Agritex field office. They were all waiting for their names to be called in order to register. Registration meant that people would be interviewed by Agritex staff, and their answers would be written on what were called 'socio-economic survey questionnaires'. But as we have seen above, the Agritex Irrigation Supervisor had selected names from the 1994 lists and those selected had been sent a message to come and register. However, as the supervisor who had selected the farmers in 1994 was to be transferred within a few days, on 27 April an acting Irrigation Supervisor was there to represent him. His farewell party was on 30 April. The acting Supervisor told the people who were present that if their name was not called, then they were to leave. 'We only need those people to whom we sent a message'

But the farmers who were present had questions. They all wanted to know why their name was not on the list. Some farmers received an answer from the acting Supervisor that they were too old etc., or they were told to ask the outgoing Agritex Supervisor, 'because he was the one who worked through the papers, not me'. Thus the organisation of this plot registration exercise a few days before the transfer, could have been a clear strategy of the re-deployed Irrigation Supervisor, who had selected the farmers for registration in 1994, to avoid having to answer the farmers' questions. They could each refer complaining farmers to the other and in that way the decision-making about the selection of farmers for an irrigated plot would not become transparent. For example, a man stood up and said, 'I did not hear my name'. The acting Irrigation Supervisor said: 'it is written that you are too old'. The farmer said: 'the date on the identity card is a mistake'. The acting Supervisor responded: 'come with your kraalhead'. The farmer got irritated and said:

'You always say come with your kraalhead. If I come with him, you say go to the outgoing Supervisor. If I go to him, he will say go to your kraalhead. It will always be like that'.

The acting Supervisor told him never to come again, not even with his kraalhead. He told people generally that if they had not been invited to register, it was better for them to go home and question their kraalheads. But the kraalheads had not been the ones to select the people from the 1994 lists. This had been the outgoing Agritex Supervisor. But when he was approached he simply said that he was no longer in office and referred people to the acting Agritex Officer.

Those who were called first on 27 April 1995 to be registered on the 'socio-economic survey questionnaire' were a few businesswomen and after them some Agritex staff. Hence, the criteria for getting an irrigated plot were not adhered to. Being in business and waged employment was specifically stated as excluding criteria. It appeared that the criteria of age and being married were the two most important criteria for giving a person access. Also those

who had studied and therefore had a better chance of finding a job in the near future were allowed to register. For example, there were two young men, both in their twenties, who were phoned by their parents the day before. One lived in Mutare and studied marketing at a college and the other one lived in Harare and studied law at the Polytec. But they were both married and had children and explained that:

‘We have to register for an irrigated plot because that is our future. When we retire we need a plot. If we are selected then our wives and kids will go back to the village to cultivate.’

It can be questioned whether irrigated plots should be allocated for retirement purposes. Most likely they register so that their parents and other family members in the village can use it, and indeed the wife and children might return to the village if these young students were to be selected for a plot. Unemployment is high and employment insecure in Zimbabwe and social welfare almost non-existent. A plot is therefore a measure of security for a family as it can bring in more than rain-fed land as was pointed out. Everyone had his/her own opinion about the selection criteria. For example, village head Manesa criticised the criteria of age. ‘If you are fifty,’ he said, ‘you are not yet dead, but very strong. A person of fifty should be given an irrigated plot, because that field won’t only contribute to his survival alone, but also to his children.’ He went on to explain that there is a difference between temporary and permanent work. Temporary work should not be counted according, he said ‘temporary work can finish tomorrow’. He also argued that businessmen should not be registered for irrigated plots. He compared a shopkeeper in Manesa village with a widow who had five children. ‘The shopkeeper earns something every day, but she works five years on a dryland field without producing anything.’

The people who were registered on 27 April 1995 also created their own realities to justify their own interests. The farmers replied to the questions of the socio-economic survey (see appendix 9) in such a way as to put themselves in a favourable light. Of course they had no businesses, their husbands were on the farm, they had no job and their irrigation experience had come from working on their fathers plots and not by working on their own! After Agritex staff had interviewed a person and written down the answers to questions, they also put down specific comments about a person. By doing so, they in fact influenced and shaped the selection process for the second time. The first time they influenced the selection process by inviting specific farmers to fill in the questionnaire, and the acting Agritex Supervisor said that the final selection would be made by interviewing those registered on the ‘socio-economic survey.’ Some people who were present at the Agritex field offices complained that only the rich were allocated the plots, and that Agritex officials served those who gave them beer and money.

### **More registration and another Agritex perspective: 2 May 1995**

Registration continued on the second of May 1995. That day also a Senior Agritex Irrigation Supervisor from another irrigation scheme came to check the property of the Agritex field office, before the outgoing Agritex Supervisor could leave. After he had done his work he commented on the number of people he had seen complaining that their names were not included in the kraalheads’ lists. ‘So the kraalheads should write people’s names again’, he said.

The complaining farmers had managed to influence the registration process via this senior official, because the following day, 3 May, the acting Irrigation Supervisor requested the kraalheads to write down the names of displaced only. He said that these would be the last forty to be registered. On 8 May 1995, 109 names so far were registered on the socio-economic forms.

### The Acting Supervisor meets the kraalheads: 10 May 1995

Between the second and tenth of May the kraalheads also had a meeting and actually agreed that nobody should be cancelled from their lists and that everybody should be given 1 acre (0,4 hectare) in the new irrigation scheme instead of one hectare. The village chiefs were of the opinion that Agritex officials were not supposed to choose people for the plots in the new scheme. This was their duty. On the 10th of May 1995, the kraalheads were invited to the Agritex field office to give their 'lists of the displaced' to the acting officer. Present was the officer, his secretary, two Agritex Extension workers, the IMC chairlady, Semwayo, village head Manesa, and the kraalheads Panganai with one of his policemen, Nemashapa, Nedangura, Mukokota, Tawona, myself with one of my research assistants. The acting Supervisor opened the meeting by repeating the selection criteria for those who would be allocated a plot: their age, marital status and those on the kraalheads' previous list, and for today, those who had been listed as displaced. They should be residents of the Mutema area and those who had a paid job would not be eligible. He gave the impression that the plot registration had begun only today and that it was the kraalheads who were going to choose their people for an irrigated plot.

The acting Supervisor started with kraalhead Panganai's list. 'This one is not married', he said. Panganai replied, 'he is'. Then the acting Supervisor requested Semwayo, the chief of the 'Low Veld' in the Mutema chieftaincy (see next chapter), to verify what the kraalheads said about their people. He questioned another name, saying, 'this one is a teacher'. Panganai said, 'no'. Semwayo said he recognised only the name and knew anything about a profession. The acting Supervisor did not give up and said 'But there is no age mentioned'. So, he put a question mark. From the 16 displaced on Panganai's list, 14 were approved and chief Semwayo had to sign for the 14/16. In this way they went through all kraalhead lists. Nemashapa got seven of the eight displaced approved by the acting Supervisor and 7/8 was signed by Semwayo. Nedangura: 7/7; Manesa: 33/37; Haugurwi 23/27; Mukokota 10/14; Tawona 17/36.

During the meeting it was obvious that the kraalheads had manipulated the lists to include their own children. But the acting Supervisor also manipulated the situation. He gave the kraalheads the impression that they were involved in selecting their people for the irrigated plots in the proposed new irrigation scheme though he did not succeed in using Semwayo, who chose to play ignorant and support his fellow kraalheads. The chiefs were actually only providing names, it was the acting Supervisor who approved the 111 names of the 208 names from what he said were the '10 May 1995 kraalhead lists'. But he had said earlier that only 40 names were left to be registered. It remained unknown if and who chose the 40 farmers from the 111 names, approved by the acting Supervisor on 10 May 1995. Table 5.3 depicts by kraalhead and gender the 208 people proposed.

Table 5.3: Those proposed by kraalhead and gender (10 May 1995)

NON-RESETTLED KRAALHEADS	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	SEX (W=women; M=men)
MANESA	37	W=6; m=30; ?=1; (W=20%)
PANGANI	54	W=5; m=48; ?=1; (W=10%)
TAWONA	36	W=9; m=27; (W=33%)
RESETTLED KRAALHEADS		
MASHAPA	24	W=2; m=22; (W=9%)
HAUGURWI	25	W=5; m=19; ?=1 (W=26%)
MUKOKOTA	25	W=8; M=14; ?=3 (W=57%)
NEDANGURA	7	W=1; M=6 (W=17%)
TOTAL	208	W=36; M=166; ?=6 (W=22%)

Twenty two percent (22%) of those proposed were women. The acting Irrigation Supervisor selected 111 from the kraalheads' lists. Of the selected 111, I could not obtain the numbers and their gender per kraalhead. The acting Supervisor did not really appreciate that I was studying the plot registration process. As I already pointed out, it remained uncertain whether the names had actually been selected from the lists. Maybe the acting Supervisor chose from the lists the number still required for registration. Maybe he did not use the lists at all, because he did not need them. Maybe he was just following up on the orders of his Agritex superior to let the kraalheads write names again. Or maybe he just wanted to give the kraalheads the impression that they were important in the allocation of plots in the new irrigation scheme.

### **Another Agritex perspective and another registration**

The District Agritex Extension Official (DAEO), Head of Agritex, Chipinge District, visited the Agritex field office in June 1995. He also had his own perceptions about plot registration. He was of the opinion that even unmarried men should be given land, as long as they were above 18 years. Furthermore, he thought that no one on the kraalhead lists (1994 and 1995) should be left out. He argued that those who were not given an irrigated plot should have been written on a separate paper, so that they could be given dryland when they had no paid job, from the dryland of those who had succeeded in getting an irrigated plot. The DAEO also approved the kraalheads' idea of giving everyone just one acre (0.4 hectare) instead of two, as an alternative to cancelling names on the lists.

On 7 August 1995, another eight people were interviewed and registered on the socio-economic forms. Thus so far 117 people had been registered (see table 5.4 below).

Table 5.4: Registered on the socio-economic forms:  
Number of people and gender per kraalhead; per 7 August 1995

NON-RESETTLED KRAALHEADS	(N.R.)	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	NUMBER OF WOMEN
MANESA		26 (23%)	2
PANGANAI		14 (12%)	
TAWONA		26 (23%)	7
RESETTLED KRAALHEADS	(R.)		
MASHAPA		22 (19%)	5
HAUGURWI		11 (10%)	
MUKOKOTA		14 (12%)	1
NEDANGURA		1 (-)	
UNKNOWN		3	1
TOTAL		117 N.R. (56%) R. (44%)	16 WOMEN (14%)

Table 5.4 shows that of those registered on the socio-economic forms, 56% are non-resettled and 44% are people of resettled kraalheads<sup>11</sup>. Thus it seems that plots for resettled people are somewhat on the increase. In 1953, 1954 and 1956, resettled people held 40% of the plots. In 1994 they held 30% of the plots in the Tawona scheme. In 1995, 44% of those who registered for a plot were resettled people. However, final selection from among those registered will show how many people of resettled kraalheads obtained a plot in the new irrigation scheme.

<sup>11</sup> See next chapter for power-struggles between resettled and non-resettled chiefs.



The same counts for women. Sixteen of the 117 (14%) were registered. Whether they all obtained a plot will be seen in 1998-1999.

### **More perspectives: visits and Agritex transfers**

While I lived in Manesa, one of my visitors was a woman who worked in West Africa for the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). She wanted to interview the acting Agritex Irrigation Supervisor. That interview took place on 7 November 1995. She asked how plots were allocated to farmers. The acting Supervisor explained, in his own words, that:

'We have a waiting list of 580 people for the proposed new irrigation scheme. These 580 are over and above those already registered. The criteria for choosing a farmer is the qualification of the farmer (master farmer) and if he is efficient. But in the first place we take those who are displaced, which is based on the lists of the chiefs. Then we go to the criteria. We have a panel who chooses. The panel consists of local government officials, chiefs, councillor, IMC and Agritex'.

The FAO representative could not know that 40% of the displaced, who lost their dryland to the new irrigation scheme, already had an irrigated holding. And from that interview she could not know either, that the acting Supervisor had reconstructed a selection procedure that differed from the one they had really organised. It also remained to be seen whether the suggested panel would be arranged. Maybe the registration for, and selection of plots in the irrigation scheme under construction would remain a question for the Agritex Department only, as the Senior Agritex Irrigation Supervisor from another irrigation scheme hinted in a letter in January 1996:

'records on waiting lists for plot allocation and records on plot allocation before they are finalised, should never be released to anyone. It remains confidential information to the Department only'.

However, the Agritex Irrigation Supervisor who took over from the acting Supervisor in 1996, told me in February 1997 that the final selection for plots in the new irrigation scheme would take place by interviewing the people who were registered on the 'socio-economic survey questionnaires'. They would be interviewed by a group of people who represent the Rural District Council (the Chairman), Headmen, the Agritex Extension Irrigation Supervisor, the kraalheads and the IMC. The Agritex Supervisor explained that selection would take place based on the following criteria: health; marital status; number of dependants; age (18-50 years); effectively landless or with insufficient dryland; agricultural stability. Businessmen and the wage-employed would be removed and the displaced without irrigated land would have priority. They seem to be fair criteria. But does the socio-economic survey used for registering the farmers comply with those criteria?

### **Screening the survey**

The socio-economic survey (see appendix 9) counts four pages and four sections. The first section covers personal details and has three subsections:

- A. Farmer's name, sex, age, place of origin, if male, number of wives; if female, married or not; if yes is husband on farm; divorced/widowed;
- B. People resident on the farm: children and adult males and females either old or working, and a question about off-farm employment.
- C. Education.

Concerning personal details. A farmer who had come to register had to show her or his own identity card, but was not asked to show the birth certificates of children or the identity cards

of those who were living with them in a homestead. Information about work and off-farm employment often remained obscure. Neither were certificates derived from any education requested.

Section two focuses on farming experience; training as master farmer; how long involved in farming; if resettled size of old farm; whether experienced with irrigated farming, if yes number of years, what type of irrigation and what crops irrigated. In connection with this section, Agritex officials had told me they preferred farmers who had experience of irrigated agriculture. It of course begs the question, whether experience in irrigated agriculture is possible when the person registering is supposed to be effectively landless or is an insufficient dryland holder.

Section three deals with perceptions on irrigation development and had the following questions. Does your dryland holding fall within the proposed scheme? If yes, are you prepared to move if allocated another holding of equal size? Would you like to give up dryland cultivation and participate fully in irrigation? What crops would you like to grow? Where would you sell the produce? How would you transport it? Would you utilise AFC (Agricultural Finance Corporation) loans to acquire inputs needed in irrigated agriculture? Questions are also asked about present vegetable gardens. What we have seen is that farmers usually say that they have dryland in the area where the new irrigation scheme will be constructed. Most likely they have, but as we have seen, that did not preclude their already having access to an irrigated plot, or having more dryland elsewhere.

The last part of section three is an inventory, i.e. how many animals and other implements the farmers had, and if they used loans. This section was administered carefully by the Agritex workers. On the last three lines, where comments were requested, the Agritex workers usually wrote whether the farmer was an appropriate candidate, because s/he was experienced in irrigated agriculture, used oxen and AFC loans. And that was usually the end of the questionnaire. Section 4, on crop production on dryland, stating variety, output, area, fertilizers, etc, was usually not administered.

This last section lays again the emphasis on dryland. Thus the farmers who come to register are expected to be dryland holders, but only experience about irrigated farming is registered and regarded as important. Another hidden criteria is that farmers must have enough implements and be able to buy implements and inputs. Thus we could conclude from the socio-economic survey questionnaire that those who have experience, an income to afford tools etc. (i.e. have a job) and have an irrigated plot, are the most appropriate candidates for a plot in the new irrigation scheme. One of Agritex' aims to emerge here is that irrigated plots should be used efficiently. Often, as we have seen, the farmers with some money and access to an irrigated plot also have dryland in the area designated for the new scheme. As a last point about plot registration for the new irrigation scheme, let us look at the selection criteria again.

### **The selection criteria and practice: an observation**

To end this section about registration for land in the new irrigation scheme, I make the following observations. The section began by looking at the criteria for selection as formulated in the 'smallholder irrigation support programme' (Republic of Zimbabwe, 1997) and in the Derude policy document (1983). The criteria in the support programme (1997) are being a master farmer; having the equipment and labour; and being between 18-50 years old and displaced. Thus, the criteria focus on experience as does the socio-economic survey questionnaire. However, the Derude policy document indicates that not only experienced farmers should be selected, but also those with initiative and ability to learn.

Agritex field officials used the criteria formulated in the Derude document (1983), with a preference for farmers who were married, lived near the scheme, who were land less (implying that they had no irrigated holding) and should not be in paid employment or business. But whether Agritex officials stuck to those criteria and selected farmers

accordingly was not transparent. What became evident was that Agritex officials shaped the registration process. Moreover, different Agritex officials had different perspectives and contributed in different ways. They formulated, manipulated and used enough criteria to justify their actions, decisions and choices over registration of farmers for irrigated plots in the new scheme and therefore fudged its transparency. The chiefs did not understand Agritex' decision-making and lost, to a certain extent, control over their land (see further section 5.4 and Chapter 6). But not only Agritex officials and chiefs struggle over land. It is a contentious question between husbands and wives also, and I turn here to these gender struggles.

### 5.3 GENDER STRUGGLES OVER PLOT ALLOCATION

Disputes over irrigated plots in Tawona irrigation scheme also occurred between wives and husbands. I explore here two such cases. The first shows how conflicts between husband and wife contribute to a struggle over the irrigated plot. The wife wants one of the two acres to be registered in her name, so that she will have control over the produce. I show how IMC members and Agritex officials react to the wife's request. When the husband finally divorces his wife by giving her a *gupuro* in the village court (divorce token; see Chapter 2), it is the village chief who decides that the two-acre irrigated plot should remain registered in the husband's name. The ex-wife then loses her access to the irrigated plot and must devise other strategies to maintain their children and herself.

In the second case, I explore how a wife who was divorced by her husband, does not want to give up access to the irrigated plot. She went to the community court. The presiding officer decided that the wife should receive a maintenance fee, which meant that if the husband was unable to pay money, then he must give her half of the irrigated plot. Finally, Agritex officials registered the woman's name on one of the two acres. However, the husband denied his divorced wife access to the plot.

The third part of this section examines social actors' perceptions about access and registration of the divorced wife of the second case. In the last part we see how registration works out in practice by presenting the gender of plot holders, which shows that widows, married and divorced women constitute 38% of the registered holder.

#### Conflict leading to divorce: loss of the irrigated plot

During the gender struggle outlined below, Miriam lived together with nine of her ten children and a *muroora* (daughter-in-law) who had a baby. Miriam was 43 years old and, although some of her children had grown up, she included all of them in what she said were her 11 children. Her husband lived elsewhere since they have had longstanding conflicts. The conflicts started in 1985 when the husband married a second wife and used the money from selling produce from the irrigated plot to pay her bridewealth. That made Miriam furious as she had done the work on the two-acre plot. 'My husband just came to collect the produce from the plot and I was left with nothing', she complained. The husband, however, legitimised his actions by arguing that as the owner of the plot he had the right to dispose of the produce. 'Everything from the plot is mine', he asserted, 'I will distribute it, because I am the *muridzi weminda* (owner of the fields)'.

As a consequence Miriam and her husband fought several times. According to the husband it all started when he married a second wife. Ever since they had continually fought. '*Havagarisani* (the two wives cannot live together peacefully) and I am now chased from my homestead'. But from the outset Miriam resisted her husband's plans to bring the second wife to the same homestead. Some of the fights she claimed were 'because he wanted that wife to come and stay in this homestead. I defeated him and now he says that he is chased away'. The husband then shifted and went to live in the homestead of his second wife in the same village. However he continued to benefit from the irrigated plot by coming and taking the produce,

though he contributed nothing. In desperation Miriam threatened the second wife, who then moved to another village where the husband joined her. The husband, however, continued to visit the homestead where Miriam was living, but conflicts went on. He then decided not to return again to Miriam though they remained married for the time being. Miriam explained that 'He never paid a *gupuro* (divorce token) because he is afraid that people would say he had divorced his wife'. He did not want a divorce in the first instance, because of the children. He said, 'In marriage we are together, but on *pfungwa* (mind/thought) we are not together. If I divorce her, who is going to support my children? My children will be *marombe* (tramps)'.

From 1985 onwards, the husband remained in control of the plot. He then rented out an acre (0.4 hectare) to somebody else in exchange for cash. At the same time he barred Miriam from cultivating the remainder of the plot. He allowed his sons, however, (who lived peacefully with their mother) to cultivate the other acre. The sons harvested the maize (grown from October to April) and stored it in the granary of their mother. Miriam became desperate and could no longer endure being barred from cultivating the plot. How was she going to look after her eleven children without a plot? In 1994, she reported to IMC and Agritex that her husband was denying her access to the plot, which she had always cultivated. She also told them that he collected the money from the tomatoes that she sent to Cairns and that the plot was being rented out. The IMC members reacted by emphasizing that: they could not interfere in private affairs. Agritex officials had made it clear during numerous meetings that the renting of plots was not allowed, but they kept quiet for almost a year, a situation which favoured the husband.

When Miriam discovered that the IMC and Agritex were not supporting her, she began to think of alternatives for coping with the situation. She worked hard on her dryland field. But it did not rain and she could not feed her eleven children from that *makowa*<sup>12</sup>. She then arranged with her brother's son to cultivate five *madhunduru* or a half acre of his plot. In return she would pay the Z\$145 tax for the plot. She cultivated groundnuts and maize (October-April) and tomatoes (April-September). However, in the name of one of her sons she also cultivated secretly 0.2 hectare of tomatoes on the non-rented acre of the husband. Both Miriam and her son relied solely on the family labour of those living at the homestead. The son lived with his mother, brothers and sisters, but he did not support them financially. Miriam explained that he did not support them even though he lived with his brothers and sisters, because he first has to pay bridewealth.

Miriam supported the children by paying their school fees and providing their clothes and food. She was also investing in their future '*kuchengeta mhuri*' (to support the family) and therefore wanted her name to be registered on one of the 2 acres. But her husband declared that nobody was going to divide his plot. 'She is not a widow and not a divorced woman, so she can't register. If she were divorced she could. If she wants to register she has to leave my homestead'.

To give more weight to his argument the husband constructed and reproduced certain images about women in general:

'It cannot be possible for a woman to have land, because she is married to somebody. If a woman gets land she is a *chabuya* (prostitute). She can be given land, but then she is a widow. A woman is there to listen to the husband, because it is the husband who marries her. Therefore the wife should stay on his field and work in that field'.

Miriam, however, did not agree that married women could not be registered. She explained that some married women were registered by husbands who worked elsewhere. Table 5.7 depicts the gender of plot holders. We see that Miriam is right. A high percentage of married women are registered on irrigated plots, despite her husband's claim to the contrary.

<sup>12</sup> *Makowa* (plural of *gowa*) are infertile fields in low rainfall areas. The Ndau people call themselves the people of the *gowa*.

In July 1995, almost a year after Miriam had reported the case, the acting Agritex Irrigation Supervisor called Miriam and her husband to the office. He advised the two to 'live together and use the plot together'. Miriam was not happy. 'Agritex are taking no action', she complained.

'Agritex only listens to my husband and his brothers. They say that my husband's plot should remain registered in his name. I should work on both acres and collect the produce from one acre. He collects the produce from the other acre, without working on the plots. Their decision won't work because my husband will sell the produce from both acres. I am only used as a hoe on his acres. I want my name to be registered on one acre otherwise he will come and sell my tomatoes'.

The husband was not happy either with the decision of the acting Supervisor. He said: 'Agritex goes zigzag. What they said was not clear. They said go and live together but I cannot stay with her because she wants to kill me'.

Actually, the husband was afraid of his wife, as he said that she was too harsh. His brothers supported him in controlling the plot as they argued that the wife was not a good person, and that she could be a *muroyi* (a witch; see Chapter 7). The husband did not go back to Miriam as suggested by the acting Irrigation Supervisor and Miriam informed the chief, who was also present when the acting Irrigation Supervisor decided over their case, that her husband had not come home. She argued that the husband had not followed the decision of Agritex.

Let us now look more closely into the acting Agritex Supervisor decisions over this case. He obviously saw himself as having a right to make decisions over plot allocation at homestead level. Three major factors shaped his decisions and strategies.

1. The first was land utilization and payment to the government. 'As long as the plot was utilised and the maintenance fee<sup>13</sup> is paid, it is alright with us'. This allowed him to ignore the renting of plots, though it was prohibited. But renting was not a problem as long as the rent was paid, and certainly it was not easy for Agritex officials to obtain the required evidence about renting. Hence rules about renting were not strictly adhered to, and the complaints of the wife that the husband rented the plot to others were not followed up. The strategy was first to ignore the case, and then later to call for a meeting between husband and wife. While the husband had brought three male relatives to the meeting, Miriam was not given the opportunity to bring hers. The acting Supervisor told her that this was not a court and that what they were doing was engaging in discussion to try to come to some agreement. He asked the husband why he was not living with his wife. He responded that he could not do so as she beat him up. Miriam denied the charge. The acting Supervisor then instructed the husband to go home, to start a new life with Miriam and to give her one acre; adding that there would be no changes concerning registration of the plot. He expected wife and husband to live together as others do and to share produce and money. In addition, he instructed Miriam to stop using the plot of her brother's son. From his argument that 'the wife will never win. She gets her food, she gets everything, except her husband. So we cannot interfere. We have never had a problem with the husband. The maintenance fee was always paid, it would appear that his main concern is that the plot is utilized and the rent paid. He knew very well that the husband was a polygamist who lived with his second wife, but he did not take seriously Miriam's claim that she was therefore chased from the plot. He simply thought she was jealous. He also found Miriam too violent and accepted the husband's argument that she hit him. He expressed his view and dislike of the fact that many African women were too bossy and dominated men. It seems he disliked assertive women and he therefore decided that they would 'never win'. He made a distinction between 'domestic' and 'technical' problems in

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<sup>13</sup> Maintenance here is the money charged to registered farmers by Agritex for the maintenance of the system, i.e. Z\$ 58 per acre in 1995-1996.

the scheme in order to justify his decision-making. Agritex he said was only concerned with the area inside the fences of the scheme, with the strategy that the land should be utilized and the maintenance fee paid. Everything outside the fences of the scheme was not an Agritex affair. He considered this case a domestic issue in which he could not interfere. 'People have to solve their own problems', he said.

2. The fear of witchcraft appeared to influence his decision-making concerning plot allocation. He explained: 'You know, you need to be very careful in Chipinge district, among the Ndau. *Chivanhu* (culture) is not easy. I am here to work for my family, otherwise you find yourself in hot soup'.
3. Another factor influencing his decision-making was the administrative system. He explained that an eviction form comprised eight pages and that it was an extremely difficult procedure to evict a person from a plot.

These perspectives of the acting supervisor contributed to the fact that he did not solve the real problem. He asked Miriam to write a letter about the matter. Miriam thought that the letter would be forwarded to the District Administrator (DA), because she thought he was the highest government official, who ought to decide in this case. But that was not to be. The Agritex official called Miriam, her husband and the IMC chairperson to the office, where the letter of Miriam was presented. As expected, the husband and his brothers did not agree with the letter. The acting Supervisor then decided that the husband should also write a letter. But the husband did not come back to the Agritex offices, so subsequent meetings to deal with the issue were cancelled with the result that the letter was not written. The acting Supervisor then sent Miriam's letter to his superior in a nearby scheme and informed the husband and his brothers to bring the case to the village court. The husband did so, but his wife Miriam and her relatives refused to attend the court case. Miriam decided to go to the community court. There they explained to her that the community court does not deal with land issues and she was referred back to the village court. At the moment she took the case to the community court, she was not yet divorced and could therefore not claim a maintenance fee, which might have got the case heard there.

The husband took the case again to the village court as Agritex had suggested. That was on 14 October 1995. It was maybe the only opportunity left to him to win the gender conflict over the plot. He must have known that the traditional leaders would most likely choose his side. I explained in Chapter 2 the village court ruling on the case. The wife wanted one acre (0,4 hectare) to be registered in her name. But the husband gave his wife a divorce token (*gupuro*; here 10 cents) in the presence of the wife's brothers, who represented her parents having passed away. The village chief ruled that:

'The children should stay with the husband (6 children) and the youngest one year old son should stay with the wife; the husband should send food every week for that child; the husband should pay Z\$ 1800, because he had never completed the last bridewealth stages; the plot should remain registered in the husband's name'.

After this ruling, the husband left to go to the place of his second wife, 20 km from Manesa village, where he used to stay. The children went to their mother Miriam for food and support, but she had no access to an irrigated plot. Miriam tried to cope with the situation by sharecropping, i.e. by looking after somebody else's acres in return for the produce of two *madhunduru* (0.08 hectare). After that season she obtained a few *madhunduru* to use from her brother's wives. Her brother had recently passed away. Thus after the divorce, Miriam gave up the struggle over the plot registered in her husband's name. However, some women will not give up their access to the irrigated plot after a divorce, as we will see from the next case.

### Divorced and trying to hold on to the irrigated plot

The divorced wife, Fortunate, in this second case, held on to the irrigated plot after she was divorced. According to her ideas half of the plot should be registered in her name, because she did the initial clearing of the land and she looked after children. Her husband Mwoyo maintains that both acres should remain registered in his name, because a divorced woman cannot be registered on irrigated land. Fortunate was 60 years old. She had nine children and lived with five of them and her *muroora* (daughter-in-law) who had a baby. In March 1995 Fortunate sent a letter to the Agritex offices at local, district, provincial and national level, writing the following<sup>14</sup>.

'I bring my problem to you, the head of the acres. I looked for land and then registered it in the name of my husband. Now he is chasing me away from this acre. He says that I have bad spirits on me. He rents the plot to others (the wife gives the names of three women who rent the plot). I don't have anything to give my children. I am hungry with my children and I cannot pay the school fees. I am crying for a field to cultivate so that I can support my family. I have a garden which I spent six months asking for and my husband also chases me from there'.

In the first sentence, Fortunate highlighted her biggest irritation. With hindsight she regretted what she did:

'I should have registered it my name, because I found the plot in 1961. I cut the trees and levelled the 2-acre plot. So it is mine. My husband and relatives were not interested. I wanted the plot, but registered the name of my husband because I did not have a *chitupa* (identity card) and they said that I had to register the plot in his name. Now I am suffering because we are not allowed to enter the plot or the garden. I received the garden in 1978, did the clearing, but since 1983 he has been chasing me away'.

Her husband Mwoyo denied very strongly that his wife Fortunate had cleared the plot and the garden: 'It is all lies. How can a woman clear the land? How can she do such work? *Ari kurwara* (she is sick).' In order to justify his claim Mwoyo constructed the image that a woman cannot do the heavy work of clearing. However, other women claimed that they had also been involved in clearing the fields when the irrigation scheme was established in 1953 and when it was extended before 1960.

From another office at local level a senior Agritex official replied to the letter in March 1995, explaining the following.

'After investigation we see that the acres are not rented. We have no proof that you looked for the acres. We see that the acres are registered in your husband's name. To be chased away from the acre means that you have been chased away from home. You go to the police or welfare, they are the owners of such cases like this'.

In his reply he hinted that this was considered to be a private affair which fell outside of their jurisdiction as to be 'chased from the plot is to be chased from the homestead'. The statement shows that a woman can only have access to land through her husband and not in her own right, irrespective of the (labour) investment she made on the plot. The investigation carried out by Agritex was not thorough. They had consulted the Irrigation supervisor of the scheme and not surprisingly he denied that the plot was rented out. In this way the offence of renting out plots would be overlooked. Hence the decision of the senior Agritex official was similar to the decision of the IMC members in the previous case. The acting Agritex Irrigation Supervisor at field level argued that Fortunate's argument that the plot was hers, because she cleared it, was invalid. She just did her duty as a wife. Fortunate should depart from the

<sup>14</sup> These are quotations from the letter. Only full stops and some changes in the sentence construction are added. The same applies to the response of Agritex.

scheme and he argued that she was also a thief and had no respect for the water controllers. He also asserted that this was a customary marriage, which did not entitle her to any property: 'Customarily it is as follows. If you are divorced, the wife should go back to where she comes from. No sharing of property. The land is not their property, it belongs to the government. Customary marriage, Chapter 37, reads that the wife should go home empty handed'.

Fortunate should simply return to the home of her parents in his view. He saw no need for her to have an acre registered in her name, because maintenance of the children was not her worry but the responsibility of the father. He said that men and women were not equal because men paid bridewealth, and that made them heads and owners of women. Women have to do their duties. They are property because bridewealth is paid for them. Furthermore, husbands and sons in the family have the duty to support the family.

In June 1995, the acting Irrigation Supervisor invited the village chiefs, Fortunate and her husband Mwoyo to the local office. The Agritex officials and the chiefs accepted the submission of Mwoyo that Fortunate had to be cleaned first of the *mabvuri* (bad spirits). Once she was treated, he would cultivate the plot with her. Dissatisfied with this ruling she immediately went to the police to report the case to the community court. She did not accept the way the acting Irrigation Supervisor and the chiefs had connived with her husband to deny her access to the plot. Fortunate explained that three years previously she went with her husband and her parents to chief Matorwa in Chibuwe. He is famous as a *n'anga* (African doctor). They could not find a bad spirit on her. The chief said to her husband: "Give your wife 15 *madhunduru* (0.6 ha) and keep 5 yourself because you don't have anybody to feed". But her husband continued to say she had a bad spirit and did not give her the *madhunduru*. Because Chief Matorwa lived some distance from the scheme, Mwoyo did not respect his judgement and referred the case to the local chief who was favourable to him.

'The chief (of the village where husband and wife live) says that the plot is mine, because he gave it to me. How can a married woman be given a plot? Everything is mine. I have two dryland plots, one garden, a 2-acre irrigated plot and a fishpond. All is mine because I was given it by the chief.'

Mwoyo continued to reproduce the bad spirit construction:

'Since 1976 she has a bad spirit of a man. We went to her place of birth in 1986 to solve the problems together with her parents. I asked them to remove the evil spirit from my wife so that I could take my wife back home. They failed and my wife came back home with the bad spirit'.

Since 1990, Mwoyo has been chasing his wife from the plot. Fortunate has tried to cope with the situation by buying produce in the irrigation scheme for sale or barter in other areas. As a result she travels a lot and was often absent from her homestead. Be that as it may she took time at very regular intervals to go to the Agritex field office to explain that her acre was being rented out. The acting Agritex Supervisor responded by asking her to bring the people who were renting<sup>15</sup> the plot. Fortunate had gone to the women who were renting but for obvious reasons they had refused to accompany her to the Agritex office. Sending farmers, who have a complaint, from one person to another until they give up, appears a regular strategy of Agritex officials.

Fortunate and her husband fought on several occasions. She was then formally divorced as Mwoyo described: 'I collected the parents of my first wife and gave them a *gupuro*. We divorced because of the bad spirit. I went to the chief to surrender the homestead and said: "this is your place, because I am leaving". The chief agreed. Fortunate refused to leave the

<sup>15</sup> Some 20% of the total land area at the end of 1996 was rented out. It was mainly women who rented.



homestead because she said that she had no bad spirits on her. She refused to leave her children behind:

'The chief says I must leave because my husband surrendered the homestead. But I can't go home to my parents, leaving all my children, I can't'.

Mwoyo was now staying with the second wife in the same village, and had two children by her. He claimed that he knew nothing of the summons to the community court that Fortunate brought after the divorce. However, the police confirmed that he was handed a letter about the court case on 4 July 1995. The case was tried in his absence. The presiding officer ruled that the husband should pay his wife Z\$ 305 per month or give her one acre. Fortunate, however, did not want the money. She wanted a one-acre plot to be registered in her name. She brought the letter of the court to the police. The police officer expressed the need to have a careful record of the judgement in case the husband in his fight for the plot, could kill her through witchcraft. In that event the plot would go to her children. The police gave a follow up of the court's judgement. They visited the husband and advised him of the courts ruling. Mwoyo was furious. He told the police that he was being chased away from home and was beaten up and assaulted everyday by his wife. Why did he not report the beatings earlier on? The police explained that the husband probably did not raise this before because he was shy to do so. Being overpowered by a wife was rare. But he should have acted before the wife started the maintenance<sup>16</sup> case. 'It is now a maintenance issue', he said.

After hearing the sentence of the court, Mwoyo said that he was going to appeal. It was a strategy for delaying the case and keeping control of the plot. The police officers waited for the husband to appeal. Nothing happened relating to the case from July until December 1995. In the meantime Fortunate travelled as far as Chisumbanje (60 km from Manesa) to barter tomatoes for maize. Two boxes of tomatoes were exchanged for 3 bags of maize cobs. 'I need maize to feed my children', she said. Meanwhile the husband cultivated one acre and he rented out the other to a man from Mutare. The man paid rent and provided chemicals and fertilizer, in exchange for the produce. But Mwoyo sold part of the produce and used the money for consumption items. The man from Mutare went to the acting Agritex Extension (Irrigation) Supervisor to complain that he had been cheated of his crops. The acting Supervisor claims to have asked the IMC if they had witnessed it, and said the IMC members denied the case. But the man wanted the money back that he had spent on inputs and rent for the plot and claimed Z\$600 from Mwoyo.

Most likely things would have continued like that, i.e. the wife travelling and bartering produce and the husband cultivating the one acre and renting out the other, and the gender conflict over the plot would not have been settled. However, in December 1995, Mwoyo came into conflict with the acting Agritex Irrigation Supervisor. It went as follows. The acting Supervisor went to Mwoyo with a few of his relatives aiming to rent an acre from him. Mwoyo seems to have refused the request. In his turn the acting Supervisor told the water controllers to deny Mwoyo access to irrigation water. Mwoyo became angry and went to the District Agricultural Extension Officer (DAEO) in Chipinge. He complained to this highest Agritex official of the District, that he had been refused water and that the acting Supervisor had accepted money. The DAEO wrote a letter to the Supervisor saying that he should not be involved in bribery and that Mwoyo should have access to water. The acting Supervisor was angry with Mwoyo and then, on 18 December 1995, he approached Fortunate. Although he had always been against the wife, he now told her that she should be registered on one of the acres as decided by the community court. She should travel to Chipinge the following day to meet the DAEO about the issue. He gave Fortunate a letter in which he made evident that several people were renting Mwoyo's acre, despite the fact that at the beginning of the year he

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<sup>16</sup> Maintenance here is the money charged the husband to enable a divorced wife to support her children.

had asserted that he could not prove Mwoyo's plot was rented out. But he now wanted Fortunate to be allocated the acre and therefore sent the letter about renting.

On 19 December 1995, Fortunate travelled to Chipinge. She explained again the whole case to the DAEO, emphasizing again how she was the one who in 1961 looked for the acres, and that Mwoyo's father did not want to hear about acres while her husband worked somewhere else. She had cleared the plot and cultivated it, but could not register her own name because women at that time did not have registration cards. After this explanation she handed the papers and judgement of the community court to the District Agricultural Extension official. His reply was that it was

'a community court case and therefore we are not going to interfere. It is a domestic affair. We are not the ones to give you the acres. Your husband is the one who must decide whether he wants to give you: the money or one acre'.

The DAEO phoned the acting Irrigation Supervisor in the field office and said that the court ruling should be implemented. The husband should be called and be asked what he could give. Also present should be a police officer, the chiefs, the clerk and the IMC members. If he says he gives money, then he has to pay that every month. If he does not pay, he has to give Fortunate the acre. 'Please handle the case with the police present'.

The next day, 20 December 1995, the meeting was held at the irrigation plot. Mwoyo was busy ploughing and sowing maize. Fortunate and her son came, the IMC members and all kraalheads were present. The acting Supervisor and his clerk arrived. However, the police was absent. The acting Supervisor explained briefly to those present what had happened to date and that Fortunate had to support the children and that the community court had decided Z\$ 305 every month or the acre. 'We are here to divide the plot into two, so that Fortunate will get an acre', he said. Then Mwoyo stood up and walked with big steps in front of the people and argued angrily: 'why did this woman go to the community court and not to report the case to the kraalheads?' The acting Supervisor reacted: 'This case is known by everybody. It was brought to the chiefs who failed to solve it. It was brought to Agritex who failed to solve it. It was the community court who solved it'. Then Mwoyo requested the letters from the police and the court, but the acting Supervisor and Fortunate did not want to give theirs, perhaps afraid that he would tear them up. Then he became very angry. He started to scold Fortunate for how bad she was and that it was all lies that the presiding officer was not allowed to judge a case without his presence, and that the case should have been judged in the village court. He finally said: 'What you are trying to do acting Supervisor, be very careful. If somebody cultivates here, that person will die during daylight. Many bodies will be buried here'.

Other people started to react and a man said it was better to wait for Mwoyo, who was going to appeal in court. Another woman said 'let the field be divided'. While everybody started talking, the acting Supervisor called the water controller and asked how the plot should be divided. The water controller said it was plot 72, so it would be 72A and 72B. The acting Supervisor decided that Fortunate would cultivate 72B. Mwoyo responded by saying that the supervisor should not rule his field. 'Are you the one who decides what to give her? Are you a person who rules people's homesteads, when the husbands are still there?'

Mwoyo's sister started to support her brother. She also repeated that this ruling would cause death. Fortunate told the sister that her father always refused acres, and that she had found the acres herself and had worked on them alone. The husband's sister became very angry and shouted that Fortunate had slept with the acting Supervisor. She then challenged Fortunate by saying: 'try to cultivate this acre. You will die during daytime, while the sun is shining'. The brother and sister continued to shout and threaten her but the people present and the Agritex official stood up and wanted to go. Not everybody was happy with the ruling of the case. One of the Block IMC members looked angry. She also rented a few *madhunduru* in the acre that had now been allocated to Fortunate. She realised that she had lost all the money she had spent on inputs. Fortunate went with the clerk to the office to register her name for

plot 72B. He explained her the rules and emphasized that she was renting the land from the government.

Did the husband and wife work on the irrigated plot, each on one acre? On 16 January 1996, Fortunate went to the Agritex office to complain that Mwoyo took her siphons when she was half way through irrigating her plot. Mwoyo said that she was only going to irrigate again when the acting Supervisor was standing at the side of her plot. Later in January everybody was talking about it, that Mwoyo was chasing Fortunate away from the plot. On 30 January 1996 both husband and wife had to visit the police and the husband was warned to stop disturbing his wife. In February and March Fortunate was helped by one of her sons to get a site in the village to build her own homestead, because Mwoyo had insisted that Fortunate should leave his place. On 21 March 1996, Fortunate visited the Agritex office at field level again, because the water controllers told her that she would only receive water if she could show them a paper with an official stamp. That day in the office she heard from the clerk that she had never been officially registered for the one acre and therefore could not receive water. The clerk told Fortunate to give up the plot. The acting Supervisor confirmed that Fortunate had never officially been given the acre. All the kraalheads were consulted and all said the same, namely that the two-acre plot should remain registered in the husband's name. However, by this time the acting Agritex Irrigation Supervisor was replaced by the new Supervisor. He said that he would discuss the registration of Fortunate's name with the DAEO in Chipinge. The Supervisor registered her name on one acre, later in 1996.

On 15 April 1996, Fortunate went to the Supervisor and explained that she wanted to grow tomatoes, but Mwoyo's maize was on her acre. This was the maize he had been planting on the day of the meeting on the plot in December 1995. The sowing of crops in her acre had been a strategy of Mwoyo to remain in control of the acre, as we will also see below. The Supervisor suggested she cut the maize and put it on Mwoyo's side. She did as she was told, but when she had cleared half the maize, her husband came and threatened her with a knife. She reported him to the police. He reported to the IMC that she had cut his maize. Then a meeting was organised with all the kraalheads and they asked Fortunate if she had cut the maize? 'Yes, I am the one', she replied. Fortunate had to pay Z\$100 as a fine. She asked her brother in Chimanimani for the money. The money went to the chiefs. Also in April 1996, Mwoyo went to the Agritex office to pay the rent for the two acres, in order to gain control of both. The IMC said that they would go to the office to make sure that each got an acre. In April the DAEO repeated to the Supervisor that Fortunate should be registered on the plot. The IMC did not want to believe it and also went to the DAEO.

In May 1996, Fortunate continued to be chased from the plot. Thus she went to Middle Sabi to pick cotton to earn money. On 5 June 1996, Fortunate went to the Agritex office again to report that her husband had planted wheat on her acre. She hired oxen and ploughed up the wheat because she wanted to grow tomatoes. Then Mwoyo was truly angry, because the wheat crop belonged to someone who had paid him rent for the acre. The old couple fought on the irrigated plot and Fortunate was badly injured in her face. A water controller, who saw the fight, reported the case to the police. Fortunate went to the police too.

On 17 December 1996 the case was again heard in the community court. This time it was the Irrigation Supervisor who brought the case to court. Fortunate and Mwoyo were both present. The papers were given to the presiding officer, and he read the judgement and concluded 'This case was already solved in 1995' when Mwoyo was not present. One acre should be given to the wife and Mwoyo was ordered to pay Z\$ 410 every month. The presiding officer asked Mwoyo his opinion. He lied, 'I do not have children with her and I did not divorce her. It is only that she has a bad spirit. I am not living with her, so she cannot have a maintenance fee'. The presiding officer responded that the court does not believe in bad spirits just because some *n'anga* or prophets from somewhere said so. 'We cannot know if it is true.' The presiding officer continued:

'We want something, which we can prove. Secondly, if we are saying that you should maintain your wife, it does not mean that you have to live with her. Why did you not

'divorce her when she was young? The same applies to your second wife. You will divorce her when she reaches the age of your first wife. Whom then do you expect to marry your wife? The acre is for the wife and the money for the children. That is the final decision. If you continue to disagree, it means that you disobey us, then we will arrest you and put you in prison'.

Fortunate said in his favour that her husband was not working, so had nowhere to get Z\$ 410 per month. 'I only want the acre', she said. The presiding officer agreed and told Fortunate not to destroy the crop, which was on the acre, but to wait for the next season. He also told her to inform the DAEO. Later, on his way back to the village Mwoyo said:

'It was a fake judgement. The magistrate wanted to cheat Fortunate. He said that one acre was for me and one for Fortunate, but he did not put it in writing. So next year after removing my cotton, I must plant tomatoes very early. Fortunate will regret it. She will not cultivate on my land'.

On 2 January 1997, the Irrigation Supervisor organised a meeting in the irrigation scheme for IMC members and kraalheads to inform them about the case of Fortunate and Mwoyo. Fortunate had to explain first that the presiding officer had not judged the case again, but had read what had been written earlier. She handed the papers to the Agritex Irrigation Supervisor who read it to the people. Mwoyo reacted by saying that the presiding officer had not been the same as the one who had first judged the case and that he had not written anything. He argued that there was no written document and he could not agree to it. 'So she is not going to cultivate on my land. I swear it', he said.

The Supervisor told me in February 1997 that Agritex would not interfere, but that the community court would take action if the husband continued to trouble his wife. But what happened in 1997? The husband delayed removing the cotton plants, which he had planted on Fortunate's acre. He removed the cotton plants in August 1997, a few months after such a crop ought to be removed from the scheme. Hence, nobody prevented him from denying his wife access to the irrigated plot. In November 1997 they appeared in court again and the husband was now ordered to pay his wife more than Z\$ 8000. He refused to pay that amount and was taken by the police to prison in December 1997. He stayed there for a couple of days and then promised that he would allow his wife access to her acre. Hence Agritex and the chiefs had left the decision-making to the presiding officer of the community court.

Up to now I have presented the perceptions and how different rules, values and norms are manipulated, transformed or reproduced by those who were involved in this gender struggle over land. To a certain extent they aimed to achieve their own interests. What are the perceptions of social actors who were not involved in this case?

### **Social actors' perceptions about access and registration**

Women and men (including chiefs) in the village who were not involved in this gender conflict have their own perceptions about whether the divorced wife should have access and/or be registered on one of the two irrigated acres. First, I explore some perceptions of women and men<sup>17</sup>, and then give the gender of the registered plot holders.

We asked women and men if the wife, Fortunate, should be given one of the two irrigated acres. The answers are depicted in Table 5.5.

Actually, when the question refers to access to the plot or the use of it, then half the respondents say that the wife should have access to the plot (7 women and 3 men). Hence, a majority of women say that the wife should have access to the irrigated plot because she needs the means to maintain herself, because she looks after the children. I explained in

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<sup>17</sup> At random 20 people; 10 women and 10 men.

Chapter 2 that in both customary and civil marriages, a divorced wife can claim maintenance if she has to look after children below 18 years. We also saw that if the husband really has nothing, he would be discharged by the presiding officer in the community court from paying his divorced wife a maintenance fee. However, if a husband has no money, but has other resources such as land, then he would be directed by the presiding officer to give his ex-wife land. That is perceived as a form of maintenance.

Table 5.5: Should the wife be given one of the two irrigated acres?

50% NO, because	50% YES, because
She was divorced (40%) and should leave to her own place	She supports children (60%)
Children are grown up (20%)	It was said by Agritex (10%)
Acre should be given to son (20%)	They should exchange plots with others (10%)
They continue to fight (10%)	They always worked together (10%)
It encourages women not to stay with their husbands (10%)	If husband had job he was supposed to pay money to maintain children; now he has to give acre (10%)

The other half of the respondents said that the wife should not be given an acre (7 men and 3 women). They maintained that a divorced wife should go back to the place she comes from. Thus she should not be given land. Others said that the son should be registered. That actually implies that the son should look after his mother. Thus, those who referred to the son did not maintain that the wife should go back to where she comes from, and still showed concern for the wife. Some were convinced she should not be given an acre because 'it encourages women not to stay with their husbands'. They meant that if this divorced wife was registered on the plot and given the immediate right to that land, then that may encourage other women to divorce their husbands, so that they will obtain the right to irrigated land.

Hence it is mainly men who say a wife should not be given irrigated land. They were of the opinion that the husband should keep both acres. When we asked that question we got the answers depicted in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Should the husband keep both acres?

50% YES, because	50% NO, because
Both acres belong to the husband ('culturally a field belongs to the husband') (100%)	She looks after children (60%)
	Wife to cultivate but plot registered in husband's name (30%)
	Son should have the acre (10%)

In the category 'yes the husband should keep both acres', are 7 men and 3 women. They are of the opinion that 'culturally a field belongs to the husband'. That means that in a patrilineal society with a virilocal marriage pattern, the woman marries into the husband's *dzinza*, and cannot have immediate rights to land. That means that she can use land, but cannot obtain registration rights herself.

In the category 'no the husband should not keep both acres', are 7 women and 3 men. Thus women favour the wife having access to the plot, because they probably understand the situation of being left with children and having no land.

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 deal more with access or use of the plot. But registration on the irrigated plot is another issue. The person whose name is on the register has the rights to that land. I asked 'should the wife, referring to the divorced wife Fortunate, be registered on the plot?' Then both women and men seemed to agree, and 90% said: No. The divorced wife should not be registered on the irrigated plot, because:

- 1) the plot belongs to the husband's, not to the wife's family (30%);
- 2) the wife was divorced (20%);
- 3) it should be registered in the son's name (30%);
- 4) wife will challenge husband because she has *mabvuri* (bad spirits) (20%).

Thus according to people's perceptions, the woman should not be registered for irrigated land, because the rights to irrigated land are the husband's, including the son's (in total 60% of the respondents). A few emphasized that she was divorced, implying that she should not be registered. A few perceived the woman to have a 'bad character'. They found 'a bad character' a sound reason for not registering the wife on one of the two acres of the irrigated holding.

### Registration in practice: the gender of the plottolders

Do the above perceptions about registration of a divorced wife for an irrigated plot imply that women in general are not registered for irrigated plots? If we examine how many women are actually registered on the plots in the Tawona irrigation scheme we find the pattern depicted in Table 5.7. The Tawona scheme had 258 registered plottolders in 1995-1996. Table 5.7 depicts the gender of the plottolders.

Table 5.7: The gender of plottolders (16/1/1996).

160 MEN (62%)	98 WOMEN (38%) of whom
	42 widows (43%)
	52 married (53%)
	4 divorced (4%)

Thirty-eight percent of the registered plottolders are women. Forty-three percent of these women are widows. There are eighty-two widows in the village (see Table 1.1; village survey, Vijfhuizen, 1995), thus 52% of the total number of widows in Manesa village are registered in their own right. The divorced number looks low, but there are only eight 'divorced women homesteads'<sup>18</sup> in the village (Table 1.1; village survey, Vijfhuizen, 1995). Hence, 50% of them are registered for a plot. Thus, despite the perceptions of women and men in the village that divorced women should not register, we see that divorced women do register on irrigated land. Another remarkable figure is that many married women are registered for irrigated plots. In general, people believed that a married woman in patrilineal societies with virilocal marriage could not register land in her own right. But we see that it happens. That practice is shaped by many, including farmers and Agritex officials. It was actually the Agritex officials who registered the women, no doubt with their husband's consent.

The two cases above showed that Agritex officials emerge as negotiators and arbitrators in these gender struggles over land. Although, at moments, they were not very supportive to women, they constitute an alternative for women who otherwise have to rely on chiefs and

<sup>18</sup> People talk about a divorce if the husband has given his wife a *gupuro*, or/and if the wife has established her own place.

husbands in the village when it concerns land issues. That is one of the reasons why women are sceptical about handing-over irrigation schemes to farmers. The handing over policy is described below, and I show that handing-over of irrigation schemes to farmers is not only a monetary issue. That farmers can cover the costs of operating an irrigation scheme is important, but not of sole importance. Women farmers especially maintain that Agritex officials need to be present to negotiate in gender struggles over land. During a national Agritex seminar in April 1997 (see Manzungu et al, 1997) an Agritex official responded: 'we have to dilute, because men are very selfish'. He meant that Agritex sometimes had to help women farmers. Let's now turn to the handing-over policy and what it implies for the control over irrigated land.

#### 5.4 CONTROL OVER IRRIGATED LAND AND THE HANDING-OVER POLICY

In this section I explore decision-making and control over irrigated land as witnessed between 1994 and 1997. Agritex officials and chiefs emerged as important social actors in such cases. The handing-over policy implied that irrigation schemes constructed before 1987 would be handed over to the farmers. Irrigation schemes constructed after 1987 are already farmer managed. Thus the handing-over policy implied that Agritex officials would disappear from the most crucial 'domains', i.e. land and water. I argue here that women farmers in particular wanted to rely on Agritex arbitrators when they faced problems in the irrigation scheme. They preferred them to the chiefs and other influential men from the village.

##### Control over irrigated land

Agritex officials perceived themselves as decision-makers over land in irrigation schemes. They said that all land belonged to the government and that they were put in charge of it in irrigation schemes. In the cases presented above on registration and gender struggles, Agritex officials involved chiefs and IMC members, at different times and for different reasons, because of the social nature of the problems and for other reasons such as to legitimise actions, to protect their backs, to try and pass on cases of a marital and kinship kind. Agritex officials also, where appropriate referred the parties to the village courts. As the DAEO wrote once in a letter in 1995:

'Running of government irrigation schemes is by Agritex staff assisted by the Irrigation Management Committee (IMC). But local leaders, e.g. kraalheads, councillors are consulted at times depending on issues to be decided upon'.

Or as a Senior Irrigation official of Agritex had put it in 1996:

'In government run irrigation schemes the head is the Agritex Extension Supervisor with his Agritex team and the IMC and Block Committees. Also AES has such office members like traditional leaders. Also according to the policy, the Rural District Council is part of the scheme management'.

He added that that was according to policy, in practice it was different.

In the Derude (1983:19) policy document it is indeed stated that District Councils are a component of the selection committee for farmers in new irrigation schemes. However, in practice, in land registration in the new irrigation scheme and in the gender struggles over land, we did not see councillors and/or other representatives of the Rural District Council emerging as decision-makers over irrigated land. The government established Rural District Council is represented in the villages by a councillor. He is mentioned as a local leader by the first Agritex official above, but he is not included in decision-making about land, as we have seen in this chapter and will see in the next.

The local leaders consulted by Agritex officials are the chiefs, 'depending on the issues to be decided upon'. Hence, not always. But in the opinion of the chiefs land belongs to their

ancestors (see next chapter), so they also feel they have a right to control land in the irrigation scheme. In fact the chiefs resist their loss of control over the land and try to maintain, to outsiders at least, that they have influence, together with Agritex, on judgements about land in the irrigation scheme. Taking these perspectives and the interests of chiefs into account, we can understand that some chiefs support the ideas for handing-over irrigation schemes to farmers. It means that Agritex officials will withdraw as decision-makers and that in practice the chiefs will make the decisions over irrigated land. But the handing-over policy implies more than land only.

### **Handing-over policy and disappearing Agritex officials?**

The handing-over policy is officially promoted by government officials. The policy was first discussed in the Derude policy paper of 1983, which states that the Irrigation Management Committees (farmers) have to eventually take over the management of the irrigation schemes. But no clear time frame is given. The handing-over policy is mentioned in the new irrigation policy of 1994, but remains vague about how and when exactly that should happen. The 1994 policy document is even less clear than the 1983 document. The handing-over policy is also mentioned in Zimbabwe's Agricultural Policy Framework 1995-2000 (1996), but its implications are not spelled out.

The Agritex Irrigation Supervisor of the Tawona and Mutema irrigation schemes, explained some envisaged implications of the handing-over policy. He did that in February 1997. His views were shaped by the 1983 Derude policy document, which he used during the interview. He said that they had explained to the Irrigation Management Committee (IMC) of Tawona irrigation scheme in 1996, about the handing-over. 'But handing-over is a process', he said,

'and cannot be implemented at once. It will take five years. Handing-over means that farmers are going to have to do everything themselves. Agritex will only remain for technical advice on crop rotation and crop production and for training master farmers. All the administration will be done by the IMC'.

Thus Agritex' control over irrigated land and water will disappear. The farmers will be free to plant any crop at the moment they want. But the Supervisor emphasized that the IMC would stick to the planting dates. The supervisor said that a first task to be handed over to the IMC, would be the collection of the maintenance fee (Z\$58 per acre per year). Farmers would no longer be expected to visit the Agritex office to paying the maintenance fees. The list of names would be handed over to the IMC members who would collect the fees and deliver the money to the office. Agritex officials would then produce receipts for the IMC to return to the farmers. However, even before this type of maintenance fee collection is implemented, there is a problem already. He mentioned that the Tawona irrigation scheme only had a debt of Z\$ 2000 on maintenance payments, but that the Mutema scheme had a debt of Z\$ 20,000. The Supervisor regarded this last debt as a bad hand-over start.

Apart from keeping to the crop rotation, planting dates and maintenance fee, handing-over also implies that farmers are expected to maintain the irrigation scheme themselves. The government will dismiss the 'general hands' who clean the canals, cut the grass within and on the edges of the scheme, maintain the roads and fencing and who repair the canals. Farmers will have to organise all this themselves. The water controllers will also be dismissed. The Supervisor did not know how the farmers would distribute the water, but he envisaged that the IMC members would distribute it.

Another aspect is the land. Agritex officials would no longer be involved in plot allocation and arbitration. The Supervisor argued that arbitration and allocation was presently done by the IMC, himself as Irrigation Supervisor, and the kraalheads. If there was vacancy in the scheme then he said they would take someone from the waiting list. 'based on the needs of a person and not on first come first served basis'. He explained that when the



schemes are handed over, it would be the kraalheads, the IMC and the chairman of the Rural District Council who would decide on plot allocation and arbitrate in conflicts. But, as we have seen, the chairman of the RDC was not involved in arbitration and allocation in 1996, probably because he lived in Chipinge, which is physically too far away (50km) to make it feasible. Thus when the schemes are handed over, the land will to all intents and purposes be back in the hands of the chiefs. Chiefs will be consulted by IMC members. Maybe the chairman of the Rural District Council will be more involved in the final selection for plots in any new irrigation schemes. All in all, handing-over implies a great deal of work for IMC members and as a consequence, a changing position for them in the village. The Supervisor said that IMC members should receive allowances, but that the farmers would be expected to organise that themselves. When the schemes are handed-over, it is also expected that farmers will have to pay the operational costs themselves. Let us now quickly look at those costs.

Whereas farmers at present (1996-1997) pay a maintenance fee of only Z\$58 per acre per year, after handing-over they will be expected to pay the following<sup>19</sup>. The electricity costs for the Tawona scheme are an estimated Z\$ 5000 per month. That means Z\$ 60,000 per year. Per acre, that will imply Z\$142 (422 acres in the scheme). Secondly, they have to pay for water, which is an estimated of 15,000 cubic metre per hectare per year for Tawona. The cost is Z\$47 per 1000 cubic metres, hence Z\$564 per year per hectare, thus Z\$226 per acre. Then the old maintenance fee of Z\$58 per acre will be payable also. Thus the total operational costs per acre per year to be paid by farmers is Z\$426. For someone with a two-acre plot that amounts to Z\$852 per year, or Z\$1065 per hectare.

Thus if farmers pay that amount, it still implies a government subsidy to smallholder irrigation schemes, because the costs are an estimated of Z\$ 5000 per hectare per year (Peacock, 1995, cited in Manzungu/van der Zaag, 1996: 10). The Agritex Irrigation Supervisor was of the opinion that an operational cost of Z\$ 426 per acre per year is already too much for farmers, because the holdings are too small, the yields and the prices are too low<sup>20</sup>, and therefore the gross margin is too low.

However, farmers showed they were able to pay something when in May 1996 the engines stopped pumping water from the Save River. The electricity bill to ZESA (Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority) had not been paid by the Water Department. There was a shortage of money in the Departments, because May was the end of the financial year. It was expected there would be money available again in July 1996. Thus the IMC members in Tawona irrigation scheme decided to collect money from all the plot holders to pay the bill and get water pumping again to their growing tomato crops. They calculated that a sum of Z\$25 per acre was needed for May and June. To cover the existing debt, an amount of Z\$ 20,000 was raised. There was a shortage of Z\$ 2000 and so farmers who had a garden along the irrigation scheme were asked to contribute because 'they also take water from the scheme' a plot holder said. After the IMC had travelled to Mutare and paid ZESA through Agritex and the Water Department, the farmers could irrigate their plots again.

The exercise of paying the electricity bill in May 1996 also shaped the opinions of farmers about the handing-over of the scheme. Farmers who held more than two acres in the scheme, and/or who had worked elsewhere or were in another way influential in the village, said they believed they could manage the scheme themselves.

<sup>19</sup> The Provincial Water Engineer in Mutare helped me to calculate these figures. In 1995 the US\$ was approximately Z\$10 and in 1996 Z\$12.

<sup>20</sup> In the previous chapter 4, I said that for example Cairns food processing company sets the price for the winter tomatoes. Tawona farmers cannot change the price. Even if all Tawona farmers decide not to deliver to Cairns, then Cairns will simply food to another irrigation scheme. I concluded in chapter 4 that it is nice that many schemes are constructed, but the number of schemes affects the prices of its agricultural products.

'We always paid for the siphons and cement and now we have also shown that we can pay for the electricity. We should be weaned from Agritex. We are grown ups', they said.

But these few farmers (some 16%) all mentioned that they would have to look for a donor for the money to maintain and operate the scheme. Thus, they actually said that they are able to manage the scheme without Agritex, but for the costs they have to look for another source. Thus these few influential farmers assumed that they could arbitrate in all conflicts. However other farmers, and in particular women farmers, had other ideas about managing the scheme.

### **Women farmers prefer Agritex arbitrators**

The majority of farmers (some 80%) said that they were unable to manage the scheme without Agritex officials for various reasons. Everybody mentioned the shortage of capital in combination with the lack of markets, and questions such as who would distribute the water and who would repair and pay for the engines when they broke down. Some farmers were concerned about regular cash availability. The winter tomatoes of the 1996 season were destroyed by frost and wet circumstances. The majority of the farmers said that Agritex officials should continue to be involved in the management of the scheme. They gave five reasons, which are depicted in order of the frequency of the answers given.

1. to advice on management
2. to advice on farming methods
3. to provide capital
4. to solve problems
5. to distribute water and arrange for repair of the pumps.

A majority, 84%, said that farmers were not able to pay the costs themselves. They said that Agritex was needed (75%) or a donor (25%). Farmers are concerned about the issue of handing-over, also caused by the fact that they do not know exactly how and when handing-over will take place. In December 1997, the rumours were that farmers should start paying in January 1998. But that date may change while policies remain unclear.

However, it was not only the farmers who had doubts about the handing-over of irrigation schemes. Agritex staff also envisaged problems. The Supervisor admitted that he did not support the hand-over policy. He believed that irrigation schemes would collapse and that the government would have to return again. He mentioned four processes that would contribute to disequity:

1. In plot allocation there would be favouritism and the small farmers will be subordinated.
2. The water cycle (water turns) would vanish and the IMC members would monopolise water distribution.
3. Those who were related to chiefs would benefit from land and water.
4. Donors would never stay long and would probably not cover operational costs as they were usually only involved in construction costs.

Rukuni (1993; cited in Manzungu and van der Zaag, 1996: 13-14) argues that not much progress has been made towards a policy in favour of community-run schemes. Makadho (1994; *ibid.*) indicates that there is no obvious preparedness by government to hand over responsibilities and control to IMC's. I have shown above that neither do the farmers themselves show any obvious preparedness to manage the schemes. Only a small percentage of influential men see themselves managing the scheme, but they need donors they said. The majority of women and men prefer Agritex as an 'outside' arbitrator in management issues. They prefer Agritex officials above a small group of influential men from the village who they perceive as insiders and therefore less neutral. From the cases described, women to some extent depend on government officials (Agritex and court) in times of conflicts. Women, in

particular, prefer the presence of government officials, when local chiefs and IMC members (the farmers who help manage the scheme) are less likely to support women's interests in conflict situations. Women argued 'why throw away something which you may need in future?'

## 5.5 MANIPULATING LAND ISSUES: A CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I will first explore the ambiguity in decision-making processes relating to land. Then I argue that gender struggles over land are regulated to a certain extent by normative frames. For both land registration and gender struggles, social actors use and transform, but also manipulate rules, norms and values and thereby shape practice, which includes the rights to irrigated plots. I argue that land issues can easily be manipulated due to ambiguities in decision-making processes. Therefore, the registration of plots in a new irrigation scheme also lacks transparency.

### Ambiguities in controlling land

Here, I focus on communal land; irrigation schemes; government officials and chiefs; and the handing over of irrigation schemes to farmers, pointing out the ambiguities that exist in the decision-making processes over land in communal areas and irrigation schemes.

#### *Communal areas*

The Reports (Volume 1 and 2) of the Commission of Inquiry into appropriate agricultural land tenure systems (Rukuni et al, 1994), argue that land tenure systems in communal areas should be based on principles of customary land tenure. The three principles of customary rights to land are (Rukuni et al, 1994, vol. 2: 191):

1. absence of private ownership of land, but the right to cultivate;
2. entitlement of every member of the community to land;
3. security of tenure.

The distinguishing feature of customary land tenure is perceived as the hierarchical and patrilineal nature of land allocation. The male head of household, usually the husband, receives an allocation of land on behalf of his family. He in turn allocates a portion of this plot to his wife or wives (ibid. 192). In other words, as Gaidzanwa (1988, in vol. 2: 192) puts it, women derive their land use rights from patrilineages in their capacities of wives and daughters. While that is true, we have seen in this chapter that there is more diversity concerning women's right to land. I will come back to this point.

The authors of the 'Land Commission Reports' say that decision-making concerning land allocation in communal areas should be undertaken by the chiefs, their (village) courts (*dare*) and the community. However they will remain broadly under the jurisdiction of some higher authority: Headmen, Paramount Chief, Rural District Council, Provincial Government and ultimately the State laws (Rukuni et al, 1994, vol. 1: 50). Thus they say that the chiefs, who are also recruited into government (see next chapter), govern dryland and gardens. But that

local government (Rural District Council) is regarded as a higher authority. However, other rules apply for irrigation schemes, such as Tawona, which is located in a communal area<sup>21</sup>.

### *Irrigation schemes*

The 'Land Commission Reports' state that in irrigation schemes, land tenure is not based on principles of customary land tenure. Customary land rights do not apply for land in irrigation schemes, resettlement and land leased for small-scale commercial farm use (vol. 1: 69-71 and 83-86). Hence what the 'Land Commission Reports' called the distinguishing feature of customary land tenure, i.e. the hierarchical and patrilineal nature of land allocation, does not apply in irrigation schemes. The policy is that government controls access to land in irrigation schemes. As we have seen, the government in irrigation schemes is represented by Agritex officials (or by resettlement officer in irrigation schemes which are located in resettlement areas), who thus derive their authority from government recognition. This can be observed in practice. The Rural District Council is regarded as a higher authority and its representatives are supposed also to have a say in control over land in the irrigation schemes. But the Rural District Council and its officials are situated in the District capital Chipinge, which is 50 kilometres away from the Tawona irrigation scheme. The District Council's representative in the field, the village councillor tends to be excluded from decision-making about land (see below and next chapter). The two social actors who in practice decide about land in the Manesa village area are the village chiefs and Agritex officials.

### *Agritex officials and village chiefs*

Agritex members are government officials, but so are chiefs co-opted into government. Thus there are clearly different 'domains' in the land 'field', with their particular representatives, and that can be perceived as follows. 1) The chiefs, who derive their authority from their traditional status and decision-making powers over dryland and gardens. 2) Agritex officials who have government backed authority to decide over irrigated land. 3) The councillor, the missing actor. As we have seen, Agritex officials have their own agendas regarding land and wield power accordingly. They choose the criteria, make plans that are not always transparent, and make decisions. They are free to decide whether to consult chiefs and IMC members or not. Government officials in the irrigation scheme make strategic use of chiefs and local authorities, and vice versa. For example, if farmers want their land disputes solved, then Agritex officials say go to your chief, and the chief might tell the parties to go to Agritex.

Chiefs, as recognised authorities in the dryland 'domain', expect to be involved in decision-making over the dryland area designated for the new irrigation scheme. It is their land and their people who will be allocated plots there. But we have seen that Agritex has a great deal of discretion in selecting people for registration on the survey forms. Maybe Agritex officials at field level perceive the land in an area designated for a new irrigation scheme as their 'domain' because it is Agritex and the Irrigation Department at national level that designs and constructs those new schemes. Moreover, Agritex officials are also active in the dryland 'domain' as extension workers. Agritex officials maintained that farmers registered on the forms would be selected for a new plot by an independent panel. They argued that during the final selection, a representative of the Rural District Council, which is

<sup>21</sup> Out of the estimated total irrigable land of 192.000 hectare, 80% is found in Large Scale Commercial areas, 12% in parastatal estates and 3% in settler schemes attached to parastatal estates and 5% percent in communal areas (FAO, 1990:1).

The smallholder irrigation support programme (Republic of Zimbabwe, working paper 4, 1997: 1) reports that there are 300 formal smallholder irrigation schemes in the communal and resettlement areas covering an estimated 12900 hectare. The schemes, on which some 21000 irrigator households cultivate plots, vary from between 5 to 700 hectares, with an average size of 45 hectares. Some 82% of the smallholder irrigation schemes are found in the low potential Natural regions IV and V.

the Local government, would be present to take the decisions. But the farmers, who would finally be selected for a plot, had already been selected and commented upon by Agritex personnel.

Chiefs and their people did not clearly understand the registration process and were to a certain extent manipulated by the actions and information of Agritex officials. The procedure for registration for plots in the new scheme was obscure and made more so by Agritex officials. A transparent procedure was not in their interests, and was perhaps in any case difficult to achieve. The system as it was left several actors with room to manoeuvre. And we saw how other social actors manipulated the registration process by using information and bending rules and norms in their own interests. The chiefs manipulated by registering their own children for new plots. Therefore Semwayo had to look through the lists of the different kraalheads, before they were sent to the Agritex office. Also a certain competition emerged among the chiefs during the meeting with the acting Agritex Supervisor. The non-resettled believed and behaved as if they had prior rights to the plots in the new irrigation scheme over the resettled chiefs (see next chapter).

An interesting difference emerged between the chiefs and Agritex officials over the size of the plot. For the new irrigation scheme, chiefs were of the opinion that the plots should be one acre, so that everybody could have access to land. This is thought to be unviable from an economic point of view. But maybe the chiefs consider other sources of income through which the farmers can cover operational costs. However, their suggestions and recommendations may not be acted upon by Agritex officials because they have in mind the future hand-over of the schemes. The Agritex officials from Harare may argue that operational costs cannot be covered by farmers themselves with a holding of only one acre. This might have influenced the suggestion of two acres as a reasonable plot size per homestead. They could perhaps also bear in mind the following. From Chapter three it emerged that several matrifocal households can be distinguished in one homestead. Therefore, one could arrange allocation so as to give a one-acre irrigated plot per matrifocal household in a homestead. That means that a polygynous or extended homestead would be allocated three to four acres, but that is also what they need. This recommendation may, however, influence the marriage practice, which emerged in Chapter two. Men might then wish to marry more wives to gain control over an extra acre in future. Or women may be less sceptical about the polygyny practice because they could have access to one acre in future.

### *Handing-over*

Although the handing over policy is vague on paper, it is officially promoted and people know that Agritex officials will withdraw at some stage from land and water 'domains'. In the schemes constructed after 1987, Agritex officials are no longer present. That means that in practice in communal areas, the chiefs are authorities again in the land 'domain', and will also be so here when the schemes constructed before 1987 are handed over. They derive their authority from their ancestors, who own all the land in the chieftaincy (see next chapter). The IMC members, who are farmers, are also supposed to arbitrate in struggles and conflicts and it is envisaged that in practice chiefs and IMC members will control the land after the schemes are handed over. On paper, the Rural District Council should be involved in decisions about land. But in practice, chiefs are likely to deny the councillor's involvement (see next chapter).

Chiefs and a few influential men from the village are in favour of handing-over the schemes. However, they clearly have their own interests. Or as Long puts it (1997: 235-236): 'Certain groups of community members may welcome privatisation and increased market involvement as a way of helping them to consolidate their entrepreneurial ambitions'. We have seen that the majority of farmers are sceptical about the ability of chiefs and influential men to manage the schemes well. Insiders are regarded as less neutral. Long says (1997: 235): 'It is easy enough to declare privatization of community resources but it is another thing to persuade peasants to put aside community interests and values in favour of neoliberal

attitudes'. The majority of farmers prefer Agritex officials as 'outside' arbitrators. In case of gender struggles, women especially prefer to enrol government officials (Agritex and court) in their projects, because the government officials are sometimes sympathetic to women's interests. Influential men and chiefs from the village use the more traditional norms.

### **Gender struggles and normative frames**

The general opinion is that married women in a patrilineal society with virilocal marriage cannot register land in their own right, but only use land through their husbands, fathers and brothers. But we see that a fair number of women do register irrigated plots in their own right. Thirty-eight percent of the plottolders in the Tawona irrigation scheme are women. Thus women and men, both farmers and government officials, reproduce, use, but also bend, transform and manipulate different rules, values and norms in practice (see also Vijfhuizen, 1996). They thereby shape the practice of land allocation in irrigation schemes. That also means that the rights of women to use and 'own' land are not static, but can be shaped or manipulated. In this section, I discuss briefly how the different social actors shape their rights, by distinguishing women and men; chiefs in village courts and presiding officers in community courts; and Agritex officials.

#### *Women and men*

Both women and men want access to land. In the case of marital conflicts, death, divorce and other problems, having one's own right to land is preferable, so as to be able to control the land and its produce. Access to land in communal areas means survival. Controlling the land means a more secure survival.

Married women who have conflicts in marriage, and are finally divorced, have to fight hard if they want to keep access to their husband's plot. These women in their struggles, challenge the norms that women should not have their own rights to land by going to court and devising other strategies. Men react and fight in court and also devise their own strategies to keep control over their registered plots. Men can also create other images and reproduce certain beliefs about women that they have bad spirits. In order to control the access to the plot, men also reproduce the normative frames regarding marriage. 'A woman cannot have her own rights to land because the man married her and paid bridewealth for her'. But social actors actively can and do change women's rights to land. Men register their married wives on the plots in order to have access to more irrigated land. Or husbands allow wives who took the initiative themselves, to register on a plot. They were also some influential men from the village who registered their wives to have access to more land. And Agritex officials registered these women. As we pointed out earlier, thirty-eight percent of the registered plottolders are women in the existing Tawona scheme, though in the registration process for a new irrigation scheme, the percentage of women is usually low (see also Zwarteveen, 1997). In the new extension of Tawona only 14% of those registered were women.

In the case of widows we have seen (Table 5.7) that more than 40% are registered in their own right on the irrigated plots. That is half the widows of the village. Some never had access to the plots, others had. If widows do not register, then the plot is usually registered under the name of one of the elder sons, or brothers of the late husband. Severe conflicts over registration can emerge on the death of a plot holder (Mate, 1995). However, on 1 November 1997, a new inheritance law was implemented by government. The law no longer makes a distinction between customary and civil marriages (Chapter 2). That means that inheritance regulations will apply in the same way regardless of the type of marriage. This implies that the eldest son will no longer automatically be the heir. The spouse and all children will be considered first in inheriting the goods and/or estate. Government officials have a significant influence on women's rights by reformulating laws.

In Chapter 3 we saw that women also have gardens. Manyepa was registered for her garden in her own right. On the irrigation plot registered in her husband's name, she had user

rights. She explained that she was proud of her garden and the land she rented, but not of the husband's irrigated plot which she only used and therefore did not regard as hers. In Chapter three we saw that women also allocate land to others, i.e. to relatives in exchange for help, to friends and outsiders in exchange for cash or goods (firewood for a *dhundururu* (0.04 ha)). Van den Berg (1997:179) indicates that her informants emphasized that 'married women only have rights to plots allocated to them by their husbands. They cannot inherit land, nor clear or buy land themselves'. She argues (1997: 181) that 'women have more strategies to acquire land than was assumed by informants and in the literature, i.e. women do inherit, rent, loan, and clear land'. 'Aside from women's secondary access to land through their husbands, there is a large grey legal area in which women do not have formulated rights, but in which they have rights or try to acquire access to land through clearing or inheritance in practice'. Fortunate tried to claim the rights to half of the irrigated plot by arguing that she cleared the land. In the case of conflict and divorce women really have to argue for their own rights to land. Chiefs in village courts and presiding officers in community courts differ in their compliance to women's interests.

#### *Chiefs in village courts and presiding officers in community courts*

In their village courts, chiefs usually deny married and divorced women access to land in their own right. They reproduce certain values and normative frames regarding marriage that tend to stick to traditional rules. Where bridewealth has not been completed the husband will be ordered to complete his payments or the dispute is sorted out by consulting traditional doctors to cleanse bad spirits.

But wives, whether widowed, divorced or married, have another option. After they have heard the judgements in the village courts, they may choose to go to the community court. If they are responsible for children younger than 18 years, then husbands will be charged a maintenance fee. This can be in terms of land or money. If the wives are allocated land as a means of maintenance and in lieu of a cash payment, then they also want to be registered on the land, to ensure control over the land and its produce. The presiding officers in the community courts reject the belief in bad spirits, because it cannot be proved. Agritex officials use strategically the judgements from the different courts.

#### *Agritex officials*

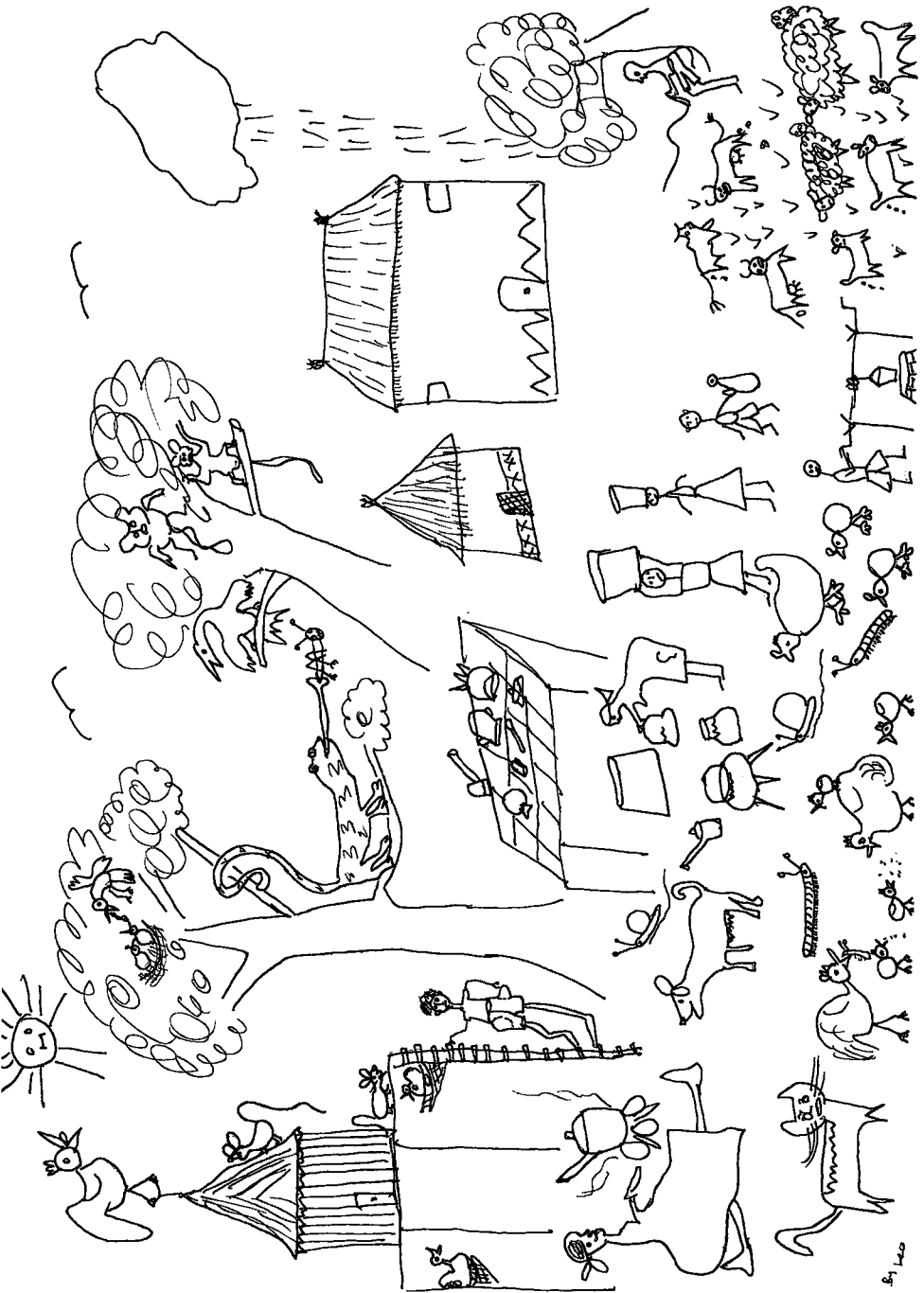
To some extent the gender perspectives of Agritex officials depend on the individual and the norms and values he/she holds. But they are also changing their perspectives to suit the situation and their own interests. Let us look into that. The acting Supervisor adhered to local norms and values about marriage in Miriam's case. Bridewealth is paid for the wife and a wife should not challenge the husband. Furthermore the maintenance fee for the irrigated plot was paid and witchcraft and complex administrative issues were at stake. Thus he delegated the case to the village courts for a chief to decide on the issue. It became a divorce and the plot was registered in the name of the husband.

In the case of Fortunate, the same acting Supervisor had the same gender perspectives and decided about her case using the same norms and values. A woman has to work on the land, bridewealth was paid, not to challenge the husband and no rights to land on her own account. That was his frame of decision-making and he acted accordingly. But he changed his tune when it was in his interests to do so, as we have seen. When he has a conflict with her husband, he helps the wife to obtain the acre she wants, by demonstrating who the husband was renting out land to, though the husband had previously denied the allegation. He later changes his mind again. How this Supervisor acts, is a nice example of how people selectively use or manipulate certain norms and values and change their decision-making frame in practice, also to achieve their own interests.

Different Agritex officials deal differently with gender struggles over land. The next Agritex Supervisor in the post, finally follows the community court's judgement, with the result that Agritex was placed between the wife-community court and the husband- village

court. The acting Agritex Supervisor had used a different argument, maintaining that he could not interfere in domestic affairs. However, to decide not to interfere and leave resources in the hands of men is also a decision, and therefore an intervention. The acting Agritex Supervisor perceived those issues as technical which appeared within the boundaries of the scheme and as domestic when they came outside those boundaries. However such a rigid distinction cannot be made, because it appears already from the decisions taken by the Agritex official that the inside shapes and influences the outside and vice versa. Everyday rural life cannot simply be distinguished in technical and domestic, or private and public, because as appears from the cases, all facets of life are intertwined.





## CHAPTER 6

### THE REIGN OF POWER AND THE POWER OF RAIN

In this chapter I explore some political decision-making processes in Manesa village and Mutema chieftaincy. Both women and men are strategic social actors in these political domains. Political power struggles in the village and chieftaincy occur mainly between chiefs and between chiefs and government officials. Women spirit mediums of the chieftaincy emerge as arbiters and mediators in those power struggles. Rain was an important phenomenon in village and chieftaincy power struggles. The existing belief is that the people whose ancestors bring the rain, own the land and are therefore the rightful authorities.

The chapter introduces the main authorities in Mutema chieftaincy and Manesa village. These ruling actors derive their authority from their traditional status, government recognition and the specific domains of activity for which they are responsible. I explore four power struggles in the village and chieftaincy. The first originates from the establishment of the village. The main social actors are Mutigwe and Manesa and the woman spirit medium who acts as an arbiter in the dispute. The second power struggle originates from the resettlement which took place in the village in 1953. Many of the existing power struggles between resettled and non-resettled chiefs stem from this event. The third power struggle is between the councillor and chiefs. Here, it is the woman spirit medium of Makopa who acts as a mediator and power broker between the worlds of government and chiefs. The last power struggle is between the councillor and Agritex officials.

Next, the work and authority of the woman spirit medium of the chieftaincy is explored. She acts as mediator, advisor and arbiter in some of the power struggles that occur at village and chieftaincy level. I examine the power struggles between two Ndau chieftaincies, those of Mutema and Musikavanhu. It is their ancestors who are said to bring the rain, and they are therefore considered as owners of the land and are regarded as the legitimate authorities of all the different Ndau chieftaincies.

I conclude by arguing that certain rules, ideologies, norms and values are reproduced, used and also manipulated by social actors who want to maintain their positions and safeguard the domains from which they themselves derive authority and wield power. The power struggles show that particular social actors claim to be the legitimate authority of certain domains of activity.

#### 6.1 SOME AUTHORITIES IN THE CHIEFTAINCY AND VILLAGE

As a context for this chapter I first introduce the different authorities in the chieftaincy and in Manesa village.

##### Chiefs and spirit mediums

The highest authority in the chieftaincy is the Paramount chief (*Mambo*). Usually, a chieftaincy has only one Paramount chief (see also Weinrich, 1971). However, for several years now there has been more than one Paramount chief (*madzimambo*) in Mutema (see appendix 10). One is a government appointee, the other two are ancestral Paramount chiefs (see Vijfhuizen and Makora, forthcoming). Freddy Mwanema was the government Paramount Chief until he died in 1992. During his time there were two ancestral Paramount Chiefs, Julius Mapipana, assisted by Semwayo Mwaneseni. Semwayo means 'the one who follows

the Paramount chief<sup>1</sup>. In July 1996, Siwonani was enthroned as the new government Paramount Chief (Vijfhuizen and Makora, forthcoming). It was not yet clear who would be selected by the *vazvare* (elder sons of Mutema) to be the Paramount chief(s) of the ancestors. In the meantime Julius Mapipana and Semwayo Mwaneseni were acting as the ancestral Paramount chiefs.

The next chiefs downwards are five *Madumburanzou*, followed by two headmen. The use of the two titles *Dumburanzou* and headmen are usually mixed and in general headman is used. They have more or less the same duties, as they each rule large areas within the Mutema chieftaincy. However, the *Madumburanzou* are involved in the selection of a Paramount and the headmen are not. *Dumburanzou* literally means 'to skin and carve up an elephant'. When people killed elephants in the past, they were not allowed to skin and cut them open before informing the Paramount chief. The title *Dumburanzou* is derived from that obligation. The different villages within the chieftaincy are also ruled by chiefs. These chiefs or heads call themselves *mutape* (informer of the Paramount chief), or *saguta* (owner of the village or of big homesteads), or *sabhuku* (owner of the tax book), or *sadunhu* (owner of a small area), or kraalhead (owner of kraals or homesteads). These chiefs do not perceive themselves as headmen, because they only have small areas to rule. There are approximately thirty-seven of them in Mutema chieftaincy. Chiefs rule together with spirit mediums (Vijfhuizen, 1997: 35). I use the general word chief in this chapter to refer to all these kinds of chief, otherwise I mention their specific rank.

The most important spirit medium (*svikiro*) for the whole Mutema chieftaincy area is a woman. She is the medium of the royal ancestral spirit of Makopa. Her name is Chanaka Zvavakura and her totem is the guinea fowl (*Hungwe*). She is a niece (*muzukuru*) of the Paramount chief. Her mother was his sister. Everybody calls her Makopa and *Baba ndiwe* (you are the father). There are several other mediums of chiefly or royal ancestral spirits in Mutema chieftaincy. They are consulted by chiefs and are asked to be present during important meetings. Chiefs and spirit mediums work together, as we will see. Mutema chieftaincy has about eight of these spirit mediums of royal ancestral spirits, seven of whom are women. The mediums are named after the spirit that works through them. One of the spirits is a woman (Rwirani) and the others are deceased men. The above information is depicted in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Authorities in the Mutema chieftaincy

CHIEFS	8 ROYAL SPIRIT MEDIUMS (W = WOMAN; in the area of chief)
2 or 3 PARAMOUNTS	MAKOPA (W; Paramount Mutema)
5 MADUMBURANZOU	MWATUMA (W; kraalhead Mwadzima)
2 HEADMEN	BWERUDZA (M; headman Mabuyaye)
37 KRAALHEADS	MWANDEKA (W; kraalhead Marwendo)
	CHAMWAKAONA (W; Paramount Mutema)
	RWIRANI (W; kraalhead Mudzimwa)
	MUNOJAJA (W; kraalhead Panganai)
	NYIKADZAYENE (W; kraalhead Manesa)

Besides chiefs and spirit mediums, government officials are also authorities in Mutema chieftaincy.

<sup>1</sup> Chief Semwayo's area covers the 'low velds' of the Mutema chieftaincy. That is almost half of the chieftaincy. He has a much bigger area to look after than kraalheads and headmen and therefore he is an important chief. He is second to the Paramount chief who looks after the whole chieftaincy area.

## Government officials

Since the beginning of this century, representatives of national government have also been present in the villages. However, after independence (1980) the Paramount and all other chiefs were also recruited into and paid by government. The District Administrator of Chipinge District drew an organogram for me in February 1997, of all government officials. Such organograms are not available on paper, perhaps because government organisation regularly changes<sup>2</sup>. Table 6.2 depicts the authorities in government organisation, which as we can see includes Paramount chiefs, headmen, kraalheads, administrators, councils, councillors and committees.

Table 6.2: Authorities in government organisation (February 1997)

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT		
*NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PARAMOUNT CHIEFS		*NATIONAL RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
* PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF PARAMOUNTS CHIEFS	PA	* PROVINCIAL COUNCIL
	DA	* RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
* HEADMEN		* COUNCILLOR
* KRAALHEADS		* WADCO
		* VIDCO

The District Administrator (DA) and Provincial Administrator (PA) are perceived as mediators between the chiefs and the representatives of the Rural Councils at national, provincial and district level. In Manesa village government is represented by the chiefs and a councillor.

Each councillor is chairman of a Ward Committee (Wadco). Mutema chieftaincy has six wards and therefore six councillors (see Appendix 4). Manesa village is located in ward two. Each village has a Vidco, a Village Development Committee. Manesa has three Vidco chairmen, each covering one area within the village. Each area counts approximately 120-140 homesteads. The ward committee (Wadco) in ward two has 12 members, the councillor and eleven Vidco chairmen. There are no female Vidco chairpersons in those wards. The work of the councillor is mainly concerned with government initiated activities, such as the distribution of drought relief food, fertilizer and seed, road maintenance, schools, clinics, toilets, boreholes, and writing letters for social welfare. Thus, the councillor, together with the Wadcos and Vidcos, safeguard community services or 'development in the area' as local people call it.

The staff of Agritex, the Agricultural and Technical Extension Service, and the Irrigation Management Committee, the IMC, are politically important. However, they usually deal with agricultural issues and only influence to a limited extent other issues in the village. They are thus only included in the chapter when the position of councillor in Manesa village is discussed. They were dealt with in detail in Chapters 4 and 5 where the irrigation scheme was the focus. Agritex officials govern issues concerning land allocation in the irrigation scheme and give advice on irrigation matters and advice to dryland farmers. Sometimes they consult

<sup>2</sup> In July 1997 the names of the Ministries changed again. For example, then the Ministry of Local Government, Urban and Rural development became the Ministry of Local Government and National Housing.

the chiefs and IMC members. In Chapter 5 we saw that IMC members do not like to intervene in conflicts which they regard as private affairs. They focus more on issues concerning agricultural production and water distribution, usually in liaison with Agritex officials, the extension workers, extension supervisors and water controllers.

So far I have presented chiefs, spirit mediums and government officials as authorities in the village. However, villagers themselves are also involved in different domains of activities from which they derive authority. Let me give a few examples.

### **Villagers**

There are other organisations in the village from which villagers derive authority, such as the churches and other religious groups of which there are over twenty in Manesa village (survey Vijfhuizen, 1995). The biggest churches are Zionist (30% of the 389 homesteads) and the United Christian Church of Zimbabwe (UCCZ-10%). All other religious groups have a membership of below 10% of the homesteads. Being members of a church or religious group does not exclude worshipping the ancestors, nor that people no longer believe in good or bad spirits. One belief does not exclude the other one.

Other groups, such as savings clubs, usually have a short life because people seem too busy to attend the meetings and they do not pay their contributions. If people need money urgently, they usually borrow from close relatives. The co-operative stopped to function in the 1980's, although the prosperous migrant from Manesa (see Chapter 3) may get it started again. Those who are important in these domains of activities, the churches, irrigation scheme, 'development', ancestors, or land, derive their authority from their importance or status in those domains, where they are able to wield power. Long's view (1997: 5) that domains are 'a locus of certain 'rules', norms and values implying degrees of social commitment' helps us to understand why power struggles emerge between specific domains.

## **6.2 POWER STRUGGLES, BOUNDARIES AND DOMAINS**

I explore in this section four of the many power struggles in Manesa village. They were historically rooted. The accounts of the main social actors in these struggles are thus reconstructions and each try to create the images that suit them best and through which they are recognised as the legitimate authority. The first struggle is about the 'ownership' of Manesa village and is between Mr. Mutigwe and Mr. Manesa. Second are the struggles between non-resettled and resettled chiefs. Third are the power struggles between the councillor and Agritex officials, and finally I explore the power struggles between chiefs and the councillor. I deal later more fully with the woman spirit medium of Makopa. However, she emerges here as an arbitrator in conflicts and a mediator between the worlds of chiefs and government. Rain also is an issue here, but is also explored later.

### **Mutigwe and Manesa**

The two main social actors in the struggle over 'ownership' of Manesa village and its land are Manesa and Mutigwe. They have different positions in the hierarchy of the chieftaincy. It is said that Mutigwe descended from the eighth Paramount chief Nyagoya (1732-1759; see app. 10) and that he is a *madziashé*. Some sons of Mutema Chieftaincy are also called *madziashé*, since a Paramount chief was once chosen from their families. Sons from Mutema families from whom no Paramount chief came are called kraalheads. By this rule, Manesa is a kraalhead. He was sent to the area by the tenth Paramount chief Makopa (1786-1813) as explained below. Let me now show how Mutigwe and Manesa reconstructed history in order to demonstrate themselves to be the legitimate authority of the village and its land. Mutigwe's account about Manesa village was as follows:

'Long ago, before the Shangaan came from Zulu-land, our forefathers were here.

Mutigwe was the first chief of this village. Manesa came later. He was born a twin and twins were not allowed to live with the Paramount chief in those days. They were often simply killed. Twins were therefore not allowed to rule the chieftaincy<sup>3</sup>. Mutigwe went to the Paramount chief and requested Manesa and took him to live with him. He became a messenger of Mutigwe. If a porcupine was killed, or fish from the Sabe river or bullfrogs, or fruits from trees, then a portion was always sent to the Paramount chief Mutema. They were taken by the messenger Manesa<sup>4</sup>. When the Whites arrived in 1890, they asked Paramount chief Mutema if he was the leader of the large territory<sup>5</sup> himself. The Paramount chief replied 'no', all the villages have leaders. The Whites then registered these leaders. Manesa was sent by Mutigwe to Melsetter (today's Chimanimani) where registration of the villages was taking place, to register Mutigwe as village leader. When Manesa tried to explain the situation, the Whites told him that as he was the one who had come he would be the one to be registered. Thus the village was named Manesa village. Therefore today there is a big problem in worshipping. Manesa can hardly be responsible for that, since it is our forefathers who are buried in the sacred forest near the village. The present Manesa has only one forefather there (the first Manesa). His other forefathers are buried elsewhere. The land and everything else is governed by Manesa, but when it comes to the ancestral spirits (*vadzimu*), then Manesa fully agrees that if he worships the ancestral spirits without Mutigwe present, then the ancestral spirits will not answer him. Everything is Manesa's, but the ancestors are ours'.

Manesa gave a different account:

'Mutigwe and his elder brother Nezomba fought each other. The leadership had been given to Nezomba and Mutigwe disagreed and said the leadership should have been given to him. The case was taken to Paramount chief Mutema, who at that time was Makopa. Makopa told them to go and live in peace. But when the brothers were back in the village they fought again. Then Makopa sent Manesa to establish peace. Manesa became the leader of the area. The people voted for him because he was a child of Makopa and because he had stopped the fighting. The country was thus given to Manesa. Mutigwe is under Manesa because Manesa was sent here by Paramount chief Mutema. Mutigwe is not greater than Manesa. Paramount chief Nyagoya (the one Mutigwe descended from) was not as strong as Paramount chief Makopa (the one Manesa descended from) or Paramount chief Shiriyedenga (the first Mutema Paramount chief). It was also Manesa who was registered by the Whites in Melsetter and they made him owner of the tax book and the area. The Whites also organised meetings in the villages and when they asked the people here their leader, they all said 'Manesa'. I am the owner of the soil, the homesteads, the area and the fields and I give people land to use. I am also the one who is supposed to worship the ancestors. I am the only chief who has a place under the sacred trees and who can talk to the ancestors'.

Semwayo's opinion was shaped by the woman spirit medium of Makopa. He believes that Mutigwe's ancestors bring the rain and therefore Mutigwe owns the land. A general belief is that those whose ancestors bring the rain, own the land (Lan, 1985). Thus Mutigwe is perceived as the owner of the village and its land. However, Semwayo strategically

<sup>3</sup> Manesa means 'you trouble me'. That meaning could be associated with the fact that he was born a twin. Perhaps his mother was troubled because she could not stay with the Paramount chief.

<sup>4</sup> That was the tribute taken to the chief in those days (see Richards, 1939). However even today the Paramount chiefs and other chiefs are supposed to be honoured by gifts. For example to buy beer for them in the beerhall, as I indicated in Chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> A chieftaincy is usually called *nyika*, meaning country. Others use territory and refer to territorial cults, meaning a 'number of complexes of belief and ritual' (Schoffeleers, 1979:1).

recognised both Manesa and Mutigwe as authorities in Manesa village and area, as he explained:

'Manesa village used to be Mutigwe's, but the two brothers Nezomba and Mutigwe fought and there was no rain. Then Paramount chief Makopa sent Manesa to establish peace and there was rain. Manesa should be honoured because he was sent by Makopa. These days there is no rain because ancestors are not being worshipped in the village. The village ancestral spirits told both Mutigwe and Manesa not to visit the small sacred forest near the village before Manesa had given Mutigwe a number of homesteads. Manesa is supposed to have given Mutigwe some homesteads so that Mutigwe receives a tax book because Mutigwe is very important for rain. Manesa should count Mutigwe in whatever he does. He has to bring Mutigwe presents and they must do everything together'.

Thus Semwayo acknowledged the leading position of Manesa 'because Manesa was sent by Makopa'. However, his opinion was that Mutigwe should be a kraalhead too, because the village ancestors are Mutigwe's and therefore Mutigwe is the owner of the village. According to Semwayo, issuing of a tax book with homesteads to Mutigwe could easily be realised because as he says:

'Manesa today has 285 homesteads and for a *sabhuku* (owner of the tax book or kraalhead) that is too many. A *sabhuku* is supposed to start with 30 homesteads only. That can rise to 100, but not more than 200. The District Administrator told Manesa when they registered the grain loan scheme that he was not supposed to have so many people as a *sabhuku* and ought to issue a book to somebody else. Like Mugadza in Mutema village who was issued a book by Mabuyaye who had too many people. Mabuyaye had to give Mugadza a book'.

In my village survey (1995), I counted less than 200 homesteads for village head Manesa. Maybe I did not include all the homesteads. Or maybe Semwayo had exaggerated the number to make his point that Manesa should give Mutigwe a few homesteads.

The above accounts from Mutigwe, Manesa and Semwayo were given in 1995. In December 1996 an important change took place when Agritex encountered problems with the construction of the new irrigation scheme (see chapter 5). The tractors broke down and work could not proceed. Manesa explained that it was not only tractors that had broken down. The rains had not come and there were problems with birds and locusts. 'I went to Mutigwe', he said:

'because his sacred place is in the area of the new irrigation scheme. We went to a *n'anga* who said that Mutigwe needed to be given a goat, a cloth and beer. I am going to see the District Commissioner with Mutigwe, to get him registered as a kraalhead'.

Thus, Manesa changed his perceptions to a certain extent, and confessed that:

'yes, you can hear, but you don't want to listen. Manesa came here when Mutigwe was already here. The British registered Manesa and Mutigwe is now under Manesa. But we should not forget Mutigwe'.

On December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1996, after Mutigwe and Manesa had visited a *n'anga*, they went together with all the other kraalheads to the sacred forest to worship the village ancestors. After weeks of drought, the rain came the night after they had worshipped. Mutigwe explained later when I visited him in January 1997:

'We were the first people to live here. I can only say that some people can become greedy about a position in a chieftaincy, and others are not. The government constructs a new irrigation scheme in the place of our ancestors and all kind of frightening things happen, such as many snakes and bees. Manesa came to me and with all the kraalheads from Manesa, we went to the forest. After begging the ancestors, things are now going

calmly. I did not ask for it, but due to hardships and problems people came to me, because Manesa had told the government that only Mutigwe could do it. After worshipping in the forest in December 1996, it started to rain. I also could not believe it. I also was very surprised. If I meet people now, they give me very high respect. Our forefathers were the first here, and they made it rain'.

Thus village head Manesa planned to give some of the homesteads registered in his taxbook to Mutigwe, so that Mutigwe could be a kraalhead too. Manesa had done that before, in 1956, when he gave the late Panganai some homesteads to become a kraalhead too. Panganai's son holds that position today. However, Manesa village has other authorities besides Manesa, Panganai, Semwayo and Mutigwe. Let me now explain who these other authorities in Manesa village were.

### **Non-resettled and resettled chiefs**

In 1953 four other kraalheads were resettled in Manesa village. They were Nemashapa, Mukokota, Haugurwi, and Nedangura. In 1995 (village survey, Vijfhuizen) the division of homesteads among all kraalheads in Manesa village was as follows:

Table 6.3: Percentage of total homesteads (N=388) per kraalhead in Manesa village

1.	Manesa	40%
2.	Panganai	29%
3.	Nemashapa	11%
4.	Haugurwi	10%
5.	Mukokota	8%
6.	Nedangura	1%

(Source: village survey; Vijfhuizen, 1995)

The resettled kraalheads came from the Munyokowere area of Mutema Chieftaincy. That area is today the Middle Sabi Estate and a Game Reserve (see appendix 5). Some of the resettled women and men in Manesa village told me how they had been unable to do anything about it.

'It was government policy. The lorries came and they gave us bags to put in our grains or whatever we had and we were taken away. Many people were crying. Some said they were not going to leave their place of birth and they drank poison and died'.

One of the resettled farmers, who was in his sixties, and now registered in kraalhead Mukokota's tax book in Manesa village believed that the resettlement had been organised by the White government:

'because the White government knew that the soil in Munyokowere was extremely rich. They said that they only had to pump water<sup>6</sup>. The White government told the chiefs they were only playing there and performing dances with their people. So they sent us to another area to cultivate'.

The Mutema Paramount chief of that time, Mwatuma (see appendix 10) saw many of his people being dispersed to Bikita, Goko, Gudyanga etc. Hence, many of the resettlement places were outside Mutema chieftaincy. Resettled kraalhead NeMashapa described how Paramount chief Mwatuma had resisted government plans to send NeMashapa, Mukokota, Haugurwi and Nedangura away from the chieftaincy. He requested the government to let

<sup>6</sup> The people in the Save River valley where the present Middle Sabi Estate and former Munyokowere area are located, actually live on the water which is under the ground. The water comes from the higher parts of Zimbabwe (e.g. Mutare and Chimanimani).



them stay in the chieftaincy because these kraalheads were important to the worship of Mutema's ancestral spirits and it was therefore essential for them to stay near the two main important worshipping places of the chieftaincy, i.e. Ngaone and Madzadza. The government agreed and said that those four kraalheads could live in Manesa village, which is near the old home (Munyokowere) of the resettled kraalheads. Nemashapa continued:

'Paramount chief Mwatuma had asked the government how the people could be expected to live in Manesa village when there was no land. The government had replied that they wanted to start build the Tawona irrigation scheme in Manesa, and that the land would be given to the people, but that they would have to dig the canal and uproot the trees themselves. So Paramount chief Mwatuma told village head Manesa to take the kraalheads and live with them in peace because the resettled kraalheads were also sons of Mutema.'

Semwayo, Manesa and Mutigwe were of the opinion that the resettled kraalheads were not given places (*nzvimbo*) in Manesa village. Resettled kraalheads had no places in Manesa village, only homesteads registered in their tax books. The resettled kraalheads had their own places where they came from. These three argued that there were no boundaries in Manesa village. Village head Manesa and Semwayo were also of the opinion that Panganai likewise had homesteads but no place to rule in Manesa. Manesa explained to me what must be an ancient ritual of how boundaries are formed:

'The only existing boundaries in Manesa village are those with the neighbouring villages, Mutema in the South and Tawona in the North. These two boundaries were established by people who were sent by Paramount chief Mutema. They performed their rituals in the night while naked and possessed and where they sat down became the boundary of the village. If boundaries are not made by possessed and naked people in this way then boundaries are not known'.

Village head Manesa actually denies any boundary within the village in order to stress the point that the whole village is his, 'All the kraalheads in Manesa village are the children of Manesa. There are no boundaries in Manesa', he says. If the resettled kraalheads want their own places then they should go back to their own area. I can remove people and replace them for clever people who can understand. Why should there be boundaries in the village? For what purpose?

The resettled kraalheads were not very outspoken about the existence of boundaries, but they claimed they had definitely been given a place (*nzvimbo*) in Manesa village, 'we were given areas by the police who pointed with their hands and said you start here and end there'. However, the resettled kraalheads agreed that they indeed also had their own places somewhere else. They said: 'we have two places, one in Manesa and one from where we came'. Kraalhead Panganai disagreed with the opinions of the resettled kraalheads. He said: 'Mukokota and Nemashapa live in Panganai and they do not have places (*havana nzvimbo*) in Manesa village'. Thus Panganai's opinion was that he has a place in the village, whereas Manesa and Semwayo said that Panganai himself has no place in the village, but only homesteads with people to look after. These perceptions all relate to the claim of particular social actors to be the rightful authority (see conclusion of this chapter).

The villagers, however, had a different view and were of the opinion that boundaries did exist between the area of the different kraalheads in Manesa village. Women and men could clearly point out the boundaries in the village. They recognised boundaries because if they shifted from one kraalhead's to another kraalhead's area, they were supposed to pay money or give a chicken for example (see Chapter 3). Then their names would be struck from one kraalhead's tax book and written into another. Hence for them boundaries between the kraalhead's places were a reality in practice.

As we have seen, non-resettled chiefs in Manesa village and indeed those who had been resettled, were of the opinion that the places these chiefs had come from, were the places seen

as 'theirs'. That perception could be seen in practice, for resettled kraalheads continued to resolve problems in the areas from which they came. Nemashapa said that his area became the Middle Sabi Estate (ARDA) and a game reserve, but that the District Administrator had told him to look after the squatters who had settled on the edges of his area. 'Squatters have no land, he said,

'Therefore they brew beer to earn money to buy maize to eat. The beer brewing and drinking causes many conflicts. Once in a while I am requested by the police to come and settle the conflicts in my area'.

The tax books of the resettled kraalheads were from the places they had come from. Hence, their people in Manesa and the people from the places they had lived before were both registered in their tax books. The children who were born in Manesa village and had established their own homesteads also were registered in these same books. This new generation perceives Manesa village as their home. They also now have family who have died since the resettlement to Manesa and they thus have ancestors whom they worship in their homesteads in Manesa village.

It is the kraalheads and their people, who experienced the resettlement, who perceived their natal place as their real home, because their forefathers were buried there, and this makes that place their most important place of worship. This is an important reason why people who experienced the resettlement, perceive themselves as 'foreigners' (*vatorwa*) in Manesa village. Another reason why resettled kraalheads specifically perceived themselves as foreigners was their inability to allocate land to their own people. They were initially allocated land in the irrigation scheme by the government, but they had no access to dryland. Kraalhead Nemashapa said: 'we are foreigners, because we have no dryland'. The children of the resettled, who were born in Manesa village and sometimes receive a small irrigated plot via their parents, also want dryland. But for the allocation of dryland they have to approach the non-resettled chiefs Manesa and Panganai.

The non-resettled chiefs and their people likewise view non-resettled as foreigners. That is expressed in the following example<sup>7</sup>.

Two men from Manesa village quarrelled at a beer drink and one said: 'why do you sit close to the kraalhead when you are a foreigner here? I am supposed to sit near the kraalhead'. He poured beer over the man, which resulted in a fight. They were both charged a cockbird when the case was dealt with in the village court.

The resettled kraalheads often complained about their struggles in the village. They would complain of how they were told by the non-resettled kraalheads that 'this is not your land, you must be under us'. In general, kraalheads derive their authority from land allocation, worshipping the ancestors and settling disputes in their village courts. We have seen that the resettled kraalheads are deprived of land allocation and are deprived of worshipping their own village ancestral spirits in Manesa village. But resettled kraalheads do have their own courts in Manesa village. However, on 14 June 1996, the courts were registered, because government planned to pay the chiefs for their court work (see below) and their situation changed. Then Semwayo explained that the courts of the resettled chiefs and those of village head Manesa and kraalhead Panganai would be the courts for small issues, such as quarrels in the homestead and cattle in the irrigation scheme. His court, *miuyu misere* ('the eight baobabs') would be the court to deal with larger issues, such as divorces and everything concerning spirits. Hence, the resettled kraalheads had lost their ancestors, control over their land, and would now be able to deal only with the minor issues among their people. These were important reasons why the resettled kraalheads did not feel settled. They felt squeezed

<sup>7</sup> I took this case from the court books (1987-1995) of village head Manesa. The case occurred in May 1994.

between the non-resettled kraalheads and the government, as emerged from resettled kraalhead Nemashapa's comment of how

'some of the non-resettled kraalheads do not want us here because they want to preserve their own areas. At such times we think let's go back. We also have our own places, the places we come from. But our land became an estate and a game reserve. If they deny us rights to our land, we cannot have homesteads. It is the policy of the government that we have to stay here in Manesa village. If the government could shift the fence of the game reserve a bit, then all the scattered Nemashapa people who have no irrigated plots could go home. But we do not have weapons to fight the government'.

The resettled people shared the view that animals were better off than human beings, because animals have much more space to live. Here, the room for manoeuvre of the resettled people is clearly limited by the government officials who formulated the rules and interventions relating to estates and game parks. In the conclusion of this chapter I will come back to the different restricted areas of manoeuvre. First we need a closer look at the government officials at village level.

### **Councillor and chiefs**

Councillors as government officials came to the rural areas of the country after Zimbabwe became independent from the Rhodesian government in 1980. Each councillor was given a ward to look after. Mutema chieftaincy was divided in six wards with six councillors (appendix 4). In some rural areas, chiefs created space for these councillors, but in other areas chiefs did not recognise them as partners in negotiations and decision making. That is more or less the case in Manesa's village area, located in ward two (see appendix 4). The chiefs of Manesa regarded the councillor as an 'eye of the government', but they themselves had been given that 'eye' first. Therefore they claimed that the councillor should inform them of all he did, while they themselves did not feel obliged to inform the councillor. For example, village head Manesa did not inform the councillor about my stay in Manesa village. When I met the councillor for the first time, he was very surprised to find me there without him having been informed. 'That is government territory', he said,

'I am above the kraalheads and therefore I should have been the one to allocate you a place to live and not village head Manesa. Our culture says that the land belongs to the chief, but the rule of the government is that the village head cannot allocate land or a homestead without the involvement of the councillor'.

He was claiming his authority in these matters through government recognition of his role therefore. The councillor in this case is paid by the government, but he is also the son of a chief, which could be perceived as a case of intersecting domains, which could help to understand his ambiguous approach to land and his role in its allocation. He understood perfectly well his exclusion from land allocation and the allocation of places to build houses in Manesa village.

'If the kraalheads gave negotiations about land to the councillor, the kraalheads might see their powers declining. If a person looks for a place to stay in the village, he will give the kraalhead money, and so the kraalhead does not involve the councillor. He may be afraid he will have to share the money with him'.

Indeed, chiefs do derive their authority from land and stand allocation and they will therefore carefully 'protect' these domains. Kraalheads also protect themselves from having to share what they earn from having this authority. But sometimes the councillor and chiefs co-operate, in the case of a borehole, for example. People believe that a chief should first pay homage to a place where a borehole is going to be constructed. But in general the councillor and his Vidco's/Wadco's are neglected by the chiefs in Manesa village. That is also

historically rooted. When the country changed from Rhodesia into Zimbabwe and became independent in 1980, the new Zimbabwean government forbade chiefs to rule in their courts and gave these tasks to the chairmen of the Vidco's. People said that the power of the chiefs had been given to the Vidco chairmen and councillors. However, in practice, most chiefs continued to rule their courts, and chiefs have never accepted the undermining of their positions by the Zimbabwean government. Such historical practices may also influence their present neglect of the councillors. The councillor said his powers were not fully recognised by the chiefs and the chiefs said that the presence of the councillor undermined their power. Hence they may both feel that they are not fully recognised as authorities in Manesa village and chieftaincy.

The government is aware that councillors and chiefs do not fully collaborate in the villages. This is despite the fact that both councillor and chiefs are government officials. But chiefs feel themselves first to be chiefs and only then to be government officials. To stimulate collaboration with government officials, the government proposed some policy changes. The *Manica Post* (14 June 1996) depicted the following information under the heading 'Power back to the chiefs':

The government plans to replace the Chiefs and Headmen Act of 1982 with a new piece of legislation that restores the chiefs' powers that were taken from them soon after independence (1980). The Chiefs and Allied Traditional Leaders Act will be passed soon<sup>8</sup>. Under the proposed legislation the chief will supervise and direct all headmen and village heads in his area of jurisdiction and preside over all disputes related to customary law. The chief will preside over his court in terms of the Customary and Local courts act of 1990. He will assist the Rural District Council in solving disputes and in selecting and approving new settlers in his area. He will collect taxes and other charges from the people. The proposed legislation seeks to link the Rural District Councils with the traditional leadership to remove any conflict and bring about harmony. It seeks to create village and ward assemblies that will be consulted on matters pertaining to rural development.

The journalist mentioned twice 'the chief', the first refers to the Paramount chief and the second to the village heads or kraalheads. The government will pay the chief who rules a court. By recognising the chief's positions again, government hopes that the chiefs will change their attitude towards other government officials and assist in government plans to develop the country. However, as is usually the case with so many policies, this new policy may have different effects to those envisaged. Chiefs can also use the new policy to undermine the position and authority of government officials such as the councillor. For example, in an encounter between Mapipana and Semwayo, the Paramount chiefs of the ancestors, and the woman spirit medium of Makopa<sup>9</sup>, Mapipana told her that he did not want councillors in the area any more. He said: 'if the government is going to deliver power into the hands of chiefs, they should remove the councillors'. Semwayo supported him and said how 'at present when they gave land to the people, the councillor ought to be present'. Mapipana responded that councillors should not be involved in the allocation of land. The woman spirit medium of Makopa said:

'That is not up to me. It is up to you. I do not want to discuss it. Give me time. I cannot be involved in the councillor issue, because the councillor is the eye of the government. So it is up to you'.

The chiefs criticised councillors for pretending to own the land and for receiving money for projects. But they knew that the spirit medium of Makopa was also right in that they could

<sup>8</sup> In November 1997 this Act had not yet been approved by Government.

<sup>9</sup> In June 1996 Locadia and I visited the spirit medium of Makopa, together with the Paramount chiefs of the ancestors, Mapipana and Semwayo.

not work without the councillors, because they needed someone who could inform them of what was going on in government, and about government plans. They accepted the presence of the councillor, but claimed that they should be selected by the Paramount chief and should be from the chiefs' family because otherwise one would never know their direction. 'That is necessary', they claimed, 'otherwise they talk too much. You need a person from within.' Chiefs wanted a related person, who could accept that land was controlled by the chiefs and would thus not threaten their authority. The chiefs did not want government officials who might interfere in their domains of activities, although they wanted information from the councillor about money and projects. Chiefs especially need such information since the decentralisation programme was implemented in Chipinge District in January 1997. Before this decentralisation, money and plans were channelled from National, to Provincial then to District level. From the District level the money was distributed to the different Departments such as Agriculture (Agritex). But with decentralisation, the Rural District Council receives all the money and obtains the task of distributing it to the various Departments. Thus, the chiefs deriving their authority from controlling land, courts and ancestors found it difficult to recognise the councillor as an authority. However, now the councillor became a controller of government money in the villages, they will recognise him as an authority in that domain of development activities. Thus government plans to pay the chiefs for their court cases, and to decentralise by giving more responsibility to the councillors, clearly influenced the relationship between chiefs and councillors. However, it is not only the chiefs who exclude councillors from their domains of activities to safeguard their authority. Government officials in Agritex also exclude the councillor.

### **Councillor and Agritex officials**

The councillor felt excluded from the management of the Tawona irrigation scheme and the registration process for irrigated plots in the scheme under construction. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, Agritex officials at field level felt this to be their domain and that they therefore did not need to include the councillor. Agritex officials derived their authority also from managing the irrigation scheme. They did not want the councillor to be in a position to undermine this authority. The councillor disagreed with this state of affairs. He argued that he should be involved in each committee, including the Irrigation Management Committee, because it was within his ward. The councillor wrote a letter about the matter (dated 5 September 1995) to District level, complaining

'that he was not involved in anything that took place in the irrigation scheme; that he had not been informed officially about a field day; that the IMC was supposed to manage the schemes in cooperation with Agritex, but that Agritex bulldozed the IMC; that he should be involved in the registration of names for plots in the new irrigation scheme, but he was not.'

The District Agricultural Extension Officer (DAEO) responded with a short letter (dd. 3 October 1995) in which he mentioned that he had requested his Senior Irrigation Officer (SIO) to investigate the case and to write a detailed report about it. That report was dated 22 January 1996. Both government officials (DAEO and SIO) were of the opinion that the councillor should be involved in the management of the scheme, although they did not say how. The DAEO explained in his letter that

'The councillor should work closely together with the Irrigation supervisor who has indicated to me that he is always prepared to liaise with the councillor. Field days and show invitation are done by farmers committees, not by Agritex staff. Farmers are going to be encouraged to inform the Councillor. Running of government irrigation schemes is by Agritex staff assisted by IMC, but local leaders, e.g. kraalheads, councillors are consulted at times depending on issues to be decided upon'.

The Senior Irrigation officer (SIO) wrote a long report saying among other things that:

'In Government run irrigation schemes the head is the Agritex Extension Supervisor (AES) with his Agritex team and the IMC and Block Committees. Also the AES has office members such as traditional leaders. Also according to the policy, the Council is also part of the scheme management'.

In Chapter 5, I noted that this last Agritex official had said that the Rural District Council was also part of the scheme's management. But that was according to policy, and he had then explained how it was supposed to be. But in practice, we did not see the councillors or any other representatives of the Rural District Council involved in decision-making over irrigated land. Regarding the councillor's exclusion from decision-making over plot registration in the new scheme the SIO responded that he:

'agreed with the AES that records on waiting lists for plot allocation and records on plot allocation before they were finalised, would never be released to anyone. It remains confidential information to the Department only'.

Thus the requested involvement by the councillor in plot registration was rejected by Agritex. Chiefs and Agritex officials appear to share the same opinion and devise the same strategies, i.e. denying the councillor access to the domains of land, i.e. the irrigation schemes (old and new), dryland and gardens. Agritex officials said that the councillor should be busy with the community services financed by government. But the councillor as a government representative aimed to be involved in all the different domains of activities, 'because the whole ward belongs to me', he said. Here we see the intersection of symbolic boundaries of on the one hand 'domains of activities' and on the other, the geographical boundaries of the ward. I will come back to these boundaries in the conclusion of this chapter.

So far I have mentioned only briefly the role played by the spirit medium of Makopa in the power struggles within the village. I will now explore her work and authority in more detail.

### 6.3 THE WOMAN SPIRIT MEDIUM OF MAKOPA

Chiefs settle certain disputes in villages and chieftaincy, but they consult the woman spirit medium of Makopa in those disputes which they cannot settle themselves. She arbitrated and mediated in the power struggles between Manesa and Mutigwe and advised on the disputes between chiefs and the councillor. Chiefs visit the medium when they wish to consult her, or they will invite her to the village when they organise specific meetings for disputes with which they want her help. I will first explore a consultation visit to the woman spirit medium of Makopa, which highlights her mediation and advice on general problems in the chieftaincy. Then I explore how she arbitrates in particular disputes in the chieftaincy and show how women spirit mediums emerge as important social actors and authorities in the chieftaincy.

#### **Mediator and advisor<sup>10</sup>**

Approximately eight or more times a year, Semwayo travels from Manesa to Ngaone (see appendix 11), where also the Paramount chief of the ancestors (Mapipana) lives.

Semwayo will usually visit him first and they will then proceed together to the spirit medium. Her name is *ambuya* Chanaka, but being the spirit medium of Makopa she is often

<sup>10</sup> This visit was in June 1996. The people who were present during the consultations were the woman spirit medium herself who was possessed, the two Paramount chiefs of the ancestors, Semwayo and Mapipana, the husband of the spirit medium, myself and Locadia Makora.

simply called Makopa. The two chiefs want to be advised about disputes they cannot settle themselves in the chieftaincy.

Photo 6.1: Julies Mapipana (right) and Semwayo Mwaneseni (left) (photo: Baukje Schat)



Also in June 1996 the two chiefs visited the spirit medium. When they arrived at *ambuya* Chanaka's place, they first exchanged news about their families and the people who had passed away in the area. At the time of our visit *ambuya* Chanaka lived in a homestead with her husband, two of her eight children and one grandson. After exchanging news, *ambuya* Chanaka started to sweep the kitchen and prepared food. When she finally sat down in the kitchen, she became quickly possessed<sup>11</sup> by the ancestral spirit of Makopa. She repeated that 'Makopa is the chief and owner of the chieftaincy (*nyika*). Everybody has to listen to Makopa and are his children'. Semwayo and Mapipana responded frequently: 'that is true (*chokwadi*)' and 'you are the father (*baba ndiwe*)'. Then, Semwayo introduced the first problem. He explained that chiefs were quarrelling about boundaries and ownership of land because several chiefs had no places to rule. The spirit medium replied:

'You say you have no places, but who then are the children of Mutema? Where should the place of Mutema be? I have just made a very big *hata* (a rounded pad to carry heavy things on the head). Now I want to rewind the *hata*. I am not going to tell you where I am, because I heard that a certain chief (*mutape*) was ordered to leave that place'.

The medium (*svikiro*) spoke more in symbolic, than in direct language. Her answer can be interpreted in various ways, but could be as follows. Conflicts about ruling the land among the chiefs in the Mutema chieftaincy is a very old problem and could be perceived as a 'heavy' one, because it remains a topic from which disputes emerge. The woman spirit medium said

<sup>11</sup> The Ndaushona language of today is mixed with standard (Zezuru) Shona, which has been taught in schools since before independence. But the spirit medium spoke in the 'old' Ndaushona language, using many original Ndaushona words that are no longer used.

that all the chiefs in the Mutema chieftaincy had their 'places'. She actually warned the chiefs that those chiefs who made problems would be chased away.

Semwayo had listened and agreed with the spirit medium. Then he quickly raised his second problem. A man had recently passed away in Manesa's area. The man's family went to a *n'anga* (African doctor) to be informed about the cause of his death. They heard that the man had in the past been responsible for the death of the wife he had inherited from his father. The spirit of the deceased wife was now seeking revenge and had become a *ngozi* (see next chapter). At the moment the wife had died her children had gone to her own family. Now, Semwayo said that the inheritance had been arranged and that the children who had been living in the late wife's family could now return to their late father's family. However, Semwayo said that the relatives disagreed. This second problem can be interpreted as follows. Semwayo meant by 'the relatives', the late wife's family. The family had been offered one of their daughters' children as compensation and did not want to accept this child as compensation in order to appease the angry spirit (*ngozi*) of their daughter. The wife's family wanted to have a child of the late husband's family, not one of their late daughter's children. If they received such an unrelated child, then that child could be married to one of the members of the late wife's family (see the next chapter for more information on these 'ghost marriages'). Semwayo raised this point here, because he wanted to persuade the spirit medium to visit the families and settle the dispute. He assumed that the families would listen to the spirit medium of the chieftaincy. However the spirit medium responded:

I am not going there. You just arrange it, as you ought to do. All the money which was supposed to be paid for the wife [now the *ngozi*] is there, also the girl child to be offered to the *ngozi*. If the child marries, then the whole bridewealth (*pfuma*) is going to be used to pay the *ngozi*. It should be done. I am not going there. It is up to you.'

Thus the spirit medium advised that the angry spirit should be compensated according to its wishes (see next chapter). Thus the possessed spirit medium not only issued warnings, but also decided about where she would or would not go. She gave clear advice and assisted the chiefs in settling disputes in the chieftaincy.

When Semwayo saw that he could not change her mind about visiting the families, he raised the third issue, which was of great concern to him. He explained that Mabuyaye would be a headman soon in Mutema village, but that Mabuyaye's younger brother also wanted to have the headman's position. He said that the younger brother was visiting the offices of the District Administrator in order to be given the headman's badge. The woman spirit medium asked him why should the younger brother be fighting to have the headman's badge of authority when the eldest was present. The eldest should be given the badge and should not be inaugurated into the position (*kugadza*) or be presented with the badge without the government being present. The government should give Mabuyaye the badge, not Semwayo in the absence of any government presence.<sup>12</sup>

This was clear advice concerning this dispute. But spirit mediums can only advise it then remains up to the chiefs to act and decide about the problems. They were not always following her advice or listening to her and that irritated the woman spirit medium of Makopa. For example, Mapipana asked the medium where in Ngaone village the throning session of Siwonani (Paramount chief of the Government) would take place. The spirit medium indicated that the place should be near the business centre. Mapipana did not seem to know the place and then the woman spirit medium told him that she had already informed someone of this fact, 'but that man did not inform you', she said,

<sup>12</sup> I attended the 'throning' or inauguration of headman Mabuyaye in August 1996 in Mutema village. The government was represented by the acting District Administrator and his assistant. But the government officials came without a badge of office, because the badge could not be made in time.



'and that is where it begins. When I tell someone to take this message to that person, then you keep it to yourself. You do not pass the words on so that people are informed. I will have to have a big meeting with you and all the people'.

The spirit medium then asked when the throning of the Paramount chief of the Government would take place. Her husband, who was also present in the kitchen, said: 'next month'. Then she replied:

'You continue to say 'next month, next month' (*mwedzi unouya, mwedzi unouya*). Which actual month? Your months are never finished. Since I chose Siwonani<sup>13</sup>, you just say next month, next month'.

Then Semwayo and Mapipana responded: 'July. After June has finished'. This time the chiefs did not change their plans again. The throning of Paramount Chief Siwonani took place in July 1996 (see Vijfhuizen and Makora, forthcoming). The spirit of Makopa warned the chiefs that if they did not use the advice given by the medium, the spirit might leave her. The possessed woman pointed to a gender issue when she said:

'You are not following what I tell you to do, because you do not follow the advice of women. You say oh, it is only a woman, we are not going to listen to her. If you do not listen to women, that means that you are also not listening to me. Then I will stop the spirit coming out. I want to see to whom you will go and who you will cry for. Once I woke up (*kumuka*) with another niece (*muzukuru*). The father was not happy and scolded me. Then I moved and came to settle here. So you should listen to this woman'.

Hence the male spirit, through the female medium, reminded the chiefs to follow his advice. Sometimes, the medium not only gave advice, but also made the decisions when she arbitrated in disputes at meetings to which she was invited.

### **Arbitrator between political parties**

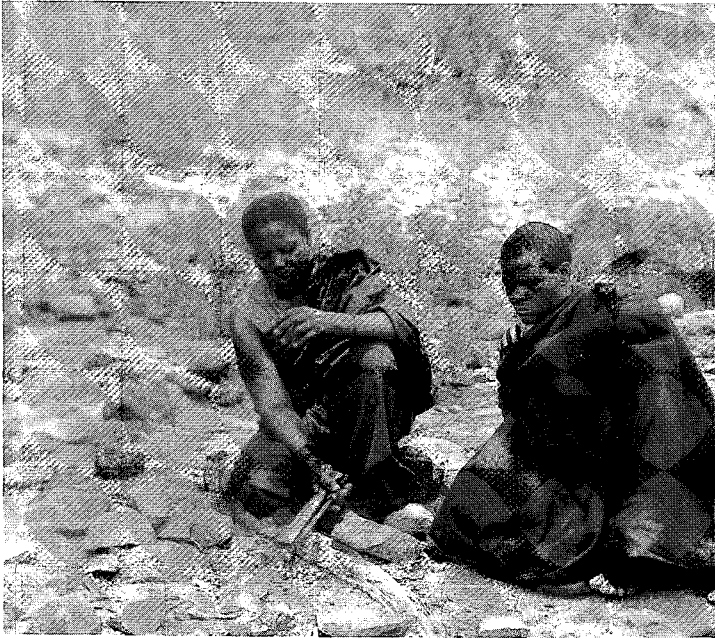
The woman spirit medium of Makopa is not only consulted privately, she is also requested by chiefs to attend specific meetings. She is more or less obliged to go, but she can also refuse as we have seen above. The meeting I explore here<sup>14</sup> is related to political conflicts in the chieftaincy in which the spirit medium was needed as an arbitrator. During these arbitration sessions, the spirit medium associated power struggles with rain. The medium's advice was that if chiefs (kraalheads etc) did not unite, it would not rain. Thus the chiefs first had to unite and then they could pay homage to the ancestors and appeal to them for rain. The spirit medium argued that kraalheads, since they were all sons of Mutema, should accept each other regardless of their political background, where they had come from in the chieftaincy, their descent or colour.

All kraalheads and other important persons of the Mutema chieftaincy were present on 11 November 1995. The spirit medium was possessed for almost two hours.

<sup>13</sup> The spirit medium of Makopa chose Siwonani as Paramount of the Government in April 1995, during a meeting organised in Manesa village.

<sup>14</sup> See also Vijfhuizen 1997, Zambezia

Photo 6.2 Spirit medium Makopa on the right and another woman spirit medium called Mwandeka on the left during the session on 11 November 1995, Musani village, Chipinge District.



She associated the droughts with conflicts at chieftaincy level and linked the war (1965-1980) to the present political conflicts in the chieftaincy between supporters of ZANU (PF) and those of ZANU (Ndonga)<sup>15</sup>. In summary the spirit medium of Makopa said:

'I saw them, the Black and White soldiers. I said to myself let them look out each for themselves. I am not a father who could say, you child, you go away because you are bad. I cannot select my children. The clever person and the fool are all my children. I am the chief (*mutape*) of the whole chieftaincy and not only for a small area'.

'You hate each other because of parties Zanu (PF) and Zanu (Ndonga). Why do you split apart? Why are you doing that when you come from one country? Do not hate each other because of political parties. These two people Sithole and Mugabe, they eat from the same plate. Please unite people of Mutema. I called you here so that my children should unite. I am the father of everyone. You did not brew beer to celebrate the inauguration of Siwonani. Why do you not celebrate his selection, as you do for the political parties of Ndabaningi Sithole and Mugabe? You are for this party and the other for that party, and forgetting to celebrate the selection of Paramount chief Siwonani'.

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<sup>15</sup> The Ndonga supporters originate from Chipinge and obtained the only two opposition seats in the elections of May 1995, mainly by the votes of the people in Chipinge. Zanu Ndonga is headed by Ndabaningi Sithole who is also the Member of Parliament for Chipinge South. At the end of 1995 the Zanu Ndonga leader was arrested because of a suspected attack on President Mugabe. This led to conflicts between ZANU (PF) and ZANU (Ndonga) people, especially in the chieftaincies in Chipinge District.

The Herald newspaper of 6 November 1997 reports under the heading "Ndonga beaten in its stronghold" that Chipinge District had 34 councillors, 15 from Zanu (Ndonga), 7 from Zanu (PF) and 12 were commercial farmers.

'The rain is coming very soon. Please stop these wars between yourselves. The rain is coming to everyone, without leaving other areas. I am not an ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*) for the children of the Mutema family (*vazvare*) only, but also for people who are not related to the Mutema family, the foreigners and strangers (*vatorwa*) in the Mutema area. The rain is coming, look in the sky. The clouds are pregnant with rain. But it will not descend to earth before you come and worship me. Please play together well, with each other'.

Bourdillon (1987: 260-272) explains that 'the territorial spirit guardians (I call them spirit mediums of the chieftaincy) help to bring and keep local communities together and reinforce the chieftdom as a political and administrative unit'. That is what the spirit medium of Makopa tried to achieve during this meeting. I will now give another example from which it becomes clear that chiefs and spirit mediums work together in governing the chieftaincy and taking political decisions.

### Arbitrator in a dispute about Madzadza

The spirit medium was called to attend a meeting at Madzadza on 13 January 1996. The meeting was about Madzadza itself (see appendix 11), one of the two important places of worship in the chieftaincy. Paramount chiefs are buried there. It is said that Madzadza is the place where the first Paramount chief of Mutema, Shiriyedenga (bird of the sky), came down (*kudzadza*) to establish the Mutema chieftaincy. It is also the place where people ask for their wishes to be fulfilled (*kudzadza*). The dispute about the place was as follows. A Madziashe and kraalhead responsible for worshipping at Madzadza had a conflict about the leadership of the place and who should lead during the opening speech. The kraalhead who did not lead the opening speech claimed that Madzadza belonged to his area. The spirit medium of Makopa then defined the exact roles of the Madziashe and kraalhead at Madzadza. She decided that the place should be led by the Madziashe. And he should be the one to lead the opening speech. Thus arbitrated the spirit medium.

On 14 January 1996, the day after the meeting at Madzadza, it started to rain in the village and area. It had been very dry. Many people, therefore, perceived the meeting at Madzadza as a rainmaking ceremony. However, the meeting had primarily been organised to settle the dispute about the leadership at Madzadza. But there is for people a strong association between conflict and rain which in this case was perceived as follows. Beer was brewed to help amend the conflict (*ruregerero*). During the session the Madziashe and kraalhead agreed that they had failed to maintain order and had been in conflict (*kubvuma* for *kutadza*). After agreeing, uniting and making amends for the conflicts, they were forgiven (*kuregererwa*) and rewarded with rain. Hence their urgent need for rain was fulfilled (*kudzadza*). This again reflects the significance of Madzadza.

### Women authorities

Women spirit mediums emerge as important advisors, mediators and arbiters in Mutema chieftaincy. They are mainly invited to meetings to arbitrate because people believe that through them the forefathers speak. They derive their authority from the ancestral spirits. *Ambuya* Chanaka, the woman spirit medium of Makopa, was the most respected and highest of the spirit mediums of Mutema chieftaincy. However, the other spirit mediums of ancestral chiefs are, except for one, all women (see Table 6.1). 'Women are lucky', said Semwayo in response to a question as to why most of the spirit mediums were women<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> In other Shona groups, for example the Kore-Kore Shona, spirit mediums of royal ancestral spirits were mainly men and the mediums of family ancestors were also said to be mainly men (see Lan, 1985; Vijfhuizen, 1997).

'because they are liked by ancestors. Makopa is not a woman, but Makopa himself comes through a woman. We have to pay her for staying with our forefather. That woman works a lot on our behalf. If any woman becomes possessed by our spirit, then we have to honour that woman. It is much better that women are spirit mediums, because they don't boast and are not proud of themselves and they can keep secrets very well'.

But what do women spirit mediums, apart from status, benefit from that important job? *Ambuya* Chanaka, the woman spirit medium of Makopa, explained that the chiefs never came to her place to offer her a gift, whereas Europeans used to offer her gifts. Maybe therefore chiefs like to work with women as mediums, because women do not demand to be rewarded. It was said that men as spirit mediums usually requested gifts and beer. So it appears that these women spirit mediums receive few material benefits. The woman spirit medium of Makopa explained:

'Others would not be happy if I were offered gifts. They would say she is going to be rich. But mind you, you are not giving me, you give the spirit, so that the spirit will be happy and do good work'.

She may thus receive a gift once in a while from the people she assists. On the other hand, the consultations and visits of chiefs and other people to her place, also implies costs for her. For example, Mapipana took the pot of tea from the fire and then requested tea. *Ambuya* Chanaka, not yet possessed of Makopa, gave him tea and bread. He said that he did not want a lot of bread, but she gave him a lot. Semwayo later joked about it saying: 'You Mapipana, you said you did not want a lot of bread but you finished everything'.

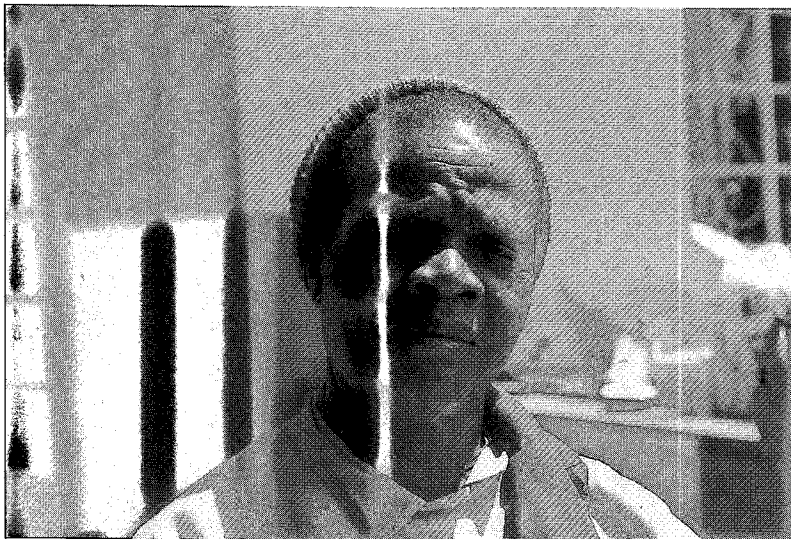
With the new law, chiefs will be paid for their court work, but the women spirit mediums will most likely continue to arbitrate and give advices for free. Thus the women spirit mediums incur material costs but the benefits are mainly non-material - status, respect and the ability to wield power. Lan (1985: 138-139) explains that 'Both chief and medium derive their political authority from the royal ancestors - the chief because he is descended from him, the medium because he is possessed by him'.

Even when the woman spirit medium of Makopa is not possessed, she is an enormously respected woman and has a considerable status. She maintains her authority also when she is not possessed. When she is invited to meetings and before she becomes possessed, all chiefs and other people come to greet her by kneeling down and saying, '*Baba ndiwe*' (you are the father). Bourdillon (1987a: 123) confirms this. 'Although a clear distinction is made in principle between the spirit and the host, in the case of important mediums the medium is normally called by the name of the spirit and receives, even when not possessed, the respect due to the spirit'. Fry (1976: 36) says the same. 'Mediums do enjoy a considerable social prestige even when out of trance'. Hence the woman herself is an authority and is able to wield power, as emerged from the advisory and arbitrating sessions. She, as the medium, is able to dismiss a troublesome chief. She will not arrange that through one of the chiefs who consults her, but by organising a public meeting where she will dismiss the chief herself. People will accept that, because they believe that it is the ancestral spirit of Makopa who took that decision. After that the chiefs will inform the government officials at District level. How does the woman spirit medium herself, assess her importance?

Zvavakura is her natal family name. Her married name is Chanaka, though she is usually called Makopa, i.e. the royal ancestral spirit of whom she is the medium. She is about to be 60 years old and she became a medium when she was a child. *Ambuya* Chanaka explained: 'Before I got married, when I was very young, I became possessed (*kumuka*, lit. to wake up). When I bore my children (4 daughters, 4 sons) I already had the spirit on me. I saw five Paramount chiefs installed. I started to be possessed when Mwatuma was alive and then came Gadzai and then Mwadzongonya and then Fred Mwanema and now there is

Siwonani Joseph Philimon Mwatuma Mutema. I witnessed all five when I was possessed by Makopa'.

Photo 6.3: *Ambuya Chanaka*, the woman spirit medium of Makopa



She is thus a woman of enormous experience. I asked her if she rules (*kutonga*) the chieftaincy along with the chiefs. 'Yes', she said, but the chief's rule first:

'Then, if they fail they come here where the ancestors are'<sup>17</sup>. The chiefs will come here to ask Makopa to do what they cannot do (*kutonga*) well themselves. They come often to Makopa but they do not listen well. They will use Makopa and then say to the people that Makopa said it. The chiefs are the ones able to rule. I cannot say I rule. I don't know myself. It is Makopa who is speaking to his children. I cannot say to myself I am very important. My importance is something conferred by others. You can see how the people of Mutema respect you and me can ask them how it is with me? Does she help you in this area? Even when the war started I was here, with another female medium called Mwandeka. The black people wanted to fight the Whites to get their country back. We were taken during the middle of the night to accompany the children who wanted to cross the border to Mozambique to be trained to fight in the war. But when the war was finished, the government did not come back here, to inform us that the war was over and the country was now in the hands of the Blacks'.

The woman spirit medium does not want to praise herself, but I have seen and heard that she is an enormously respected woman. She is herself also aware of her importance in the chieftaincy. But she hesitates to emphasize that importance. Maybe she is also conscious of the fact that she is used by the chiefs and the government. They use her when they say to the people 'Makopa said it'. Chiefs and government officials can strategically use or manipulate her advice in the way it suits them best. This is perhaps one reason she plays down her role as a ruler (*mutongi*), because things are not always ruled or settled and organised according to Makopa's advice and wishes. I come back to this issue in the conclusion of this chapter. But first let us explore the rain issue.

<sup>17</sup> *eehe vanotonga kutanga madzimambo; chavanonga watadza vanouya kuno kune vadzimu.*

## 6.4 WHO CAN LET IT RAIN?

During my fieldwork rain emerged as a particularly important phenomenon in disputes or power struggles (Vijfhuizen, 1997). The woman spirit medium of Makopa refers to rain in her arbitrating sessions, but it was only later that I understood the association between power struggles and rain. Lan (1985:171) says 'whose ancestors bring the rain, own the land'. This belief was used in the power struggles in Manesa village between Manesa and Mutigwe. But the association between rainmaking and ownership of land also emerged as an issue in the power struggles between different Ndaus chieftaincies, for example, between Mutema and Musikavanhu. In this section I explore that Mutema, through historical reconstructions, claims to be the legitimate authority of the approximately ten different Ndaus chieftaincies. However, Musikavanhu is also an authority.

### Power struggles between Mutema and Musikavanhu

The Ndaus-Shona group embraces different chieftaincies, Muwushu, Saungweme, Saurombe, Mafusi, Mapungwana, Ngorima, Mutambara, Garahwa, Mutema and Musikavanhu (Rennie, 1973: 89). All have their own territory (*nyika*) to rule in the South-East of Zimbabwe (Chipingwe District). The chieftaincies within the Ndaus group distinguish themselves by totemic clans (*mutupo*; pl: *mitupo*). The totem of Mutema is cattle (*mombe*). Cattle has sub-clans (*chidao*; pl: *zvidao*) and as I explained in Chapter 2, the cattle sub-clans are for example leg (*gumbo*) and heart (*mwoyo*). The cattle-heart (in Ndaus called *chirandu*) is the totem of the Mutema chiefs.

In the past, but also today, chiefs have been involved in power struggles over leadership. Shiriyedenga was the first Paramount chief of the Mutema chieftaincy. He left the big Varozvi kingdom around 1650 and established Mutema chieftaincy in the South Eastern part of Zimbabwe (now Chipingwe District) (see Meredith, 1903; Rennie, 1973). Mutema chieftaincy today (1997) had a total of 19 Paramount chiefs (see appendix 10 and Vijfhuizen and Makora, forthcoming). Makopa was the tenth Mutema Paramount and is the royal ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*)<sup>18</sup> worshipped by the whole Mutema chieftaincy. Semwayo explained that during and before his rule people lived more or less in peace, which is perhaps why Makopa is regarded as the highest spirit. After his death many conflicts over leadership occurred including a civil war between subchief Chikwanda and his brother Saurozvi who competed to become Paramount chief (Meredith, 1903). Chikwanda was killed and Saurozvi became the Paramount chief (11th). During his rule the land was invaded by the Shangaan in 1830, who established the Gaza state<sup>19</sup>. Saurozvi (11th) was succeeded by Matsikachando (12th), who found the Shangaan rule too severe and fled with all his people to Gutu, where he

<sup>18</sup> The several Shona groups use different concepts for royal ancestral spirit. In Ndaus chieftaincies the royal ancestral spirit is referred to as *mudzimu* (spirit). A *svikiro* is a spirit medium. David Lan (1985) who carried out his study among the Kore-kore Shona group, used the concept *Mhondoro* to refer to royal ancestral spirits. He distinguished Mhondoro from *mudzimu*, the (family) ancestral spirits. Bourdillon (1987: 253-254) wrote: Among the Karanga, the name *mhondoro* is not normally used for chiefly spirits. In central Shona country, the spirit head of any large family who comes out in a medium is called *mhondoro*, but in the north it is very rare.

<sup>19</sup> Rennie (1973) explained that the Gaza state was formed by a breakaway movement of Natal Nguni people from the Zulu state of Shaka. Between 1821 and 1831 the founder of the Gaza state, Soshangane, moved North with his followers (see Rennie, 1973: 135-165).

died. Matsikachando was succeeded by Munodani (13th), who led the people back in 1850 (Meredith, 1903: 339)<sup>20</sup>.

Meredith writes that Mutema was the first to establish his chieftaincy (1678; appendix 10) and sent his younger brother Nyakuvimba to another area. Nyakuvimba, then established the Musikavanhu chieftaincy. Mutema chiefs today claim that they were the first in the Ndau area, and therefore they perceive themselves as the founder of all the Ndau chieftaincies and authority of all the Paramount chiefs. According to the Mutema chiefs, Ndau chieftaincies are distinguished by totemic clans, but they originate from one Mutema. If Mutema was the first, and the founder of the Ndau chieftaincies, then Mutema's ancestors are the rain bringers and owners of the land. Various Mutema chiefs reconstruct history in such a way that depicts Mutema as the rainbringer. For example, village head Manesa explained that chief Saurozvi (11th Paramount, who succeeded Makopa) was the first Paramount to be named Mutema. The different chiefs have always been in competition with each other especially over the nomination of a Paramount chief. Saurozvi and his brother Chikwanda also had such a conflict, and the brother chased Saurozvi away from the chieftaincy. Then it did not rain for years and people begged Saurozvi to come back and on his return he killed his brother. When he arrived in his chieftaincy, immediately dark clouds gathered in the sky. Then he took a big sword, pointed to the sky and symbolically cut the clouds open. It started to rain. Therefore this chief Saurozvi was named Mutema, after *kutema*, to cut, or *mutemi*, cutter, of clouds in this context. The meaning of Mutema can also be derived from *tema*, meaning black, which could refer to black clouds. Thus the name refers to the belief that Mutema's ancestors had the power to let it rain by a certain ritual. Mutema can thus be seen as the authority among all Ndau chieftaincies and thus the owners of the land.

However, Musikavanhu chieftaincy also appeared to be important in rain bringing. Rennie (1973: 65-69) argues that:

'Musikavanhu chieftaincy was established by Nyakuvimba, the younger brother of Shiriyedenga<sup>21</sup> (the founder of Mutema). Traditional history recounted that Nyakuvimba and his sister Chapo stole the ritual objects for rain bringing from the Varozvi king. Fleeing with it he was killed, but the rain medicine was given from successor to successor. Therefore Musikavanhu was the rain-bringing specialist for the whole Ndau area.'

Elsewhere, Rennie (1979: 257) maintains that Nyakuvimba was the first to arrive in the area, founded the chieftaincy and he was the important rainmaker. However, he explains (1979: 258) that:

'in the late seventeenth century.... The Mutema group invaded the area. The cult centre was attacked... and moved from its old cave centre in the Sabi valley to the highlands South of Mutema. Mutema became a rain-bringing chieftaincy with its own political territory.'

Semwayo, an important Mutema chief, gave another account explaining how both Ndau chieftaincies became important in association to rain:

'A Mutema Paramount married a Musikavanhu woman and she learned how to make the rain and then ran away. You see, a man cannot do anything in the house without his wife knowing it. She must know how to do it also. She is the wife. But when troubles come

<sup>20</sup> The Gaza state was defeated by the Portuguese between 1895 and 1897. The British and the White farmers from South Africa arrived around 1890. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) arrived between 1890 and 1935 (Rennie, 1973). That means that Mutema chieftaincy was invaded over a long period of time, first by the Shangaan people for 50 years and immediately thereafter by the Whites.

<sup>21</sup> Semwayo doubted whether the founder of Musikavanhu chieftaincy was a brother of Shiriyedenga.

the wife says 'I am going' and she leaves her homestead. She ran away with the wisdom of the medicine (*mushonga*), because a husband and a wife know each other's secrets'.

Musikavanhu thus obtained rainmaking powers, but Semwayo argued that Musikavanhu stole the power from Mutema. However, according to Rennie's account, the ancestors of Musikavanhu bring the rain. That would imply that the Musikavanhu are the owners of the land and that Musikavanhu can be perceived as the authority among all Ndaue chieftaincies. That is probably why Semwayo, the Mutema chief, strongly disagreed when I explained to him what Rennie had written. 'NO, NO, NO' he adamantly declared. 'It was the wife of Mutema who ran away with the secrets of rain. The Musikavanhu people got that wisdom from us'. So Mutema had the rainmaking power, and it seems that they have lost it to Musikavanhu. But Semwayo explained that the Mutema people still have some knowledge, but that they cannot do the rainmaking ceremonies alone in times of drought. Then Mutema has to work together with Musikavanhu, whom Mutema perceives as their wives, because it was a Musikavanhu woman who married a Mutema chief and she ran away with the rainmaking power. Musikavanhu is needed, as Semwayo pointed out: 'if we throw away our wives, things will not go well for us. A wife has power inside the house. We cannot do the rainmaking ourselves, without the wives'<sup>22</sup>.

Village head Manesa was of the opinion that the wife of Shiriyedenga did not steal, but that she learned something and that Mutema still has the powers. The way he expressed it, is how people in general perceive it, namely that ancestors have the strength to move the clouds. He said 'Mutema was the first to move the clouds and then Musikavanhu followed him in moving the clouds, and then the clouds meet'. Mutema and Musikavanhu chiefs are thus both seen as authorities among the approximately ten Ndaue chieftaincies in the South East of Zimbabwe.

## Two rightful authorities among the Ndaue chieftaincies

Worshipping of both wind and rain is important for good rainfall. The sacred forest near Ngaone village is called Hadowe. That is where the wind is worshipped. Mutema pays homage to the wind on its own. In times of drought the worshipping of rain is done together with Musikavanhu. It is the Mutema chiefs who visit Musikavanhu. However, before going to Musikavanhu, these representatives of Mutema chieftaincy, including the representatives of all the other Ndaue chieftaincies, visit the spirit medium of Makopa. Semwayo perceived the spirit medium of Makopa as the headquarters for foreseeing and foretelling and selecting people to take the messages to the female spirit medium of Musikavanhu who has the rainmaking power. In times of drought, Musikavanhu cannot make it raining without the preparations of Mutema. They need to co-operate. Thus, based on the practices related to rainmaking, we can conclude that the ancestors of both chieftaincies are believed to bring the rain and own the land.

The constructions of Rennie (1973) and the Mutema chiefs in my research differ. Most likely, because Rennie is concerned with revealing the perceptions of the Musikavanhu chiefs<sup>23</sup>. As Beach (1994: 248-252) points out,

'Oral traditions are preserved for the benefit of the people of the community and not for the outsider (researcher). It is often to prove an internal point, as for example the claim to leadership or to strengthen a position. Oral traditions are not strictly factual accounts, though they often relate to something factual in the past. They contain a message'.

<sup>22</sup> That is not only related to rainmaking. Semwayo explained that if the chiefs travel together, the Musikavanhu chief is supposed to make the bed for the Mutema chief.

<sup>23</sup> Although his book is a historical account that deals with the Ndaue chieftaincies in general, which is based on an impressive literature review and archival work, his case studies are derived from his specific chieftaincy, Musikavanhu.



Beach argues that oral traditions are there for the benefit of the people. I do not know what these benefits exactly are, but I think that an understanding of certain positions and subsequently of authorities can be beneficial for the survival of the chieftaincy, for people, but also for outsiders. In the case of the power struggle between Mutema and Musikavanhu we saw that both Musikavanhu and Mutema chiefs aim to reconstruct their history in such a way as to claim to be the most important authority among the authorities of all Ndauchieftaincies in the South East of Zimbabwe. Let us now draw some conclusions from this chapter.

## 6.5 POWER STRUGGLES TO MAINTAIN POSITIONS: A CONCLUSION

Again, in this conclusion I want to explore how social actors, including spirit mediums, use, transform and manipulate certain ideologies, rules, norms and values in order to maintain their 'domains' and 'boundaries' from which they derive authority and wield power. Women spirit mediums emerge as arbiters and advisors within the villages and chieftaincy, and as mediators and power brokers between the different but overlapping worlds of chiefs and government.

### Rightful authorities: domains and boundaries

The power struggles between Manesa and Mutigwe resemble the power struggles between Mutema and Musikavanhu. Both make claims to land by referring to the ancestors. Beliefs are reproduced. Those who are first to arrive in a certain territory are the owners of the land and the rightful authorities, because it is believed that their ancestors bring the rain. Based on those beliefs, Mutigwe is the actual owner of the land. If he is not recognised as an authority by giving him homesteads to look after, then that serves as an explanation for the lack of rain in Manesa village. Villarreal (1994: 214) also argues that

'Interpretation of history is important in accounts. Rights to land were legitimated through demarcation of who had suffered in struggles for it, and evaluations of the adequacy of particular policies were measured against accounts of what these had been in the past. Within particular domains 'the correct' interpretation of history was negotiated in order to evaluate present experiences and future expectations'.

Village head Manesa first maintained to outsiders like me, that the sacred place near Manesa village was his. That would mean that it was also his ancestors. That claim must be seen as a justification for the ownership of the village. Thus sacred rules and sacred places are factors to manipulate. That could also be a reason for their existence. Although it appeared that the sacred place was not Manesa's, but Mutigwe's, Manesa claimed his right to be an owner of the village, because he was sent by Makopa. But Mutigwe was the first, and therefore the woman spirit medium of Makopa suggested that Mutigwe also be made a kraalhead. The accounts of Manesa-Mutigwe and Mutema-Musikavanhu show how both, through historical reconstructions, claim to be the rightful authority to give legitimacy to their claims for power. Thus my analysis shows what Villarreal argued (1994: 214), i.e. that power is not localised in institutions or sovereigns, but takes form through the use of strategies, tactics and techniques. She argues (1994: 203) that 'Exploring the social construction of meaning, then, reveals the messiness of power processes. A power wielder is also influenced by myths, language and symbols'. Village head Manesa is actually the power wielder, also because the village carries his name. He allocates the land. Mutigwe resists by approaching Semwayo, and together they visit the spirit medium of Makopa who suggests that Manesa should give some of the homesteads to Mutigwe. He delays this allocation, which might be seen as a strategy to maintain his position.

Another power struggle in Manesa village is between the resettled and the non-resettled chiefs. The non-resettled chiefs maintain that there are no boundaries in the village and the resettled chiefs thus have no area and thus less influence among the chiefs. However, villagers recognise boundaries in the village. When they shift from one kraalhead's area to another they are obliged to pay in cash or kind (see chapter three). The non-resettled chiefs maintain that 1) the resettled chiefs have no area, only homesteads in Manesa village; 2) they have no ancestral worshipping places; 3) they have no land to allocate; and 4) if they make problems they should go back to where they came from. They maintain such a stance to ensure their own domains of activities from which they derive authority and power. Villarreal (1994:223) explains that 'the power wielder has to rely on the actions of others who acknowledge its existence'. The resettled chiefs acknowledge the power of the non-resettled chiefs, and admit that they have two homes, i.e. in Manesa village and where their forefathers are buried. The resettled chiefs would claim that they have had to yield power to the non-resettled chiefs. But subordination, as Villarreal argues (1994:224)

'does not imply a zero-sum process whereby those who yield are necessarily powerless. If power is fluid and constantly negotiated, those wielding power also need to subordinate themselves to discourses, social beliefs and the wills of others. Thus, subordination cannot be exclusively attributed to the lower strata of society, to marginalised groups, or to the 'losers'. In a word: power relations also necessitate the yielding of power by the power wielder'.

Chiefs are certainly not lower strata. They belong to the ruling elite. The resettled kraalheads can wield power in other domains than those of non-resettled chiefs. For example, the resettled chief Nemashapa wields power in the context of Madzadza worshipping place and in the area where he originally comes from.

The councillor and chiefs are also involved in continuous power struggles. Neither chiefs nor Agritex officials want the councillor involved in their domains of activities because he threatens their authority in those domains. According to them the councillor should 'stick to' his own domain of activities, to development activities financed by government. But the councillor is interested in expanding his domain of authority likewise.

Struggles are rooted in wanting to be acknowledged as the legitimate authority in practice and being able to wield power accordingly. That is the case in the village (Manesa-Mutigwe), in the ward (councillor-chiefs), in the irrigation scheme (Agritex-councillor), in places in the chieftaincy (Madzadza) and between chieftaincies (Mutema-Musikavanhu) and between members of political parties in the chieftaincy. As a matter of fact, social actors struggle over boundaries, which are physical, symbolic, political and ritual. Physical boundaries are to a certain extent clear. For example, the ward of the councillor, the village of Manesa, the chieftaincy of Mutema and Musikavanhu, the irrigation scheme of Agritex, the places of the resettled chiefs. But these physical boundaries already show that domains also intersect. For example, a ward is in a chieftaincy and a village is in a ward. Boundaries confine people, but also establish relations between differently bounded groups. Then in these physically bounded areas, different social actors are busy maintaining their domains of activities and authority. These boundaries between domains of activities are symbolic, political and ritual. For example, the chiefs derive authority from land allocation, ancestral spirits through the spirit mediums, worshipping for the rains, and from their courts. To maintain their authority and ability to wield power they need to safeguard those domains and not allow others, like the government (e.g. councillor and Agritex), to encroach upon them and threaten their position. We have seen that there are discrepancies in values, interests, knowledge and power between the different domains of the different social actors. Long (1989: 232) defines the meeting of these differences as interfaces, those points of 'discontinuities in social life, which typically occur at points where different, and often conflicting, 'life-worlds' or social fields intersect'.

In this chapter we have dealt with the 'political field' in village and chieftaincy and with specific domains in this field. It is a field in which domains indeed struggle and vie for

authority and where attempts are made to take over some of the decision-making processes in other 'domains'. However, these domains in the political field also complement each other. Domains intersect and throw up discontinuities but they also throw up complementarities and shared interests. For example, the councillor organises development activities in the area, boreholes, schools etc. Agritex organises the irrigation schemes and chiefs organise their courts and spheres of worship and spirit mediums. Their shared interests are the survival of their positions and to make a better living (see for both aspects chapter 8) for themselves and the people in the chieftaincy. Spirit mediums help also to fulfil those interests.

### **A woman spirit medium as power broker**

Chiefs in the chieftaincy create and maintain their own world or domains of activities, also by reproducing certain beliefs. Their world is continuously under threat from government whose officials become authorities in the area and also claim the land is theirs. Chiefs, however, will not give up their ownership of the land since it gives them their authority and power. The land is embedded in the ideological construction of 'ancestors-rain-land'. Chiefs do not want to involve councillors in such domains. They work through spirit mediums through whom chiefs and people believe their forefathers, who own the land and bring the rain, speak. What the forefathers say must be respected. Thus spirit mediums remain very important. The spirit mediums derive their authority from the ancestral spirits. This is an interesting phenomenon, namely that spirits embodied in mediums have agency, which as Long explains (1997: 241) 'is how actors acquire and sustain appropriate forms of 'knowledgeability' and 'capability' in carrying out their social actions; and how they enrol others in the 'projects' they develop'.

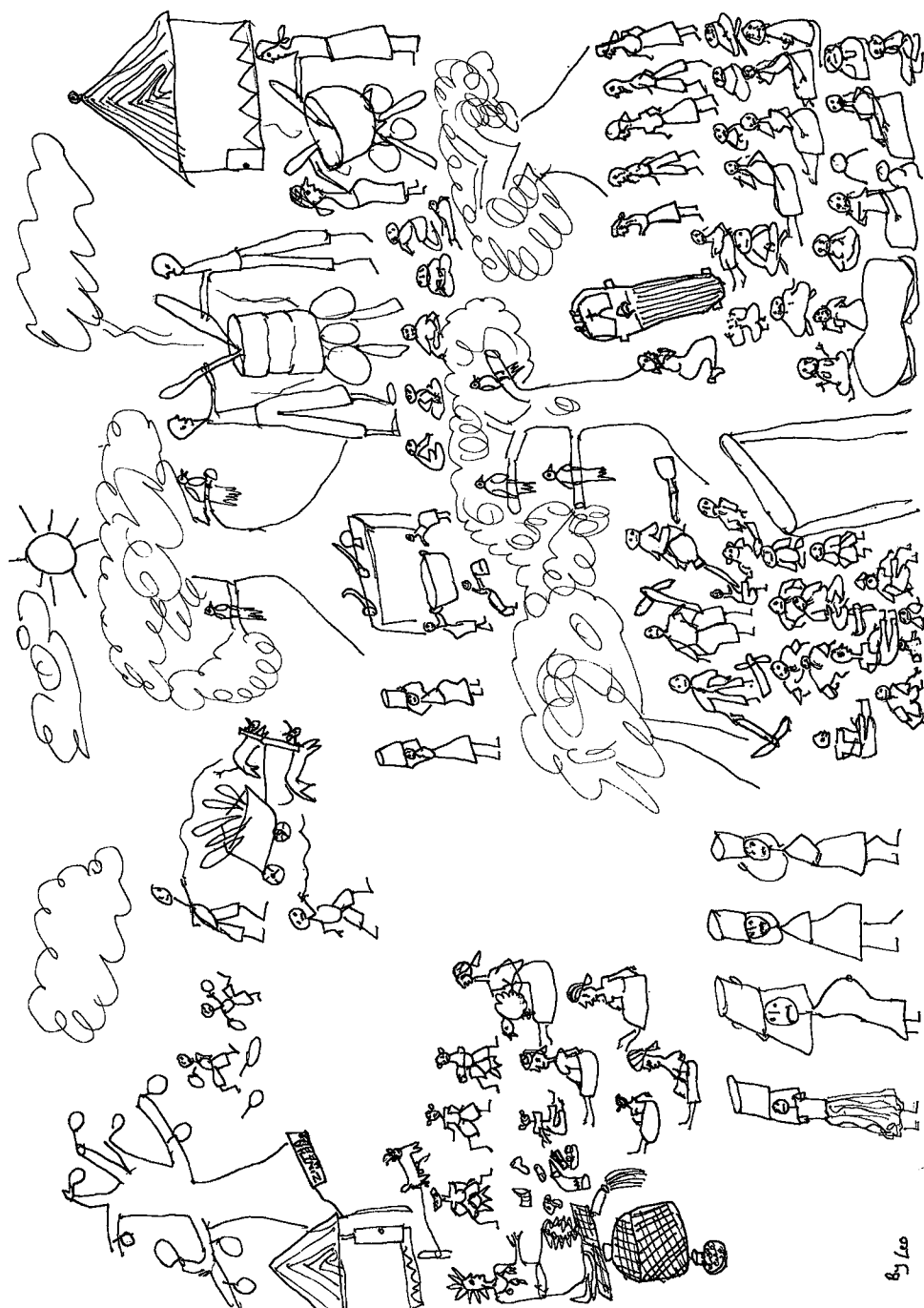
The important mediums are women among the Ndau, and thus women are the mediums of strategic agency. And it is the chiefs who strategically include the spirit mediums in their activities in the chieftaincy. By doing so they maintain their own world. They regularly consult the spirit medium and invite her to important meetings to advise and arbitrate. However, as the spirit medium herself indicated and as I have seen for myself, chiefs manipulate their position as communicators with the spirit medium. They use her advice in the way it suits them best. When the chiefs visit the spirit medium, she is clearly the authority and the chiefs are the power yielders in that context. But in other contexts chiefs are power wielders and use to their advantage their position as the communicators of what the spirit medium offers.

The woman medium of Makopa emerges as a strategic actor. She tries to combine and intertwine government and chieftaincy discourses. The chiefs want to abandon the councillor, but the spirit medium knows that such things cannot be done. The woman spirit medium of Makopa, Semwayo Mwaneseni and Julius Mapipana can be perceived as gatekeepers since they are responsible for the ancestral world. Consulting ancestral spirits has the advantage that conflicts and struggles are communicated. People believe in spirit possession and that spirits talk through this woman. Chiefs say that they are led by 'father Makopa' who brings the rain and owns the land. It is believed that power lies with the ancestors. But we could also conclude that Mutema chieftaincy is looked after by a clever woman who takes the most difficult decisions. In society it is sometimes difficult to take decisions and even more difficult to declare the truth. Truth speakers are often threatened. Therefore, clear decisions are taken by a spirit medium on which chiefs and people can rely. The spirit is responsible for the truth and the woman herself remains unthreatened. Actually the woman spirit medium is the spokeswoman for the chieftaincy and represents the interests of the chiefs. She is an authority, an important mediator and arbiter, who honestly and strategically and with a lot of experience, intertwines different discourses and domains. Thus the woman spirit medium can be perceived as a power broker (Villarreal, 1994: 215) who

'drew upon shared ideas, emotions and alliances to win the struggles over definitions

and to enrol others in their strategies. Whilst operating as 'linkage people' between domains, they often act[ed] as 'keepers' within them. To carry out their strategies successfully, they need[ed] to take into account others' points of view, sentiments and beliefs; they need[ed] to 'manage' these perceptions to enrol them, if possible, in their strategies'.

This woman is a spirit medium, i.e. a medium between ancestors and chiefs. But she is also a mediator between government officials and chiefs. Spirit mediums, chiefs and government officials use, manipulate and transform rules, values, norms and ideas in practice and thereby shape practice. They do so to maintain their own worlds, which become intertwined with those of others who wield power and authority. The woman spirit medium of the chieftaincy emerges as a power broker and mediator between the different worlds of chiefs and government, thus assisting both government officials and chiefs in maintaining their worlds. The spirit medium herself is also a stakeholder. It is also in her own interests to see the world of the ancestors maintained. It is important also that chiefs strategically use spirit mediums to reproduce, use and transform beliefs about spirits (see next chapter 7). That is one of the reasons why the chiefs want their own Paramount chief of the ancestors, i.e. to maintain their world or domains of activities. The government chose the Paramount chief. These two worlds exist alongside each other, but also intertwine (see Vijfhuizen and Makora, forthcoming). Interventions by government officials mean change. But transformation of society does not necessarily mean that the chieftaincy apparatus, or as some call it 'the traditional structure', will cease to exist. On the contrary, the chief's hierarchy and apparatus could also be enforced because chiefs and spirit mediums are important social actors for strategically interlinking these different worlds of different rules, values, norms and ideologies.



## CHAPTER 7

### DEFINING SPIRITS AND CONTROLLING WOMEN

Ndau women and men believe that spirits, ancestral spirits and other good or bad spirits, influence their lives, despite their neglect by the churches. Some churches, however, as the Ndau themselves, strategically combine different beliefs, ancestral spirits and God, for example, healing spirits and hospitals, and they use the different beliefs and practices to seek comfort, to understand, be healed, take revenge and to control. This chapter, concentrates on how social actors strategically define spirits and use, reproduce and manipulate spirit and witchcraft beliefs to explain and understand death and illness and achieve control of resources and other social actors, especially women<sup>1</sup>. Their strategic use and usefulness are perhaps the reason why such beliefs are not disappearing.

In the first section I explore good spirits. Spirits are perceived to be good when they protect, assist and heal. They must therefore be worshipped or honoured by offering them something (*kupira*), usually beer. Spirit worship is practised both by women and men.

Section two deals with bad spirits. Two bad spirits are distinguished, i.e. *ngozi* and *bvuri*. A *ngozi* is perceived as the angry revengeful spirit of an innocent person killed. When such a spirit is cast upon another innocent person by the person guilty of the killing it is referred to as a *bvuri*, a 'cast' spirit. Women and men believe that a spirit is bad when it kills or causes illness. I explore four cases of bad spirits, to show how they, and witchcraft beliefs are used by individuals in their search for explanations about death and misfortune. Furthermore, I show how women are often the accused, and how this is a mechanism of control. The first case is about the death of three men. The second is a case of common witchcraft, i.e. the use of *ngozi* and *bvuri*. The third is about a spirit house (of a *ngozi*), and the fourth explores the use of *bvuri* and shows how men might accuse women of having bad spirits in order to control land. The cases are used to explore witchcraft from a gender perspective. In all the cases, African doctors, *n'anga*, emerge as important social actors.

In section three, I briefly review the profession of and importance of these African doctors or *n'anga*. I argue that *n'anga* are important arbitrators in conflicts, but also strategically use their profession to achieve their own interests to make a living. Their clients endeavour to use them in their strategies to harm and control each other. The conclusion focuses on how social actors use spirit and witchcraft beliefs in practice<sup>2</sup>.

#### 7.1 GOOD SPIRITS: HEALING AND PROTECTION

I explain first which spirits are perceived to be good. Then I explore briefly the worshipping of family ancestors.

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<sup>1</sup> That is the focus of this chapter, but I do not deny that ceremonies and beliefs in spirits are of help and provide comfort in difficult situations such as illness, death and conflicts.

<sup>2</sup> This is a methodological note. While carrying out the research the importance of spirits in life emerged through the many case studies, situational analysis, in-depth interviews, court cases and checklists. I also studied several *kurova guva* ceremonies (section 2) and witchcraft cases (section 2). Based on such qualitative material I used checklists to understand how women (20) and men (20) define and perceive specific spirits, how they perceive witchcraft (section 2) and the perceptions about *n'anga* (section 3). After that I conducted in depth interviews and group discussions based on the results of the checklists. I also visited *n'anga* and prophets on several occasions with people who were ill and had in depth interviews with *n'anga*.

## Good spirits

A family ancestral spirit is called a *mudzimu* (pl: *vadzimu*). *Vadzimu* may be *ziteteguru* (great aunts) or *zibabaguru* (great (grand) fathers) and are defined by both women and men as *dzinza* or patrikin who die and then 'wake up' (*kumuka*) in a relative or child in the *dzinza*, and use them as their medium for helping *dzinza* members and assisting them to plan things. A relative used as a medium by a *mudzimu* becomes a *n'anga*, who is able to heal and solve problems in the family. People say that the *n'anga* of family ancestors can only do good. This is the first type of *n'anga* distinguished. Two other types of *n'anga* were also distinguished, those who heal and solve problems based on their own knowledge and skill as practitioners. They are not the medium of spirits. However, people regard *n'anga* who use only knowledge, as false *n'anga*. They believe that true *n'anga* are also spirit mediums.

The other *n'anga* discussed are the mediums of *mashavi* (sing. *shavi*<sup>3</sup>) spirits, who are alien or animal spirits. Bourdillon argues that:

'*Mashavi* are the spirits of strangers, who have died away from home, or the spirits of young unmarried individuals. Such spirits will not have been laid to rest with the usual funerary ceremonials and therefore wander around restlessly. Having no living descendants, they seek to express themselves by taking possession of unrelated persons. Sometimes a *shavi* is said to work through a medium to help him or her perform a particular task. A *shavi* spirit is believed to have powers such as those of healing. A person may have more than one *shavi* spirit. Of these, however, the healing spirit is regarded as the most powerful' (Bourdillon, 1987: 242-47).

*N'anga* are said to have *shavi* spirits, but an individual who is possessed of a *shavi* healing spirit tends to become a *n'anga*. Ndaou women and men see a *shavi* spirit as associated with those possessed of spirits that are good and can be inherited. In Manesa village, they mentioned four *mashavi*: *nzuzu*, *zvipunha*, *madzviti* and *zvirombo*.

1. *Nzuzu*, a mermaid, is the spirit of water and is regarded as a good spirit and must be honoured. A village chief said that a *nzuzu* can also live in the mountains and is taken by whirlwinds to a place with water. Whenever a borehole, pump or other water extracting mechanism is established, the place must first be blessed, to honour the mermaid who looks after such places.
2. *Zvipunha*, (sing: *chipunha*) are prayed to and worshipped for rain and the cultivation of crops. I attended a session to honour this spirit before the sowing of seeds. After harvesting, *zvipunha* are expected to be honoured again. While the *nzuzu* works through women and men, the *chipunha* spirit comes mainly through women and is therefore called a woman's spirit (*chipunha* means girl). People say that very few men are possessed of such a spirit.
3. The *madzviti* (sing: *dzviti*) appear to be spirits of Shangaan warriors. If a *n'anga* is possessed of that spirit s/he dresses like a warrior.
4. *Zvirombo* (sing: *chirombo*) are the spirits of animals and those possessed of such a spirit behave like animals. For example, one of the chiefly spirit mediums of the chieftaincy always roared like a lion when he was possessed.

In general, women say that both women and men have *shavi* spirits. Men say that it is mainly women who become possessed by them. Bourdillon (1987: 164) tells us that:

'A healing spirit is frequently a *shavi* spirit, who may pick an individual at random as a medium, but once accepted, will generally remain within the family. After some generations of *n'anga* possessed of the spirit, people may ignore the distinction between the *shavi* and the *mudzimu*, the personal spirit of a patrilineal ancestor. A *n'anga* who

<sup>3</sup> Ndaou say '*shavi*'; Zezuru and Kore-Kore say '*shave*'.

practices through the help of a family spirit (*mudzimu*) is thought to be more powerful than the host of a wandering *shavi* spirit.'

Gelfand (1973: 131) argues that the functions of a healing *shavi* spirit and a healing *mudzimu* spirit are the same and the Shona use the terms almost as synonymous. However, from my own experience among the Ndau-Shona, although some may not distinguish very rigidly between the practices of the *n'anga* used as the medium of a *mudzimu* and the *n'anga* possessed by a *shavi* spirit, *n'anga* themselves know the difference and regard ancestral spirits as the higher, more important and respected spirits. The *mudzimu* is perceived as more important because it has a much wider area to look after, that of a large *dzinza*. A *shavi* spirit has no such responsibility, it simply wanders. A *mudzimu* is generally perceived as doing only good and thus resembles a good *shavi* spirit. But people believe that there are also bad *shavi* spirits. Ancestral spirits need to be honoured, by offerings of beer to the ancestors for example. If ancestors are not honoured then people believe that they become angry and then resemble bad *shavi* spirits or *ngozi*. Let us now turn to the worshipping of family ancestors.

### Worshipping family ancestors

*Kurova guva* is a ceremony organised a year after the death of a person. It is a ceremony to bring home the person's spirit, seen as wandering in the countryside, 'the bush'. The spirit will then become an ancestral spirit and join other family ancestors in looking after and protecting the family and *dzinza*. The *kurova guva* ceremony among the Ndau usually lasts three days. The first day is for collecting money and consulting a *n'anga*. The second day is for the public hearings of who caused the death (see next section). The third day is for cementing the grave. *Kurova guva* literally means 'hitting the grave' and refers to its cementing. The three days are filled with dancing, honouring the spirits and beer drinking.

Bourdillon (1987: 209) states that '*kurova guva* is not usually performed for women'. However, among the Ndau-Shona it takes place for both sexes. A woman is usually buried in the place where she dies. If wives are buried at the place of their marriage and have children there, they become guardian spirits of the family. *Kurova guva*, by which the spirit becomes a family ancestor, is performed at the place of burial. We saw in Chapter 2 how money was paid for snuff (*fodya*) during bridewealth payments. The practice implied that the ancestral spirits (*vadzimu*) of wife and husband had a relationship together. Therefore, a woman as wife can be a spirit guardian of the family into which she marries. Likewise, however, a deceased woman as daughter will also protect her birth family. At the place where she settles on marriage, the descendants will worship her as *mai* and *ambuya* (mother and grandmother). At her place of birth her spirit will be worshipped by her descendants as *vatete*. Hence, it is believed that a deceased, married woman's spirit will protect two families.

Thus women and men worship their family ancestral spirits, their *vadzimu*. Two concepts are used for honouring or worshipping, namely *kudira* and *kupira*, which have different meanings. *Kudira* means that the name of a deceased person is given to an animal, bull or person. Thus an animal is given the person's name and from that time the bull etc. will carry the name of the deceased and will protect the people and animals in that homestead. After *kudira* is performed, the animal or person will be honoured and offered beer (*kupira*). The chief's family members have as their totem 'cattle' (*mombe*). A chief told me that everybody keeps a bull in their kraal to keep the family well. Such a bull has no reproduction purpose. Therefore he regarded the totem 'cattle' (*mombe*) as superior since people with a hippo or zebra totem will also keep a bull in their kraal. *Kupira* ancestors mean that offerings are made from time to time, so that the family ancestral spirits will guide, protect and assist them to solve problems. People said that ancestors need to be honoured by brewing beer once a year. After harvesting it is also expected to brew beer for the ancestors, to thank them. If ancestral spirits are not honoured, people believe they become angry and cause illness in the family.



Referring only to forefathers as ancestral spirits is a misnomer. Foremothers (*madziteteguru*) are also very important<sup>4</sup>. People often mentioned *madziteteguru* first and then *madzibaba* when they defined ancestral spirits (*vadzimu*). Some of those I spoke to were of the opinion that female ancestral spirits are the first to be approached when worshipping ancestors. The female spirits will communicate the messages to the male ancestral spirits. Or as a mother explained during the *kurova guva* of one of her sons:

‘My son was a married man. He had his own house. We (parents, brothers and sisters of the deceased) enter that house and worship (*kupira*) just by holding the *mukombe* (drinking vessel) and drinking beer. We start by worshipping the important *madzitetete*, then the *madzibaba* (fathers) and then the deceased’.

She indicated that the same ‘channel’ is followed in daily life. In a homestead a child will first approach its mother and she will approach the father. Women also worship ancestors. A *vatete* explained:

‘Whenever beer is brewed to worship the ancestors, men will not worship without women present. They will wait, because I am following after their dead fathers. If the beer is brewed to worship male spirits, then men will do the honouring. But if the *madziteteguru* are being worshipped I will do it myself’.

Thus she explains that both women and men need to be present when the ancestors are being worshipped and that women worship the deceased women after the men have worshipped the deceased men. A man present reacted:

‘The entry to the spirit world is through men and not through women. A man leads the way. But women brew beer. After worshipping we go to a *n’anga* to see if the spirits are satisfied. If a woman worshipped, the spirits might not be satisfied’.

What is clear is that both women and men perform important tasks in worshipping. Women brew beer and clap hands so that the messages will be heard and received by the ancestors. Both women and men communicate with the ancestral spirits, but in general, men will do the talking. I would argue that both women and men are indispensable in worshipping their ancestral spirits (Vijfhuizen, 1997).

## 7.2 BAD SPIRITS: ACCUSING AND EXPLANATIONS

Both women and men believe that a bad spirit is troubling them when they face death, illness and other misfortune. These bad spirit constructions could be perceived as explanations for the misfortune experienced. Nda women and men try to prevent and solve problems and therefore try to appease bad spirits. In their search for explanations, women tend to be the accused and thus controlled since their room to manoeuvre becomes severely restricted (see below). Such accusations usually occur in specific relationships. Often the daughter-in-law, i.e. the wife who married into the husband’s family, is suspected of being involved in the cause of death. Other relationships in which women are accused are conjugal relations (husband (H) and wife (W)); husband’s sister (HZ, *vatete*) and husband’s wife (HW); and between co-wives.

First let us look at the bad spirits recognised by women and men, and examine four cases of bad spirits. The first concerns the death of three men in which three daughters-in-law are accused. The next explores the cases of two *ngozi* (the angry revenging spirits of those killed). The first *ngozi-bvuri* case is perceived as a case of common witchcraft in which women are victimised and one woman is labelled a witch. The second *ngozi* case, a ‘house for a spirit’, is not perceived as a witchcraft case. A girl has to be married to the spirit. In the fourth case I show how the *bvuri* (bad spirit) is attributed to women. I argue that to accuse

<sup>4</sup> See Holleman (1974: 118), who also referred to the importance of maternal female ancestors.

wives of having bad spirits, can also serve as a strategy to control resources. Finally I explore witchcraft from a gender perspective. I examine the idea that witchcraft beliefs emerge from disputes and power struggles over health, wealth and love.

### Bad spirits

Ndau define the various bad spirits as *ngozi*, *bvuri*, *mweya*, and *mhepo*. *Ngozi* are described by women and men as the spirits of those killed, who 'wake up' to take revenge (*kupfuka*) on the person or family who killed them. People believe that *ngozi* can only be stopped from taking revenge by the guilty person or family compensating or appeasing (*kuripa*) the spirit. *Ngozi* can be spirits of related or unrelated persons. A woman told me that every homestead has *ngozi*. This means that in every *dzinza* there are members suspected of killing a relative or stranger, past or present, whose spirit wants revenge or compensation because of their innocence. The *ngozi* of a stranger is called *chikwambo*. Thus, when people define spirits as *ngozi*, it usually means they know the background of the spirit and the specific issues involved in the killing. The *ngozi* is actually perceived by women and men as a family spirit, because the family who once killed has to solve the problem.

Ndau women and men define a *bvuri* (lit. shadow, pl: *mabvuri*), as the spirit of a dead person that has been cast or sent (*kutorwa nekuiswa*) by the killer (*muroyi* or witch) to inhabit and cause trouble to another person who is innocent of the crime. People explain that *mabvuri* are thus different from *mashavi* and *ngozi*. They believe that *mashavi* are inherited and have chosen for themselves the person who will be their medium. When the term *ngozi* is used it means that the spirit is known to people and can be identified. People define a spirit as *bvuri* when they do not know the background of the spirit. They believe such a spirit is sent by *varoyi* (killers or witches) to possess the innocent. When people say the troubling spirit is not ours, then it is a *bvuri*. When they say the spirit is ours, then it is *ngozi*. Both women and men are of the opinion that it is women who are the recipients of *bvuri*. The spirit possesses a girl who does not know that she has the spirit until the spirit starts to talk and make claims to be compensated (see below). *Mweya* is also perceived as the spirit of a dead person and many women and men make no distinction between *bvuri* and *mweya*. *Mhepo* (literally wind) is seen as the practice of a *n'anga* or witch who sends bad spirits to other people. It is believed that they burn medicine or use mirrors so that the wind or *mhepo* blows to the person they want to harm or kill. Older people explained that in the past only *mhepo* was known and not *mabvuri*.

The following sequence was constructed to clarify the work of witches and the believed origin of bad spirits. A witch or *n'anga* sends a bad wind (*mhepo*) with a spirit (*mweya*) to a certain person and the person dies. The person thus killed becomes an angry revenging spirit (*ngozi*) because s/he was killed. The *ngozi* will go to the witch or *n'anga* and demand to be compensated (*kuripa*). That has to be done by offering beer, money and often a girl. If the killer refuses to make such offerings and wants to free him or herself from the *ngozi* then s/he will send or transfer (*kudira*) the angry spirit to an animal, or onto money, which s/he throws somewhere. The spirit will then settle on the person who picks up the money or who slaughters the animal and eats the meat. The family defines this received spirit as *bvuri*, because they do not know the background of the spirit. People who are inhabited by a *bvuri* become sick and troubled and will consult *n'anga*. The *n'anga* will make the *bvuri* talk and it will become clear who the killer was. The *n'anga* can re-transfer the *bvuri* to money, which can then be thrown back into the homestead of the killer or the killer will be given the money by the *n'anga*. Then the killer will have to compensate the spirit (*kuripa*). Let us now explore the first bad spirit case.

### Confessing to be discharged

Ndau women and men believe that social actors are able to break through the ancestral spirits' protection of a person. Thus, death is perceived to have a combination of causes: viruses, bacteria or accidents, and also people's actions. Fry (1976: 105) argues that:

'beliefs in ancestor spirits and witches do not preclude beliefs in atoms and germs; they complement each other because they answer different questions of an existential nature. Epistemologically, there is no reason why both belief systems should not go hand in hand'.

Indeed, as I will argue, people combine beliefs in practice. They do this for different purposes, but in this first bad spirit case those concerned were seeking explanations for a death. When someone dies, usually, the relatives of the deceased will immediately visit a *n'anga* to consult the spirits. This, however, is in private, and only for the family to know who caused the death and to receive medicine that can be sprinkled on the goods of the deceased before they are inherited, distributed among the relatives. However, when the *kurova guva* is organised to bring the spirit of the deceased home, normally a year after the death, the relatives consult a *n'anga* again, but this time for public purposes<sup>5</sup>. Then, during the *kurova guva* ceremony, people can confess their guilt or not regarding this specific death. Confessing is called *kupembera*, meaning one is discharged of suspicion and therefore cleansed.

Let me now focus on the *kurova guva* of two young men, Tasimba and Wagona, who were both from one family. The ceremony was organised for the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1996. The family consulted a *n'anga* to be able to inform the public about the cause of Tasimba's death, the elder of the two. The family was informed privately about the cause of Wagona's death, who died in a car accident in Harare. His death was related to the death of his paternal grandfather. I show that in all three cases, women married into the family were accused of being involved in the deaths. They were daughters-in-law, wives, mothers and grandmothers. The accusations had important consequences for all three women, who finally had to leave their marital homes and return to their places of origin.

#### *Confessing in public*

On the first day of the *kurova guva* ceremony, everybody contributed Z\$ 1 to consult a *n'anga* to hear what caused Tasimba's death. The money was called *gata* and the total amount collected was Z\$165. A close relative transferred the spirit of the deceased to the money (*kudira*), saying:

'the reason why we transfer your spirit to this money is to have light thrown on where we are going. You (the deceased) must help us to know what caused your death and what killed you. You should not hide what took you from us'.

The women and men who were going to a *n'anga* represented different groups of relatives. For example, a *muzukuru* represented all the *vazukuru* (nephews and niece), and a *muroora* (daughter-in-law) represented all the *varoora*. There were also *vatete*, a *mukuwasha* (son-in-law), a brother and one of the parents.

On the second day, the representatives had to confess whether the suspected killer belonged to their group or to whoever else was accused. They all received a spot of white mealie-meal on their foreheads and told the large gathering, one by one, what the *n'anga* had

<sup>5</sup> This consulting of *n'anga* immediately after the funeral is explained by Bourdillon (1987: 205), but in describing *kurova guva* (1987: 209-214) he does not mention the consulting of *n'anga*. However, among Ndau and also Manyika, a *n'anga* is consulted during *kurova guva*, and that is usually a year after the person has passed away.

said. After they professed themselves to be innocent they shook the mealie-meal from their foreheads. A *sekuru* (elder brother) began:

'We know that our *hama* (relatives) already know who took Tasimba<sup>6</sup>. The *hakata* (divining bones) of the *n'anga* said that Tasimba died outside this homestead and that all the relatives and *vazukuru* had confessed and been declared cleansed (*kupembera*<sup>7</sup>). Tasimba was killed by an outsider, but not from this homestead. Then he shook the mealie-meal from his head'.

Then the representative of the *vazukuru* (nephews and nieces) stood up and walked to the middle of the gathering and spoke also for other groups of relatives, saying they were there to hear what caused the death of their relative. He was not going to hide what the *n'anga* said, but tell the truth. 'The *madzitezvara* (wife's parents) are the ones who killed Tasimba'. He had mealie-meal in a small plastic bag and said while taking a handful and throwing it on the ground: 'this is the mealie-meal of all the *vazukuru* of the family. We did not kill'. He took another handful and threw it on the ground saying 'this is the mealie-meal of all the *vakuwasha* (sons-in-law). They are innocent'. Then he put a small amount of mealie-meal on the ground and said:

'Some of the *varooro* (daughters-in-law) are innocent, but the mealie-meal left in this plastic bag is for one *muroora* (daughter-in-law) who did not confess in order to be discharged. This *muroora* is the wife of Tasimba and her parents have also not confessed. They are guilty. They killed Tasimba'.

A man stood up and said to Tasimba's father-in-law (*tezvara*), 'I heard that your son-in-law Tasimba had a *bvuri* cast upon him and that this *bvuri* was from your homestead'. The father of the accused daughter, Mavis, said:

'You returned my daughter saying that I had to remove the *bvuri* from her. But I heard that my relatives were the ones to cast the *bvuri* on her. I went to a *n'anga* and the *bvuri* was removed and my daughter came back here'.

The brother of the late Tasimba replied: 'when your daughter came back, we did not know whether you had removed the *bvuri* or not'. An old woman, Tasimba's mother, asked to speak and said:

'In short, I can say that my child died from being barren. I think the misfortune of being barren can make a person die'.

Then the big *muzukuru* (son-in-law) of the family stood up and said: 'those who caused Tasimba's death are on the parent-in-law's side (*tezvara*). You are the ones who killed Tasimba'. Mavis' father denied the charge and said that he was not happy with what the people and *n'anga* had said. He suggested consulting another *n'anga*. That suggestion provoked anger among Tasimba's family. They said how could he think that another *n'anga* would say anything different. 'We are not going to another *n'anga*', they said. Then the father-in-law declared, 'it is over'.

#### *Private consultation*

Andipa, the sister of the dead Tasimba and aunt to the late Tasimba's wife, Mavis, explained the following about the causes of Tasimba and Wagona's deaths:

'The father of Mavis wanted Tasimba to marry one of his daughters. Mavis, however, already had a boyfriend /partner, though they were not married, and she asked her father how she could get out of this first commitment so that she would be free to completely love Tasimba. The father said that they would kill the boyfriend, who did not have a lot

<sup>6</sup> Probably, from the private consultation of a *n'anga* immediately after death.

<sup>7</sup> Discharged from suspicion of being the killer and therefore cleansed and innocent.

of money. The parents preferred to have their daughter married to Tasimba, who was well off. Later Tasimba built a house for his parents-in-law. However, through killing the first partner, they had created a *ngozi*, and the *ngozi* or *bvuri* as it now became, was cast upon Tasimba. The spirit of the dead boyfriend asked Tasimba why he was taking his wife. We heard this from a *n'anga*, Andipa said, 'we visited many *n'anga* and they all said the same. Then our brother passed away because of the *bvuri*'.

Others said that it was impossible for Tasimba to be possessed by the spirit of the boyfriend. They argued that it was more a case of the spirit of the dead boyfriend having possessed the woman, and she became the wife of this *ngozi*. The people believed that whenever the couple slept together the spirit on the wife would say to Tasimba, 'don't sleep with my wife', and therefore the wife remained barren, because of this spirit on her.

The explanation of Wagona's death in a car accident in Harare, could only be understood in the light of the explanation of the death of his grandfather, Andipa's father.

'It started', she told me, 'when one of my brothers, Mike, fell in love with a woman called Peleshi who then became pregnant and gave birth to a son called Wagona. Mike did not want to marry Peleshi but wanted his son Wagona to grow up in his family. Then Mike's mother visited the father of Peleshi (*tezvara*), and told him that she thought the reason her son did not want to marry his daughter was because her husband did not scold the boy sufficiently into marrying her. Peleshi's father said that if that was the case he would see her husband, Mike's father, at a beer drink. The two men drank beer together and the father bought beer and put *chefu* (poison) in the beer. Later Mike's father said that the beer he had been given by Peleshi's father was not good and it had upset him. The father was ill for a week and he went for treatment to a place where his relatives lived, but he passed away. A year later the beer for *kurova guva* was brewed for him and the *n'anga* told them that their father had been killed. He had been *kuroiwa*, bewitched, by Peleshi's father'.

Thus, they believed that the father-in-law had killed the father and Wagona's mother had to return to her place of birth to live with her accused father. We arrive now at the grandson Wagona's death. Andipa explained:

'After Wagona died in a car accident in Harare, we went to consult a *n'anga* and were told that our dead father wanted compensation (*kuripwa*) from his wife, because she had gone to Peleshi's father to report that her husband was not controlling their son Mike. The mother brewed beer to make up for what she had done. She brewed five pots of beer and slaughtered a goat. The spirit was appeased and thanked her. But she had not been the one to kill her husband and now our dead father wanted compensation from the parents of Wagona's mother. They have paid Z\$600 and we are waiting for further compensation'.

Hence, they believed that the spirit of the grandfather had become a *ngozi* and had caused the death of his grandson Wagona because the parents-in-law had not fully compensated him.

### *Beliefs and consequences for women*

In these three death cases, three women were accused of bad practices. Let us now explore how people explain death by reproducing spirit beliefs in these three cases.

1. People believed that in the case of Tasimba, Tasimba's wife requested assistance from her father to replace the poor boy friend for a rich one, i.e. Tasimba. People believed that the father assisted his daughter in killing the boy friend, whose spirit became a *ngozi*. That spirit was believed to have been cast upon Tasimba or his wife, thus becoming a *bvuri*, which caused the death of Tasimba.

2. In the case of the grandfather, people believed that Mike's mother had reported her husband to the daughter-in-law's father, who then killed Mike's father because he had not motivated his son to marry Wagona's mother, the daughter-in-law.
3. In Wagona's case, people believed that the angry spirit of the grandfather had taken revenge by killing, because he was not fully compensated by the parents-in-law.

Hence in these cases, the relatives who belonged to the *dzinza* of the deceased were innocent, but the outsiders, the fathers of the daughters-in-law and the daughters-in-law themselves, were accused of causing death. People perceived these *tezvara* (parents of daughters-in-law) as *varoyi* (witches). The perception was that they killed in order for their daughters to be married. Such beliefs and accusations have enormous implications for daughters-in-law. They can be chased from the families into which they have married and be obliged to live again in their parents' homesteads. All three of the accused women above had to leave and return to their places of birth. Let us look at the situation for these three women.

1. Tasimba's wife, Mavis, was sent back home because she and her father were the suspects. Even before her husband Tasimba died, Mavis was sent home several times because of a suspected bad spirit (*bvuri*). Most probably Tasimba was ill for a long time and then his family accused his wife for the illness by accusing her of a bad spirit and sending her home to be treated<sup>8</sup>. Also if women do not act according to their expected marriage role, they can be simply accused of having *bvuri* (see below), and sent to their natal home for treatment.
2. The mother of Wagona returned to her natal home, because her father was the suspect.
3. The wife of Mike's father, who reported him to the *tezvara*, also returned to her natal home.

Therefore, women as wives, may be seen as outsiders because they stand for their own family in witchcraft cases, regardless of age. That is also a reason why married women usually carefully maintain bonds with their own family, because they never know when they will need them again. Thus a married woman clearly has two homes. However, not all women return to their place of birth. They can also establish their own homestead, in consultation with their own families, as we saw in Chapter 3. Thus, despite the fact that a married woman as a daughter-in-law becomes a mother and grandmother, she can always be victimised by the people she lives with, as an outsider, a *mutorwa*, 'taken from outside'. And it is why both women and men of a family and *dzinza* may accuse such women, when trying to explain death in the family and *dzinza*. Let us now explore a common witchcraft case.

### A common witchcraft case

Before colonial times, witches were killed as a punishment for their perceived bad deeds. However, the Colonial Government of Rhodesia did not believe 'witches' should be sentenced to death without evidence, and formulated a law to more or less protect them (Bourdillon, 1987: 194). Some people in Manesa village are of the opinion that the law prohibiting the killing of witches, is the cause of so many *ngozi* and *bvuri* today. They believe that an innocent person will not awake to become an angry revenging spirit (*ngozi*), if the witch who killed him/her was also killed. Several people think that witches should be sentenced to death, but the majority says that they should be fined and chased away from the area. Many suggest placing a sign in front of the house of the witch, which seems to have been a practice in the past.

<sup>8</sup> During a *kurova guva*, the inheritance of a wife of a deceased (*kugar(w)a nhaka*) is usually arranged (see Chapter 2). However, during this ceremony, Tasimba's wife was not inherited because people believed that she had a bad spirit, which needed to be removed first. This bad spirit construction could also be a metaphor for the illness HIV/AIDS.

Below I explore a *ngozi* case, seen as a common witchcraft case, which shows that women are believed to be witches who threaten and kill. A woman, Batina, killed her father-in-law by putting poison in the meat of a chicken. Therefore Batina's husband divorced her, but she married again. Then a daughter of the brother of her second husband became sick. She became possessed, and indicated that Batina was a *muroyi* (witch). Then the second husband divorced Batina too. Batina was troubled by the *ngozi*, i.e. the angry revenging spirit of the father-in-law whom she was believed to have killed. Batina refused to compensate the spirit. She then sent the spirit (*bvuri*) to Farasia, one of the daughters of her second husband's first wife. Then that *bvuri* started to talk. People believe that it can take years before a cast bad spirit (*bvuri*) starts to talk. They believe that certain things can be done to keep the spirit quiet. For example by brewing beer. But when the spirit reveals everything, then treatment also ensues. The case is presented in chronological sequence, and in terms of the principal actors involved.

### *The girl Farasia*

The girl Farasia was 17 years old and the daughter of Batina's second husband, who had divorced her. Farasia was at a boarding school when she became sick. The matron gave her tablets but later Farasia collapsed and the matron took her to a *n'anga*. The spirit on her talked and said he was Mapfeka (the father-in-law whom Batina was said to have killed). Her parents came and looked for a *n'anga*, but they had all gone to other places. So the following day they went to a prophet. When people came to church, Farasia was laid in the centre and people sang and prayed for her. Farasia became possessed and the prophet wanted to chase away the demon, but it said: 'you do not know me? I am Mapfeka and I want to go home. I come from Manesa'. The prophet replied: 'I want you to go home right now and you must leave this girl. She is sick because of you'. Then Farasia felt better but she still had the spirit. The parents and daughter travelled to Manesa village. In Manesa, Farasia ran to the late Mapfeka's homestead. Mapfeka's son (Batina's first husband) was very surprised to see Farasia. He did not know that she was possessed. Farasia said: 'I am your father, I want to say something to my family. Go and call the relatives'.

The relatives gathered at Mapfeka's homestead and the spirit through Farasia said: 'I am happy you are here. I want to say something to Batina, my daughter-in-law. She put poison in the chicken meat and gave it to me. That was why I died'. The son of the deceased said: 'we have heard what you have said, but it is impossible for us to call the daughter-in-law without her father's knowledge. We must inform the father that his daughter is wanted here. The best way is to report the case to the village court', which they did. The court case was held a few days later. The police of village head Manesa arrested Batina's father. Many people came to listen to the court case. Both families, Farasia and her relatives, Batina and her father and brother were present.

Mapfeka spoke through Farasia and said he was killed by Batina. He was given poisoned chicken meat, after which he died. He (the spirit) went to Batina who said that he could be given a woman. Then Batina gave him Farasia. He said he had been given her a long time ago. He said that sometimes Batina cast his spirit onto money or other people, but he discovered that he lived with another family. Batina had sent him to Farasia so he could kill her. He had thought of killing her, but she had done him no harm, so I was unable to do so. That was why Farasia was ill. It was because of him. 'I want Batina to give me two claypots of beer, a wife, two goats and money', he said.

This last request of the spirit is the so-called *muripo*, the fine. Batina responded that the spirit talked false. To prove this an appointment with a *n'anga* was made. Farasia and her father and his brother, and Batina with her brother and father, went to a *n'anga* accompanied by one of the village head's policeman. The *n'anga* repeated what Mapfeka had said during the court session and Farasia became possessed. Then the *n'anga* sniffed the spirit from Farasia and also became possessed. The *n'anga* asked Batina for a Z\$20 note, which Batina asked her father for. He gave her the money and she handed it to the *n'anga* who then

sneezed (*kufemha*) Mapfeka onto the money. The *n'anga* told Batina to keep the money until the day she would brew beer, provide two goats and a wife for Mapfeka. The police wrote down the number of the Z\$20 note, to ensure it was kept. Batina took the money and tied it in a cloth. Mapfeka was thus kept in Batina's homestead. The *n'anga* asked Farasia to visit her the following day. That day she made some small cuttings<sup>9</sup> in Farasia's body and told her not to take a bath for three days, and gave her medicine.

#### *The brother of the second husband*

A brother of Farasia's father, explained the following. 'A *bvuri* can be sent to somebody after 20 years. Batina killed her father-in-law in 1975. He had quarrelled with his wife and Batina took her mother-in-law's side and killed him. The spirit went to Batina and she was very much troubled by the *ngozi* and wanted to be released from it. Now, in 1995, it has been discovered that the *bvuri* was sent to Farasia. Batina burned *mafuta* (fat) and said to the spirit, 'go to that person, she will be your wife'. She sent the spirit to Farasia because she was angry at being divorced by Farasia's father. As Farasia was unrelated to Mapfeka, it would take time before it was discovered who the spirit was. Now, the *n'anga* has cast the spirit onto a Z\$20<sup>10</sup> note. She has ordered Batina to brew six pots of beer, to kill a goat, and to bring a cloth of one metre and a wife. Batina's family should give a daughter (wife) to Mapfeka's family. If they cannot do so then they will have to pay Z\$600. Mapfeka's family has to use the money for bridewealth, to look for a wife for the spirit. If they squandered it then the *ngozi* would be very angry and kill members of Mapfeka's family. Mapfeka's family has had to build a house for the spirit, which will be called the house of *baba munini*'.

#### *The witch Batina*

Batina clearly constructed her own story, when I visited her in her homestead. She explained that she was divorced by her second husband because he said that she was ill, but that he refused to accompany her to a *n'anga*. She told me how difficult it is to be divorced when you have children. The previous year she had paid the schoolfees by selling firewood. When she was small her father had been in need of money and she was promised to someone in marriage while still young (a practice called *kuputswa*, see Chapter 2). She was promised to an old man named Chikwama, who said he was going to give her to his son. Once in a while he would send a message saying he had bought something for his wife and she was to come and collect it. 'That is what happens' she said, 'when you are the subject of *kuputswa*. They want to see how you are growing'. When she was grown up<sup>11</sup>, she was sent to Chikwama, but she ran away (*kutizira*) from the homestead because she did not want to be given to a husband. She wanted to choose her own, and she chose someone who was living in Manesa. Her husband paid Z\$80 to her parents who gave it to Chikwama. That was for everything Chikwama had already paid for her. Chikwama accepted it. 'Now, yesterday,' she said. 'July 1995, Farasia woke up (*kumuka*) with that old man Chikwama to whom I was promised. We went to the court and *n'anga*'. According to her it was the spirit of *tezvara* Chikwama who spoke. They left the *n'anga* and were still waiting. They were going to have to look for another *n'anga*. She did not know why the spirit was waking up with Farasia. 'How can other people be possessed of your family spirit?', she said. 'If somebody of my family is killed then the spirit will wake up in my family. It is not possible that for Farasia to be possessed with our family spirit'. Batina answered my questions about Mapfeka and said she did not know Mapfeka. 'I was never married in that family'.

<sup>9</sup> To reduce the chance of being HIV infected, a friend of Farasia bought new razor blades.

<sup>10</sup> In 1995, 1 guilder was Z\$5; 1 US dollar was Z\$10.

<sup>11</sup> When I asked how old she was at that very moment, she explained that she could not remember, but said afterwards that she had started menstruating and her breasts had grown.



### *The N'anga*

The woman *n'anga* explained that Farasia was possessed by a *bvuri*. 'The *bvuri* was not from her relatives, but came from outside. Farasia has had a bad spirit cast on her (*kudirirwa*) by a *muroyi*, (a killer, a witch) while she was sleeping'. Farasia had been possessed while there and had spoken out that she was Mapfeka. He wanted to be paid cattle and a girl. 'When Farasia was possessed, I as *n'anga* also became possessed. Her spirit told me 'leave this girl, she is tired and sick'. Then Mapfeka asked my spirit: 'where are you going to put me? There are no children here'. My spirit could not find a person to cast the spirit on. Then I sneezed the *bvuri* onto a Z\$20 note. The police of village head Manesa wrote down the number on the money. My spirit said look for the person who put the *bvuri* on the girl. She has to take the money. Then Batina was given the money. My spirit gave the girl medicine'.

She continued to explain that there are many *mabvuri*, because people do not want to compensate the revenging spirit and therefore send the spirit to others. Removal of *bvuri* from people are difficult cases. 'For example' she said, 'the spirit of Mapfeka was fire. It could have burned me up. Many *n'anga* die when they remove spirits. Especially from people who have asked for the spirit to be removed while knowing that they have killed. The spirit will say: 'why *n'anga*, why? You know that this person caused my death, so why are you removing me'? Then the spirit will kill the *n'anga*'.

In section three I will explain more about *n'anga* and the beliefs, values and norms they reproduce in practice and thereby shape it.

### *Mapfeka's son and the first husband of Batina*

The son of the late Mapfeka, who was also Batina's first husband, explained that he divorced his wife Batina because of *uroyi* (witchcraft) and prostitution. He gave this explanation of how *mabvuri* are sent to other people.

'When you are dead and buried, the witch doctor opens the grave during the night and takes certain parts of the body and dries the meat to mix with medicines. Then she visits a person during the night and makes small cuttings in that person into which she puts the mixture. She will then say 'you are keeping my meat, so you are keeping my spirit, and the spirit of the person is passed with his meat and the medicine'.

He explained that Batina had to pay Mapfeka's family Z\$1600. He wanted the money, but did not want to be given a girl or use the money to marry a girl. He claimed that area was 'full of *varoyi* (witches), because people use a lot of medicine to become rich'.

Thus in conclusion I would say that people use and manipulate different spirit beliefs to explain the illness of Farasia and to treat her and achieve their own interests. People use these bad spirit beliefs to construct explanations and implicitly control those whom they do not like. For example, Batina was accused of being witch and did not want to compensate the angry spirit (*ngozi*) of somebody she had killed and thus she cast the *bvuri* or bad spirit that was demanding compensation onto the girl. Those beliefs were constructed because the man had passed away and the girl was ill. Since Batina was a woman who was disliked, and divorced by the girl's father, people accused her of death and illness. People labelled Batina a witch because they believed she was taking revenge for the divorce by making the girl ill. Let us now turn to a *ngozi* case that is not regarded as a witchcraft case. Thus there is a *ngozi*, but not an accused witch.

### **A house for a spirit**

After Independence in 1980, the government formulated a law that prohibited the practice of compensating angry spirits with girls/wives. However, today, many people believe that giving a girl to an angry spirit is the only way to appease such a spirit. They believe that the real treatment for a *ngozi* is for the family responsible for a death to pay a daughter to the family of the dead member. That daughter is then supposed to be married to the angry spirit.

If someone is killed by a member of their own family, then that family is supposed to give one of their own daughters to the angry spirit. Many families find this very difficult, perhaps for lack of a daughter to give, or the daughter chosen does not consent. They prefer therefore to look for an 'outsider' and pay bridewealth for her. Let us now explore such a 'ghost marriage'.

Various families of a chief's house<sup>12</sup> in Manesa village were struggling with death, illness, divorce and unemployment. They therefore consulted different *n'anga* for an explanation of their misfortunes. But they not only wanted an explanation, they also wanted to hear from the *n'anga* what they should do to stop and prevent all the problems. All the different *n'anga* seemed to point to the same conclusion, namely, that *ambuya* (grandmother) wanted a house. It was believed that her spirit was constantly asking for the house, but the family had not arranged it. The forefathers had once started to build a house for *ambuya*, but they had never completed it. Various members of the different chiefly families believed they had problems because they had never fulfilled *ambuya*'s request. An old female member of the family said: 'Long ago *ambuya* was well known, but now the *ambuya* awakes to say 'you have forgotten me, you have thrown me away'. The *dzinza* members argued that *ambuya* was an angry ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*). An ancestral spirit usually looks after the families of the *dzinza* and is seen as a protective shield through which no one can enter to harm them. Therefore they said that *ambuya* needed to be honoured through the offering of beer, money, a wife and the building of a house. They also saw the building of the house as honouring women in general. If that was done, the *ambuya*'s spirit would look after the families again. The family members also argued that the place for *ambuya*'s house should be *miyu misere* (the place of the eight baobabs, the main court of the area). It was already considered an important place in the chieftaincy area, but with the house of *ambuya* it would reach the importance of *Ngaone* and *Madzadza*<sup>13</sup>, they argued.

All the heads of family (52) in this chiefs' house were requested to contribute Z\$20. That money would be used to pay bridewealth (*pfuma*) for a 'wife' for *ambuya*. The wife would come and live in the house of *ambuya*. Then the family was approached by a poor man who wanted his daughter to be married in the chiefs' family. The chiefs' family explained to him that his daughter would become the wife of *ambuya*. The girl's father accepted it. She was only five years old and so could not possibly understand or consent to what took place. 'When she grows older' said one of the chiefs, 'she may run away at the age of fifteen. But then we can tell *ambuya* that we did our work, but that the girl ran away'. The wife of *ambuya* was not to be allowed to go to school. Sons of the chief's families paid the bridewealth in March 1995 at the girl's homestead, but still left a debt outstanding for the first stage of the bridewealth (*mabvunziro*). When the debt for the first stage was complete, the 'wife' of *ambuya* would come with her father. Beer would be brewed and *kudira* would take place, i.e. *ambuya*'s spirit would be transferred to the girl. After that, the girl would go back with her father and would return to stay in the house they had built for *ambuya* when she was older. The wife of *ambuya* should have children. Therefore a son of one of the families in the chiefs' house would be chosen to be the genitor. However, concerning clothes and food, she would be looked after collectively, i.e. by the different families.

The above accounts were given by the family members of this chief's house. It was left to others in the chieftaincy to tell me that this chiefs' house once had a daughter-in-law whose bridewealth was not paid and who was so completely ignored by the members of the chiefs' house that she died of hunger. That is regarded as killing, and therefore her spirit became a

<sup>12</sup> A chieftaincy is looked after by a Paramount chief from different rotating houses. A house has different families (see Vijfhuizen and Makora, forthcoming).

<sup>13</sup> In Chapter 6 I explained that *Ngaone* and *Madzadza* are the two most important places of the Mutema chieftaincy; *Ngaone* is the residence of the Paramount chiefs and *Madzadza* is the place where the first Paramount chief started the chieftaincy. In both places Paramount chiefs are buried and both are important places of worship.

*ngozi*. The spirit of that woman, the *ambuya* in question, was angered. It wanted to be compensated and was therefore causing misfortune. Family members, however, maintained that the spirit was an angry ancestral spirit and not of an outsider and *ngozi*. People in the village explained to me that people in general are not very open about their *ngozi*. They want to hide their 'skeletons in the cupboard' or bad deeds and they also do not want to sacrifice their own daughters to angry spirits. Indeed, according to beliefs and practice, the *dzinza* should have paid with a daughter of their own, because the killing had been done by themselves in the past. But they decided to collect money from among themselves to bring in an outsider as 'wife'. Thus they had reason enough to change the image of the spirit and construct the story that the house of *ambuya* would be of importance for the whole chieftaincy and would honour all women.

In conclusion, the families in this chief's house had indeed many problems. I saw a number of people in their families pass away, some due to HIV/Aids. Such sickness and death requires an explanation and must be prevented from occurring. The problems were explained by pointing to an angry spirit, which was believed to be causing the misfortune. To prevent problems continuing to occur, the angry spirit was to be appeased by building it a house. That suggested that the spirit was most likely not an angry ancestral spirit but a *ngozi*. But they reconstructed the image of the ancestral spirit, because otherwise, according to the beliefs surrounding *ngozi*, they would have had to 'pay' with one of their own daughters. This is also a clear indication of how people use and manipulate spirit beliefs in practice and thereby shape that practice. They look for explanations in order to be able to solve problems and prevent further misfortune and make life bearable. It is also important to mention that the particular social actors in this case were members of a chief's house. We have seen in the previous chapter how chiefs derive their authority from the spirit 'domain'. This may be why they were particularly interested in using and reproducing beliefs and practices to do with compensation by offering the angry spirit a girl, despite the government's prohibition of such practices. In the previous chapter we saw how chiefs prevent their authority and ability to wield power from being undermined by government.

Evans-Pritchard discusses different types of marriage among the Nuer and also notes ghost marriages (1951: 109-113). Among the Nuer, when a man dies without male heirs, a younger brother or other kinsman, who would be the pro-genitor, usually marries the wife in the name of the dead husband. The legal husband becomes the ghost in whose name bridewealth was paid and the marriage rituals were performed. Evans-Pritchard tells us that 'more rarely a man marries a wife in the name of a dead sister or other kinswoman. This is perhaps only done when the dead woman's ghost causes sickness to draw attention to her unhappy condition' (1951: 112). He adds that for such a marriage a stranger (an outsider) will be chosen. He calls this marriage also 'ghost marriage'. In Chapter 2, when explaining the various types of marriages recognised in Manesa village, I labelled the marriage to a spirit as a '*ngozi* marriage'. Such a marriage is organised when people face many problems that they believe are caused by the angry spirit of someone they harmed. To appease such a spirit, or in other words to prevent problems continuing, a man must marry a wife in the name of the angry spirit. In Manesa people believe that the spirits' biggest wish is for their kin group to be extended. Therefore *ngozi* have to be compensated and appeased with wives. Let us now turn to the *bvuri* spirit.

### ***Bvuri* cases**

People in Manesa village believe that many *mabvuri* are transferred nowadays. They believe that it is caused by people who are bad, who harm others. They believe that *mabvuri* are transferred to others through money, either picked up or given by others. That is also why, for example, during the payment of bridewealth or fines, people may ask if the money is clean. They do not want to receive bad spirits from the family paying them. Many cases in the village court deal with *mabvuri*. Both sexes believe that women are the principal hosts of

*mabvuri*, transferred by other women and men. For example, it is believed that when *madzitete* (aunts) and *vanababa* (fathers) are not happy with their daughters-in-law (*varoora*), they can cast a *bvuri* on them. People believe that women are the main hosts because the spirit of an unknown person killed, wants to be compensated and requests money and beer, but also a wife for the reproduction of children who will then belong to the *dzinza*. Therefore it is believed that bad spirits are sent to women. Men can also have *mabvuri*, but their number is much lower.

I analysed the court books (1987-1995) of village head Joel Manesa in 1995 and it became clear that divorces are often related to *mabvuri*. When somebody in the husband's family becomes ill or there are other problems, husbands divorce their wives, believing them to have *mabvuri* which cause the family woes. I described in Chapter 3 the court case of Maona, where it was believed his previous girl friend had made him ill. If a wife lives with her husband and problems arise in his kingroup for which she is blamed, then she will be sent to her natal home for treatment. The following case from Manesa's court books shows such a regular practice.

A husband approached his father-in-law telling him that his daughter had a *bvuri*. He wanted the parents to have her treated to remove the bad spirit. Later, the husband sent his wife for a second time for treatment to her natal place, at which time the woman's father reported the matter to the village court. The judgement of the village chief was to send the woman with his police to a *n'anga*. The *n'anga* explained that the wife did not have a *bvuri* but that a husband's relative died on his way to South Africa a long time ago, and beer and a goat should be offered (*kupira*) to that spirit. The *n'anga* told the husband that a relative hated him and had hired a *n'anga* to put medicine into his homestead so that he would divorce his wife<sup>14</sup>.

This written court case shows how complex witchcraft is. In fact both the hired *n'anga* and the relative can be perceived as witches since both try to threaten and control another. But, the husband, who accuses his wife of having *bvuri* and continues to send her to her parents, also threatens and controls, namely, his wife. A person who falsely accuses another person of having a *bvuri* will be sentenced in the village court and will have to pay money to clear the person's name. That is also a common court case. But the woman in this case did not report her husband to the court. The *n'anga* arbitrates in this case and explains that it is an angry ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*) from the husband's *dzinza*, and explains that the medicine which is thrown in their homestead also makes the couple unsettled. Since the *nanga's* arbitration, the husband and wife have stayed together.

When women are accused of having *bvuri*, it can also have consequences other than being sent home. She can thereby be denied access to land. We saw in Chapter 5 how a wife was denied access to the irrigated plot, because both husband and chiefs agreed that the *bvuri* with her should first be removed. However, the wife had visited several *n'anga* together with her husband, who all told them that the wife had no *bvuri*. The wife explained that her husband's *dzinza* had a *ngozi*, because her husband's father (HF) killed a person whose spirit now wanted to be compensated. She said that her husband refused to compensate the spirit and the spirit therefore troubled the family and made them unsettled. The wife said that the husband had tried to cast the spirit on her, but had failed. She believed that the *ngozi* lived in the husband's homestead where she also lived. She planned to build her own homestead, but said that the spirit would follow her when her husband tried to transfer the spirit to her. Maybe her husband believed that he had managed already to put the *bvuri* on his wife, and therefore used that argument in the conflict over the irrigated plot. The chiefs were on his side, because they also believed the wife had *bvuri*. However, according to existing witchcraft beliefs, the husband could be accused of practising witchcraft, because he did not want to compensate the *ngozi* spirit and had tried to cast a *bvuri* on his wife. Or in other words, he threatened and

<sup>14</sup> This woman would be the second wife to be divorced.

controlled his wife, by denying her access to the plot and accusing her of having bad spirits. This example shows again how complex witchcraft is. Men especially, try to hide that they are witches as we shall see, and accuse women in order to control them and resources.

When a husband and a wife often fight, then many believe that the wife must have *bvuri*, because a woman is not supposed to fight back. Also if a woman does not have a nice character, she will be said often to have a *bvuri*. Some men are also said to have bad spirits but not as frequently as women. The *bvuri* argument could be purposely constructed to rid a husband's family of an unwanted or disliked woman. Sometimes when women are accused, they suggest that a *n'anga* is consulted, but the request is not always followed, especially when the accuser knows the accusation to be false. When wives wield more power than their husbands, or are physically and/or mentally stronger and more intelligent, the husband and his relatives usually accuse the wife of having *bvuri*. The wife will then be divorced. Some will acquiesce to the accusation because it suits them to leave the husband's family. And in many cases, where only a first bridewealth payment has been made, the women and their families may chose to ignore the matter. The *bvuri* construction can become a controlling mechanism by which women can be kept in line, divorced or denied access to resources in their marital setting. This certainly appears to be one aspect of witchcraft beliefs and practices. Let us now explore the gender of witchcraft

### Gender of witchcraft

Witchcraft has emerged in all the cases explored above and I would now like to look at the phenomenon of witchcraft again from a gender perspective. Bourdillon (1987: 176) asserts that the most powerful witches are believed to be the hosts of evil ancestral spirits or of *mashavi*, just as the best diviners and healers are believed to be the hosts of healing spirits. Chavunduka (1994: 93) argues that Zimbabwe has three principal kinds of witches: 1) those possessed by a deceased family member who was also a witch; 2) those possessed by a stranger or alien spirit and 3) those sponsored by a practising witch.

The Ndau explain that those who kill and violate have a *shavi rekuroya* (a spirit for killing). They also believe that the same *n'anga* can both treat and kill. Furthermore, they say that people can also be called witches without being the medium of a *shavi*. In other words, if people are suspected of or do bad things they may be labelled a witch (*muroyi*). *Muroyi* literally means killer, from *kuuraya*, to kill, harm or violate. Everything bad is called *uroyi*. Every violation, revenge, or bad practice, whether it is purely belief or can be seen/proved, is called *uroyi* and is carried out by killers/violators (*varoyi*) and is a permanent danger. Thus the Ndau-Shona do not make a distinction between witchcraft and sorcery. Bourdillon (1990: 192) says that 'witchcraft and sorcery are not always carefully distinguished in practice'. Elsewhere (1987) he says that the distinction between witches and sorcerers is not very rigid in the Shona view, as suggested by the use of the word *varoyi* for both. But he maintains that the Shona do distinguish witchcraft from sorcery in the sense that the sorcerer does not represent a permanent danger to the community as does the witch. Chavunduka (1994) also makes a distinction between witchcraft and sorcery. Real witches are people who travel at night and are said to eat corpses, dance naked in the fields at night and cause sickness, death and other misfortunes. Witchcraft refers to things that cannot be seen and cannot be proven. Sorcery is a technique or tool employed by an individual under certain circumstances in order to harm other people. Thus sorcery can be seen and therefore proved. He distinguishes three types of sorcery, namely, putting medicine or poison in the victim's food; planting poison or dangerous objects on a path or in the victim's homestead; using medicine from an animal horn (1994: 89-91).

The dual distinction between witchcraft and sorcery was first made by Evans-Pritchard (1937) among the Zande people. Marwick (1970:12-13) calls it 'the Zande distinction', in which the main difference between a sorcerer and witch is that 'the sorcerer achieves his evil ends by magic and the witch achieves hers by some mystical power. Witches are weird and

sorcerers are ordinary people'. From distinctions emerge questions, and in this case we might wonder what the difference is between magic and mystical power. Marwick (1970-13) argues that 'While most anthropologists see the advantage of following the Zande distinction between witchcraft and sorcery, there are some, particularly those writing on Oceania, who use the term 'sorcery' for all forms of destructive magic.'

Bourdillon concludes that witchcraft can refer to any threat to personal security by the violation of the person or life, or by the violation of any deeply held value (1987: 181-183). The conclusion that witchcraft can refer to any threat, can help understand why Ndaushona people do not distinguish between witchcraft and sorcery. Despite the fact that Ndaushona women and men themselves do not make the distinction between witchcraft and sorcery, the distinction has led to dualistic categorisations, also related to gender. I now look at three such dualistic categorisations.

A first categorisation emerging from the witchcraft-sorcery distinction is, as Chavunduka (1994:89) says, that 'recourse to sorcery is always on a deliberate, conscious, voluntary basis'. He and other authors perceive sorcery as intentional and witchcraft as unintentional. However, all witchcraft is perceived by Ndaushona women and men as intentional in that it aims to threaten, kill and violate. Due to conflicts people will always have their reasons to threaten or control each other. Food poisoning (as sorcery) is intentional. But to make people believe that they are visited during the night or that dangerous things and spirits are sent to them, is also a threat and intentional.

A second dualistic categorisation is that witchcraft rites are defined as 'bizarre', such as riding hyenas during the night and eating human flesh. Sorcery is defined as less 'bizarre' and refers for example to food poisoning. Ndaushona people distinguish between different witchcraft beliefs, but do not categorise them into witchcraft and sorcery as I will show. Women and men believed the following to be witchcraft, ordered according to the frequency of the answers to various questions.

1. Being abroad at night (*kumuka usiku*) was often indicated as a witchcraft practice, without explaining what the witch might be doing in the night. Some said that their purpose was to visit and get people to eat in their sleep and so poison them; or *kutemera nyora*, to get people to drink medicine while asleep in order to transfer a *bvuri* or make the person a witch also; to have sexual intercourse with a woman without her knowing it. A less heard explanation was riding hyenas.
2. Food poisoning.
3. *Zvifura*, meaning to insert dangerous objects into the body whose movements can be felt (*kupfura*, to pass or to shoot).
4. *Zvidhoma*, believed to be very small, dangerous, human like creatures kept by certain women and men (witches) to violate and kill others.
5. Lightning. People believe that *n'anga* are able to make and send lightning.

Witches are also given names according to the practices they are believed to perform. One who visits in the night to kill or violate is said to be a person 'who does not tear his or her blankets' (*haabvaruri machira* or *magumbeze*). One who poisons others is said to have a big thumb (*ane gunwe*). One who assaults others with an axe or knife is a *Mhondi*. One who visits women for sexual intercourse in the night without their knowledge, is called *Mukwarakwato*. The practices most often mentioned as practised by women are food poisoning and *zvifura*. Most probably because they cook and look after the sick. Men mentioned most often waking in the night and *zvidhoma*. This could be an indication that men practice more severe methods. Men in particular did not distinguish between food poisoning and other types of witchcraft. They tend to distinguish the different types of things sent to them.

A third dualistic categorisation emerging from the witchcraft-sorcery distinction, is that witchcraft is performed by women and sorcery by men. For example, Bourdillon (1987) writes 'women do horrible deeds' (p.174) and 'men are lesser witches' (p.179). He (1987:

178) indicates that the healer normally uses **his** powers for good, whereas a witch uses **her** powers for evil. The healer is a man and the witch is a woman. Marwick (1970: 12-13), like Evans-Pritchard, does the same, i.e. the sorcerer and **his** magic, the witch and **her** mystical power. Marwick (1965), cited in Bourdillon (1990: 192), shows that sorcery is often performed by men. Thus 'bizarre' practices are performed by women and less 'bizarre' by men. Fry (1976: 28) seems to imply that all evil in society is done by women when he says 'the inherent evil in society which is passed on as witching *shaves* from mothers to their daughters'.

However, these constructions as found in the literature, that women are perceived to carry out bad and bizarre practices, does not correspond with the perceptions of Ndau women and men. I asked<sup>15</sup>: Women bewitch by doing what?; men bewitch by doing what? (*Vakadzi kana varume vanouraya sei?*, lit: women or men, how do they kill). Men answered (N=36)<sup>16</sup>:

Table 7.1: Perceived witchcraft practices

	Percentage of men who said
<b>Women do:</b>	
Food poisoning	69%
Sending <i>mabvuri</i>	17%
Prostituting	11%
Sending dangerous things	6%
Sending ghosts	3%
<b>Men do:</b>	
Food poisoning	50%
Sending ghosts	25%
Sending dangerous objects to others	22%
Sending <i>mabvuri</i>	17%
Sending lightening	11%
Sending miracles	8%
Fighting/murdering	6%
Don't know	19%

When we look at the figures we see that both women and men are believed to practice food poisoning. But men are believed to be experts in sending things. Men were of the opinion that men's witchcraft practices are more developed and that men kill straight away, whilst women only send *mabvuri*. A man explained: 'men are mainly witches because they kill, whereas women are only sent by men'. Indeed, people believe that men use women for their evil purposes and practices. Thus the notion that women perform worse deeds than men, is not borne out in the statements of Ndau women and men. Men actually said that men have more developed methods for doing evil.

In Shona literature, women are usually depicted as witches. Holleman (1974) and Wilson (1951) claim that women, as daughters-in-law, are usually perceived as witches because they are outsiders, who marry into the patrikin. But among the Ndau in Manesa village, women and men were alike convinced that both women and men are witches. Marwick (1965), cited in Bourdillon (1990: 192), also argues that both women and men can be witches. That both sexes are witches can be understood if we take into account the reasons for practising witchcraft. 1a) The reasons given by women for men practising witchcraft were that men defend their riches, wife and family; men want to be feared; men take revenge on other men

<sup>15</sup> Checklist September 1996.

<sup>16</sup> 60% of the women said that they did not know, and the research assistant did not ask further. The other 40% of the women said: it is known by the witches themselves; food poisoning; stabbing with knives; sending ghosts; visiting others during the night.

who sleep with their wives (adultery); men kill their brothers to inherit goods and wives. It was less often said that it was because men want to be the head. 1b) The reasons given by women for women practising witchcraft was envy or jealousy (*godo*, meaning a bone which is difficult to chew), often in association with polygyny. 2a) The reasons given by men for men practising witchcraft were that men revenge other men who sleep with their wives (this was said by almost all men); men defend their property (cattle etc.). 2b) The reasons given by men why women practice witchcraft was envy or jealousy without a reason.

Thus women and men gave the same answers. Men bewitch with a sound reason - to defend riches or revenge adultery. Women bewitch without a sound reason, or as one woman said: 'a man can bewitch when there is a case for doing so (revenge), but women can just kill because of envy'. Thus envy, here, was not perceived as a reason for exercising witchcraft. Also men were of the opinion that men bewitch people who have done wrong to them (revenge) and women bewitch innocent people. The results show that men as well as women have reasons to threaten or violate and it is more or less accepted therefore that men practice witchcraft. People were of the opinion that women have no reasons to threaten. Thus from this logic, women are perceived as the real witches, because they kill the innocent. However, if we look at the reasons of both women and men for practising witchcraft, then the context becomes important and must be taken into consideration. The view is that women bewitch because of envy or jealousy. But this appears to be a concomitant of polygynous, virilocal marriage. For example, there is a Shona saying which goes: 'if you start polygyny in your homestead, you also create a lot of graves'. Marwick (1964: 286) also makes reference to this idea when he says:

'Cattle and polygyny finish people. Meaning that quarrels over the ownership and inheritance of cattle and over polygyny are frequent, and often culminate in believed attacks of sorcery'.

Thus we must conclude, where polygynous marriage exists, that envy and jealousy is not without reason. Women bewitch other women, because their husbands have girl friends and other wives. And like men, women also revenge adultery. Thus it is apparent that women likewise have their reasons for practising witchcraft, and that witchcraft practised by men also emerges from envy and jealousy. And yet despite the evidence leading one to argue otherwise, it is the view of both sexes that men bewitch to revenge specific incidences, and women bewitch for nothing. Thus both women and men might practice witchcraft and be witches, but women are perceived as the real witches. But it is not surprising that both sexes share the same opinions over women and witchcraft, since both were socialised into such beliefs and values.

Witchcraft beliefs and practices emerge from conflicts over love and money, with envy as the most important force for violence and murder. Those who practice it are probably those who wield less power. Maybe women threaten and violate more often than men, but that must also be related to their more vulnerable position in a patrilineal polygynous society that restricts their access to resources. Men threaten and violate in defending resources. Women have fewer resources to defend, but when necessary they will defend the little they have in the face of claims from their husband's other wives. Second, since women are more vulnerable, or less powerful where conflicts over resources are concerned in a virilocal society, they can be more easily accused of witchcraft. Men are regarded as better witches and also perform witchcraft practices through women, which allows them to point the finger and say the woman is the witch and not they themselves. Chavunduka argues (1994: 99) that it is

'mainly women [who] confess that they are witches, because they want to be feared and build up a reputation as a powerful individual. Women want to enhance their status by confessing to witchcraft because in general it is very difficult for a woman in traditional African society to enhance her political and social position'.



I doubt if women confess to being witches to enhance their status. First of all, men too are seen as witches. Secondly, we have seen in previous chapters that women have status and derive authority from their 'domains of activities' and wield power accordingly. Thirdly, confessing to be a witch may not improve either a woman's or a man's status and for women the consequences can frequently be dire. The point that needs to be emphasised here is that it is especially the powerful women who are accused of witchcraft. It is a way of controlling them. Control is the driving force of accusing and practising witchcraft, i.e. controlling wives/husbands, kinship relations and resources. An example follows.

*Witchcraft beliefs mean control*

People believe that witchcraft and threats of violation mainly emerge from envy. If one person does better than others, s/he becomes almost automatically a target for witchcraft accusations. The migrant son in Chapter 3, who prospered well, was also afraid of witchcraft. He explained that good spirits were with him. Things that happened could not be explained scientifically, only spiritually, he said. He pointed out that in 1992 a cheap welding machine, a cheap car and a cheap grinding mill came his way and to him it was a token of the goodness and protection of his ancestral spirits. But he was also afraid of bad spirits. '*Ngozi* and *bvuri* are related and have a bearing on many things, but a *ngozi* has no bearing on business', he said. 'A *ngozi* has more to do with violence. It is a vengeful spirit'. But he believed that *bvuri* had something to do with business in the sense that neighbours could become affronted by one's progress, and then unexplained illness occurred. Practices relating to *mabvuri* he thought to be based on natural hatreds (envy), because people are not happy about the progress of others. 'In 1992' he said:

'I bought a grinding mill and I have recently installed it. I waited. When I started to build the big house in the homestead of my father, I delayed purposely because I was afraid of *mabvuri*. I first finished other things in Harare. When I informed my parents in 1980 that I wanted to build a house in their homestead, my parents said I would be killed if I built such a house'.

He believed that witchcraft was used by neighbours in such circumstances. But it is not only neighbours who are suspected of practising witchcraft.

Witchcraft can also come from within the family and this was a reason why the migrant son involved his brothers in his projects. He wanted to make sure they had a vested interest in his progress and that way he could control any desire to practice witchcraft on him. He explained that witchcraft comes from within the family. It has to do with totems, and the one who would like to kill you can do so because only someone from within the family has the knowledge of how to worship (*kupira*) family ancestors and break down their protective shield. Hence it must be somebody from within the family. The ancestors are there to defend one. 'So let's say my brother wants to kill me' he said:

'and cannot because the spirit is there to protect me. If my brother despite his knowledge cannot break the shield, he will go to a *n'anga*, a witchdoctor, who can make the spirits give away because of the brother's information about worshipping. If they manage to kill me, then my brother and the witch doctor will be troubled by my *ngozi*. Only my family members can kill me. They know how to worship together with the witch. Foreigners cannot kill me, because they do not know this. Many of those who came back from the war and wanted to develop their homesteads and families, were killed. I can do my business because my brothers are under my control. They cannot kill me. I can give my family a good life. But I have to look after my brothers, because they are my children and culturally witchcraft is at play'.

People in the village talked about this family and its progress due to the investments of the migrant son. People believed that it was impossible to do all that from a salary and there were suspicions that the family had killed somebody and used the private parts to start their

business. According to Bourdillon (1987: 192) the Shona believe that there is a continual threat from persons endowed with evil. He also states (1987: 193) that a man who changed his lifestyle and became rich is suspected of using witchcraft to obtain the wealth that changed his life. But he is likely to arouse envy and so become the victim of witchcraft.

Hence developing local networks (see Verschoor, 1997) in an African context, is also related to the fear of witchcraft. People are convinced that witchcraft is practised by both insiders and outsiders of a family, though never by complete strangers. It is always practised within existing relationship bonds. Hence those who harm and violate others and each other are acquainted with each other already (see also Marwick, 1964: 288). They are neighbours, friends or relatives (see *nhaka* case Chapter 2). All of them can approach a *n'anga* to request medicine, or issue threats to victimise those they want to hurt. Therefore, those who are ill or have problems and conflicts in their lives, feel under threat because of those around them who may have wished them harm. We have seen that outsiders with whom a bond exists, such as for example daughters-in-law, are particularly vulnerable when there is death and illness in the family. Bourdillon (1987b: 268) makes the same point when he says that occasionally strangers can be accused of witchcraft and refers to women married into the kin group. The women are thus in an ambiguous position. On the one hand, they are seen as insiders because they live in the homesteads where they marry and know how to worship the ancestors of their husband's family and break through their protection. On the other hand, they can be seen as outsiders, because they will always side with their own family in witchcraft cases, as we saw above. But there are real outsiders, such as *n'anga* (African doctors) who confirm or deny that particular women are involved in causing misfortune. Let us now explore this profession.

### 7.3 N'ANGA IN CHIPINGE

In previous sections and chapters, *n'anga* (African doctors) emerged as important negotiators and arbitrators in relationships. However there are two sides of the *n'anga*, seen as good and bad. Why then do people consult them?

#### Two sides of a *n'anga*

Ndau people live in Chipinge district. Chipinge means 'you control it' (from *kupinga*, to control) and that refers to its famous *n'anga* and spirit mediums. Women and men come from all parts of Zimbabwe to consult doctors (*n'anga*) in Chipinge. They are renowned for their use of 'medicine' (*mushonga*), and people travel long distances to be treated there and get help for their problems, to resolve conflict or seek control over others by receiving medicines.

People believe in the existence of bad *shavi* spirits, and that a person can have more than one spirit and that *n'anga* have healing spirit (*shavi rekurapa*), as well as vengeful spirits, *shavi rekuroya*. My neighbours in Manesa village believed that it depended on the problems brought to the consultations as to which spirit the *n'anga* would consult. If people consult a *n'anga* for treatment, then the *n'anga* is assisted by a healing spirit. If people are looking for vengeance or to bring about a break-up in relationships, a *n'anga* may consult a bad spirit. Thus people believe that all *n'anga* practice good and bad. They are both healer and witch. Bourdillon states that some people say that all professional healers are witches (1987: 178). Fry (1976: 27), who lived among the Zezuru, writes that:

'they (*n'anga*) are of ambiguous moral standing, for it is believed that the *miti* (medicines; among Ndau called *mushonga*) they handle may be used for harm as well as good and it is from the *n'anga* that the sorcery is supposed to be acquired'.

*N'anga* explain that they cannot refuse the healing or any other spirits, because the spirit itself chooses the person. In the first section of this chapter I explained that there are different types of *n'anga*, those possessed with *dzinza* ancestral spirits, those possessed by *shavi* spirits

and those who work without spirits. It is believed that every *dzinza* has a *n'anga* who inherited an ancestral spirit. People believe that the spirit will make its medium ill and can cause death if the medium resists accepting the spirit (see also Bourdillon, 1987: 238 -241; Fry, 1976: 79-81). It is believed that a *n'anga* will always *kupira* her/his own spirits for protection and assistance. The spirit of a '*dzinza n'anga*' is also called a holy spirit: *mudzimu unoera*. *N'anga* are both women (54,8%) and men (45.2%) (Chavunduka, 1994: 43).

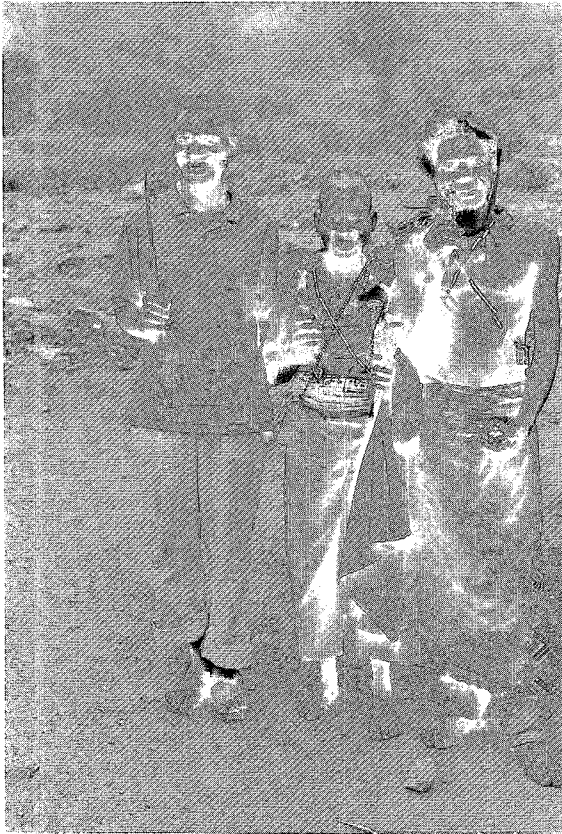
Photo 7.1: Two *n'anga* from Manesa village



In 1996 in Manesa village, lived seven *n'anga*, four women and three men. They explained that they were assisted or possessed by various spirits. The three men were all possessed (*kumuka*; to wake up) with a *shavi* spirit called *mandlozi* or *dzviti*. *Ndlozi* is an Ndbele word for *mudzimu* or *shavi*. When the *n'anga* is possessed by this *dzviti* spirit, he speaks Mukondo (a South African language) and dresses like a Shangaan warrior (*Mashangana*) with spears and shields. One of the women *n'anga* explained by whom the different women *n'anga* were possessed. One of them was assisted by a *dzviti* spirit, the second one 'woke' with the *shavi* spirit of a *nzuzu* (mermaid) and also dressed like one. The third would 'wake' with a *shavi* spirit of a *chipunha*, meaning *chimusikana* (girl) and that is the spirit of a woman such as the *vatete* or *ambuya* of her own *dzinza*. She spoke in the Nyanga language from Malawi. The fourth woman *n'anga* woke with *dzviti*, *chipunha* and with the *mbongo* spirit. Like the *nzuzu*, the last spirit is also from water, but they dress differently.

Hence, when *n'anga* are possessed, they talk in a language not understood by the women and men consulting them. Therefore a *muturikiri* (translator) translates the explanations of the possessed *n'anga* to the clients. Translators are usually the husbands of women *n'anga*. When I went to one of the women *n'anga* with somebody who was not feeling well, she became possessed of the *dzviti* spirit and talked the Zulu language. Her husband translated the messages to us.

Photo 7.2: Two *n'anga* with their *muturikiri* (translator) on the left.



After possession, a *n'anga* is not supposed to know what the spirits have said. The husband tells the *n'anga* what the spirits said and the type of medicine recommended. *N'anga* rely on their spirits. For example a *n'anga* said:

'I am a doctor. I do what my spirits tell me to do. When people come to me I must always nominate the real witch. My spirits tell me to talk *chokwadi* (the truth) otherwise the spirit will hit me. The spirits say I have a certificate because of them so I should tell the truth'.

When *n'anga* register by filling in an application form to become members of ZINATHA, the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association, they receive a certificate, a membership card and a batch (Chavunduka, 1994: 23). Chavunduka writes (1994:11) that the political party which won the first elections after the civil war, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU(PF)) had sympathetic attitudes towards traditional medicine. A few months after the election, the first national association of traditional healers was established, ZINATHA. Chavunduka became its president and his main aims have been to obtain legal recognition for traditional healers and acceptance of traditional medicine. He argues (1994:5) that colonial governments and early Christian missionaries tried to suppress traditional medicine for several reasons. First they did not know that such medicines were effective in curing many illnesses. Second, they felt that traditional healers encouraged beliefs in witchcraft. And they felt that traditional healers encouraged people to worship their ancestors instead of God.

Some in Manesa village are of the opinion that there are *n'anga* who fake possession and tell lies. In practice we see that people usually check with several *n'anga* because different *n'anga* usually have different explanations. For example, in a *kurova guva* case a *n'anga* told the relatives of a dead young married man, that he had been killed by his wife and mother-in-law. Many people believed it, because it coincided with existing beliefs that daughters-in-law are usually the 'killers'. However, based on the accounts of another *n'anga*, the 'killer' appeared to be a male relative. It was said that the male relative paid the first *n'anga* to lie. People believe that *n'anga* will say and do anything when short of money. The opinion of both women and men is that *n'anga* can heal and they can do harm. I was told that a *n'anga* who had healed a sick child asked the mother for a large sum of money, but she did not have such a sum. The *n'anga* then asked the mother to buy a bag of 50 kg maize seed for him. The mother repeated that she had no money. Then the *n'anga* bewitched the child who died. A village chief was very outspoken about the practices of *n'anga*. He claimed that nowadays *n'anga* were controlled by bad spirits. For example, cases in court are mainly *mabvuri* cases. The court requests Z\$5 for such cases, but the *n'anga* charges Z\$100. *N'anga* in earlier days threw their *hakata* (divining bones), and told clients to go home and offer beer to ask their ancestors to protect them. But today *n'anga* tell people they have *bvuri*. Clients then visit one *n'anga* after another paying Z\$100, Z\$200 or Z\$300. And then the patient dies. 'These days' the village chief said:

'we have many bad spirits because *n'anga* want to earn money. *N'anga* want business and therefore also spread bad spirits in the country. They worship bad spirits to ensure many clients. Some *n'anga* blow a horn and so spread medicine to make people ill to earn money. A *n'anga* can heal and kill. They are good and bad and are thus also witches. If *n'anga* are asked to kill someone, they can do it. They can make lightening and if somebody steals cattle they can kill the thief should the owner ask them to do so. The Colonial government did not allow *n'anga* to practice, so there were only a few. This government allows *n'anga* to practice, but it was a mistake to give them certification. We have many *n'anga* and that is why we have many *mabvuri*. Being a *n'anga* is a business. They do not farm any more, but travel up and down to earn their money'.

Many people share his opinion that nowadays *n'anga* also make people ill in order to earn money. They believe that *n'anga* remove bad spirits but as soon as the patient leaves, the *n'anga* returns the spirit so the patient would come back. If the patient goes to a different *n'anga* the experience would be the same<sup>17</sup>. Many people believe that *n'anga* are no longer serious about their work, and are only interested in money.

People complain when *n'anga* are unable to treat them adequately. The same complaints are made about doctors with private practices in towns. In the case of illness people can also turn to the church 'prophets'. There are some differences between *n'anga* and prophets in Manesa. *N'anga* prescribe medicines and sometimes wear the clothes of the spirits that possess them. They often speak in other tongues when possessed and need a translator for which they also charge. Prophets are members of churches, wear their church clothes and do not talk in other language. They are believed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit when they preach. Bourdillon (1987: 292) writes that 'Prophecy under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is a dominant feature in 'spirit-type' churches and the phenomenon of speaking in tongues is common'. Prophets also have a reputation as healers, as faith healers. Their assistance is usually for free. That is also one of the reasons why nowadays with illnesses which cannot be treated (e.g. HIV/Aids), the membership of those churches increases rapidly. To visit *n'anga* regularly with those illnesses would become too expensive. What people need in those desperate situations is faith. However, despite complaints about *n'anga* demanding money

<sup>17</sup> This could also refer to the difficult situation nowadays with the HIV/AIDS virus.

and despite the alternatives of doctors in town and prophets in churches, people continue to consult *n'anga*. Why they do so is explored below.

### Why people consult *n'anga*

Chavunduka (1994:9) gives several reasons why people continue to use the services of traditional healers. 1) They are successful in curing a great many illnesses. 2) Many of those who consult traditional healers do not do so for medical reasons alone. Many have social, psychological and spiritual problems, which also need attention. Chavunduka says (p1) that in addition to being medical practitioners, traditional healers are religious consultants, legal and political advisors, marriage counsellors, police detectives and social workers. Although Chavunduka talks of the past, the *n'anga* in Manesa village are still carrying out all of these activities as we shall see below. 3) Chavunduka gives another reason why people continue to visit traditional healers, and that is the effectiveness of many traditional practices and the failure of modern medical science to get better results (1994: 10).

People combine treatments. They believe in bacterial and viral causes of infection and death and they go to hospitals and private doctors for treatment. But they will also consult *n'anga* as to the cause of illness or other misfortune. They consult them in the hope that *n'anga* can advise them on how to solve or prevent the problems they have, usually illness. From the different *n'anga* I visited, it emerged that *n'anga* usually associate illness with conflicts among the living. Indeed, conflicts and problems can make people ill and their profession resembles in this way that of psychotherapy. *N'anga* are effective in treating psychosomatic and other illnesses by using traditional treatments. They listed several causes for believed bewitching and illness, including inheritance of property, envy or jealousy concerning paid work or wealth, and bridewealth not paid in a proper way or being squandered by relatives. Conflicts and tensions about bridewealth were often associated by *n'anga* with illness. After the *n'anga* has consulted the spirits, then s/he will give people the medicine recommended by the spirit, and they will usually suggest to buy a cloth or brewing beer for the angry spirit. Another cause of illness is believed to be *mabvuri*. The *n'anga* removes the *bvuri* and transfers it on money to be thrown into the homestead from which it originates. Thus *n'anga* treat the sickness and address causes, often explained as the tensions associated with disputes about inheritance, bridewealth, envy and bad spirits.

*N'anga* are also consulted to tell the future. Often this concerns marriage. Families want to know that the family into which their offspring is marrying is a good family. Furthermore *n'anga* are consulted for an appropriate medicine to keep husbands at home, or in other words to prevent adultery. This is the so-called love potion (*mupfuhwira*). The medicine is put in food or smeared on the floor. It is believed that the husbands will then love their wives only. Sometimes *n'anga* are consulted when the husband and wife cannot conceive, and sometimes when pregnant women or girls want an abortion.

*N'anga* are usually consulted in witchcraft cases and disputes about theft. Some chiefs may criticise *n'anga* for wanting to earn money, but in their village court this does not prevent them from referring the conflicting parties to a *n'anga* to help in solving the conflicts and quarrels among villagers. If these conflicting parties visit the *n'anga*, then the *n'anga* emerges as a negotiator and arbitrator between the parties, as for example in Batina's case. I will now give a few examples from village head Manesa's court books, on how the *n'anga* arbitrates in disputes.

Two brothers of the same father but different mothers, began to hate each other after the death of their father. They accused each other of being a *muroyi* (witch). Then they reported the case to the court. The chief of the court told them to visit a *n'anga*. The *n'anga* explained that the two brothers should look for another *n'anga*, because the *bvuri* present could tell who was the *muroyi*. They did not look for another *n'anga* and thus the case was not solved.

Another example of how chiefs rely on *n'anga* to arbitrate and negotiate in disputes is that of a man who had two wives when he passed away.

The son of the first wife accused the second wife of causing the death of his father (*kupumha*: to accuse somebody to be a witch). They went to a *n'anga* and the second wife appeared to be innocent. The court chief then ruled that the son should pay two head of cattle to clear the second wife's name.

A last example, is the case of a woman who married, divorced and then married another man.

The first husband became sick and passed away. His spirit was believed to come to his previous wife who lived in the homestead of her second husband. The children of the second husband's brother became sick, and he accused the brother and his wife. He reported the woman to the court. The accused and complainant went to a *n'anga* and the spirit of the first deceased husband requested a wife. Then the divorced wife of the deceased gave one of her children of her first marriage to the spirit.

The chief of the village court explained that the girl was not yet married but if she should marry then the whole bridewealth should be offered to the spirit. The chief explained that the spirit would instruct the family about the use of the money. In practice the money would be given to and would appease the first dead husband's family. If they should fail to follow the instructions, then the chief believed that the spirit would rise again.

We have seen that in cases of death and *kurova guva*, *n'anga* are important. Social pressures exist in villages to consult *n'anga*. If a person should refuse to do so s/he is immediately suspected of being a witch. It is believed that sometimes *n'anga* are afraid to tell 'the truth' of what the spirits have conveyed and will then turn to their own spirits for guidance. For example, I was told that during a *kurova guva*, the relatives of the deceased, eight men and one *vatete*, went to a *n'anga*. The *n'anga* was told by his spirits that the deceased was 'killed' by his own relatives, so it was a *ngozi* in the family. But the *n'anga* did not inform his visitors that their own relatives were the cause. It was believed that he had consulted his own spirits to tell him the future before he had handled this case. His spirits seemed to have protected him by informing him not to tell who 'killed'. In cases of illness some *n'anga* will not inform people where a *bvuri* comes from out of fear for their own lives. Thus *n'anga*, being good healers and using appropriate medicines, also need to act strategically, because their judgements as arbiters of disputes can also endanger their own lives. While this may be true, there are also other reasons for them to behave strategically. They use, reproduce and manipulate people's beliefs in bad spirits and witchcraft because these consultations constitute the work from which they make a living. Such beliefs mean money. In addition their skill in such activities and consultations brings them a degree of authority and status and it allows them to wield power.

#### 7.4 SPIRIT BELIEFS IN PRACTICE: A CONCLUSION

First we look into the classification and defining of spirits and then I explore 'the craft of controlling'.

##### Defining spirits

Spirits are part of life in African culture. Ancestral spirits will be honoured by offering them beer (*kupira*). Spirits are consulted through mediums, who mediate, arbitrate, advise, and explain illness, death and other misfortune. Women and men in Manesa village could not imagine living without honouring and consulting their spirits. Of course such beliefs and practices are changing, because social actors transform beliefs in practice due to all kind of influences. One might expect with the influence of the churches, economic development, HIV/AIDS, and government interventions, that such change would be dramatic. However,

social actors also reproduce beliefs in practice. Culture is never static as people strategically combine new and old beliefs and at the same time shape and change practice. They often do that in a way that best suits their present needs and context. Beliefs in God and (ancestral) spirits are strategically combined, and it is not only older people who reproduce the spirit beliefs. People do not always struggle with new beliefs as is sometimes assumed (see Hove et al, 1996). Old and young take advantage of several beliefs by strategically combining them as they grapple to explain difficult situations such as HIV/AIDS, poverty, land scarcity and all the disputes which emerge from those problems.

Bourdillon (1987: 247) believes that despite changes, families believe and practice traditional religion much as they have always done. He argues (285-9) that traditional religion is concerned primarily with respect for ancestral spirits, personal problems of individuals and witchcraft. Christian mission churches provide a religion that stretches beyond the limiting boundaries of kinship or chiefdom, and directly approach a God that is concerned with universal ethical norms. I would argue that people combine beliefs, or think, as Bourdillon puts it (1987: 289) 'it is best to believe it all'. From combining beliefs, the 'spirit-type' churches emerged, which Bourdillon calls 'new independent churches'. They usually practice faith healing, like the Zionist church of which Janet was a member (Chapter 3). Bourdillon (1987: 247-249) mentions two strong forces that compel people to continue practising traditional religion: 1) Fear in any danger or crisis, maybe they have neglected ancestral spirits, and people fear their powers. Traditional religion may thus be some kind of insurance against insecurity. The influence of family spirits is more often felt in times of trouble and illness and poorer people are therefore more likely to have a stronger faith in traditional religion. 2) Family ties. A person who refuses to take part in traditional rituals may find himself excluded by his kin. Since few Shona can afford adequate insurance against unemployment, sickness and old age, most must rely on their kin for sustenance in times of hardship. A person who is excluded by his kin is thus deprived of his principal form of social security.

The argument of this chapter was that people not only believe in spirits for insurance purposes and to explain and prevent misfortune (see also Bourdillon (1993: 115) and Evans-Pritchard (1937)), but they manipulate such beliefs to control others in the case of disputes and power struggles. Accusations of witchcraft and the subsequent paying of fines emerge from these power struggles and can be perceived as control measures to maintain unity in the village, family or homestead. Such control measures must have been important before government laws, and are still important measures of control even with such laws. The ways in which spirit beliefs are used and manipulated have deliberate consequences for women. Illnesses in a homestead can more easily be attributed to a daughter-in-law since she comes from outside the complex social relationships of the patrikin, and it is easier therefore to accuse her of the bad spirit. Having a bad spirit, she can be sent back to the parents if she does not fit in the husband's *dzinza* because they find her too independent, not kind enough, or lazy, in other words if they do not like her character. The bad spirit construction is also reproduced in another situation, as we saw in Chapter 2. These days, when a young husband dies, people hesitate to inherit his wife (*kugarwa nhaka*) because of the HIV/AIDS virus. People will not verbally express their thoughts about the suspected cause of death, but they will say that the wife has a bad spirit, which means she will not be inherited or her care taken on. The wife in the *kurova guva* case in this chapter was not inherited because of such thinking. The *kurova guva* ceremony took place without the inheritance of the wife.

I have argued that accusations of witchcraft can take place in all relationships where a bond exists. However, some relationships are more likely to be the focus than others in attempts to explain and understand misfortune and witchcraft. The daughter-in-law, as a woman, a wife and sister-in-law is often the most vulnerable to such accusations by husband, his sister (*vatete* to the daughter-in-law) and the co-wives of a man. The new daughter-in-law has to establish a place in the husband's *dzinza*, and that is extremely difficult. She must fit into the existing historical relations in that *dzinza*. The daughter- or sister-in-law is expected



to perform in a particular way. The husband's sister (her *vatete*) may closely watch her because she could immediately influence relations with her brother. Thus women become 'patients, that is the recipients of the acts of others' (Villareal, 1994: 218). However not all women. Women such as paternal aunts are less often the victims of witchcraft. Sometimes men have bad spirits too, but to a much lesser extent.

As I have said, the *bvuri* (bad spirit) became a mechanism to control women. *Mabvuri* spirits give women no status as other spirits do, such as healing spirit, *shavi*, and ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*). Family ancestors often choose a woman as their medium. The *zvipunha* spirits are believed to awake mainly through girls and women are therefore most involved in these rain and crop ceremonies.

Thus Ndau women and men strategically define spirits in relations to particular situations. Therefore it becomes less appropriate to classify spirits according to certain fixed characteristics, as do Lan (1985:38) and Fry (1976: 29). Lan classifies certain spirits according to whether they are benign or hostile, or are from within or outside of the lineage (*dzinza*):

Table 7.2: Classification of spirits

	Inside	Outside
Hostile	<i>Muroyi</i>	<i>Ngozi</i>
Benign	<i>Mudzimu</i>	<i>Shavi</i>

I have already indicated a *muroyi* (witch) is not a spirit, but a person who can be assisted by a bad *shavi* spirit. This also implies that a *shavi* (wandering spirit) is not only benign (e.g. a healing *shavi*) as is indicated by Lan, but can also be a hostile spirit (e.g. killing *shavi*). Of the *ngozi* (revenging spirit of the dead) Bourdillon (1987b: 268) states that '*ngozi* is usually an outsider and in some areas a *ngozi* never attacks its own family, but that it is not universally the case'. According to Ndau women and men a *ngozi* is usually a family spirit, and called *ngozi* if the family were ever involved in harming someone, related or otherwise. The family will call it a *bvuri* (bad spirit) when it is an unknown spirit to them, which means the killing was done by others and the spirit is sent (cast) on to them by the 'killer'. Lan (1985) and Bourdillon (1987) do not distinguish among *bvuri*. Lan states that a *mudzimu* (ancestral spirit) is benign. Ndau women and men said that a *mudzimu* is always kind, but can be made hostile by women and men who neglect to honour it by offering beer and other things. If *vadzimu* (ancestral spirits) are not honoured they are believed to cause death and then they resemble *ngozi*. Lan, but also Fry (1976:28-29), states that a *shavi* is outside the lineage. However, a *shavi* is usually perceived as inherited and can therefore also be inside the lineage. And we have seen that a *shavi* can also be very unfriendly.

All these comments regarding the categorisation of spirits show that the contexts and specific situations as reconstructed by people must be taken into account before it can be stated that a spirit is kind or not or whether is inside or outside the lineage. Social actors use spirit beliefs and thereby shape practice in their attempts to explain and prevent death, illnesses or other difficult issues. From the cases presented, I argue that the spirit can thus be perceived as constructions used by social actors to explain difficult issues and in their disputes over wives, husbands and resources (land and money). The multiple realities, manipulations, constructions and labelling of social actors need to be considered. They use and manipulate spirit beliefs in various ways to devise strategies from which power emerges. That means that they try to control each other and resources, look for suitable explanations, and establish unity. Gluckman (1965) associates the control of spirits with the protection of good ancestral spirits, as does Bourdillon (1987). In this and previous chapters I have shown how people strategically use and reproduce beliefs in good and bad spirits in practice and thereby shape practice. People explain death through beliefs about bad-spirits, *ngozi* (angry revenging spirit), *bvuri* (bad spirit which is sent) and then put things to rights by *kupira*

(offering beer), *kuripa* (compensating). By doing so, they also reproduce witchcraft beliefs and accuse each other. The *n'anga* then emerges as the arbitrator and controller. Let us now explore these two aspects of witchcraft and the *n'anga* profession.

### The craft of controlling

I made no distinction between witchcraft and sorcery in this chapter because Nda women and men do not make such a distinction. They believe in witchcraft, and they label everything associated with bad practice that violates, threatens and kills, whether it can be seen or not, as witchcraft (*uroyi*). Therefore I defined witchcraft as any harmful threat emerging from disputes in relations, that aims to control others or problems. One may reply that such a definition disposes of the occult. However, a harmful threat is also a way of letting someone believe that bad spirits are being sent to them. Envy and jealousy appear to be the driving forces of witchcraft beliefs and practices. Women's and men's emotions and intentions appear to be similar, they concern their health, love and wealth. Witchcraft beliefs and practices emerge from power struggles related to wealth, health and love and is thus a power issue. Thus as Gluckman (1944) argues, 'witch-beliefs throw light on other problems'. Marwick (1970, 1964) perceives witchcraft as a gauge of social stress. I perceive witchcraft as the 'craft of controlling'. Those who believe a person to be a witch and label him or her accordingly, have their reasons for doing so. They also have reasons for wanting that person controlled. In reality such beliefs and practices emerge from disputes over wives, husbands and resources (money, cattle and land). With such matters at stake, people will threaten, harm and kill each other, both women and men. Men are believed to threaten more severely and women are often the accused witches in cases of illness and death.

Not all death is seen as witchcraft. For example a clear case of murder, 'Mrs X stabbed Mr Y with a knife', is not seen as having anything to do with witchcraft. In the case of the house for a spirit there were no witches, because it was not perceived as witchcraft. Those involved argued that everybody could have seen that the woman had been ill-treated, not given food and had therefore died. If there is enough evidence, such as guns, bullets, knives, or other overt bad practices, people will say it is murder without witchcraft. But when people do not understand how a person has died, and nobody can find evidence, then they say and believe that witchcraft is involved. Then there must be a witch and a *n'anga* must be consulted.

The Zimbabwe National Healers' Association (ZINATHA) proposed reforms to the Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1899. The proposed amendments, discussed in the Herald newspaper July 1996, defined a witch as a person who uses poisons, harmful charms and other means or devices to cause disease, injury or death to any person or animal or property (Mafuba, 1996). ZINATHA does not use sorcerer and defines everyone who practices witchcraft as a witch, meaning those who poison or use other means to cause disease, injury or death. Chavunduka (1994: 98) says that the people who confess to witchcraft are sane. He says (1994: 93) that anyone can be made a witch by another witch. From this chapter it also emerges that any body can be a witch, meaning any person who threatens and violates by accusing others or otherwise. That also means that those who are not a continuous threat can also be witches, because they are capable at one moment of good and at another of doing harm by violating. Thus the distinction Bourdillon (1987) made between permanent danger (witchcraft) and momentary danger (sorcery) may not be adequate. And thus taking this situation/time aspect into account, of doing good at one moment and bad the next, also applies to the *n'anga*. Thus it seems to me that the main point concerning witchcraft is not who is the witch, but when somebody is a witch. We have seen that it is often difficult because of the strategic use and manipulation of beliefs and because of different interpretations in practice, to state when somebody is a witch. In earlier days, before government intervention, judgements about witches were left to chiefs who took severe actions against them, even sentencing them to death. That is no longer allowed, but chiefs are

still expected to solve witchcraft cases in their village courts. Then they also strategically rely on *n'anga*. *N'anga* usually take into consideration old as well as recent conflicts. Therefore people prefer *n'anga* who live far away from their home. Thus *n'anga* and prophets emerge as arbiters in and controllers (*vapingi*) of conflicts. The chiefs in their courts arbitrate, but usually send conflicting parties to the *n'anga*.

*N'anga*, like chiefs (Chapter 6), but also wives and husbands (Chapter 3), must safeguard the domains of activities from which they derive their authority, identity and can wield power. Thus, in addition to being good doctors, negotiators and arbiters, they must also reproduce beliefs about witches and angry spirits to maintain their positions in the village. They will arbitrate when different parties consult them, but they will not tell them that there is no angry spirit and therefore to build it a house is not necessary, nor for a woman to marry it. No, that is not the way they advise. In Batina's witchcraft case, they will not tell the disputing parties that Batina is not a witch and subsequently send the parties home and tell them to stop troubling each other. No. It is *n'angas'* work, their profession, to reproduce and manipulate witchcraft and spirit beliefs. In addition to arbitrating between the parties in conflict, they can also contribute to troubles by perpetrating evil. For example they can give those who consult them, poison to kill somebody else. Then *n'anga* become witches themselves. Perhaps they do such things to be feared and/or in order to maintain their positions. They will assist those who consult them in different good and bad ways to earn money and make a living. They will reproduce beliefs in practice and thereby shape and change practice and thereby control people. The point is that *n'anga*, who are both women and men, help to reproduce the beliefs that women are witches and they often accuse women in the case of illness or trouble. I might also say that *n'anga* are not that gender sensitive.

Considering the cases and analysis in this chapter, we could also say that social actors live in a 'culture of fear'. They fear angry and bad spirits, and *n'anga* in particular use and reproduce those beliefs in practice. Thus villagers are captured and controlled to a certain extent by *n'anga*, but also by their own practices and beliefs produced and reproduced in practice. They visit *n'anga* in sickness and disputes to control others, but at the same time are themselves controlled. It is a vicious cycle and therefore the 'culture of fear' is difficult to escape. People try to escape it by also becoming members of churches. But bad spirit beliefs are usually reproduced in these churches and even when they are not, they cannot escape those outside the church who reproduce spirit beliefs in practice and shape practice.

Control is necessary to survival. Not only survival in food terms, but also survival of activities, identities and authorities. In the retrospect of the following chapter, I will explore this issue of survival by linking all the different chapters. We will see that livelihood, that is, making a living, implies more than food and shelter.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **RETROSPECT**

The different chapters in this book aimed to depict everyday rural life of Ndaushona women and men who make use of land in the Tawona irrigation scheme and who live in Manesa village. Three major issues emerged from the empirical material and analysis in each chapter, namely, those of survival, control and authority. Focusing on these three issues allows me to review here all the chapters simultaneously. I comment also on some additional perspectives that the study provides in the fields of gender, Shona, and irrigation.

#### **8.1 EVERYDAY LIFE: SURVIVAL, CONTROL AND AUTHORITIES**

The most important aim of social actors in everyday rural life in Zimbabwe is to survive, to secure a livelihood and the basics of food, a place to live, money, and emotional security and love, for themselves and their families. As Wallman (cited in Long 1997: 11) emphasises, livelihood is not only a matter of shelter, money and food. Livelihood also implies relations, identities, status and information. I use the embracing word livelihood because, following Long (1997: 11), I believe that:

'Livelihood best expresses the idea of individuals and groups striving to make a living, attempting to meet their various consumption and economic necessities, coping with uncertainties, responding to new opportunities, and choosing between different value positions'.

Making a living and surviving also implies competition and control over resources, positions and between and over individuals and their networks. Power and subordination emerge from social relations, and in the different fields of homestead, village, and chieftaincy. It is in these ways that specific social actors derive their authority and can wield power. Authorities in different domains come into conflict but they also complement each other. The notions of survival, control and authority in the livelihoods of women and men link the various chapters and domains of this book.

As a background chapter, the first substantive chapter dealt with social relations (Chapter 2) rather than first presenting, as many studies do, the historical and environmental setting. I started with social relations and in particular kinship and marital relations, because they are of crucial importance in the livelihoods of women and men and in understanding the nature of social life in Manesa village. People are dependent on kinship relations, particularly when they have problems, and on marital relations. They distinguish different types of marriage, which could also be perceived as a form of social security for women and men, especially when a partner dies. Then, for example, wives can be inherited or looked after, or the sister of a deceased wife can be married to the bereaved husband. The choice for particular types of marriage is changing. At present the 'runaway marriage' is most common, where the girl will already be living at the partners place before any bridewealth has been paid. Marriage patterns are also influenced by government rules and intervention. Many women and men agree with the practice of polygyny as being functional and worthwhile from the perspective of having more children and more access to labour. A minority criticises polygyny because with many wives it is difficult to survive in a context of land shortage, creating poverty in families. Polygyny also creates jealousy from which control and witchcraft struggles emerge. Customary marriage allows the practice of polygyny, civil marriage does not, and this is one of the reasons why many people still prefer customary marriage. The bridewealth practice is part of marriage. It takes many years for bridewealth payments to be completed. This is strategic and may not cause problems but it can also give rise to conflictive debt relations,

especially upon the death of one of the spouses, when the conflicting parties try to control wives and outstanding bridewealth payments. Despite these disputes, neither women nor men want the bridewealth practice abolished, because of the reciprocity involved, the proof of an established bond, and the social security of cash and cattle. Bridewealth can be seen as a part of people's survival strategy in rural areas. Cash, goods and cattle are obtained through these practices, and it gives the wife and her family a degree of control over the husband and his family. Bridewealth is also a point of discussion when there is a divorce. If a woman must return to her family then the family will demand any outstanding bridewealth from the husband's family. In the case of divorce, both husband and wife will fight for the control of children, land and goods. In divorce and court cases, wives and husbands are assisted by their respective kin. The village courts with their chiefs try to maintain unity in the village and homesteads and arbitrate in disputes in a manner that facilitates their survival and the survival of families and their social relationships. Chiefs use customary law in their courts. In the case of divorce, in terms of social security, this jurisdiction works out better for men than for women. Women, then, rely more for their survival on the community courts where presiding officers decide over the case and can impose maintenance fee. In levirate cases, women and men are constrained in their choices. The widow usually has to choose the late husband's brother. But the husband's brother may refuse to inherit the widow especially if he has already inherited other wives and it will be hard for him to survive with many different wives, families and the possibility of drought. In the case mentioned in the study, the young man also did not want to be restricted in his decisions and wanted to be free to choose his own partner. After the late husband's brother had refused, the widow also stuck to her decision not to choose another among the husbands brothers. She could rely on the pension, the irrigated land and the house of her late husband for survival. But she felt controlled by his family who were continuously watching her.

In the establishment, ending and continuation of social relations, fathers, mothers, mother's brothers and especially aunts (HZ/HFZ, and also WFZ) emerge as important negotiators and mediators. An aunt derives her authority from the domain of social and family relations and is able to wield considerable power. Sisters help brothers, but brothers also help sisters. Both kinship and affinal relations are important, though kinship relations are particularly important in a patrilineal, virilocal polygynous society where in times of trouble and conflict, wives in particular, but also husbands must rely on their natal families and networks for survival. This dimension emerged as significant in every domain and field of action in Manesa village and the Tawona irrigation scheme.

A place to live and a shelter are also of crucial importance in the livelihoods of women and men (Chapter 3). Four distinct stages in the establishment of a homestead were highlighted: the choosing and allocation of a place by the village chief; *kurova hoko*, hammering in the first peg; the building of the house itself; and finally, the *chiutsi* party. It is interesting to see in these four stages different authorities emerging: first the village chief; then the *dzinza* (patrikin) heads; third, the wives and husbands with their own gender-specific roles and activities in building; and finally the ancestors and villagers. All of them will contribute to the homestead's survival by helping in times of hardship and conflict and with other issues. Distinguishing between the different stages in the establishment of a homestead allowed one to see these relations and authorities at work.

Both women and men are perceived as heads. As heads of homesteads, fathers, husbands, and aunts (HZ/HFZ) are seen to be the authorities. Married women do not perceive themselves as heads of the homestead where they marry. But they are heads in practice. The homestead is clearly a woman's domain. In fact 'head' is not an appropriate notion in this context. The notion of 'multiple heads' is more appropriate. Subsequently, 'family' and 'homestead' emerge as multi-vocal notions, i.e. they refer to different functional groupings and different arenas of activity and control. A homestead may comprise several matrifocal households, each with a woman and her own children. This single group is involved in various areas of activity and control. In each homestead, every wife with her children derives

her authority from her own household and is a head in that specific context. But within the homestead, a woman can be in conflict or competition with other women household heads, who are also authorities over resources such as land and cash. Where conflicts exist the female authority figure of that particular 'homestead domain' will make the decisions and arbitrates in disputes. Women must struggle in situations of scarce resources to ensure that their own households within the homestead survive. To do so they take control of the management of their own resources. Husbands and wives within the homestead derive their authority from their own domains of activity. 'Outside heads', such as migrant sons and aunts are sometimes consulted in order to contribute to the survival of certain relationships. Therefore these 'outside heads' emerge as authorities through their negotiating and arbitrating roles and skills. Different authorities of a homestead compete but also complement each other and look for unity to let the homestead survive.

In everyday rural livelihoods, agriculture means food. Irrigated agriculture, if one has access to land and water, means food and cash. I mention in Chapter 4 that water distribution in the Tawona irrigation scheme usually runs smoothly. Conflicts about water distribution only emerge when Agritex announces its planting date for winter tomatoes, when everyone must transplant seedlings and will therefore need water at the same moment. Chapter 4 highlights how social actors, especially women and their families, must survive from the agricultural produce they grow. They devise various strategies to achieve this. They diversify cultivation practices on their plots in the irrigation scheme by planting different large-(>0,2ha) and smaller-scale (<0,2 ha) crops during the same season on different types of land. Secondly, women farmers try to shape and control the value of agricultural produce and are successful in doing so to a certain extent. In the latter context, I discussed commoditization in the light of Long's comment (1997: 235) that it 'constitutes a label we apply to ongoing processes [...] it is more a way of looking at things than a clearly defined category of things'. Hence products are in some contexts attributed with exchange value, whilst in other contexts they are not. Thus the same thing is sometimes a commodity, and sometimes not. For example, women farmers shape the value of agricultural produce through consumption, through gift giving and through barter relations. Gifts are strategically used in various ways to maintain networks of social relations. The equivalence of goods in barter relations is established through notions of cash, volumetric size, and weight. The establishment of such equivalence is based more on general knowledge and therefore does not need much negotiation. Negotiations become more prominent in the case of sales, when negotiations take place over prices. However, when it comes to sales to the food processing companies, neither women nor men farmers can influence the price. Such companies simply go to other irrigation schemes if farmers in the Tawona scheme do not accept their price for winter tomatoes. Farmers can negotiate with private buyers about the price of tomatoes, especially at the beginning of the season. Later in the season private buyers no longer want to buy for cash, but come with goods to barter. Women farmers manage to a large extent to control the potential value of agricultural produce by deciding on its allocation, to a neighbour, for example, or to the food processing companies or private buyers. The cash value realised from tomato sales is individually controlled by women and also collectively, i.e. with their husbands, when they are there. It is social actors, that is, women farmers, companies, and traders who shape and control the value of produce and help construct markets.

The agricultural produce comes from the land (Chapter 5). Therefore land is the most necessary resource in people's attempts to survive. People will try by all the means available to them to control irrigated land. In a patrilineal society with virilocal marriages women usually have the undisputed right to use land, but not to register the land in their own names. They devise various strategies to register land in their own right. A considerable number of women manage to do so judging from the fact that 38% of the registered plot holders in the Tawona irrigation scheme are women. However, in the registration process for land in a new irrigation scheme the percentage of women registered was low (14%), and women need again to devise strategies to gain the right to register on such land. If women were given the choice,

they would have the land registered in their own name, then in marital conflicts they would have the legal right to control the land and its produce.

But control over land is couched in ambiguities. Agritex officials say that they control the land in the irrigation scheme and they try to manipulate the registration process through choosing the selection criteria. Agritex officials carefully safeguard their domain of activities in the irrigation scheme, from which they derive authority and wield power. The position in the irrigation scheme ensures their means of survival and it is therefore important that they keep control of it. To do so they deny the councillor and chiefs their role in crucial decision-making. The councillor is an absent authority in the land domain, for the chiefs in their turn also deny him a role in their decision-making over land and ancestors. Handing over irrigation schemes to farmers not only implies that Agritex can hand over all the costs of the scheme, it also means that Agritex officials must hand over control. Control will pass to the farmers' Irrigation Management Committee and to the village chiefs. Women farmers, however, prefer Agritex officials to arbitrate over irrigated land. Outside arbiters are perceived as more neutral.

Chapter 6 looks at the different domains of traditional authority within the village and chieftaincy. Chiefs derive authority from specific domains within the village, such as the control of land and their ancestors. They also derive a degree of authority from the roles they have long played for colonial government and at present chiefs are government officials in local government. Within the village, the councillor also derives authority from government recognition and development activities. Women spirit mediums in the chieftaincy derive their authority from the ancestors who speak through them. When they arbitrate and mediate between various social actors, they use and manipulate spirit beliefs, ensuring the survival of their own 'domain' and at the same time helping government and chieftaincy 'domains' to survive. The woman spirit medium of Makopa emerged as a mediator between government officials and local authorities. All these social actors, government officials, local authorities and spirit mediums have their rights to practice and derive their authority from specific domains in which they wield power.

The importance of traditional authorities was also highlighted in the struggles over land within the government intervention programme that brought the constructing of a new irrigation scheme. Since a sacred forest was in the designated area, the struggle for irrigated plots (Chapter 5) culminated in a struggle over the rightful ownership and authority of Manesa village and its area (Chapter 6). The woman spirit medium emerged as an arbitrator in that struggle. Beliefs were important in shaping decision-making over the ownership of the Manesa village area, beliefs that assert that those, whose ancestors bring the rain, own the land. It implied that those who had arrived first in the area were the 'owners' of land and village and were therefore the rightful authority in the village. The same struggles over rightful authority took place between the Mutema and Musikavanhu chieftaincies. Historical issues related to chieftaincies, villages and resettlement are important issues at present and influence social relations in Manesa village. Spirit mediums of the chieftaincy are the mediums of royal ancestral spirits, whose main aim is, together with the chiefs, as authorities, to keep the chieftaincy united, thus ensuring its survival. Spirit beliefs and practice constitute both an unconscious habitus as well a strategic means for exerting control in this situation.

Beliefs in general, whether in good or bad spirits (Chapter 7) help people to survive. Ceremonies and beliefs around spirits are of help and provide comfort in difficult situations such as illness, death and conflict. People use their spirit and witchcraft beliefs in practice, in order to understand, prevent and control. But they also continue to use them because it is difficult to escape from it because of the interests and actions of others and the fear of the consequences should they abandon such beliefs. *N'anga*, are mediums of *shave*, or family ancestral spirits. *N'anga* use and manipulate spirit beliefs in practice, but they also use and manipulate witchcraft beliefs. They do so to make a living and to survive. They hand out efficient treatments and also advise people who ask for their help in controlling others. Using and manipulating bad spirit and witchcraft beliefs also emerges from the practice of polygyny

and from poverty. Both women and men are greatly concerned about their health, wealth and social relationships and try to achieve control over these by several means including the use of bad spirit and witchcraft beliefs. They use them to gain an understanding of the problems and other misfortune they face, and to resolve those problems and prevent further problems from arising. They consult *n'anga* to act as arbitrators and negotiators for them. *N'anga* will do so but will also use their position strategically to keep control over the domain from which they derive authority and a living.

Those who are important negotiators, mediators and arbitrators are authorities in their own domains. They are the spirit mediums of chieftaincies, the *n'anga*, the aunts, uncles, husbands and wives. The spirit medium of the chieftaincy is a 'go between' for government and chieftaincy. *Vatete* (aunt; HFZ/HZ) and *sekuru* (uncle; MB) are the 'go between' of partners in relationships and between the different parties who negotiate over bridewealth. *N'anga* mediate and negotiate in disputes. Thus Ndau-Shona society is a complex whole of different beliefs, practices, values and norms and different authorities and therefore hierarchies among social actors. Hierarchies exist in kinship relations, where *maiguru*, elders such as mother's sister and father's brother's wife have authority over *mainini* (younger MZ; younger FBW) and the same for father's brothers. There are hierarchies within homesteads, lineages, villages, chieftaincies, among spirit mediums and *n'anga* (African doctors), and government officials. All social actors are constantly producing, reproducing and transforming to a degree their beliefs and practices, trying to resist or bring about change to protect the 'domains' from which they derive authority and in which they can wield power. All social actors have their reasons for sticking to some things and wanting to change others. They try to make situations more favourable to themselves, and not everyone will always manage to do so in the different and often conflicting interests of different individuals and groups. But these different interests are not always in conflict, they can also complement each other.

## 8.2 GENDER AND SHONA

Let us now explore some additional perspectives that the study provided in the fields of gender, Shona and irrigation. In the introduction (Chapter 1) I referred to a male bias in gender and Shona studies. Men had usually been approached as informants, and women were considered as subordinate to men, as researchers assumed asymmetries to be analogous to their own cultural experience (Moore, 1988). I argued also that theoretical gender perspectives and conventional models can likewise shape the outcome of studies. And although as Leonardo (1991) argues, a correction of this male bias was started in the 1970's, in recent gender and Shona literature such a male bias still can be found. As a consequence, women are depicted as passive social actors or victims of patriarchal structures, or women are put in a separate section and therefore treated separately from the rest. However, by using an actor-oriented approach with case studies and research techniques such as situational analysis, this study gives some additional perspectives regarding gender, the Shona and irrigation.

### *Shapers of practice and users of norms and values*

This study shows how social actors, be they women farmers, government officials, chiefs, husbands, traders or spirit mediums, shape and transform the world in which they live, thereby enabling and restricting each other. It shows how women and men use, change, reproduce, bend and manipulate beliefs, rules, norms and value frames (discursive forms) in practice, while at the same time they shape practice and assign meaning, usually for their own survival, interests or projects. In Chapter 2, social actors shape practices such as marriage, bridewealth, levirate, and divorce. I use the notion of practice and not of institutions, because institutions obscure too much the dynamic aspects of the individuals who shape marriage, bridewealth levirate and divorce and thereby create diversity. For example, all bridewealth



payment arrangements differ. Negotiators, stages and payments are different, though these practices are also governed by larger frames of meaning and action. In levirate and divorce cases women and men make their own decisions for a variety of reasons, emotions and aims. Chapter 3 shows us how such notions of 'patriarchal family structures' are a too simple and conventional way of looking at things. Reality is more complex than that, with many heads and authorities who complement, but also oppose each other. Chapter 4 explores how women are important value shapers as they negotiate potential and realised value. In Chapter 5, many social actors struggle over land, but women also clearly emerge as strategic actors, in their attempts to get hold of and control irrigated land. Chapter 6 also shows women as negotiators in the political domain, shaping practices and power struggles. Chapter 7 shows how social actors use spirit and witchcraft beliefs in practice. And because Ndaou women are important in many fields and domains of everyday life, they are seen also to reproduce and transform norms and value frames in practice. Thus women themselves also reproduce dominant discourses in practice. It becomes difficult from such a position to then perceive women as victims of patriarchal family structures and so forth.

### *Domain maintainers*

Every social actor is involved in particular activities and social relations that reproduce certain values. They are active in specific domains and derive authority from those domains. Social actors will resist and act and devise strategies to maintain their domains when they feel their authority threatened. Authorities in a homestead or village for example, struggle over symbolic boundaries, but they also complement each other. Ndaou-Shona women are active in many different domains and fields and thus derive their authority in different ways. I should not hesitate to point out that women are often more important in practice than men among the Ndaou people. Women are important negotiators in relations. They are important authorities in homesteads. They are very important in the irrigation scheme, as they are the main cultivators, value shapers and managers of the scheme. They are persistent fighters over land issues. They are important political arbitrators and negotiators. They are important *n'anga*, and important reproducers and transformers of spirit and witchcraft beliefs.

### *Gender identities*

Women and men derive their gender identities from specific situations and domains, from particular relations and networks, through particular issues and age. We are therefore dealing with a multiplicity of identities. This means that gender identities continuously change, depending with whom a person is interacting, where and about what. It implies an enormous diversity in the wielding and yielding of power. Ardener (1975, in Moore 1988) introduces us to the theory of muted groups. She tells us that 'The dominant groups in society generate and control the dominant modes of expression. Muted groups are silenced by the structures of dominance, and if they wish to express themselves they are forced to do so through the dominant modes of expression and ideologies. Women may speak, but remain muted'. The present study shows that there are so many different situations and networks of relations of which women are a part and have their authority and a voice in negotiating, that such a theory of muted groups becomes too generalised.

### *Power and room for manoeuvre*

Women can be subordinated in certain situations, in certain relationships or in relation to certain topics. However, as emerged in the different chapters, and as Villarreal (1994) points out, subordination is a difficult state of affairs. She argues that subordination does not imply a zero-sum process whereby those who yield are necessarily powerless. She also argues that power is fluid. Arce et al (1994) maintain that each individual is a locus of a complex set of social relations. Following those perspectives it becomes difficult to talk about 'the position' or 'the role' of women, because positions and roles constantly change, depending on with whom, about what and where social actors interact. It is also difficult to make generalisations

about whether the position of women improves or deteriorates, for the same reason. It may be both when different relations and contexts are taken into account. Position, power, subordination, domination and hierarchies are not static, but change in time.

In each field, thus each chapter, power struggles emerged. Power is an outcome and has very much to do with room for manoeuvre. People's room for manoeuvre is continuously under threat, namely by the beliefs and actions of others in past and present and the rules and laws emerging from those actions and beliefs; and by the use of specific normative and value frames in action. Some people may live in continuous fear or continuous land shortage. But in those restricted circumstances people do their utmost best to survive, enabled by some, constrained by others and by laws and rules. Women do not always have a restricted room for manoeuvre. Hence, women are not always 'the weak', who can only fight with 'some weapons' (see Villarreal in Booth, 1994). Women, like men have, a room for manoeuvre which they also partly construct themselves. Women do not only wield power by manipulation, subordination and compliance, but also actively wield power by dominating and following the same strategies as men do. All social actors, whether women or men, try to maintain a good room for manoeuvre. Whether they manage to succeed may be different for women and men. Hence, gender relations are unequal, but not always in the disadvantage of women as we have seen. Women can change ideas and social actions, but sometimes that is difficult, due to virilocal marriage, access to resources and certain beliefs, rules and laws. In addition, many women do not want to be labelled deviant and therefore decide to travel on the road where the majority is travelling. Thus women also accommodate, because they: want to maintain their domains of activities; do not want to be labelled deviant; want to protect or want to be protected; want to satisfy or being satisfied. Perceiving women as authorities also implies that we have to acknowledge that women themselves reproduce and transform the world in which they live. Then a thorny issue emerges and that is that women as strategic social actors also restrict the room of manoeuvre of other women, by for example looking after and choosing the sides of their fathers, husbands, sons and brothers. And it are these men who strategically make use of women's decisions, authorities, strength and activities.

African women in the rural context of Manesa village in Mutema chieftaincy emphasized that they face difficulties (*zvakaoma*) and that some of these difficulties are heavy. But they said that they stand for the difficulties, because difficulties need women to solve them. These difficulties could refer to a restricted room of manoeuvre and also to subordination sometimes. However, they are able to solve many difficulties and they stand for the difficulties. That shows the strength and the central place of women in rural life. It also shows that women, even in their restricted room for manoeuvre, derive authority and are able to wield power. Besides that, not every situation is difficult. Thus there are also relations and domains of activities where they are less restricted.

#### *Qualitative and quantitative research*

Statistical figures based on quantitative research show women usually have less resources, worse access to resources, a higher labour load etc. One might add that few women are important in some fields, as for example in the political field. Quantitative research provides figures that are frequently used to say something about the position of women. However, it should not always be quantity that gets emphasis. It is perhaps less appropriate to demonstrate that women lag behind by using quantitative figures. The fact that position, authority, gender identities and power are continuously changing make them more a matter for qualitative analysis. It may be more useful or certainly as important to show how social actors use, reproduce, transform and manipulate beliefs, rules, normative and value frames in practice. We are then in a better position to show how and where women shape practice and from which authority and gender identities their power can be derived and grow.

### 8.3 IRRIGATION AND GENDER

I argued in the introduction that research related to gender and irrigation in Zimbabwe was largely quantitative in nature. The emphasis was that women have more work due to irrigation and have less access to land and that therefore the position of women had deteriorated in relation to land and labour. Chapter 4 shows that women indeed do most of the work, but there is also another side, i.e. they are value shapers, making decisions about the potential value and gaining benefits from the realised value from large- and small-scale crops. Related to land in Tawona irrigation scheme, the plot holders are also women (38%) and women actively devise strategies to register their names on plots. However, in the land sphere women have to fight hard. In the new irrigation scheme, only 14% of the potentially registered farmers for new irrigated plots were women. But women will be the users of the irrigated land and most likely the 14% will increase as time goes by as they succeed in strategies to get their names registered.

Irrigation studies and literature on an international scale emphasize the marginalisation of women in irrigation interventions. This is no doubt true to a certain extent in the context of enormous rice irrigation schemes. Marginalisation was then perceived as those processes, which push women out of the sectors of the production process, which wield power, towards the periphery of the subsistence and informal sector and onto the margins of the market economy. However, in the context of Manesa village and Ndau women in the smallholder Tawona irrigation scheme of 169 hectare, the opposite of marginalisation has been the result. Far from being pushed out, women have gained new grounds or domains from which they wield power. These new grounds are related to cultivation practices, crops, negotiating value, obtaining and holding land and water, the management of the irrigation scheme and extension. This shows that in contradiction to existing gender-irrigation studies, women are not passive social actors, but shape government interventions and try by all means to benefit from them.

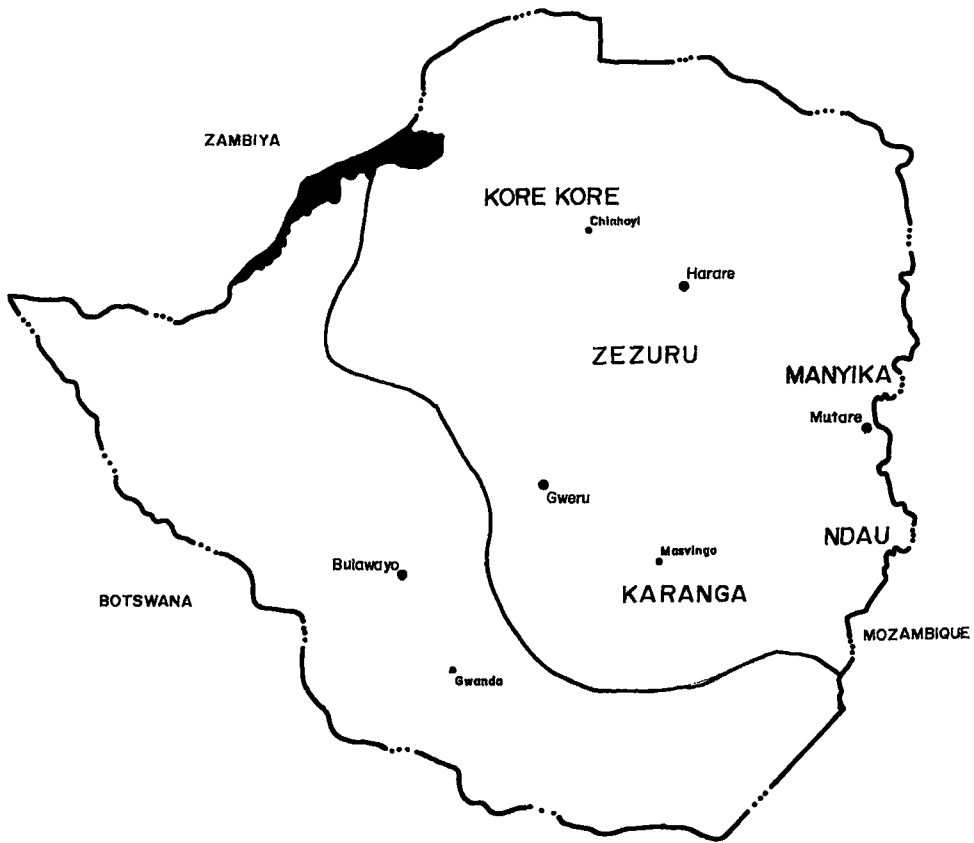
But irrigation interventions not only influence the availability of food and cash, workload and access to land. When I explored kinship and marital relations, irrigation clearly emerged as an issue. The first source for bridewealth payments is irrigated agriculture. Access to irrigated land does not necessarily increase bridewealth but it appears to have a bearing on the increase in polygynous marriages among irrigated plot holders. Irrigated land is also one of the issues at stake in divorce. Maintenance settlements can mean half of the irrigated plot, but men are not very willing to give a way half of such an important resource. In levirate cases irrigation also has an indirect impact. When a young widow has access to an irrigated plot, it can influence her decision about levirate. She may choose independence since with a plot she can maintain herself and her children. On the other hand, it may make a more desirable proposition for inheritance. The brother's husband could then maintain a bigger family. A government irrigation scheme is moulded by social actors, who slot it into their patterns of social relations, use it in bridewealth, marriage, divorce and levirate, and more generally speaking into the practices of their everyday life.

## List of Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### ZIMBABWE SHONA GROUPS

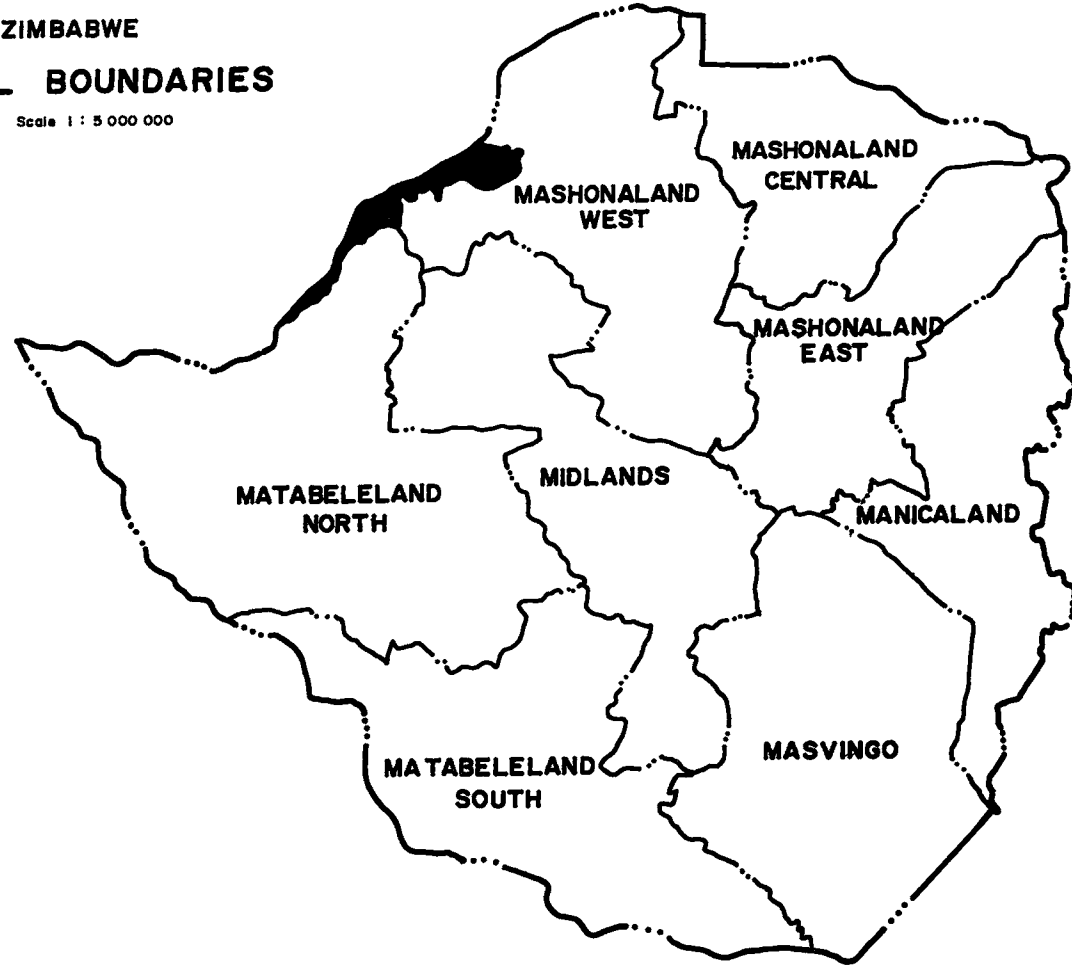
Scale 1 : 5 000 000



SHONA DIALECTS	CHIEF CENTRES	SOUTH AFRICA
KARANGA . . . . .	Gweru, Masvingo.	
KORE KORE . . . . .	Guruve, Mt. Darwin	
MANYIKA . . . . .	Mutare	
NDAU . . . . .	Chipinge	
ZEZURU . . . . .	Harare	

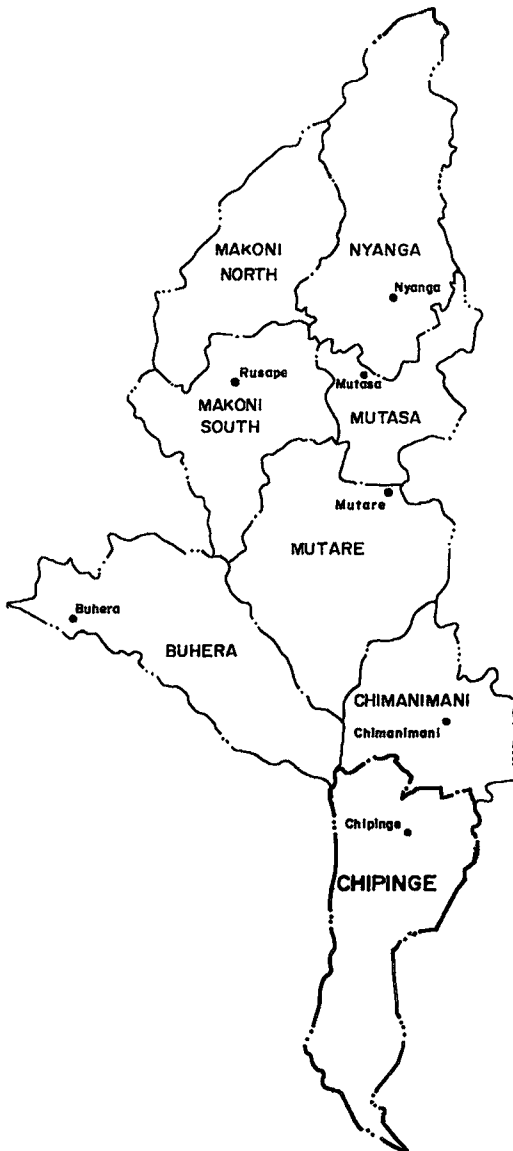
N.B. In the west, Shona and Ndebele Speakers are intermingled.

**ZIMBABWE**  
**PROVINCIAL BOUNDARIES**  
Scale 1 : 5 000 000

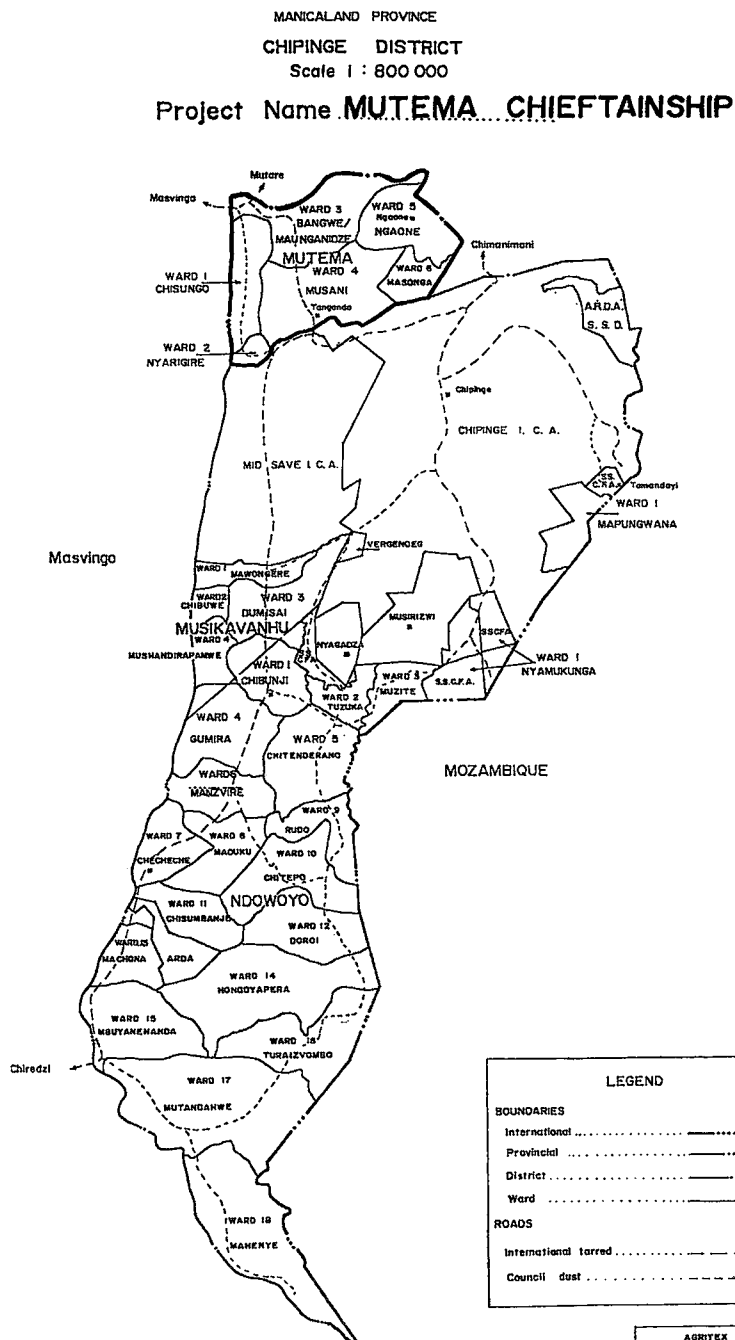


Appendix 3

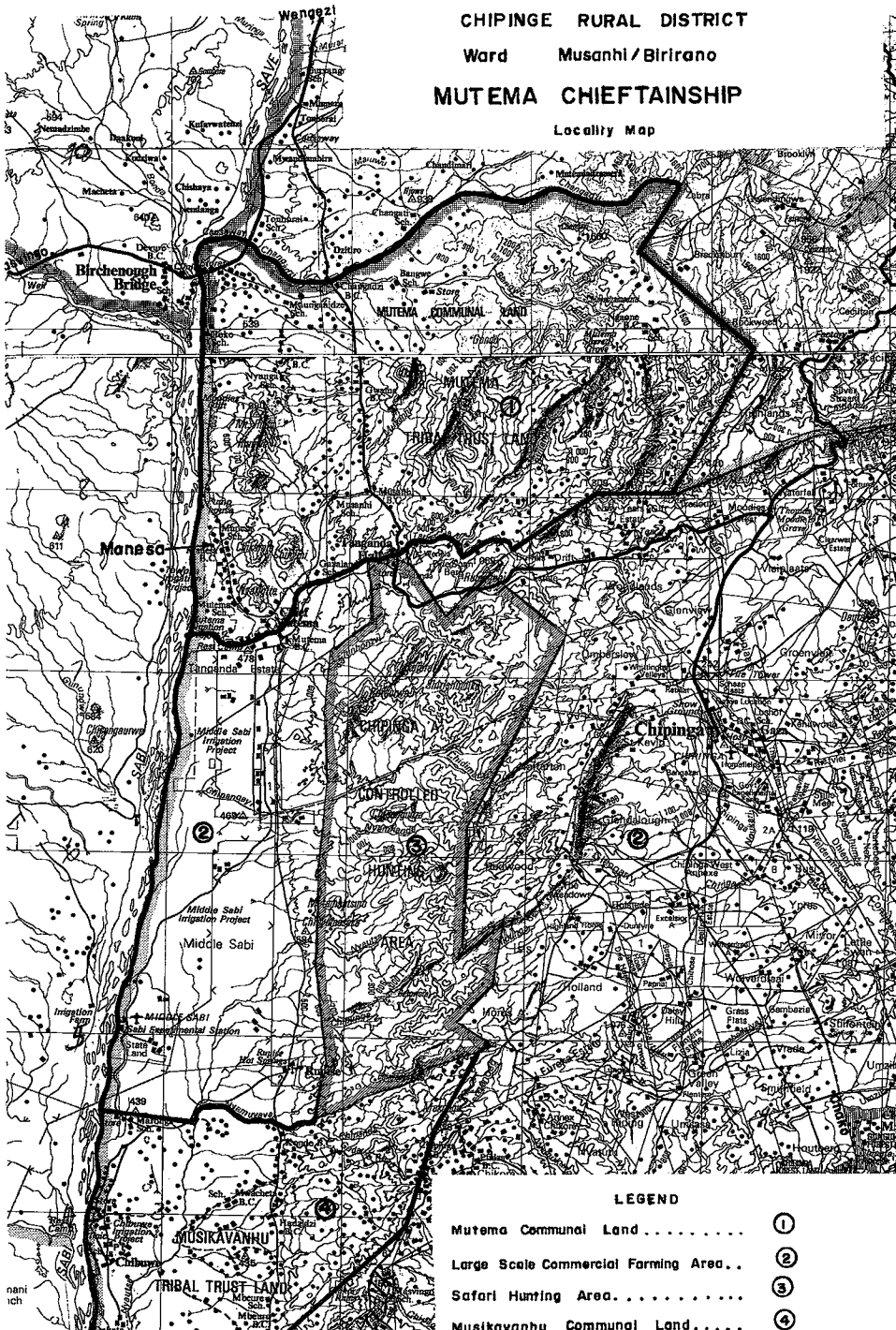
MANICALAND PROVINCE



## Appendix 4

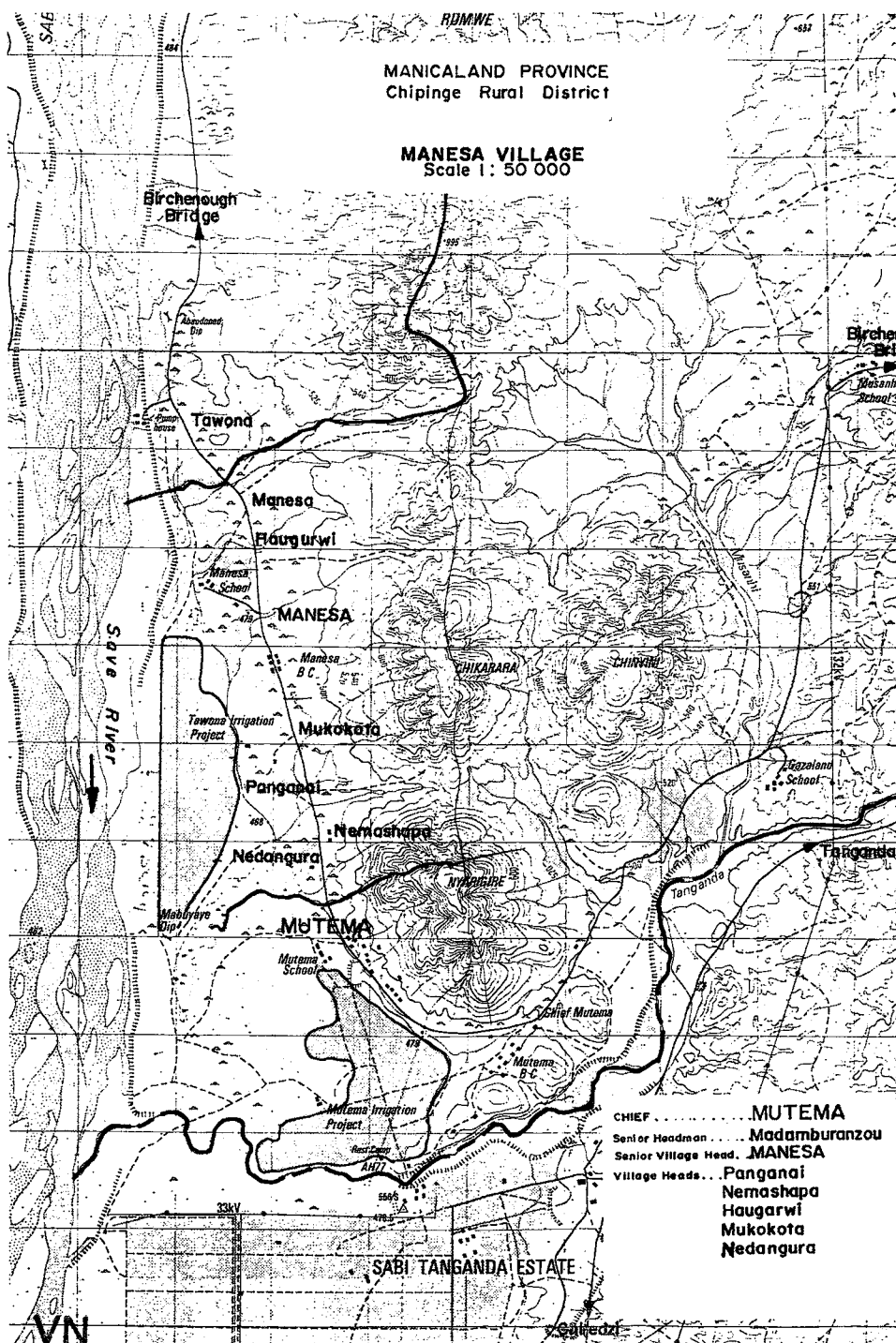


Appendix 5

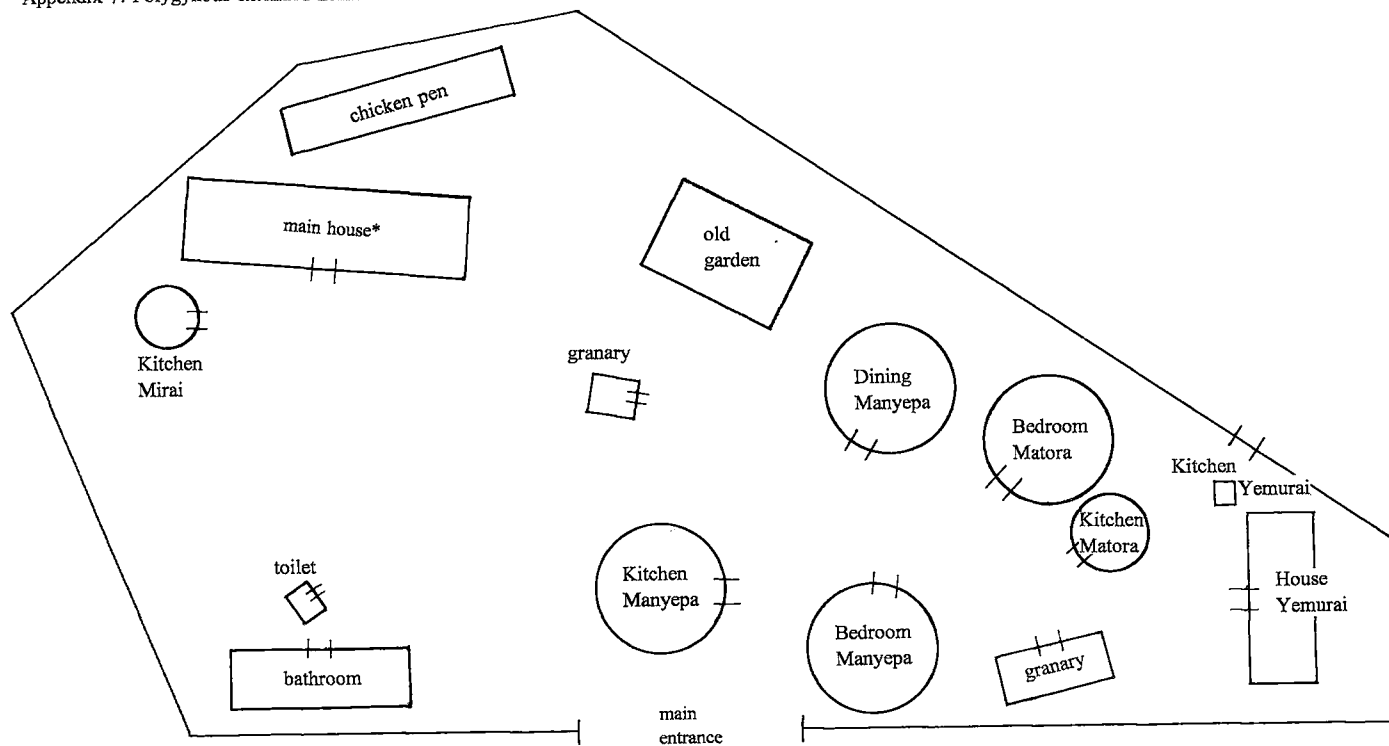




## Appendix 6



Appendix 7: Polygynous extended homestead

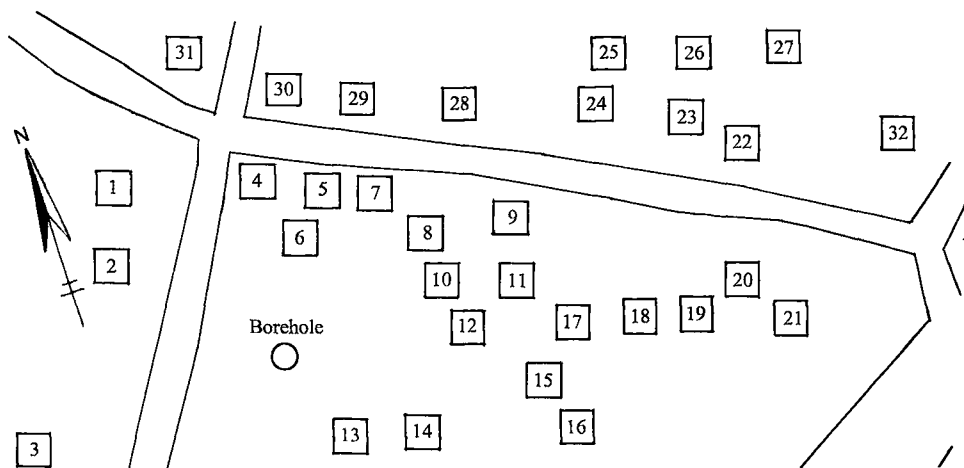


\*Main house:

- men's dining and lounge
- bedrooms of Mirai, Sarudzai, Maona and Netsai

## Appendix 8

Appendix 8: Some of the relationships between Abraham's nuclear homestead (8) and the surrounding homesteads



## Homestead-number

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.
- 21.
- 22.
- 23.
- 24.
- 25.
- 26.
- 27.
- 28.
- 29.
- 30.
- 31.
- 32.

## Relationship with Abraham (homestead number 8)

- Not related
- Not related
- Not related
- First wife of homestead 4 is D of FB  
WB married D from homestead 4  
MBS (*sekuru*)  
Parents of BW (same mother/same father)  
MZ  
ego: Abraham  
FB married D from homestead 9  
B (different mothers/same father)  
B (different mothers/same father)  
FZ  
not related  
B married Z from homestead 14  
FBS  
H of homestead 16 is married to FZD  
Not related  
B (different mothers)  
M and 2 FW's and FZ  
FZDD  
B (different mothers/same father)  
B (different mothers/same father)  
B (different mothers/same father)  
B (different mothers/same father)  
BSW  
MZS  
B married Z of homestead 27  
FZS  
FZH and F married daughter of homestead 29  
FZ children  
Not related  
FBS

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Enumerator: ..... Date: ..... Scheme: .....

Village: .....

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

A. Farmer name ..... Sex ..... Age .....

Place of origin .....

If male, number of wives .....

If female, Married Yes ..... No .....

If yes, is husband on farm? Yes ..... No .....

Divorced/widowed .....

B. People Resident on the Farm (including above-mentioned)

Children:

< 9 years: ..... 9-13 years: ..... 14-18 years: .....

Adults:

Males: ..... Females: ..... Old/infirm: ..... Working away: .....

Number of people resident on farm with significant off-farm employment:

..... During which period of year? .....

C. Education

number of years in school (head of household): .....

2. FARMING EXPERIENCE

Trained master farmer: Yes: ..... No: .....

How long have you been involved in farming? (years with own farm): .....

If resettled: size of old farm (ha): .....

Did you use irrigation farming? Yes: ..... No: .....

If yes, number of years: .....

Type of irrigation: Sprinkler: ..... Surface: ..... Other: .....

Crops irrigated: 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 .....

3. PERCEPTIONS ON IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT

1. Does your dryland holding fall within the proposed scheme? Yes: ..... No: .....

If yes, are you prepared to move if allocated another holding of equal size:

Yes: ..... No: .....

2. Would you like to give up dryland cultivation and participate fully in irrigation?

Yes: ..... No: .....

3. What crops would you like to grow under irrigation:

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

4. ....

5. ....

6. ....

If vegetable crops are included, where would you sell the produce: .....

.....

What means of transport would you use to transport the produce ? .....

at what cost (\$/tonne)? .....

4. Would you utilise APC to acquire inputs needed in irrigated agriculture?

Yes: ..... No: .....

If no, then where would you get the inputs from? .....

Present vegetable garden

Size of vegetable garden: .....

Crops: 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 .....

Type of irrigation: Sprinkler: ..... Surface: ..... Hose: .....

Other: .....

Water source: River: ..... Stream: ..... Dam: ..... Borehole: .....

Is produce for: Market: ..... H/consumption: ..... Both .....

Estimated monthly income (\$): .....

Inventory and practices

(Give number)

Plough oxen: ..... Other adult cattle: ..... Calves:

.....

Donkeys: ..... Pigs: ..... Sheep: ..... Goats: .....

Poultry: .....

Farm Implements:

Plough ..... Scotchcarts: ..... Cultivators .....

Harrows: ..... Planters: ..... Ridgers: .....

Tractors: ..... Other: .....

Do you plough yourself? Yes: ..... No: ..... Partially: .....

If no, who ploughs for you? .....

Cost (\$/ha): .....

Do you use AFC seasonal loans? Yes: ..... No: .....

Do you receive inputs in time? Yes: ..... No: .....

Comments: .....

.....

.....

4. CROP PRODUCTION ON DRYLAND

CROP						TOTAL
VARIETY						
OUTPUT Indicate unit						
AREA (ha)						
CALCULATE yield/ha						Should tally with dryland holding
FERTILISER: Indicate type and quantity	Type Quan	Type Quan	Type Quan	Type Quan	Type Quan	
TRANSPORT Cost/bag						
CHEMICALS: Indicate type and quantity	Type Quan	Type Quan	Type Quan	Type Quan	Type Quan	
MARKET where crop sold						
QUANTITY sold: Indicate unit						
AVERAGE price/unit						
TRANSPORT Cost to market/unit						

Present dryland holding (ha): .....

Fallow area (ha): .....

Distance from homestead (km): .....

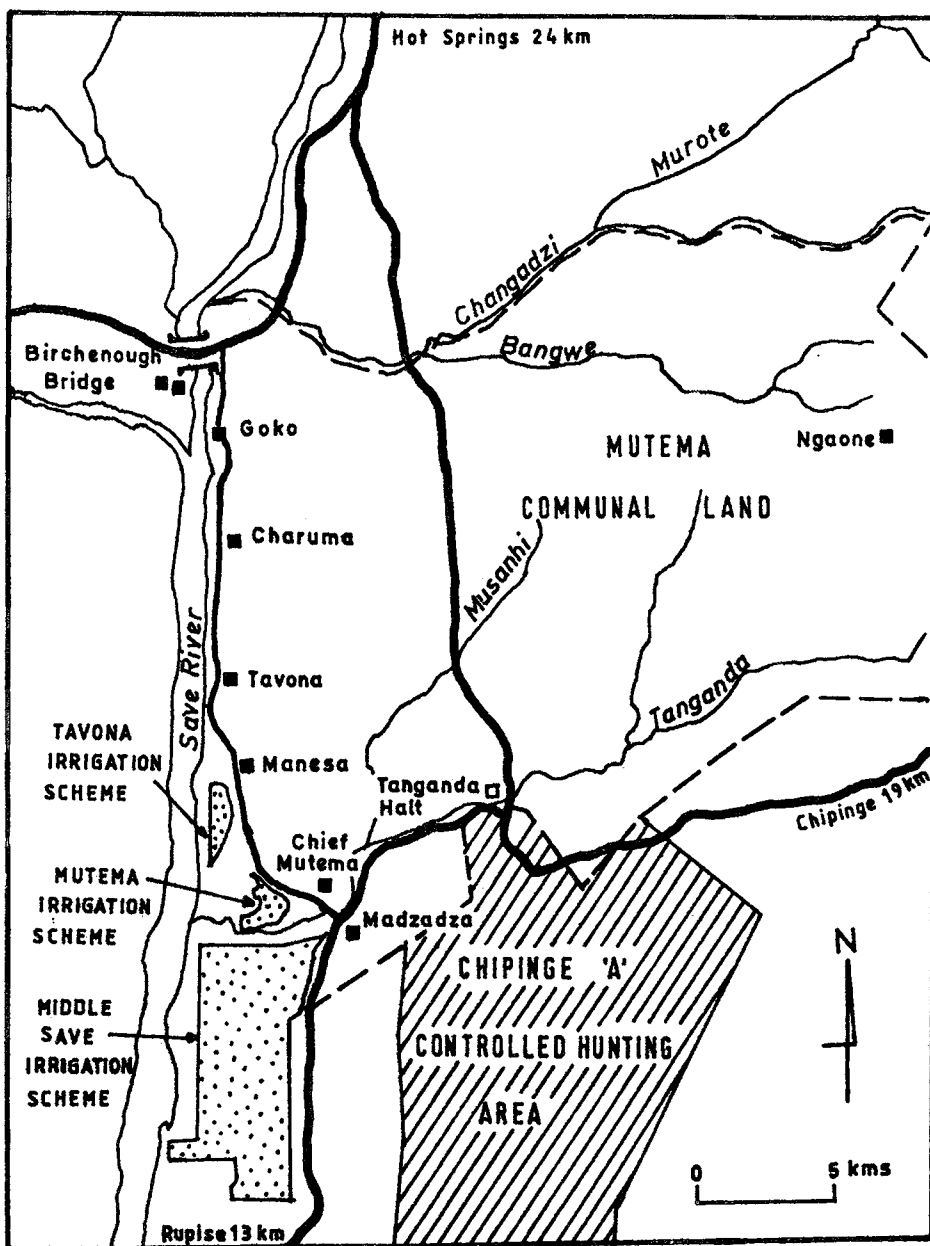
## Appendix 10

Five lists of Paramount chiefs of the Mutema chieftaincy (Vijhuizen and Makora, forthcoming)

MEREDITH (1903)	RENNIE (1973); Estimated Dates	District Administrator (1996; Government)	MUTEMA CHIEF (1995)	WOMAN SPIRIT MEDIUM OF MAKOPA (1996)
1. Shiriyedenga	Chiphaphami; 1678-1705 Shiriyedenga	Shiriyedenga	1. Shiriyedenga	Shiriyedenga
2. Chikanda	Chikanda; 1705-1732	Chikanda	2. Chikanda Fekura	n.a (not asked)
3. Chinyongo	Chihongo	Chinongo	3. Chiongo Chembire	n.a
4. Furidzo	Muriwomutsa	Muriwomutsva	4. Muriro Mutsva	n.a
5. Bindu	Furidzo	Furidzo	5. Furidzo	n.a
6. Muriwumcha	Bindu	Bindu	6. Bindura Uta	n.a
7. Mutsatsike	Nyaziro Mutsasike	Nyazviro	7. Mutsatsiki	n.a
8. Nyagoya	Nyagoya; 1732-1759	Nyagoya	8. Nyagoya	n.a
9. Dengura	Dengura; 1759-1786	Dengura	9. Dengura	n.a
10. Makopa	Makopa; 1786-1813	Makopa	10. Makopa	n.a
11. Sawurozi	Chikomba Saurozvi 1813-1840	Chikomba	11. Chikomba Charipirwa	n.a
12. Matsika- chando	Matsika- chando 1840-1881	Matsikachombo	12. Marigo Chando	n.a
13. Munodani	13. Munodani; 1881-1923	13. Munodani	13. Munodani Shambaririmugura	13. Munodani
	14. Zarura; 1925-1933	14. Zarura	14. Muzura	14. Zarura and Mwatuma
	15. Mwatuma; 1934-?	15. Mwatuma	15. Zarura	15. Mwatuma
	16. Gadzayi; ? -1957	16. Gadzayi	16. Mwatuma	16. Gadzayi
	17. Madzongonya; 1957-?	17. Mwadzongonya	17. Gadzai	17. Mwadzongonya first with Chamwakaona and later with Mwapinga
		18. Mwanema ?-1992	18. Mwadzongonya	18. Mwanema; the whole period with Mapipana; and Mwaneseni
		19. Sionani 1996-	19. Mwanema ?- 1992	19. Siwonani and ???
			20. Siwonani 1996-	

## Appendix 11

## LOCATION OF RESEARCH AREA



## GLOSSARY OF WORDS, EXPRESSIONS AND ACRONYMS

<i>ambuya:</i>	grandmother and aunt (FM; MM, MBW)
<i>baba:</i>	father (F; FB)
<i>babamukuru:</i>	elder brother of father or husband
<i>babamunini:</i>	younger brother of father or husband
<i>babakadzi:</i>	paternal aunt (FZ/HFZ); lit: female father
<i>barika:</i>	polygyny
<i>bonde:</i>	sleeping mat of reed
<i>bvuri:</i>	casted bad spirit
<i>chefu:</i>	poison
<i>chete:</i>	only
<i>chidao:</i>	sub-clan
<i>chidziro:</i>	minor wall poles
<i>chigara mapfiwa:</i>	to inherit the fireplace/kitchen (one of the different types of marriages)
<i>chikwerete:</i>	debt
<i>chikwambo:</i>	revenging spirit ( <i>ngozi</i> ) of a stranger
<i>chipanda:</i>	parents allocate their received daughter's bridewealth to the payments of the son's bridewealth
<i>chipo</i>	gift or present
<i>chipunha:</i>	female <i>shave</i> spirit for crops and rain
<i>chitupa:</i>	identity card or any identification certificate
<i>chiutsi:</i>	smoke
<i>chirombo:</i>	<i>shave</i> spirit of an animal
<i>chivanhu:</i>	culture of human beings
<i>chizvarwa:</i>	place of birth
<i>chokwadi:</i>	truly
<i>danga:</i>	cattle paid during second or third bridewealth payment stage. <i>Danga</i> is also a kraal (a place where livestock is kept)
<i>dare:</i>	court
<i>dhlwayo:</i>	termites (totem of clan)
<i>dhunduru:</i>	0,04 hectare
<i>doro:</i>	beer
<i>dube:</i>	zebra (totem of clan)
<i>dumburanzou:</i>	headman
<i>dzimba:</i>	houses
<i>dzinza:</i>	patrikin or patri-lineage
<i>dzviti:</i>	lit: warrior; good <i>shave</i> spirit for healing
<i>fodya:</i>	snuff
<i>gata:</i>	gathered money to consult a <i>n'anga</i>
<i>godo:</i>	jealousy/envy
<i>go-go-goi:</i>	knock-knock-knock
<i>gova:</i>	dry-river-valley
<i>gumbo:</i>	leg (totem of sub-clan)
<i>gupuro:</i>	divorce token
<i>hakata:</i>	divining bones
<i>hama:</i>	relative or relatives
<i>hari:</i>	claypot
<i>hasha:</i>	long thin sticks
<i>hozi:</i>	granary
<i>humwe:</i>	people come to work and after that they eat ('work party')
<i>hungwe:</i>	guinea fowl (totem of clan)



<i>hurumende:</i>	government
<i>imba:</i>	house
<i>kubatana:</i>	to be united
<i>kubatanidza:</i>	to unite
<i>kubatsira:</i>	to help/to assist
<i>kubatsirana:</i>	to help each other
<i>kubika:</i>	to cook
<i>kubvisa:</i>	to remove
<i>kubvuma:</i>	to agree
<i>kubvunzira:</i>	to request
<i>kuchengeta:</i>	to look after
<i>kuchinjanisa:</i>	to barter
<i>kudira:</i>	to name an animal after a deceased person
<i>kudzadza:</i>	to come down/to fulfil/to fill up
<i>kufemha:</i>	to sneeze
<i>kugadza:</i>	to be throned
<i>kugadzira:</i>	to prepare or to make
<i>kugara:</i>	to live; to stay; to sit
<i>kugara nhaka:</i>	levirate; wife chooses 'brother' of deceased
<i>kugarwa nhaka:</i>	levirate; 'brother' of deceased chooses wife
<i>kugobora:</i>	to dig out trees
<i>kupira:</i>	to worship or to honour by giving beer
<i>kucheka ukama:</i>	to break the relationship
<i>kumuka:</i>	to wake up/to be possessed
<i>kunamata:</i>	to pray
<i>kuombera maoko:</i>	clapping hands
<i>kupa:</i>	to give
<i>kupembera:</i>	to confess
<i>kupfuka:</i>	to revenge
<i>kupfura:</i>	to pass or to shoot
<i>kupinga:</i>	to control
<i>kupumha:</i>	to accuse somebody to be a witch
<i>kuputswa:</i>	forced to be married
<i>kuregererwa:</i>	to be forgiven
<i>kurima:</i>	to cultivate/to plough
<i>kuripa:</i>	to compensate
<i>kuroiwa:</i>	to be killed/to bewitch
<i>kuroora guva:</i>	lit: marrying the grave; which means that the husband of the deceased wife has to complete the bridewealth payments
<i>kurova guva:</i>	lit: hitting the grave; which means that the spirit of deceased is taken home (the ceremony) and that the grave is cemented
<i>kurova hoko:</i>	hammering a first peg into the ground
<i>kurambwa:</i>	to be divorced
<i>kurambana:</i>	to divorce each other
<i>kurwara:</i>	to be ill
<i>kusema:</i>	to dislike
<i>kushandira:</i>	to work for something
<i>kushopera:</i>	to tell the future
<i>kusunga:</i>	to tie
<i>kutadza:</i>	to fail
<i>kutamba:</i>	to play
<i>kutarisa:</i>	to look/to watch
<i>kutema:</i>	to cut/to chop

<i>kutemaugariri:</i>	to work for bridewealth (one of the different types of marriages)
<i>kutizira:</i>	to run away (one of the different types of marriages)
<i>kutonga:</i>	to rule
<i>kutorwa:</i>	to be taken
<i>kuuraya</i>	to kill
<i>kuwirirana:</i>	to be used to each other/to have an agreement with each other
<i>kuyemura:</i>	to admire
<i>mabiko:</i>	party
<i>mabvunziro:</i>	first stage of bridewealth payments
<i>mabvuri:</i>	casted bad spirits
<i>madhunduru:</i>	plural of <i>dhunduru</i> (0,04 hectare)
<i>madumburanzou:</i>	headmen
<i>madziashe:</i>	kraalhead from a family who once provided a Paramount chief
<i>madzibaba</i>	fathers (F;FB)
<i>madzimai:</i>	mothers (M; FBW; MZ)
<i>madzimambo:</i>	Paramount chiefs
<i>madzimbuya:</i>	grandmothers (FM; MM; MBW)
<i>madzitete:</i>	paternal aunts (HZ;HFZ)
<i>madziteteguru:</i>	female ancestral family spirits
<i>madzviti:</i>	lit: warriors; good <i>shave</i> spirits for healing
<i>mafuta:</i>	fat or oil
<i>mai:</i>	mother (M; FBW; MZ)
<i>maiguru:</i>	elder sister of mother or elder HBW
<i>mainini:</i>	younger sister of mother or younger HBW
<i>magariro:</i>	way of living
<i>magobo:</i>	field or area where trees are removed
<i>maheu:</i>	sweet beer
<i>mambo:</i>	Paramount chief
<i>mashavi:</i>	animal or alien spirits which can be good or bad
<i>masika:</i>	main wall poles
<i>masungiro:</i>	a goat which is paid by the husband's family to the wife's family after a first child is born
<i>masvikiro:</i>	spirit mediums
<i>matare:</i>	courts
<i>matorwa:</i>	wife goes to husband's place after the first bridewealth payment is done (one of the different types of marriages)
<i>mazambia:</i>	wrapping clothes
<i>mbizi:</i>	zebra (totem of clan)
<i>mhopo:</i>	casted bad spirits (lit: wind)
<i>mhofu:</i>	eland (totem of clan)
<i>mhuri:</i>	family
<i>mirandu:</i>	channels
<i>misha:</i>	homesteads in the rural area; villages; countries
<i>mitemo:</i>	rules or laws
<i>mitupo:</i>	totems of clans
<i>miuyu misere:</i>	eight baobab trees
<i>mombe:</i>	cattle
<i>mubereki:</i>	parent
<i>muchato:</i>	civil or formal marriage
<i>muchongoyo:</i>	Ndau traditional dance
<i>mudzimu:</i>	a family ancestral spirit
<i>muenzi:</i>	newcomer or visitor
<i>mufushwa:</i>	dried vegetables

<i>mukadzi:</i>	woman or wife
<i>mukoko:</i>	beehive
<i>mukombe:</i>	drinking vessel
<i>mukondobera:</i>	an illness which is spread world-wide (HIV/Aids)
<i>mukuru:</i>	head
<i>mukuwasha:</i>	son in law; husband's family in bridewealth payments
<i>munyai:</i>	intermediator; spokeswoman; spokesman
<i>munin'ina:</i>	younger brother or sister
<i>munhu:</i>	person
<i>mupfuhwira:</i>	love-potion
<i>murandu:</i>	channel
<i>muridzi:</i>	owner
<i>murimi:</i>	farmer
<i>muriwo:</i>	relish
<i>muroora:</i>	daughter in law
<i>muromo:</i>	mouth
<i>muroyi:</i>	lit: killer; witch
<i>murume:</i>	man or husband
<i>murongi:</i>	organiser
<i>mushandi:</i>	worker
<i>mushandirapamwe:</i>	assisting each other by working in turn on each other's fields
<i>mushonga:</i>	medicine and chemicals
<i>musha:</i>	homestead in the rural area; or village; or country
<i>mutape:</i>	village chief; informer of the Paramount chief; kraalhead; owner of the tax book;
<i>mutemi:</i>	one who cuts
<i>mutemo:</i>	rule or law
<i>mutongi:</i>	ruler or judge
<i>mutorwa:</i>	foreigner; daughter in law
<i>mutupo:</i>	totem of clan
<i>mutungamiri:</i>	leader
<i>muturikiri</i>	translator
<i>muzukuru:</i>	grandchild
<i>mwana:</i>	child
<i>mwari:</i>	God
<i>mweya:</i>	bad or good spirit (air)
<i>mwoyo:</i>	heart (totem of sub-clan)
<i>n'anga:</i>	traditional or African doctor
<i>ndauwe:</i>	you are allowed to enter (this homestead)
<i>ndiro:</i>	plate
<i>ngano:</i>	tales
<i>ngozi:</i>	angry revenging spirit
<i>nhamo:</i>	problems
<i>nhungo:</i>	roofing poles
<i>nyika:</i>	country
<i>nzuzu:</i>	mermaid <i>shave</i> spirit
<i>nzvimbo:</i>	a place
<i>nzvimbo yekugara:</i>	a place to live
<i>pamberi:</i>	forwards
<i>pfuma:</i>	lit: wealth. second stage of bridewealth payments
<i>povo:</i>	lit: mass; drought relief
<i>sababa:</i>	big father of the patrikin or patri-lineage
<i>sabhuku:</i>	owner of the tax book

<i>sadunhu:</i>	owner of an area
<i>saguta:</i>	owner of villages or homesteads
<i>samukuru:</i>	older aged negotiator, spokesman or spokeswoman during bridewealth payments
<i>samukadzi:</i>	the owner of the wife is the <i>vatete</i> (FZ/HFZ)
<i>samusha:</i>	head of the homestead
<i>sekuru:</i>	grandfather; uncle (FF; MF AND MB)
<i>shavi:</i>	animal or alien spirit which can be good or bad
<i>shiri:</i>	bird (totem of clan)
<i>shoko:</i>	monkey (totem of clan)
<i>sigauke:</i>	wild dog (totem of clan)
<i>svikiro:</i>	spirit medium
<i>tezvara:</i>	wife's family
<i>ukama:</i>	relationship
<i>udzvinyiriri:</i>	oppression
<i>upfumi:</i>	wealth
<i>uroyi:</i>	witchcraft
<i>usiku:</i>	night
<i>vabereki:</i>	parents
<i>vadzimu:</i>	family ancestral spirits
<i>vaenzi:</i>	newcomers or visitors
<i>vakadzi:</i>	women or wives
<i>vakuru:</i>	heads
<i>vakuwasha:</i>	sons in law; husband's family in bridewealth payments
<i>vana:</i>	children
<i>vanasekuru:</i>	grandfathers and uncles (FF; MF AND MB)
<i>vanhu:</i>	people
<i>vanyai:</i>	intermediators; spokeswomen; spokesmen
<i>varidzi:</i>	owners
<i>varimi:</i>	farmers
<i>varooru:</i>	daughters in law
<i>varongi:</i>	organisers
<i>varoyi:</i>	lit: killers; witches
<i>varume:</i>	men; husbands
<i>vashandi:</i>	workers
<i>vatape:</i>	village chiefs; informers of the paramount chief; kraalheads; owners of the tax book.
<i>vatete:</i>	paternal aunt (FZ/HFZ)
<i>vatongi:</i>	rulers or judges
<i>vatorwa:</i>	foreigners; daughters in law
<i>vatungamiri:</i>	leaders
<i>vazukuru:</i>	grandchildren
<i>zvidao:</i>	sub-clans
<i>zvidhoma:</i>	dangerous very short human like creatures
<i>zvipunha:</i>	female <i>shave</i> spirits for crops and rain
<i>zvirombo:</i>	<i>shave</i> spirits of animals

**Acronyms**

F:	Father
M:	Mother
B:	Brother
Z:	Sister
S:	Son
D:	Daughter
W:	Wife
H:	Husband
HZ:	<i>vatete</i>
HFZ:	<i>vatete</i>
WFZ:	<i>vatete</i>

Agritex:	Agricultural and Technical Extension Service
IMC:	Irrigation Management Committee
ZIMWEST:	Zimbabwe programme for Women studies, Extension, Sociology and Irrigation
UZ:	University of Zimbabwe (Harare)
WAU:	Wageningen Agricultural University (Netherlands).
NUFFIC:	Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Netherlands)
DGIS:	Directorate General International Cooperation.
FAO:	Food and Agricultural Organisation (United Nations)

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## SUMMARY

Conventional gender theories shape to a large extent the outcomes of studies concerning Shona culture, gender relations in agriculture and irrigation. Subsequently, women are depicted as subordinated and passive actors and as victims of patriarchal (family) structures. In Southern Africa, including Zimbabwe, little research has been done that perceives women as strategic social actors who also reproduce and transform everyday life. The present study, then, aims to shed light on the question of how Nda (Shona) women and men themselves use, transform, and manipulate rules, beliefs, and normative value frames in practice and thereby shape practice and vice versa. Power is an outcome of those processes. To this end I have studied everyday life of Nda women and men who live in Manesa village. The village is located in the Mutema chieftaincy of Chipinge District in Zimbabwe. The people in Manesa village make use of both dryland (rainfed) and land which is located in Tawona irrigation scheme. The field research was carried out from July 1994 to July 1996. To explore everyday village life I have used the concepts of practice, power and discourse. In order to understand social dynamics in everyday life I have used an actor-oriented approach. This approach entails detailed observations (qualitative and quantitative), case studies with techniques such as situational analysis and discourse analysis, informal interviews, group discussions, surveys and checklists. I lived with the people. I was allocated my own place in Manesa village by village head Manesa and I built my own house of poles, mud and grass. I also worked with the women in the irrigation scheme and participated in many other activities.

This thesis is written for scholars in rural development sociology, anthropology, gender in agriculture and irrigation. It is also written for practitioners in the field, who are the officials in Agritex and policy-makers in the fields of gender and irrigation. The study was carried out in the framework of the ZIMWESI project (Zimbabwean Programme for Women studies, Extension, Sociology and Irrigation). It was a multidisciplinary project of Wageningen Agricultural University (WAO), University of Zimbabwe (UZ) and the Department of Agricultural, Technical and Extension Services (Agritex).

### 1) Introduction

In Chapter 1 I explore different gender perspectives and explain the theoretical concepts used in this study to explore everyday life. I also explain the actor oriented approach and review Shona and irrigation literature from an engendered actor oriented approach. I explain that I studied everyday life by distinguishing 'fields' which are analysed per chapter as follows: social relations and more in particular kinship and marriage; the establishing and running of homesteads; agricultural production outside and inside the irrigation scheme and how women shape the value of agricultural produce; allocating and holding the land; politics in Manesa village and Mutema chieftaincy; spirit and witchcraft beliefs in practice.

### 2) Binding the marriage and breaking the bonds

After the introduction, I start the book with a chapter on social relations. I did this because social relations are of primary importance in people's lives. Kinship terms such as clan, patrilineal extended kinship (*dzinza*), family and place of birth (*chizvarwa*) are used by social actors particularly in the context of marriage. New social relations are established through marriage. I explored marriage by describing important marriage practices and by exploring some social changes. An important practice is 'the channel' (*murandu*). When a girl and boy want to marry, they have to follow certain channels. Each one, separately, has to inform certain family members who send them to other relatives in their own patrikin. Another practice is virilocality. Upon marriage a woman thus shifts to the place and family of her husband.

Nda women and men distinguish eight different types of marriages: *kutizira*; *matorwa* or *mabvunziro*; *kuzvarira* or *kuputswa*; *chigara mapfwa*; *kuga(r)wa nhaka* (levirate); *kutemaukariri*; *musengabere*; *ngozi*. These different marriages are described in Chapter 2. Social change has also occurred in the marriage practices. The *kutizira* marriage, which means

that girls go to their husbands' homesteads before any bridewealth has been paid, has become the most common type of marriage. *Matorwa* or *mabvunzirc* marriages, where the girl will be collected from her parents' place (*kutorwa*) after the first bridewealth payment (*mabvunziro*) has been accomplished were always few. *Kuputswa*, *ngozi* and *musengabere* marriages are prohibited by the government because often the girl is below the marriageable age of 18, or these marriages include practices with spirits or sometimes rape. Despite the fact that such marriages are prohibited, they still occur, although in low numbers.

Government law distinguishes two types of marriages, namely customary marriage and civil marriage. In the case of a customary marriage, the couple do not obtain a marriage certificate. Customary marriage occurs most frequently in the villages (80%). Civil marriages for which a marriage-certificate is obtained in the community court, are still few in Manesa village. Only customary marriage allows the polygynous practice described in Chapter 2.

Bridewealth payments are also an important practice of each marriage, be it customary or civil. The irrigation scheme was mentioned as the most important source for bridewealth payments. In Manesa village, both women and men are convinced that bridewealth should be paid, and give three reasons: 1) reciprocity: bridewealth in exchange for a woman because a woman goes to the husbands' place where they work and bear children and that cannot be for nothing; 2) cash concerns (social security); 3) as evidence of the established bond between the wife and husband's families. From the two detailed case studies of bridewealth payments, it emerges that both women and men shape the bridewealth arrangements and both benefit. Bridewealth is never paid at once, but in different stages with different payments. Then debts are established and conflicts can emerge, especially when one of the spouses dies.

Social relations can also break up. Male and female family members support their own daughter or son in a divorce. Husbands tend to rely in divorces on the decision-making of chiefs in village courts who usually allocate the land and children to them (people's customary law). Wives therefore consider more often turning to the presiding officers in community courts can impose a maintenance fee. Marriage can also end by the death of a husband. The Ndau people then try to continue the relationship between the wife's and husband's families. A 'brother' of the deceased is then supposed to inherit or look after the wife of the deceased man (*kugarwa nhaka*; levirate).

The paternal aunt (*vatete*, HFZ/HZ) emerges as a very important negotiator and arbitrator in social relations. Almost every woman is an aunt. She will assist her 'brothers' and her 'brothers' will also assist her in times of trouble. Both kinship and marital relations are important in the lives of social actors, but kinship relations help a woman and a man survive in times of marital problems. The common discourse in the literature concerning Shona culture and gender in irrigation often depicts the man as the most important negotiator in social relations, whereas that is very often a woman in Shona culture.

### 3) Heads of homesteads and complementarities of power

People need a place to live in the village and therefore they establish a homestead. I distinguish four stages in the establishment of a homestead. 1) The allocation of a place to build a house. Both women and men in the village select their place and the village chief has to approve it. 2) Patrikin elders hammer in the first peg (*kurova hoko*). It means that the building process can start and that the homestead belongs to the patrikin. In troubled times the members of the homestead can consult the older members of the patrikin who in their turn can consult the ancestors. 3) The building of different types of houses: i.e. wattle daub or houses of poles, mud and grass; stone houses and brick houses. Each type of house has its specific gender tasks, showing that both women and men build houses. 4) A *chiutsi* party for villagers and ancestors to be informed about the new established homestead.

Different groups live together in homesteads in the village and they constitute different types of homesteads, which I labelled as follows: Women without husbands (WWH), Women with Absent Husbands (WAH); Polygynous separate (PS); Polygynous (POL); Polygynous in the past, but monogamous at present (PP); Monogamous (M); Extended (Ext). These

categories overlap, for example a polygynous homestead is often extended. However, the different categories do refer to headship, management of and authorities in the homesteads. Social actors perceive fathers, husbands and aunts (HZ/HFZ) as heads of homesteads. Married and widowed women do not perceive themselves as heads of the homesteads where they are married, but they emerge as heads in practice. For example, in a polygynous homestead studied, the eldest wife allocates the land and cash and arranges the agricultural production, consumption, storage and medical care. The wives of her sons are heads of their own households within the homestead, having their own income and expenditures (matrifocal households). Wives or daughters-in-law have a clear place in the homestead's hierarchy. The importance of women and men and their ability to wield power, increases as they grow older, have children or become educated. But that acquired status, authority and influence can be disrupted, because people's positions are shaped to a large extent by the people they live with in a homestead. A woman can be neglected completely by the people she lives with, though she can be an older mother of children and grandchildren. Aunts (HFZ/HZ) and migrant sons, both living elsewhere, also emerge as heads of homesteads, because they negotiate and arbitrate in conflicts and sometimes they assist the people in the homestead with money and/or goods. Also in one of the monogamous homesteads studied, the wife emerges as a head in practice. Both wife and husband have their own domains inside, but also outside the homestead. For example, the wife is active in the church and the husband obtains his piecework through a building society.

The common discourse in gender in irrigation and Shona studies is that there is 'the' head of the homestead who is usually a man. I have emphasized multiple headship. That means that there is more than one head in a homestead and that 'heads' are authorities. For example, authorities of a homestead are the village chief who allocated the site; the patrikin elders who worship the ancestors; the aunts and migrant sons; the women and men from the homestead who both derive their authority from their specific domains from which also the matrifocal households emerge. These authorities usually wield power by arbitrating, negotiating and enrolling others in their specific projects and domains. Specific gender identities do then also emerge. The different authorities complement each other, though there are struggles and tensions.

#### **4) Agricultural producers and value shapers.**

Women in particular are the agricultural producers in Manesa's village area and Tawona irrigation scheme. Agricultural produce is their food and cash; it has use and exchange value. That women do the work in the fields is regularly emphasized in gender and irrigation literature. However, that it is women too who actively shape the value of agricultural produce is often neglected and that is the focus in Chapter 4. In some situations, agricultural produce is a commodity, in other situations it is not.

Women farmers diversify their cultivation practices on different types of land, i.e. different gardens, dryland, and irrigated plots. They organise the labour on the land and cultivate a large variety of crops in and outside the irrigation scheme. I have defined small-scale crops as those crops which are cultivated on an area smaller than 0.2 hectare. Large-scale crops are cultivated on an area larger than 0.2 hectare. Women farmers cultivate both small and larger scale crops and also shape to a large extent the potential and realised value of both crops. Small-scale groundnuts obtain their value by sales, gifts, barter, 'paying' labour, consumption and reproduction for the next season. The larger-scale crop of winter tomatoes is to a large extent sold to a food processing company (56%), to private buyers (24%) and used for labour, barter, consumption and gifts (20%). Women farmers control individually the cash obtained from small-scale crops. For the larger-scale crop of winter tomatoes they have individual, but also collective control over the cash, together with their husbands. In addition, the money obtained from the larger-scale crops is often used for collective issues such as school fees and the rent of the irrigated plot.



Some small scale crops can bring more cash than the larger-scale crops. A large number of different small-scale crops are cultivated in the scheme. However, small-scale crops are not included by Agritex officials in the calculation of the economic performance of irrigation schemes. The performance of irrigation schemes is thus much better than is generally assumed. Women farmers also contribute to the economic performance by being actively involved in the management of the irrigation scheme. Women farmers are approached by extension workers because they are the cultivators of the crops. Thus in Tawona irrigation scheme, women are not marginalised by the intervention of irrigation. They were not pushed out of the production process where power is wielded, towards the periphery of the subsistence sector. On the contrary, they have extended their domains of activities, which gives them the ability to wield power.

### **5) Allocating the land and holding the plots**

Land in communal areas where Manesa village is located is not privately owned. Both government and chiefs maintain that they 'own' the land, which means that they both control to a certain extent the allocation of it. Irrigated plots are usually allocated by the state agency Agritex (Agricultural and Technical Extension Service), sometimes in consultation with village heads (or kraalheads) and the farmers in the Irrigation Management Committee (IMC). Dryland plots and gardens are allocated by the non-resettled village chiefs. Both women and men are plot holders and users of land, although they also maintain that they 'own' their specific irrigated plots, gardens and dryland.

The Tawona irrigation scheme was constructed in 1953 for the purpose of resettlement. Four chiefs with their people were resettled in Manesa village. They got hold of 40% of the land in the new Tawona irrigation scheme. Thus non-resettled chiefs and their people had the major proportion of the irrigated land. The registration for irrigated land was and is a dynamic process. In Chapter 5 I explore the registration process for land in a new irrigation scheme which was under construction. All farmers want to have the highly desirable new irrigated plots and therefore criteria for selecting the farmers are used. Agritex officials emerge as shapers of the registration process, because they formulate, manipulate and use selection criteria to justify their actions, decisions and choices regarding the registration of farmers for plots in the new scheme. However, different Agritex officials had different perspectives and contributed in different ways to that process. The way Agritex officials created their room to manoeuvre was to make the selection process less than transparent. The chiefs did not understand Agritex' decision-making either, and they lost to a certain extent their control over the land. However, not only Agritex officials, but also chiefs and farmers have their own agendas and strategies to achieve their own interests concerning the new irrigated plots. Only 14% of women are initially registered for the new irrigated plots, despite the fact that they work the land. Some women will therefore fight hard to have their names registered in order to control the land and its produce. The low percentage will slowly increase.

I have explored plot allocation and plot utilization in the existing Tawona irrigation scheme by focusing on gender struggles over irrigated land. Normative and value frames regarding gender and existing gender images influence the practice of plot allocation and women's access to irrigated plots. Both women and men devise strategies to become or remain the registered plottolders, enabling them to control the irrigated land and its produce. Although the majority of women and men are of the opinion that a married or divorced woman cannot register on land, which is the common discourse, we see that in practice a total of 38% of the plottolders in Tawona irrigation scheme are women, of whom the majority is married.

The handing-over policy of irrigation schemes, from the extension service Agritex to the farmers, will also influence control over land. Thus, in the handing over, not only the ability of farmers to cover the costs should be considered, but also who will arbitrate in irrigated plot utilization and allocation. Farmers in general, but women farmers in particular, prefer an 'outside' negotiator such as Agritex to arbitrate and negotiate in gender struggles over land.

## 6) The reign of power and the power of reign

The main authorities in the Mutema chieftaincy and Manesa village are chiefs, women spirit mediums, Agritex officials and councillor, Irrigation Management Committee members and villagers who play a leading role in, for example, churches or other committees. They derive their authority from traditional status, government recognition and the specific domains of activities for which they are responsible.

Political power struggles in the village and chieftaincy often emerge among chiefs and between chiefs and government officials. Women spirit mediums of the chieftaincy emerge as arbiters and mediators in those power struggles. Rain also emerges as an important phenomenon in power struggles in the village and chieftaincy. The existing belief is that the people whose ancestors bring the rain, own the land and are therefore the rightful authorities. That emerged clearly from the power struggles between Manesa and Mutigwe in the village. The woman spirit medium acted as an arbitrator in this dispute. Both Manesa and Mutigwe are perceived as rightful authorities, because Mutigwe's ancestors could let it rain in the village area and Manesa because he was sent by a Paramount chief. From the resettlement also power struggles emerge. The resettled chiefs clearly had more restricted room for manoeuvre in comparison with the non-resettled chiefs in Manesa village. This was associated with control over land, worshipping village ancestors and the courts in the village. Power struggles also emerge between the councillor and chiefs and among government officials such as the councillor and Agritex officials. The woman spirit medium of Makopa acts as a mediator and power broker between the government officials and chiefs. She emerged as an important authority in the political field of Manesa village and Mutema chieftaincy. Power struggles also occur between Ndaue chieftaincies, like those between Mutema and Musikavanhu. Also among chieftaincies the rightful authority is the one whose ancestors bring the rain. Particularly in the political field with its different domains we have seen that rules, ideologies, norms and value frames are reproduced, used and manipulated by social actors to maintain their positions and safeguard their own domains from which they derive authority and are able to wield power. Therefore too, chiefs rely on women spirit mediums who act as power brokers between the different but overlapping worlds of chiefs and government. Power struggles have in common that specific social actors claim to be the rightful authority in certain domains.

## 7) Defining spirits and controlling women

Ndaue women and men believe that spirits influence their lives. They continue to believe in ancestral spirits and other good or bad spirits, whether they are members of churches or not. Different beliefs are usually strategically defined and combined. Social actors believe in ancestral spirits and the Christian God, in healing spirits and hospitals, in bad spirits and witchcraft. They use, transform and manipulate these different beliefs and practices strategically in order to seek comfort, to understand death/illness, to be healed, to revenge and to achieve control over resources or social actors, especially women. Spirits are perceived to be good when they protect, assist and heal. Therefore good spirits need to be honoured by giving them something, usually beer (*kupira*; worshipping). Spirit worship is practiced both by women and men. Spirits are perceived as bad when there is illness, death or any other misfortune. Social actors distinguish two bad spirits, i.e. *ngozi* and *bvuri*. 1) An *ngozi* is perceived as an angry revenging spirit of a killed person. 2) A *bvuri* is perceived as a 'cast' spirit. A guilty person who has harmed someone will send the revenging spirit to another innocent person. I have explored four bad spirit cases, which show how people use spirit and witchcraft beliefs in their search for explanations about death and misfortune. Women are often the accused and are therefore controlled. A common witchcraft case is the use of beliefs in bad spirits such as *ngozi* and *bvuri*. People use these bad spirit beliefs to construct explanations and implicitly control those whom they do not like. But not all the use of bad spirit beliefs are labelled as witchcraft as I explore in 'the house for a spirit'. A girl had to be married in the name of an angry spirit (*ngozi*) so that

occurring misfortune could be solved and prevented. The reconstruction of the bad spirit *bvuri*, not only serves the aim of controlling or eliminating women, but also to control resources such as land.

I do not make a distinction between witchcraft and sorcery in this study, because Ndaun women and men do not make that distinction. They believe in '*uroyi*', which they define as witchcraft and they label everything associated with bad practices and that which violates, threatens and kills, whether it can be seen or not, as witchcraft (*uroyi*). Therefore I defined witchcraft as any violating threat which emerges from disputes in relations, aiming to control others or problems. The common discourse in literature is that women are the witches. However, the Ndaun people say that both women and men are witches. Envy and jealousy are the driving forces of witchcraft beliefs and practices. Women's and men's emotions and intentions appear to be similar. They are both very much concerned about their health, love and wealth. From power struggles about these issues, witchcraft beliefs and practices emerge. Witchcraft is therefore a power issue.

African doctors (*n'anga*) are both women and men (55%; 45%). On the one hand they are perceived as good doctors by using appropriate medicines and by being negotiators and arbiters in disputes. On the other, they reproduce beliefs about witches and angry spirits and subsequently assist the people who consult them in different good and bad ways, in order to earn money and make a living and to remain authorities. They reproduce beliefs that women are witches and they often accuse women in case of illnesses and problems. Social actors in the village visit *n'anga* in the case of illness and disputes in order to control others. At the same time they will be controlled by *n'anga*.

### **8) Survival, control and authority: Shona, gender and irrigation**

By studying everyday life among Ndaun-Shona in Manesa village, survival, control and authority emerged as three important phenomena, elaborated in the retrospect of chapter 8.

By using an actor-oriented approach, women and men, be they women farmers, government officials, chiefs, husbands, traders or spirit mediums, emerge as social actors who shape and transform everyday life, thereby enabling and restricting each other. This also shows that conventional gender theories and common discourses reflected in Shona literature and gender in irrigation studies, depict women far too often as passive victims of development.

Every social actor is active in specific domains, derives authority from those domains and devises certain strategies to maintain them. Authorities in a homestead or village for example, struggle over symbolic boundaries, but they also complement each other. Ndaun-Shona women are important because they are active in many different domains from which they derive authority and which gives them the ability to wield power. Women and men also derive their gender identity from specific domains. These gender identities emerge from 1) specific situations and domains, 2) specific relations, 3) specific topics and 4) age. The multiple identities of a person need to be considered. Gender identities are continuously changing and that implies an enormous diversity in the wielding and yielding of power. Power is fluid and each individual is a locus of a complex set of social relations. Therefore we cannot talk about 'the position' or 'the role' of women, because positions and roles change all the time, depending on with whom, about what and where social actors interact.

Quantitative research provides figures, which are frequently used to depict the position of women. It seems to be less appropriate to say that women lag behind by using quantitative figures. Issues about positions, authorities, gender identities and power, those things, which are fluid and continuously changing in specific situations, are more qualitative issues. That also implies that interventions like irrigation are continuously shaped and transformed by social actors.

## SAMENVATTING

Conventionele gender theorieën geven in belangrijke mate vorm aan de studies die zijn uitgevoerd in het kader van de Shona samenleving, gender-relaties in de landbouw en irrigatie. Hierin worden vrouwen dikwijls afgebeeld als onderdrukte en passieve actoren, en als slachtoffers van patriarchale (familie) structuren. In Zuidelijk Afrika, inclusief Zimbabwe, is weinig onderzoek uitgevoerd vanuit het perspectief dat vrouwen ook strategische sociale actoren zijn, die het dagelijkse leven vorm geven en transformeren. Daarom heeft de huidige studie de volgende onderzoeksvraag als focus genomen: hoe gebruiken, veranderen en manipuleren Ndau-Shona vrouwen en mannen zelf regels, geloofsvoorstellingen, waarden en normen in het alledaagse leven en hoe vormen ze daarbij de praktijk, en vice versa, namelijk dat de praktijk weer bepaalde regels, geloofsvoorstellingen, waarden en normen beïnvloedt. Macht is dan een resultaat of een uitkomst van deze processen. Om de onderzoeksvraag te beantwoorden heb ik het alledaagse leven van Ndau vrouwen en mannen bestudeerd in het dorp Manesa. Manesa ligt in het Mutema hoofdschap (chieftaincy) in Chipinge district, Zimbabwe. De mensen die in het dorp Manesa wonen, maken gebruik van land dat in een irrigatie stelsel ligt en ook van regenafhankelijke velden. Het veldwerk werd voornamelijk uitgevoerd in de periode van juli 1994 tot en met juli 1996. Om het alledaagse leven te analyseren heb ik gebruik gemaakt van verschillende theoretische concepten, namelijk 'praktijk' (practice), 'macht' en 'discourse'. Discourse bevat zowel handelen als betekenisverlening, met macht als uitkomst. Macht wordt verkregen en gebruikt en wordt afgestaan. Ik maakte gebruik van de actor georiënteerde benadering om de sociale dynamiek in het dagelijkse leven te begrijpen. Deze benadering bestaat uit gedetailleerde analyses die zowel kwalitatief als kwantitatief zijn, case studies met onderzoekstechnieken als 'situational analysis' en 'discourse analysis', informele interviews en groeps discussies. Verder leefde ik met de mensen in het dorp. Het dorps hoofd gaf mij een eigen plek in het dorp waar ik mijn eigen hut liet bouwen. Ik werkte ook met de vrouwen en mannen in het irrigatie stelsel en participeerde in vele andere activiteiten.

Dit boek kan gebruikt worden door wetenschappelijk medewerkers, studenten en consultants die actief zijn op de vakgebieden rurale ontwikkelings sociologie, antropologie, gender in de landbouw en irrigatie. Maar het boek kan ook gebruikt worden door vertegenwoordigers van de Landbouw voorlichtingsdienst (Agritex) en beleidsmakers op het gebied van gender en irrigatie. Het onderzoek werd uitgevoerd in het kader van het Zimwesi project. Zimwesi staat voor een universitair samenwerkingsprogramma in Zimbabwe op de vakgebieden van vrouwen studies, voorlichting, sociologie en irrigatie. Het is een multidisciplinair project dat wordt uitgevoerd door de Landbouw universiteit in Wageningen, Nederland, de universiteit van Zimbabwe in Harare en de Landbouw- voorlichtingsdienst in Zimbabwe.

### 1) Introductie

In Hoofdstuk 1 behandel ik verschillende gender perspectieven en verklaar de theoretische concepten die ik in deze studie gebruik om het alledaagse leven te analyseren. Ook ga ik in op de actor georiënteerde benadering en benader de bestaande literatuur betreffende de Shona en gender literatuur betreffende irrigatie, vanuit een engendered actor georiënteerd perspectief. Het dagelijkse leven bestudeerde ik door verschillende 'velden' te onderscheiden, die dan per hoofdstuk worden geanalyseerd, te weten sociale relaties en meer in het bijzonder verwantschap en huwelijk (hst 2); het zich vestigen in een dorp, het bouwen van huizen en het leiden van de woonerven (hst 3); de agrarische productie binnen en buiten het irrigatie stelsel en hoe vrouwen waarde aan de agrarische productie geven (hst 4); het toewijzen en het behouden van het land (hst 5); politiek bestuur in het dorp Manesa en Mutema hoofdschap (hst 6); geloofsvoorstellingen in het alledaagse leven (hst 7). Het laatste hoofdstuk 8 probeert de hoofdstukken aan elkaar te koppelen en spitst zich toe op de belangrijkste facetten die in het dagelijks leven naar voren komen: overleving, beheersing (controle) en autoriteit. Alvorens het laatste hoofdstuk samen te vatten, geef ik eerst een korte bespreking van de hoofdstukken.

## 2) Het tot stand brengen en verbreken van sociale relaties

Verwantschapstermen zoals 'clan' (*mutupo*) en 'lineage' (*dzinza*), beide verwijzend naar de patrilineaire afstammingsgroep (patri-groep), familie en geboorteplaats, worden door sociale actoren vooral verbonden met het huwelijk. Nieuwe sociale relaties komen onder andere voort uit een huwelijk. Ik heb het huwelijk geanalyseerd door belangrijke huwelijkspraktijken te beschrijven en veranderingen te analyseren. Bepaalde procedures rond het huwelijk zijn belangrijk. Wanneer een meisje en een jongen willen trouwen, dan moeten ze bepaalde procedures volgen. Onafhankelijk van elkaar moeten ze hun eigen familieleden informeren, die hen op hun beurt weer naar andere familieleden in de patri-groep sturen. Virilocaliteit is een belangrijke andere praktijk. Dat betekent dat wanneer vrouw en man getrouwd zijn, de vrouw in het algemeen naar het huis en de familie van de echtgenoot verhuist.

De Ndau mensen onderscheiden acht verschillende soorten huwelijk, te weten *kutizira*; *matorwa of mabvunziro*; *kuzvarira of kuputswa*; *chigara mapfiwa*; *kuga(r)a naka*; *kutemaukariri*; *musengabere*; *ngozi*. Die verschillende huwelijken zijn in hoofdstuk twee beschreven. Er zijn sociale veranderingen in de huwelijkspraktijken. Het *kutizira* huwelijk, waarbij de vrouw naar de woonplaats van de man verhuist voordat er ook maar iets van de bruidsprijs is betaald, is het meest voorkomende huwelijk op dit moment. De *matorwa* huwelijken, waarbij het meisje wordt opgehaald nadat netjes de eerste bruidsprijsbetaling is gedaan, waren altijd in de minderheid. *Kuputswa*, *ngozi* en *musengbere* huwelijken zijn door de overheid verboden omdat het vaak om huwelijken gaat waarvan het meisje beneden de huwelijksleeftijd van 18 jaar is en omdat het soms met onduidelijke praktijken van geesten (*ngozi*, zie hst 7) en ook met verkrachting (*musengabere*) te maken heeft. Maar ondanks het verbod komen deze huwelijken nog steeds voor, zij het in lage aantallen.

In de wet worden twee typen huwelijken onderscheiden, namelijk de 'customary marriage' en de 'civil marriage'. Bij het 'gewoonterecht' huwelijk wordt geen huwelijkscertificaat verkregen en dit huwelijk komt nog het meeste voor in het dorp (80%). Het 'burger huwelijk' vindt in het gerechtshof van de overheid plaats en daar wordt dan ook een certificaat verkregen. In het gewoonte huwelijk mag de man meer dan één vrouw trouwen, de zogenaamde polygyne praktijk die ook in hoofdstuk twee van verschillende kanten is benaderd.

De bruidsprijsbetaling is ook een belangrijke praktijk in het huwelijk en vindt plaats in zowel 'customary' als 'civil' huwelijken. De opbrengsten uit de geïrrigeerde landbouw worden als belangrijkste bron van de bruidsprijsbetaling genoemd. Zowel vrouwen als mannen zijn ervan overtuigd dat de bruidsprijs betaald moet worden vanwege drie belangrijke redenen, te weten 1) reciprociteit, een wederkerigheid van een vrouw voor een bruidsprijs, omdat de vrouw naar de woonplaats van de man gaat waar zij werkt en kinderen baart; 2) sociale zekerheid; 3) bewijs van de gevestigde relatie tussen de families van de vrouw en man. Uit de twee gedetailleerde case studies over bruidsprijsbetalingen komt naar voren dat zowel vrouwen als mannen de bruidsprijs regelen en dat ze ook beide van de betalingen profiteren. Een bruidsprijs wordt nooit in een keer betaald, maar altijd in verschillende fasen met verschillende betalingen. Deze gefaseerde betalingen geven aanleiding tot conflicten tijdens de bruidsprijs betaling en eveneens daarna, vooral als een van beide echtgenoten overlijdt, omdat er schulden zijn ontstaan.

Sociale relaties kunnen ook verbroken worden. Vrouwen en mannen in families ondersteunen hun eigen dochter of zoon in het geval van een echtscheiding. Bij een echtscheiding zoeken mannen vaker de hulp van de dorpschoufden en de dorpsrechtspreek (*people's customary law*), omdat dorpschoufden in het algemeen het land en de kinderen aan de mannen toewijzen. Vrouwen daarentegen zoeken ook hulp van rechters en de overheidsrechtspreek (*court's customary law*) omdat daar een wettelijke alimentatie geregeld kan worden. Het huwelijk kan ook eindigen door het overlijden van een van de echtgenoten. Wanneer een man overlijdt, probeert men in de Ndau samenleving de bestaande relatie tussen

de twee families voort te zetten door de vrouw uit te huwelijken aan een broer of half broer. Hoofdstuk 2 analyseert zo'n leviraat case.

De tantes, dat wil zeggen de zus van de echtgenoot's vader of de zus van de echtgenoot, zijn zeer belangrijke sociale actoren in de Ndau samenleving. Zij zijn in het onderzoek naar voren gekomen als belangrijke onderhandelaars en geschilbeslechteers in sociale relaties. Bijna elke vrouw is een tante. Zij ondersteunt haar broers, en dus haar broers ondersteunen ook haar wanneer zij problemen heeft. Verwantschaps- en huwelijksrelaties zijn belangrijk in het leven van sociale actoren, maar het zijn toch de verwantschapsrelaties, vooral die van zus-broer, die voor vrouwen vaak belangrijker zijn, vooral wanneer er problemen in het huwelijk zijn. Het algemene denken in de bestaande Shona, gender en irrigatie literatuur is vaak dat een man de belangrijkste onderhandelaar in sociale relaties is, terwijl dat toch ook herhaaldelijk een vrouw is.

### 3) Het vestigen in een dorp, huizen bouwen en het leiden van woonerven

Als mensen in een dorp komen, zoeken ze een plek uit om te wonen en maken dan hun woonerf (homestead). In het stichten van een woonerf heb ik vier verschillende fasen onderscheiden. 1) De toewijzing van een plek om een huis te bouwen. Die plek wordt door zowel vrouwen en mannen zelf uitgezocht en dan wordt het dorpshoofd benaderd, die de plek moet goedkeuren. 2) Vervolgens worden de oudsten van de patri-groep benaderd die dan een eerste stokje in de grond slaan (*kurova hoko*). Dat betekent dat het bouwen kan beginnen en dat het woonerf bij die patri-groep behoort. Wanneer de mensen in dat woonerf problemen hebben, kunnen ze de oudsten van die patri-groep informeren en raadplegen. Op hun beurt kunnen de oudsten dan weer de voorouders raadplegen. 3) De huizen kunnen van palen, modder en gras zijn, maar ook van ronde platte stenen uit de bergen, of van zelf gebakken bakstenen. Elk type huis heeft zijn eigen gender specifieke taken en het bleek dat zowel vrouwen als mannen huizen bouwen. 4) Het '*chiutsi*' feest is eigenlijk het openingsfeest van het woonerf. De mensen in het dorp en de voorouders worden zodoende geïnformeerd over het nieuw gestichte woonerf.

Verschillende groepen mensen leven bij elkaar in een woonerf, en die woonerven onderscheidde ik als volgt: vrouwen zonder echtgenoten (WWH); vrouwen met afwezige echtgenoten (WAH); Polygyne woonerven waar de echtgenotes in verschillende woonerven wonen (PS); polygyne woonerven (POL); woonerven die in het verleden polygyn waren, maar monogaam op dit moment (PP); monogame woonerven (M) en woonerven waar de kinderen al weer getrouwd zijn en kinderen hebben (extended; EXT). Natuurlijk overlappen die categorieën, bijvoorbeeld een polygyne huishouding is vaak extended etc. De verschillende typen woonerven zeggen iets over de 'headship', leiding van en autoriteiten in die homesteads. De sociale actoren zagen vaak de vaders, echtgenoten en tantes als hoofden van de woonerven. Getrouwde vrouwen en weduwes zagen zichzelf niet als hoofden van de woonerven waar ze waren getrouwd, maar in de praktijk van alle dag kwamen ze toch naar voren als de hoofden en zijn ze hoofden in de woonerven van hun broers.

In een woonerf kan men dus verschillende 'hoofden' onderscheiden, ieder met hun eigen machtsdomeinen. In een bepaald polygyn woonerf was het bijvoorbeeld de oudste getrouwde vrouw die het land en geld toewees en ze organiseerde de agrarische productie, consumptie, opslag en medische zorg. De vrouwen van haar zonen bleken hoofden van hun eigen huishouding te zijn, want ze hadden hun eigen inkomsten en uitgaven (matrifocal households). Deze vrouwen van zonen, of te wel schoondochters, hebben een duidelijke plaats in de hiërarchie van een woonerf. De belangrijkheid van vrouwen en mannen en hun bekwaamheid om macht te verwerven neemt toe als ze ouder worden, als ze kinderen hebben en als ze zijn opgeleid. Maar die verkregen status, autoriteit en invloed kan gemakkelijk onderuit gehaald worden, omdat de positie van mensen voor een groot deel ook gevormd wordt door de mensen waarmee zij leven in een woonerf. Tantes en gemigeerde zonen die beide elders, i.e. buiten het woonerf leven, komen ook naar voren als hoofden van woonerven, omdat zij vaak geraadpleegd worden als er conflicten zijn en dan onderhandelen zij tussen de verschillende betrokken partijen en soms ondersteunen ze in de vorm van geld

en goederen. Ook in een onderzocht monogaam woonerf was de vrouw in de praktijk het hoofd van het woonerf. Het bleek dat vrouw en man hun eigen domeinen binnen en buiten het woonerf hebben. Vrouwen zijn bijvoorbeeld vaak actief in de kerk en mannen hebben vaak tijdelijk werk in of buiten het dorp.

In veel gender, Shona en irrigatie studies is het algemene denken terug te vinden dat er maar één hoofd is in een woonerf, waarbij dan meestal een man als zodanig wordt aangemerkt. Ik heb het meervoudige 'hoofdschap' ('headship') willen benadrukken, hetgeen betekent dat er veel meer 'hoofden' zijn en dat 'hoofden' kunnen worden opgevat als autoriteiten. Die autoriteiten in een woonerf zijn dan bijvoorbeeld het dorpshoofd die de woonplek toewijst; de patri-groep oudsten die ook de voorouders raadplegen; de tantes en gemigreerde zonen; de vrouwen en mannen van het woonerf die hun autoriteit verkrijgen vanuit specifieke domeinen, waaruit ook de matrifocale huishoudingen voort komen. Deze autoriteiten verkrijgen macht door te onderhandelen, geschillen op te lossen en anderen in hun specifieke projecten en domeinen te trekken ('enrollen'). Hier komen dan de gender identiteiten ook weer uit voort. De verschillende autoriteiten van een woonerf vullen elkaar aan, maar natuurlijk zijn er spanningen en machtsconflicten.

#### 4) Agrarische producenten die waarde aan de productie geven

Het zijn met name vrouwen die de landbouw beoefenen op de velden in het Tawona irrigatie stelsel, op de regenafhankelijke velden en in de tuinen. De agrarische productie is hun voedsel en ook hun geld, het heeft gebruiks- en ruilwaarde. In de literatuur over gender en irrigatie in Zimbabwe wordt vaak benadrukt dat het voornamelijk vrouwen zijn die de arbeid leveren in de kleinschalige irrigatie stelsels. Echter, dat het ook vrouwen zijn die de waarde aan de agrarische productie geven, wordt vaak niet onderkend, en dat is de focus van hoofdstuk 4. Agrarische producten zijn in sommige situaties een handelswaar (commodity) en in andere situaties weer niet.

Vrouwen gebruiken verschillende landbouw methodes op de verschillende geïrrigeerde en regenafhankelijke velden en in de verschillende tuinen. Zij organiseren de arbeid en verbouwen een grote variëteit aan gewassen binnen en buiten het irrigatie stelsel. Ik heb gewassen gedefinieerd als kleinschalig, als ze op een oppervlakte kleiner dan 0,2 hectare worden verbouwd, zoals zomer-tomaten, pinda's en groente. Grootschalige gewassen zijn dan die gewassen die op een oppervlakte groter dan 0,2 hectare verbouwd worden, zoals winter-tomaten en maïs. Vrouwen verbouwen zowel klein- als grootschalige gewassen en geven in belangrijke mate ook de potentiële en gerealiseerde waarde aan die beide gewassen. Kleinschalige pinda's verkrijgen hun waarde door verkoop, giften, ruil, het betalen van arbeid, consumptie en reproductie voor het volgende groeiseizoen. De grootschalige winter-tomaten worden verkocht aan een voedselverwerkende maatschappij (56%), aan privé handelaren (24%) en de tomaten worden tevens aangewend om arbeid te betalen, te ruilen, en voor consumptie en giften (20%). Vrouwen hebben een individuele zeggenschap ('control') over het geld dat ze verdienen met de kleinschalige gewassen. Over het geld uit de grootschalige gewassen hebben ze een individuele maar ook een gemeenschappelijke zeggenschap, dat wil zeggen samen met hun man. Vaak wordt dit geld van de grootschalige gewassen aangewend voor collectieve zaken zoals schoolgeld en de huur van het veld in het irrigatiestelsel. Sommige kleinschalige gewassen kunnen meer geld opleveren dan de grootschalige gewassen. Ook worden er een groot aantal verschillende kleinschalige gewassen in het irrigatie stelsel verbouwd. Echter, kleinschalige gewassen worden door de agrarische voorlichtingsdienst niet meegenomen in de economische berekeningen ('economic performance') van irrigatie stelsels. Daarom kunnen we stellen dat irrigatie stelsels het beter doen dan in het algemeen verondersteld wordt. Vrouwen dragen ook bij aan een beter functioneren van irrigatie stelsels, doordat ze actief zijn in de leiding van de stelsels. Vrouwen worden benaderd door de landbouwvoorlichters, omdat het voornamelijk vrouwen zijn die de gewassen verbouwen. Dus vrouwen worden hier niet gemarginaliseerd door een irrigatie interventie. Dat wil zeggen dat ze door het Tawona irrigatie stelsel niet uit het

productie proces worden weggedrukt, maar dat ze daarentegen hun domein van agrarische activiteiten hebben weten uit te breiden en dat heeft hen de mogelijkheid gegeven om macht te verwerven.

### 5) Het toewijzen van land en het behouden van de veldjes

Het dorp Manesa ligt in een 'communaal' gebied en dat betekent dat het land geen privé bezit is. In zulke gebieden beweren dorpschoufden (chiefs) en overheid dat ze het land 'bezitten'. Dat betekent dat ze beide, tot op zekere hoogte, zeggenschap hebben over de toewijzing van land. Irrigatie veldjes met een oppervlakte van 0,4 en 0,8 hectare, worden gewoonlijk door de overheidsdienst Agritex toegewezen aan boeren. Soms doen ze dat in overleg met dorpschoufden en de leden van het Irrigation Management Committee. De dorpschoufden die oorspronkelijk uit Manesa afkomstig zijn, regelen de toewijzing van de regenafhankelijk velden en de tuinen. Zowel vrouwen als mannen zijn 'plottolders' en gebruikers van het land, maar zij beweren ook dat zij hun specifieke veldjes 'bezitten'.

In 1953 werd het Tawona irrigatie stelsel aangelegd omdat er 'resettlement' in het gebied plaats zou vinden. Vier dorpschoufden met hun mensen werden naar het dorp Manesa verhuisd (resettled) en ze kregen toegang tot 40% van het geïrrigeerde land. Dat hield in dat de 'non-resettled' chiefs met hun mensen meer geïrrigeerd land hadden. Mensen moeten voor land in een irrigatie stelsel hun naam registreren en dat was en is een dynamisch proces. In hoofdstuk 5 analyseer ik zo'n land registratie proces voor een nieuw irrigatie stelsel, dat feitelijk een uitbreiding van het bestaande stelsel is. Veel mensen willen de begeerde irrigatie veldjes en daarom worden er selectie criteria toegepast. De overheidsvoorlichters van Agritex zijn dan degenen die de meeste invloed hebben op de registratie omdat zij de selectiecriteria formuleren en manipuleren. Ze gebruiken bepaalde criteria om hun selectie te onderbouwen. Verschillende Agritex voorlichters hadden verschillende ideeën over de registratie. Door al dat gemanoeuvreren door de overheidsmensen, ging de doorzichtigheid van het registratie proces verloren. De dorpschoufden begrepen er niets meer van en dreigden zodoende ook hun zeggenschap over het land te verliezen. Echter niet alleen de overheidsvoorlichters, maar ook de dorpschoufden en de vrouwen en mannen uit de dorpen hadden hun eigen agenda's en strategieën om hun eigen belangen te realiseren aangaande het land in het nieuwe irrigatie stelsel. Veertien procent (14%) van de geregistreerden waren vrouwen, terwijl het hoofdzakelijk vrouwen zijn die het land bewerken. Sommige vrouwen zullen daarom hun uiterste best doen om het land in hun eigen naam geregistreerd te krijgen, zodat ze zeggenschap over het land en de productie zullen hebben. Het lage percentage zal dan ook langzaam stijgen.

Ik heb de toewijzing van land en het gebruik van land in het bestaande Tawona irrigatie stelsel bestudeerd door gender conflicten over land te bestuderen. Bestaande waarden en ideeën over gender worden gereproduceerd en dat beïnvloedt in belangrijke mate de toewijzing van land en de toegang van vrouwen tot land in een stelsel. Maar zowel vrouwen als mannen ontwerpen bepaalde strategieën om een geregistreerde 'plotholder' te worden of te blijven, zodat ze zeggenschap over land en de productie hebben. Ondanks het feit dat vrouwen en mannen menen (common discourse) dat een getrouwde of een gescheiden vrouw niet voor land kan registreren, zien we in de praktijk dat toch veel vrouwen (38%) in het Tawona stelsel geregistreerd zijn.

De privatisering van irrigatiestelsels betekent dat de taken van de Agritex overheidsvoorlichters door de boeren moet worden overgenomen. Boeren moeten dan ook het water verdelen en alle andere taken uitvoeren en zelf ook het water en elektriciteit gaan betalen. Echter in zake privatisering gaat het niet alleen over geld, maar dus ook over de zeggenschap en toewijzing van land. De meeste boeren en vooral de vrouwen vinden dat er een onderhandelaar van buiten bij betrokken moet blijven om het irrigatie stelsel te leiden en op te treden in gender geschillen over land.



## 6) De 'koninklijke' macht en de macht van de regen

De belangrijkste autoriteiten in het dorp en het hoofdschap zijn 'chiefs', vrouwelijke 'spirit mediums', Agritex functionarissen, councillors, leden van het Irrigation Management Committee en mensen die bijvoorbeeld een belangrijke rol in de kerk spelen. Ze verkrijgen hun autoriteit van traditionele status, overheidserkenning en specifieke activiteiten waarvoor ze verantwoordelijk zijn. De 'chiefs' onderling, maar ook chiefs met overheidsfunctionarissen zijn in het dorp en hoofdschap in politieke machtsconflicten verwickeld. Het is het vrouwelijke spirit medium van het hoofdschap genaamd Makopa, die vaak optreedt als een onderhandelaar en geschilsbeslechter in die conflicten.

Regen bleek ook een belangrijk fenomeen te zijn in die machtsconflicten in het dorp en hoofdschap. Mensen geloven dat degenen wier voorouders regen kunnen brengen, het land bezitten en daarom de rechtmatige autoriteiten zijn. Die geloofsovertuiging kwam duidelijk naar voren in het machtsconflict tussen Mutigwe en Manesa. Het vrouwelijk 'spirit medium' trad in dit conflict weer op als de geschilsbeslechter. Manesa en Mutigwe werden beiden als autoriteiten in het dorp Manesa aangewezen, omdat Mutigwe's voorouders de regen zouden brengen, en omdat Manesa in het verleden ook door een opperhoofd (Paramount chief) van het Mutema hoofdschap als hoofd van het dorp was aangewezen.

Machtsconflicten kwamen ook voort uit de hervestiging ('resettlement'). De dorpschoufden die van buiten kwamen hadden duidelijk minder handelingsruimte dan de dorpschoufden die afkomstig waren uit het dorp Manesa. De dorpschoufden die van buiten kwamen hadden geen zeggenschap over land, moesten elders hun dorpsvoorouders vereren en ze kregen een andere plaats in het lokale rechtssysteem. In hoofdstuk zes heb ik verder de machtsconflicten tussen de councillor en dorpschoufden en ook tussen councillor en Agritex voorlichters geanalyseerd. Het vrouwelijk 'spirit medium' van het hoofdschap, Makopa, onderhandelde vaak tussen overheidsfunctionarissen en de dorpschoufden. Zij was een belangrijke autoriteit in het politieke veld.

Machtsconflicten waren er ook tussen de verschillende Ndaou hoofdschappen. Bijvoorbeeld tussen de Mutema en Musikavanhu hoofdschappen. Mutema probeerde de geschiedenis op een bepaalde wijze te reconstrueren, namelijk dat zij het belangrijkste waren in het brengen van de regen, en daarmee de rechtmatige autoriteit onder alle Ndaou chieftains zouden zijn.

Voor al in het politieke veld met de verschillende domeinen hebben we gezien dat regels, ideologieën, waarden en normen worden gereproduceerd, gebruikt en gemanipuleerd door sociale actoren met het doel om hun posities veilig te stellen, maar ook om hun domeinen te onderhouden waardoor ze hun autoriteit verkrijgen en macht kunnen verwerven. Daarom ook vallen dorpschoufden en opperschoufden terug op hun 'spirit mediums', die als machtsbemiddelaars optreden tussen de verschillende, maar overlappende werelden van de 'chiefs' en overheid. In alle machtsconflicten zien we dat specifieke sociale actoren er aanspraak op maken dat ze de rechtmatige autoriteit op bepaalde gebieden zijn.

## 7) Het definiëren van geesten en de controle over vrouwen

Ndaou vrouwen en mannen geloven dat geesten hun leven beïnvloeden. Ze geloven in voorouders en andere goede en slechte geesten, ook al zijn ze lid van een kerk. Verschillende geloofsovertuigingen worden vaak op een strategische wijze gecombineerd. Bijvoorbeeld vele sociale actoren geloven in hun voorouders, maar ook in een God. Ze geloven in genezende geesten die bijvoorbeeld door Afrikaanse dokters worden geraadpleegd, maar ze geloven ook in de werking van medicijnen in ziekenhuizen en artsen. Ze geloven in slechte geesten en hekserij. Al deze verschillende geloofsovertuigingen worden op strategische wijze gedefinieerd, gebruikt en gemanipuleerd, om bijvoorbeeld troost te vinden, om dood en ziekten te verklaren; om genezen te worden; om wraak te nemen of om hulpbronnen of andere sociale actoren, vooral vrouwen, te beheersen. Goede geesten zijn die geesten die beschermen, helpen en genezen. Goede geesten worden daarom vereerd, bijvoorbeeld door bier te brouwen en te offeren. Voorouder geesten worden gemeenschappelijk vereerd, maar geesten van overleden vrouwen

worden vaak door de oudere vrouwen vereerd. Geesten worden als slecht gedefinieerd als bijvoorbeeld mensen ziek worden of overlijden of wanneer er andere problemen zijn. Twee slechte, kwade of boze geesten zijn bijvoorbeeld de '*ngozi*' en de '*bvuri*'. De '*ngozi*' wordt gedefinieerd als de boze geest van iemand die vermoord is en daarom wraak neemt. De '*bvuri*' wordt gedefinieerd als de boze geest van iemand die vermoord is, maar die door de moordenaar naar iemand anders wordt gestuurd (casted). In vier verschillende 'bad spirit' cases heb ik geanalyseerd hoe sociale actoren de geloofsovertuigingen in slechte geesten en hekserij toepassen op hun zoektocht naar verklaringen voor de dood, ziekten en ongeluk. In deze processen worden vrouwen vaak als de zondebokken aangewezen en daardoor worden ze in zekere mate in hun handelingsruimte beperkt.

Maar niet alle praktijken en ideeën over boze geesten worden als hekserij gedefinieerd. Het bouwen van een huis voor een geest bijvoorbeeld, wordt in het algemeen niet als hekserij opgevat. Als er veel problemen zijn in een familie, dan geloven zij dat deze problemen kunnen worden voorkomen als een mannelijk familielid trouwt met een meisje in de naam van de betrokken geest. De reconstructie van de boze geest '*bvuri*' had niet alleen ten doel om vrouwen te controleren door ze soms naar hun ouderlijk huis terug te sturen, maar had ook ten doel om hulpbronnen te beheersen.

In deze studie maakte ik geen onderscheid tussen 'witchcraft' (hekserij) en 'sorcery' (tovenarij) omdat de Ndaus dat onderscheid zelf niet maakten. Ze geloven in '*uroyi*', dat zij zelf vertaalden met 'witchcraft' en dat vertaalde ik weer met hekserij. Ze betitelden alles wat slecht is en dat met geweld, bedreiging en dood te maken heeft als hekserij en dat is dus afgezien van het feit of het zichtbaar dan wel onzichtbaar is. Daarom definieerde ik hekserij als elke geweldplegende bedreiging die vaak voortkomt uit conflicten en het doel heeft anderen of problemen te beheersen. In veel literatuur is het algemene denken (common discourse) terug te vinden dat vrouwen de heksen zijn. Echter, Ndaus vrouwen en mannen waren er van overtuigd dat zowel mannen als vrouwen in de praktijk heksen kunnen zijn. Afgunst en jaloezie werden gezien als de drijvende krachten achter hekserij beschuldigingen. De emoties en intenties van vrouwen en mannen bleken niet zo erg te verschillen. Ze houden zich namelijk allemaal met gezondheid, liefde en rijkdom bezig. Uit zorg over die zaken komt de hekserij voort. Hekserij beschuldigingen kunnen worden gebruikt in de strijd om de macht.

Zowel vrouwen als mannen zijn Afrikaanse dokters. Aan de ene kant worden ze als goede dokters gezien die goede medicijnen voorschrijven en kunnen onderhandelen in conflicten. Aan de andere kant zijn het ook deze dokters die het geloof in hekserij reproduceren en in het geval van ziekte en dood de vrouwen vaak van hekserij beschuldigen. De dokters helpen mensen in goede, maar ook slechte praktijken. Zij doen dat om geld te verdienen om zodoende in hun levensonderhoud te voorzien, maar ook omdat ze een autoriteit in het dorp willen blijven. Actoren in het dorp worden door de Afrikaanse dokters beheerst, maar zij zelf raadplegen ook die dokters in geval van ziekte en dood, maar ook in geval van ruzies en wraak. Dan willen ze door de Afrikaanse dokter geholpen worden om anderen te controleren, terwijl ze op dat moment zelf door de Afrikaanse dokter beheerst worden.

## 8) Overleving, controle en autoriteit: Shona, gender en irrigatie

Door het bestuderen van het alledaagse leven van de Ndaus vrouwen en mannen, kwamen overleving, beheersing (control) en autoriteit als de drie belangrijkste fenomenen naar buiten. Dat wordt in de Retrospect, hoofdstuk 8, nader uitgelegd.

Door het gebruik van de actor georiënteerde benadering komen vrouwen en mannen, of ze nu boeren, 'spirit mediums', overheidsfunctionarissen, 'chiefs', echtgenoten of handelaren zijn, naar voren als sociale actoren die het alledaagse leven vorm geven en veranderen. Daarbij geven ze elkaar mogelijkheden, maar beperken ze elkaar ook. Dit geeft impliciet ook aan dat in de conventionele gender theorieën en het algemene denken (common discourse) dat terug te vinden is in de Shona en gender-irrigatie literatuur, vrouwen veel te vaak als passieve slachtoffers van ontwikkeling afschilderen.

Elke sociale actor is actief in bepaalde specifieke domeinen, en verkrijgt daardoor ook haar/zijn autoriteit en zal daarom ook bepaalde strategieën bedenken om die domeinen te behouden. Bijvoorbeeld de autoriteiten in een dorp of woonerf 'vechten' met elkaar over symbolische grenzen, maar ze vullen elkaar ook aan. Ndau vrouwen zijn belangrijk omdat ze in vele verschillende domeinen actief zijn en daaruit ook hun autoriteit verkrijgen, hetgeen hen bekwaam maakt om macht te verwerven.

Gender identiteiten kunnen ook gerelateerd worden aan specifieke domeinen. Gender identiteiten krijgen vorm 1) in specifieke situaties en domeinen; 2) in specifieke relaties; 3) bij speciale onderwerpen en 4) door leeftijd. De veelvoudige identiteit van een sociale actor moet worden onderkend. Gender identiteiten veranderen constant. De veelvoudige gender identiteiten impliceren een enorme diversiteit in het verkrijgen en afstaan van macht. Macht is vloeiend en elk individu is een complexe set van relaties. Daarom kunnen we ook niet over 'de positie' en 'de rol' van vrouwen spreken, omdat positie en rollen elke keer veranderen en dat is dus afhankelijk van met wie, over welk onderwerp en de plaats waar sociale actoren interacteren.

Kwantitatief onderzoek wordt vaak aangehaald om 'de positie' van vrouwen weer te geven. Toch lijkt het me minder adequaat om via kwantitatieve gegevens te stellen dat vrouwen achterblijven. Zaken over posities, autoriteiten, gender identiteiten en macht, die dingen dus die constant veranderen in specifieke situaties, zijn toch meer kwalitatieve zaken. Zo ook worden interventies zoals een irrigatie stelsel, steeds gevormd en veranderd door sociale actoren zelf.

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Carin Vijfhuizen was born April 9th 1961, in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. She holds a BSc in Agricultural Economics and Animal Husbandry (1980-1984). She is a Rural Sociologist and holds a MSc in the Sociology of Rural Development, Gender in Agriculture, Extension, Tropical Animal Husbandry and Research Methodology from Wageningen Agricultural University; 1984-1989. Before and during her BSc study she obtained farming experience in the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland. During her MSc study she carried out sociological research in Zambia (1987) and Burkina Faso (1988).

From January 1990 until March 1993 she worked in Zambia as Co-ordinator of a Socio-Economic Analysis Team in a Livestock Development Project (Department of Veterinary and Tsetse Control). In April, May, and June 1993 she wrote a PhD research proposal during a seminar which was organised by the ZIMWESI project. From July 1993 to February 1994 she took care of her son, then two years old. From March 1994 until April 1998 she stayed in Zimbabwe and was, apart from being a mother, a Research Associate and a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe (Department of Sociology) and a Research fellow at the Wageningen Agricultural University (Department of Social Sciences/Rural Development Sociology). During those years in Zimbabwe she conducted PhD research among the Ndau (Shona) women and men in Manesa village, in Chipinge District, and covered the fields of Rural Development Sociology, Gender and Irrigation.

In 1998 she was appointed for several years as lecturer and researcher at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, Mozambique.

