

**Living on the Frontline: Politics, Migration and Transfrontier
Conservation in the Mozambican Villages of the
Mozambique-South Africa Borderland**

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PhD in Anthropology
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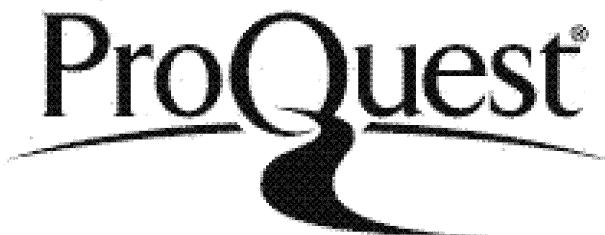


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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with relations between the state and society in the rural communities of the district of Massingir, close to Mozambique's southern border with South Africa. Based on 17 months of fieldwork, it explores how the changing relations between the neighbouring states have affected the social, economic, and political lives of the residents of this borderland. It addresses issues concerned with labour migration, local politics, and the recent development of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP).

There has been a long history of male labour migration from this region to the goldmines in South Africa. While this migration has been of economic importance to the people of Massingir, it has also become deeply embedded in their social and cultural lives, signifying the transition from adolescence to manhood. However, cross-border relations deteriorated when Mozambique gained independence and the mining industry reduced its dependence on foreign labour. This thesis argues that, despite recruitment cutbacks, the social and economic pressures remain for the young men of Massingir to migrate. Unable to cross the border legally, they cross illegally and attempt to find temporary employment.

- Migration has been important in constructing the ethnic Shangaan identity of this area. I argue that, although ethnic identity is sharpened whilst people are away, it is equally important to consider how it is consolidated at home. The domination of the Frelimo party in this region has been key in this. I demonstrate that Frelimo has been able to maintain its popularity and sustain single-party rule in Massingir, despite the official shift to pluralist democracy. I argue that the recent development of the GLTP is a threat to local livelihoods and Frelimo's popularity has been diminished by its involvement in the project. I demonstrate that residents have used political processes to pressurise the state into recognising their concerns.

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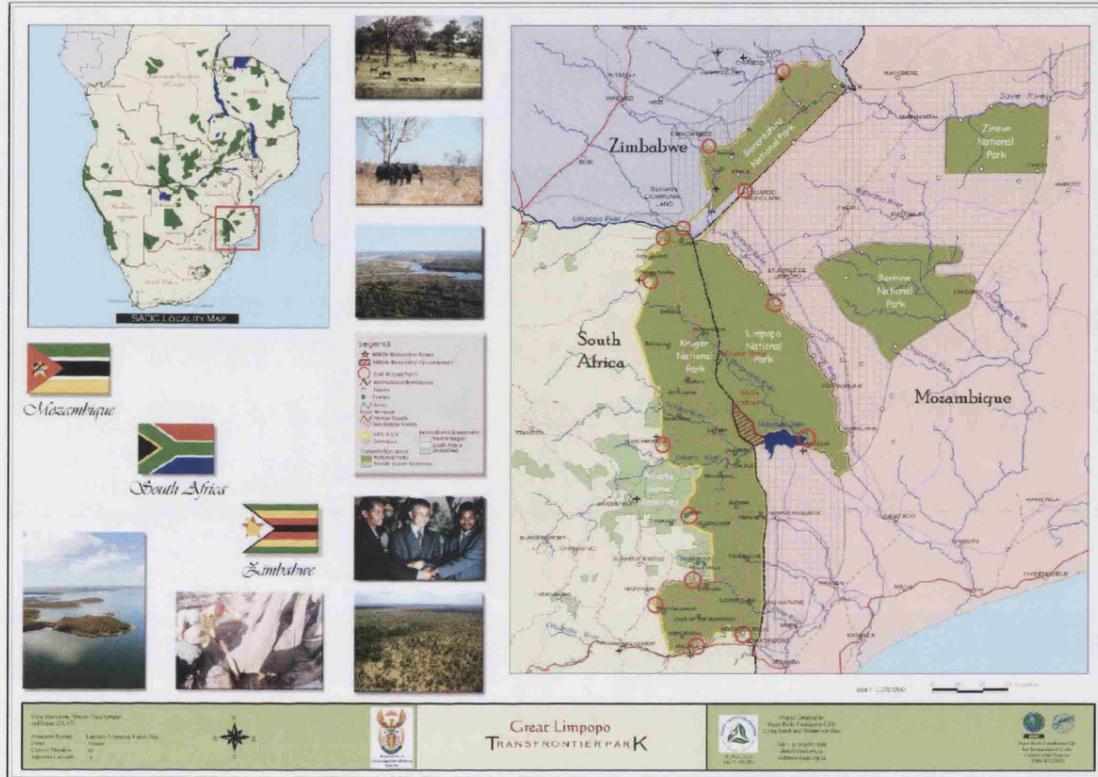
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Glossary of organisations and acronyms

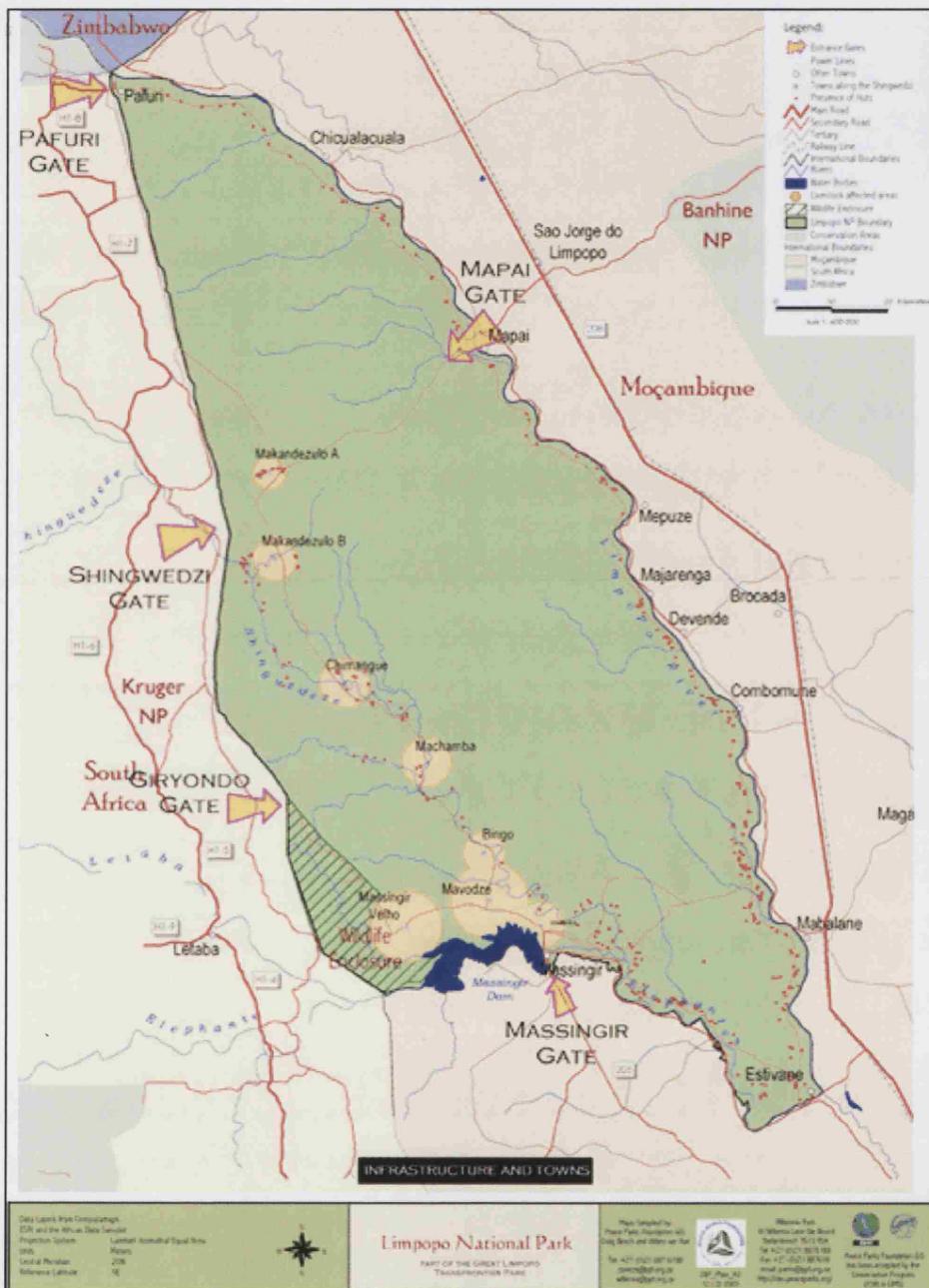
ADB	African Development Bank
AIM	Agência de Informação de Moçambique
	Mozambican News Agency
ANC	African National Congress
ARA-SUL	Administração Regional de Águas do Sul
	Regional Water Administration for Southern Mozambique
AWF	African Wildlife Foundation
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme For Indigenous Resources (Zimbabwean conservation initiative)
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation (Rhodesia)
DNAC	Direcção Nacional de Áreas de Conservação
	National Directorate of Conservation Areas
EU	European Union
FMD	Food and Mouth Disease
Frelimo	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
	Mozambican Liberation Front
GLTP	Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park
GOM	Government of Mozambique
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRIN	United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network
IUCN	World Conservation Union
KAWENA	Southern African Distribution and Transport Company
KFW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau.
	German development bank
KNP	Kruger National Park
LNP	Limpopo National Park
MAE	Ministério de Administração Estatal
	Ministry of State Administration
MPPB	Mozambican Peace Process Bulletin

MZM	Mozambican Metical (exchange rate: 1US\$: 23,000 MZM)
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OFS	Orange Free State
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PPF	Peace Parks Foundation
Rand	South Africa Rand (exchange rate: 1US\$: 10 Rand)
Renamo	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana
	Mozambique National Resistance (MNR)
RNLA	Rand Native Labour Association
SADC	South African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference (later to become SADC)
SANParks	South African National Parks
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SAPA	South African Press Association
SMME	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise
TAMEGA	Portuguese construction company
TEBA	The Employment Bureau of Africa
TFCA	Transfrontier Conservation Area
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
	Rhodesian white minority government (1965-1979)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US\$	United States Dollar
USAID	United States Agency of International Development
Wenela	Witwatersrand Native Labour Association
WFP	World Food Programme
WWF	World Wildlife Foundation

Map 1: Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park and the regional fieldwork setting

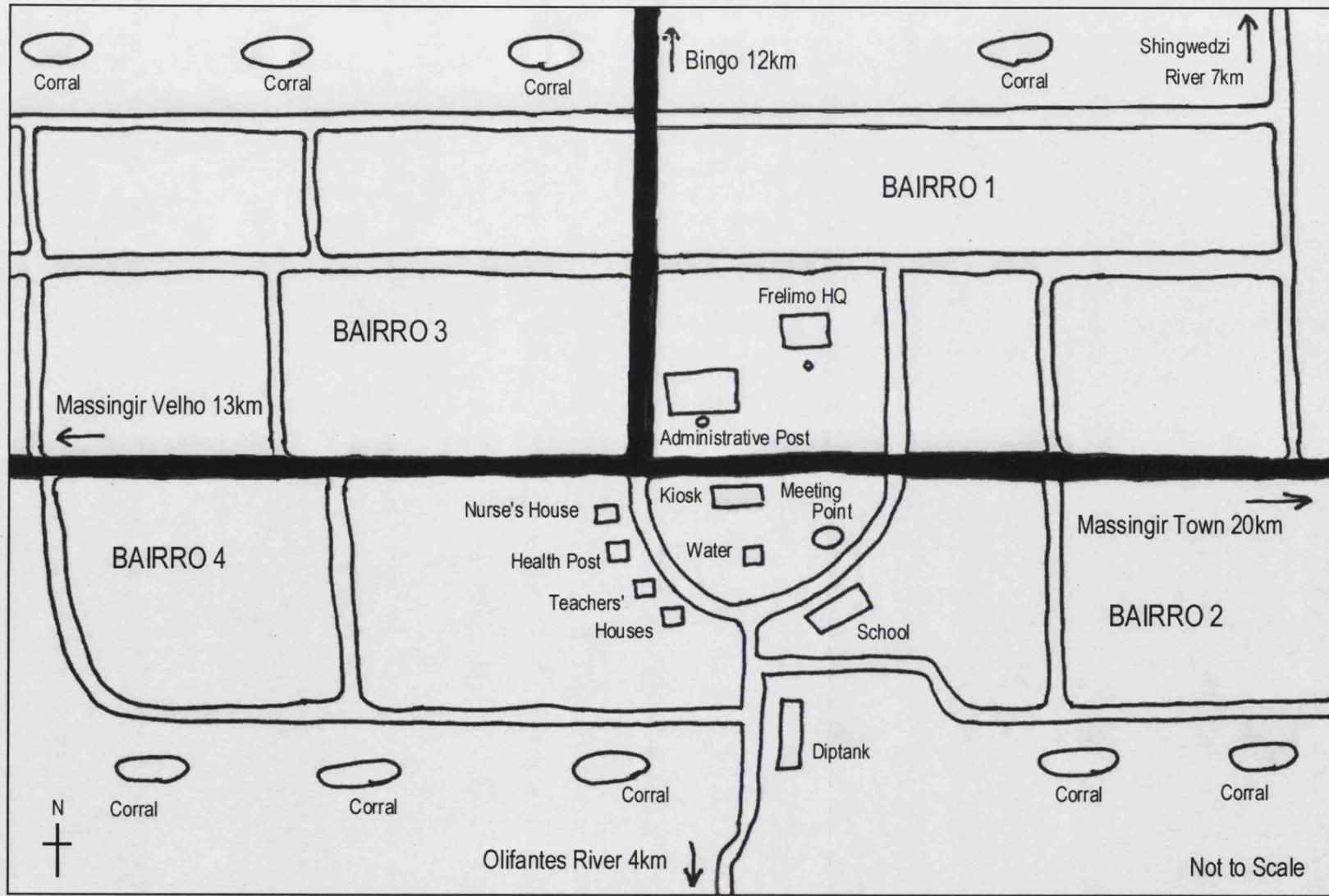


Map 2: Fieldsite and Limpopo National Park



Map courtesy of the Peace Parks Foundation

Map 3: Sketch Map of Mavodze



1. Introduction

Paying Mandela's brideprice

Seven kilometres north of the village of Mavodze there is a pool in the Shingwedzi River where the men come to fish and the young boys water livestock during the dry season. Behind the trees that shade the river are the mixed fields of maize, pumpkin and melon that, in a good year, provide the villagers with much of their food. I had been living in Mavodze for little less than a week when Fernando, a local man who was later to become my field assistant, asked if I was interested in spending a day in the Shingwedzi valley. I spent the morning badgering my new and unsuspecting informant for information while he fished in the pool. Having lunched on Fernando's catch, he suggested we should walk along the river and visit his fields. Fernando's field was much like the others in the valley. It was late October 2001 and the dead maize plants from the previous year still stood in the parched soil, bleached yellow by the long dry season. A high fence of thorny branches surrounded Fernando's plot of land, built to keep wandering livestock from eating the crops. However, on one side of the field a huge gap had been torn through the fence. Several posts had been ripped out of the ground and branches lay scattered on the ground. "Shit," Fernando exclaimed, running over to his damaged fence. He looked down at the tracks in the dust and shook his head, "Elephants," he said, "Nothing can stop an elephant. It was Mandela's elephants that did this."

Earlier that month the former South African President Nelson Mandela had opened the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, a massive conservation project that would link South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, forming the largest conservation area in the world. A ceremony had taken place on the Mozambique-South African border, some 80 km further up the Shingwedzi River from Fernando's field, where Mandela had opened a symbolic gate in the border fence and had witnessed the relocation of 40 elephants from the Kruger National Park to Mozambique's newly created Limpopo National Park. During the press conference that followed the elephant release, Mandela joked that with the transfer of the South African elephants he had finally paid his *lobola* (bride price) for his Mozambican wife, Graca Machel. "In my home village I am often



Photo 1: Fishing in the Shingwedzi River



Photo 2: Goats drinking from the Shingwedzi River during the dry season

asked why my wife still keeps her original surname. I tell them it is because I haven't paid my *lobola*, but today that has finally happened" (cited in ANC 2001).

The 1998 wedding between Mandela and Machel was a potent symbol of the new era in Mozambican-South African relations that had developed following the end of apartheid. Graca Machel was the former Mozambican first lady and widow of Samora Machel, the country's first president and legendary leader of Frelimo's liberation struggle against Portuguese colonialism. Nelson Mandela was the hero of the fight against apartheid: the leader of the ANC, the first freely elected president of a truly democratic South Africa and one of the most respected statesmen in the world. Their marriage symbolised the hope for a better future for Southern Africa: a future without white minority rule, a future without the interferences of the Cold War superpowers, and a future of peace and regional cooperation.

The dismantling of the system of apartheid in South Africa, culminating in the 1994 elections, heralded massive changes across the Southern African region; nowhere more so than in Mozambique. In the early 1990s the apartheid government withdrew its support of the Renamo rebels that had been engaged in a brutal civil war against the Mozambican government since the late 1970s. Without its major sponsor, Renamo was forced to the negotiating table and a peace process was successfully implemented in 1992 followed by multiparty elections two years later. With peace in Mozambique and the ANC in government in South Africa, cooperation between the two countries blossomed over the following decade. Bilateral approaches have been discussed relating to an array of issues including transport policies, migration and labour issues, energy supply and environmental protection (IRIN 2003). Such cooperation has not been limited to the inter-governmental level but has also occurred in the business sector; there has been over US\$1.33 billion of private South African investment in Mozambique since 1985 (IRIN 2004). The transfrontier park (involving both government and private finance) that Nelson Mandela had been opening when he joked about paying his brideprice in October 2001 was just one of the many ventures that were being realised across the Mozambique-South Africa border.

For Fernando, struggling to rebuild his fences in the Shingwedzi Valley, Mr Mandela's elephants were not a sudden introduction to this changing regional situation. Having

lived in the Mozambique-South Africa borderland for most of his life, Fernando had personal experience of the effects of the changing cross-border relations. Like hundreds of thousands of other young men from southern Mozambique, Fernando had migrated across the border and worked underground in the gold mines of South Africa at the heart of the capitalist system that had fuelled the apartheid regime. When Mozambique had gained independence from the Portuguese and the socialist Frelimo government came to power, Fernando was drafted into the army. He had fought against the UDI Rhodesian army's attempts to destabilise the newly independent country. A decade later he was part of a civilian militia that fought against the Renamo rebels, sponsored by apartheid South Africa, which had crossed the border and repeatedly attacked the villages of the Shingwedzi Basin. For Fernando and the other residents of Mavodze the impact of Mandela's elephants and the creation of the Transfrontier Park were another way in which their lives were being affected by their proximity to the border and the actions taken by the Mozambican state and its neighbours.

This thesis explores how the changing relations between the neighbouring states have affected the people living in the Mozambique-South Africa borderland. It examines how labour migration from southern Mozambique to the South African goldmines developed on the basis of cordial cross-border relations that existed during the colonial period. This relationship cooled following Mozambican independence in 1975, resulting in a reduction in the number of Mozambicans being recruited into the mining industry. The thesis argues that the long tradition of men migrating to the gold mines was socially, culturally and economically important to the households of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin and, although the retrenchments to the mining industry limited the legal opportunities for migration, the young men of this region have continued to cross into South Africa as illegal migrants. The development of the Transfrontier Park that Mr Mandela was opening in October 2001 is a symbol of the new post-apartheid era of regional cooperation that signifies the removal of boundaries between the different states. I argue that for the villagers like Fernando the park constitutes a threat to their livelihoods and, paradoxically, is creating a more impenetrable border through which to cross to find work in South Africa. The residents' response to the park has to be understood in terms of the local political situation in Massingir. After independence, the Frelimo party was able to rapidly generate grassroots support and successfully pursue its nationalist policies. Frelimo has been able to maintain complete dominance of the local

political sphere despite Mozambique's transition to a multiparty democracy at the end of the civil war. This local popularity has been threatened by the Frelimo government's involvement in the creation of the Transfrontier Park. The thesis explores how the residents have been able to appropriate the appointment of a new community leader as a political response to the Mozambican state's involvement in the Transfrontier Park. Tying all these themes together, the thesis is ultimately concerned with concepts of citizenship, sovereignty and statehood in a border region.

Living in a borderland

Fernando had been born and brought up in the Olifantes Valley, only 25km from the Mozambique-South Africa border. During the time I spent conducting fieldwork Fernando lived in the village of Mavodze and supported his family through agricultural production and selling fish from the local rivers. Although he was settled in Mozambique during this period, he had spent much of his life crossing into South Africa and working in the mining industry. Members of his family had fled across the border seeking refuge in South Africa during the war and he had crossed to visit them on numerous occasions. Many of his material possessions, including the fishing nets we had used that morning, had been purchased on the other side of the border. Even his leisure time was shaped by the neighbouring state, as Fernando was — like most of the villagers — unable to receive the signal from Mozambican radio stations and relied on the South African stations that broadcast across the border. During my 17 months of living in the villages of Massingir I came to understand the extent to which the lives of the residents of this region are shaped by their proximity to the international border.

Traditionally anthropology has been more concerned with the cultural and symbolic boundaries between groups of people than with the geo-political borders that shape the world (Donnan & Wilson 1994:5). Anthropologists have tended to concentrate on the processes of the formation of the boundaries that create and divide peoples along, for example, ethnic lines (Barth 1969) or according to the notion of symbolic communities (Cohen 1985; 1987). Anthropological interest in borders and borderlands, in the physical sense, has been a more recent phenomenon. Many of these contemporary

studies, conducted in Africa and elsewhere, have tended to concentrate on the classical anthropological concern of identity.

The anthropology of borders, Donnan and Wilson argue, “is part of the wider social science of class, ethnic, religious and national identity, but it is an anthropology specifically concerned with the negotiation of identity in places where everyone expects identity to be problematic” (1994:12). Borderlands have been regarded as the zones in which divergent political, economic and social systems meet, coexist and conflict. The study of such cultural melting pots, Donnan and Wilson suggest, provides unique insight into the way in which identities are constructed. Similarly, Daphne Berdahl uses her work in the former East Germany to argue that the process of boundary formation is a means of understanding the dynamics of identity formation and expression. She argues that crossing borders “is an act of definition and declaration of identity” (1999:4). By concentrating on localised studies of identity in borderlands, ethnographers have been able to explore the way in which international borders are understood and experienced by the populations living on either side. When looking at how the people in the Mexico-US borderlands negotiate the border, Martinez suggests that all borderlanders share a similar identity, arguing that the “influence of the border makes the lives of border peoples functionally similar irrespective of location, nationality, ethnicity, culture and language” (1994:xviii; see also Heyman 1994:51). While agreeing that people in border regions share similar structural constraints and processes, Donna Flynn disputes that all border populations respond to these in the same way (1997:312). Nevertheless, she argues that the Shabe people living near the Bénin-Nigeria border forge a collective and distinct ‘border identity’ or ‘border culture’ (1997:311).

Although Flynn argues that the Shabe identity is based solely on their proximity to the border, elsewhere in Africa a shared ethnicity has often been considered as the basis of construction of such a transfrontier identity.¹ A salient feature of international boundaries throughout the continent is their disregard for the ethnic boundaries of the people living on the ground. The geo-political borders are seen to artificially divide groups of people that share an identity founded on ethnicity (see Phiri 1985; Miles

¹ For good examples outside Africa see Wilson & Donnan (1998).

1994): a feature clearly to be seen in the case of Mozambique and South Africa where the border neatly divides the Shangaan ethnic group in two.

Fernando and the other residents of the Massingir villages trace their origins back to a group of Nguni, led by Soshangane, who fled the expansion of the Zulu leader Chaka in the early 19th century. The Nguni crossed the Lebombo Mountains in 1821 and conquered the Tsonga people, forming the Gaza Empire that at its height dominated all of what is now Southern Mozambique (Theal 1915; Junod 1927 [1912]; Smith 1970). The Nguni introduced their own language and customs and mixed with the local Tsonga to such an extent that the whole group became known as the Shangaan (van Warmelo 1974:68). When the international border between South Africa and Mozambique was agreed in the 1860s the Shangaan were split: part of the group were recognised as living in South Africa, others in Mozambique.

While the people living in both Mozambique and South Africa consider themselves Shangaan, this does not undermine the significance of the border. In a study of the Hausa on the Nigeria-Niger border, William Miles notes that divergent value systems arise on either side of the boundary and become deeply entrenched over time (1994). Like the Hausa, the Shangaan on either side of the Mozambique-South Africa border share a language, a similar culture and a common history, but differences have emerged from living in different states and thus experiencing vastly different political systems and economic circumstances. To discuss the people living in this area in terms of sharing some sort of 'border identity' is to gloss over these important variations and the effect they have on people's lives. Fernando and the other residents of the Mozambican villages near the South African border were ethnically Shangaan, but it was always made clear that they considered themselves *Mozambican* Shangaan. People made frequent journeys across the border and the neighbouring state was an important influence over many aspects of their lives, yet, in spite of this familiarity, South Africa was always considered a foreign land.² It was a place where one might go to work or to engage in some other activity, but Mozambique was always home.

² Similar sentiments are shared by the Ghanaians living near the Togolese border, who frequently travel between the two countries but still ultimately consider themselves as Ghanaians (Nugent 2002:7)

This is not to argue that the Mozambican Shangaans are a homogenous group. Elsewhere in Gaza Province a hierarchy exists between those people who trace their descents back to the Nguni conquerors and to the Tsonga who were conquered. The residents of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin considered themselves as descendants of the Nguni conquerors and contrasted themselves to the other Mozambican Shangaans living nearer the coast. However, people did not express this contrast in terms of the Nguni invasions of the early 19th century, but discussed it in terms of Portuguese colonialisation and linguistics. As a result of closer contact with the colonial power, those living further south had incorporated more Portuguese vocabulary into their language. The residents of the villages where I conducted fieldwork all spoke a dialect of Shangaan that had appropriated numerous English words and phrases. While my informants could easily communicate with people living to the south, they considered their dialect to be superior because of its closer ties to South Africa, where Soshangane had originated, rather than to Portugal, the colonial power that defeated 'their' Gaza Empire.

Although my informants retained this sense of 'Mozambican-ness', they would use whatever resources were available to avoid problems whilst visiting South Africa, including ethnicity. Just as Mexican truckers crossing into the United States strategically play upon the ambiguities of the border to reformulate and mobilise ethnic identity to their advantage (Alvarez & Collier 1994:607), my informants were able to use their Shangaan identity to claim residence on both sides of the Mozambique-South Africa border. Many people possessed both Mozambican and South African identity cards and would produce which ever one was appropriate depending on which country they were in.³ Some of my older informants left Massingir and went to South Africa when they learned they might be eligible to receive a pension on that side of the border. Such behaviour does not indicate that the identity of this borderland population was shaped by deterritorialization and displacement, as suggested by Gupta and Ferguson (1992:18), nor does it show that the residents have formed a 'border culture'. Rather it demonstrates the opportunistically flexible approach borderland residents took to their official identity, whereby people would expediently switch official documentation

³ Similarly, Stephan Hofstatter observes people having both South African and Mozambican identity papers living on the South African side of the border (2004)

whenever they felt it appropriate; as Liisa Malkki observes, “identity is always mobile and processual” (1992:37).

Making use of Malkki’s observations, Harri Englund argues that, if identities are inherently flexible and processual, then “identity itself should hardly be the ultimate subject of analysis” (2002:24). Rather than concern himself with the current preoccupation with the concept of identity in borderlands, Englund concentrates on the administrative and social forces and power relations that shaped the peoples’ experiences in the Mozambique-Malawi borderland during and shortly after the Mozambican civil war. In a similar vein he is also critical of the concept of a ‘border culture’. Englund subscribes to the ideas of Robert Alvarez who argues that a notion of a border culture essentialises individual traits and behaviours and often obliterates the actual problems and conditions faced by the people living in a borderland (1995:450). Working on the Mexico-US border, Alvarez argues that attempts to define a border culture have been socially misleading and have obscured the social-cultural processes of the people living in this borderland.

Rather than attempting to analyse the experiences of Fernando and the other residents of the villages of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin in terms of a ‘border culture’ or ‘identity’, in this thesis I position myself alongside Englund and Alvarez to look at how the lives of these people have been shaped by the specific social, economic, and political processes taking place within the historical context of the borderland. As the border is a symbolic and politico-jural boundary between the Mozambican and South African states, this approach must consider “the very concrete material consequences of the actions of states for local populations” (Hann 1995:136).

States and the borderland

Part of the way in which the Mozambique-South Africa border is understood and experienced today stems from the manner in which it was originally created. The history of African borders in general differs from that of their European and American counterparts. The European borders, Nugent argues, developed from spheres of

influence of neighbouring centres that, over time, solidified to become fixed boundaries between states (2002:3). The American model was one of a rolling frontier where settlers gradually expanded beyond the boundaries imposed by the colonial powers. In contrast the borders in Africa were created by competing European powers — often not even present on African soil — that divided the continent between them (Nugent 2002:4).⁴ In this case, the Mozambique-South Africa border, through which Mr Mandela had released his elephants, was created in an agreement between the Portuguese and the Boer Republic of the Transvaal signed in 1869. This treaty recognised the Portuguese possession of Delagoa Bay (Maputo) and established the border of the Transvaal as the ridge of the Lebombo Mountains as far north as the Limpopo River (Newitt 1995:327).⁵

While the 1869 treaty defined the borders between the two states, the agreement was concerned with far more than simply the demarcation of frontiers. The Boers, having broken away from the British and established the Republic of the Transvaal, were looking to end their dependence on the British for access to the coast and the ports of Durban and Cape Town. In the 1869 treaty, the Transvaal and the Portuguese not only defined the extent of their territory, but also agreed transport links and access to the port at Delagoa Bay in return for favourable customs duties and tariffs. Although this agreement was subsequently revised, most notably to allow access to Mozambican labour following the discovery of gold in the Transvaal, its basic principles have defined international relations between Mozambique and South Africa⁶ for much of the last 100 years. Mozambique has been able to generate revenues from the South African trade using the port facilities in Maputo and through a system of labour migration organised by South African industrial interests that were granted sole access to recruit throughout Mozambique's southern provinces.

⁴ Although many of these boundary negotiations occurred in Europe, it is not the case, as is commonly thought, that the colonial map of Africa was carved out at the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-5. The boundaries long predicated the Berlin conference and had been gradually crystallised during the period of 'informal empire', when the network of trading posts, missions and the slave trade expanded inland from the European coastal strongholds (Mbembe 2000). Formal recognition of these unofficial territorial claims was based on individual treaties negotiated between the powers concerned, not an arbitrary map-making session in Berlin (Katzellenbogen 1996:21).

⁵ The northern and western borders of Mozambique were finally established, after much negotiation, in the Anglo-Portuguese treaty of 1891 (see Hammond 1966; Axelson 1967; Newitt 1995).

⁶ The Transvaal was annexed by Britain in 1900 and became the founding province of the Union of South Africa in 1910.

These treaties and agreements between the two states shaped not only the diplomatic relations, but also the lives of the people inhabiting borderlands. If we return to the example of Fernando, he had migrated to South Africa to work in the gold mines, as had his father before him. As a result of the inter-state relations, initiated by the 1869 treaty, hundreds of thousands of young Mozambicans have crossed the border, searching for work in South Africa. This thesis examines how this labour migration has affected social and economic relations among the people living in the borderland and shows how the process has been shaped by the changing relations between the South African and Mozambican states. Yet the case of Fernando and the elephants also demonstrates that the relationship between Mozambique and South Africa has not always been one of mutual cooperation. The elephants that destroyed Fernando's fence may have been a part of an intergovernmental conservation project, but one of the objectives of this transfrontier park was to rebuild peace and generate trust after almost two decades of conflict and tension that existed between the apartheid state and the Frelimo government that came to power after independence. The Mozambique-South Africa border also symbolizes this more menacing history of the two nations.

Elsewhere in Africa borders have frequently been characterised as flexible, weak and porous in comparison to the fixed and clearly defined boundaries of nation states elsewhere in the world (see Donnan & Wilson 1994; Wilson & Donnan 1998b; Englund 2002). This view stems, in part, from the manner in which they were established. As we have seen above, most African borders were created through negotiations between foreign powers. While we have seen that in many cases the ethnic and social boundaries of the people living in the area were ignored during such negotiations, in many cases these borders also fail to correspond to physical features on the ground. As a result most African borders are poorly marked and readily crossable (Griffiths 1996). This does not apply in the southern African setting, where — despite the fact that many of the borders do not conform to any natural physical features — the uneasy relations between apartheid South Africa and the 'Frontline States'⁷ have created some of the most fortified borders on the continent.

⁷ The 'Frontline States' was the term given to the black independent southern African states that were unified in their hostility to white minority rule in South Africa. This movement consisted of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. This group

By no stretch of the imagination could the Mozambique-South Africa border be described as either poorly-defined or easy to cross. The entire length of the boundary is fenced. During the apartheid era this was electrified from the Swaziland border to Komatipoort and carried a lethal current that was responsible for more deaths in 36 months than the Berlin Wall was throughout its entire history (Griffiths 1996:76; de la Hunt 1998). The northern section of the border fence has never been electrified, yet this is not to say it is any easier crossing into South Africa in this region. The Kruger National Park follows the border from the end of the electric fence as far as Zimbabwe. This park, the size of Israel, constitutes a buffer zone the effectiveness of which derives from its being populated with dangerous animals, most notably lions, and patrolled by armed guards.

Despite these efforts of the apartheid state, this thesis demonstrates that Fernando and many of the other residents of Mavodze and the surrounding villages, avoiding electrocution, attack or capture, continued to migrate across the border into South Africa. While people were able to slip through the gaps in the border, this does not imply that the border was in any way ineffective. Even those African borders that conform to the most stereotyped image of a highly porous and invisible frontier succeed, Jeffrey Herbst argues, in their primary function of preserving the integrity of the state (2000:253). Borders demarcate the territorial and political limits of nation states and thus require policing. As we have seen, the South African state has been particularly vigorous in maintaining its frontier with Mozambique.

While borders have long been considered the territorial limit of the power of the state, much recent literature challenges whether this remains the case. It argues that, in the age of globalisation, international and regional organisations such as the United Nations or the European Union are applying increasing pressure on states to weaken their borders (Donnan & Wilson 1994:2). In this way sovereignty is being unbundled and moved away from the nation-state and into global and supra-national arenas and institutions (Hansen & Stepputat forthcoming; Sassen 1996:1-30). The Great Limpopo National

went on to form the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC, later SADC) in 1979.

Park, which Nelson Mandela opened with the elephant release, appears to be an example of this process occurring in southern Africa. The project is underpinned by an ethos of regional cooperation and its funding, rather than being linked to any single national source, is channelled through the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The park's design requires the dropping of the national border fences and ultimately a committee of representatives from the participating states will jointly manage the whole area. This seems to substantiate the theory that borders are becoming less important and are being gradually dismantled. I argue in the thesis, however, that, although the fences are being removed, for the villagers of the Shingwedzi Basin the creation of the Limpopo Park has in fact solidified the border. As we have seen, the fencing in this northern section of the Mozambique-South Africa border, even during the apartheid era, was never the major obstacle for people attempting to cross. The major problems were, and still are, the animals and the armed patrols in Kruger National Park on the South African side of the border. At one level the Transfrontier Park is dismantling the border fences, but it is also bringing animals and armed patrols to the Mozambican side of the border. People attempting to cross the border will not only have to contend with these threats on the South African side, but will also face them closer to home. The effects of globalisation can be deceptive: national states are in fact holding on to the powers needed to define their political boundaries (Trouillot 2001:133). I maintain that the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park is an example of such a deception: the fences may be falling, but the two states are maintaining and enforcing their own political boundaries with perhaps even greater effectiveness than before.

Understandings of the state

Thus far I have argued that to understand the experiences of the Mozambican villagers living near the Mozambique-South Africa border we must move away from the anthropological interest in merged borderland identities and instead concentrate on the divisive role of the two states — despite their plans of co-operation — in this border region. Both the South African and Mozambican states have been integral to the development of the border and continue to play an active role in the way it is experienced and understood by those living in its vicinity. Considerations of the state

are not only important in terms of discussing the border: they also concern a broader theme that runs all the way through this thesis. In addition to analysing the role of both states in the practice of labour migration from southern Mozambique to the South African gold mining industry the thesis also explores how the state operates at a local level in the border villages, examining how the lives of the villagers have been affected by actions and policies of the local state representatives. The thesis explores how the post-colonial one-party state established a presence in this border region and how it has been able to maintain this domination in spite of the shift to pluralist politics that has occurred at a national level. It examines how the village residents, countering these techniques of domination, have strategized to engage with the local state and how they have been able to appropriate political processes that are being debated at a national level in an attempt to protect their local interests.

For anthropologists, 'the state' has been a notoriously problematic subject of study. As long ago as 1940, Radcliffe-Brown dismissed the concept from the field of anthropological investigation, arguing that the term 'state' was a source of mystification and that the analysis of government and politics were amply sufficient to grasp the political (1940a). Subsequent attempts to bring the state back into the field of social analysis have dealt with the concept as a distinct entity that is set apart from society and everyday life, and as such it has remained of little interest to anthropologists (Evans *et al.* 1985; Migdal 1988).

Jonathan Spencer's recent criticism of modern anthropology's neglect of the state and politics in general (1997) is part of a growing literature within the discipline that aims to redress this situation. Much of this work emphasises that state and society, rather than being distinct categories, are interconnected in numerous ways. For Timothy Mitchell the "edges of the state are uncertain, societal elements seem to penetrate it on all sides, and the resulting boundary between state and society is difficult to determine" (1991:88). While dismissing the notion of a state that is abstract from society is helpful, the problem of how to conceptualise the state remains. If the state is not an empirical given, as Radcliffe-Brown argues, where and how can anthropology encounter the state, if at all (Trouillot 2001:126)? Following in the Marxist tradition, Ralph Miliband argues that the 'state' stands for ... a number of institutions which, together, constitute its reality and which interact as part of what may be called a state system" (1969:48). If we

understand that the state is not a discrete unitary actor but a system that consists of multiple agencies staffed by individuals, anthropology is well equipped to study this 'everyday' state.

For the people of Mavodze and the surrounding villages the *estado* (state) was a broad and inclusive term that referred to numerous individuals and institutions operating at a number of different levels. Within the village, residents would interact with local state officials on an everyday basis. These local state representatives besides being the village secretary or the president of the locality were also someone's kinsman, a neighbour, a drinking companion or a victim of misfortune in much the same way as everyone else. These individuals were familiar and therefore approachable. People could engage with this local state in their own terms and with a sense of confidence that allowed them to present their views and opinions in a frank and honest manner. This local state was a site where individuals interacted with one another on a daily basis.

Thus at the village level Miliband's notion of the state system initially appears to be an adequate tool of analysis. However, this local understanding of the state is only half the story. While the local state was considered to comprise familiar individuals, as the representatives working for state institutions became more remote from the villagers' daily lives, they appeared to become amalgamated into a monolithic institution. For example, the village residents had little to do with the staff of the district administration in Massingir on a one-to-one basis and subsequently conceived of the various people working at this level as a single entity: the district administration. As the degree of unfamiliarity and distance increased to the provincial administration and then national government in Maputo, so the state was increasingly discussed as an abstract and monolithic entity.

These levels of gradually increasing abstraction in villagers' understanding of the state question whether Miliband's analysis of the state system is sufficient. Paul Abrams acknowledges that the concept of the state system allows the empirical investigation of how the various institutions and individuals are clustered together and how they relate to each other (1988:69). Yet Abrams maintains that Miliband remains trapped in the reification of the state. For Abrams the state is an ideology. He argues that in considering the state we must distinguish between the state-system and the state-idea.

The state-system consists of the institutional practice experienced on a day-to-day basis through the interaction of individuals at a local level. The state-idea reifies this system to the extent to which it takes on its own identity and becomes progressively divorced from political practices.⁸ The state-idea is, therefore, a mask that obscures the state-system: it prevents the observation and study of political practice and, as social scientists, our task is to demystify this process. For the residents of the Mozambique-South Africa borderland this ‘illusion’ perpetrated by the ‘state-idea’ was complete. They were too distant to be able to unpick the individual components of the state institutions that they did not deal with on a regular basis and saw them as a single monolithic entity. Rather than demystifying this, in this thesis I show that, to understand the effect of the state on the lives of the people living in this border region, we must understand how they perceived the way the state operated.

One of the consequences of this way of seeing the state is that the villagers understand the state as a far larger and all-encompassing institution than it actually is. If we return to the incident with the elephants and Fernando’s fence, the local residents understood the new park to be part of the *estado* (state).⁹ In fact a conglomeration of different parties were responsible for the design, funding and implementation of the transfrontier project, including the World Wildlife Fund, the International Conservation Union, the World Bank, South African NGOs, an oil company, the African Wildlife Fund, the Dutch government and the German development bank (KfW). Despite the large number of interested parties, in the eyes of the villagers all of these organisations were part of the state.

While the Transfrontier Park was the most recent example of this blurring of boundaries between the state and other institutions, this thesis demonstrates that it is not a new phenomenon. The system of migratory labour, discussed earlier, has been operating for over 100 years. This is a relationship that has been constructed between Mozambique and South Africa for their mutual benefit. However, while the migrants see the system

⁸ Timothy Mitchell subscribes to Abrams’ approach but argues that, instead of viewing the state-system and state-idea as two distinct objects of analysis, they are better seen as two aspects of the same process; each reinforcing the other (Mitchell 1999). I return to this argument in the conclusion.

⁹ For a long time it was unclear to villagers whether it was part of the Mozambican or South African state. This is explored in Chapter 5.

in terms of state interests, the labour system also reflects the interests of the mining companies. Another similar example of the amalgamation of different institutions into a single construct of the state occurs in relation to NGOs and state service provision in rural areas. For a long time, and especially since the 1992 peace accord, different national and international organisations have been implementing development projects in the border region. Again, the local people understand many of these to be the work of the state. This thesis looks at these examples and examines how the Frelimo state has used the blurring of these boundaries for its own advantage in terms of generating and sustaining local support.

The village of Mavodze and the local state

While the villagers of Mavodze, my primary fieldsite, were not always completely familiar with the aspects of the state that existed outside their immediate surroundings, very few of them had any doubts about the workings of the local state. If we trace the village's recent history we can see that, in part, this understanding reflected the fact that Mavodze was quite literally created by the state: the physical structure of this new village reflected the way in which the local political system was organised.

Portugal had claimed sovereignty over Mozambique ever since Vasco da Gama had circled the Cape of Good Hope and landed on the Ilha da Mozambique in 1498. Although it staked a claim to the territory, in reality the European power had little influence outside of its coastal strongholds until the late 19th century. It was not until the defeat of the Gaza Empire and the capture of its last ruler, Ngungunyane, in 1895 that the Portuguese were able to consolidate control over southern Mozambique. The Portuguese authorities co-opted the local chiefs, or *régulos*, to administer rural areas, collect taxes and govern according to customary law. This system was introduced in Massingir in the early part of the 20th century and later a Portuguese administrator was installed in Mavodze. The administration remained in Mavodze until the construction of Massingir Town began in the 1970s, when it was transferred to this larger centre.

During the colonial period the name Mavodze referred to a wider area, rather than to the specific village that exists today. People lived in dispersed homesteads along the Olifantes River, cultivating subsistence maize crops and the colonially-introduced cotton cash crop in the fertile valley soils. Livestock were grazed on the higher ground to the south and many residents recall hunting zebra, giraffe, antelope and buffalo in the surrounding area. In 1972 the Portuguese began construction of the Massingir Dam, flooding the Olifantes valley in order to provide flood control and irrigation for the commercially important Lower Limpopo Valley further downstream. The dam was completed in 1976, but by this time the Frelimo nationalist liberation movement had succeeded in overthrowing the Portuguese and Mozambique had gained independence.

The struggle for Mozambican independence began in the early 1960s with the founding of Frelimo in neighbouring Tanzania. The armed struggle largely took place in the north of Mozambique and had little effect on the lives of the residents of Massingir. The liberation war continued until 1974 when a military coup in Lisbon caused a change in the government of Portugal and initiated negotiations with the nationalist movements in the Portuguese colonies. Mozambique became an independent nation on 25th June 1975.

Independence more or less coincided with the completion of the Massingir Dam when the local population had to move due to the flooding of the Olifantes River Valley. Representatives of the new Frelimo government offered to help with the move and proposed building a village on the top of the steep escarpment, overlooking the population's former homesteads. In contrast to what happened in many other areas of the country, the local population showed no resistance to villagisation and embraced the idea with enthusiasm. Frelimo, assisting with the reconstruction of the homes destroyed by the Portuguese colonial government's dam-building project, were perceived as saviours.

The decision to site the village on the top of the plateau was taken in part due to the disastrous flooding that affected southern Mozambique in 1977, when over 300 people were killed and over 400,000 made homeless (Christie & Hanlon 2001:10). Many of these people were living in the fertile river valleys and Frelimo used the policy of villagisation to relocate homesteads to areas that were less prone to flooding. This decision appeared to be vindicated in 2000 when floods again swamped the region.

Mavodze, sited on higher ground, survived the floods unscathed. However the villagers continue to depend on the fertile soils of the river valley for agricultural production. While several farmers who were caught in their fields at the time of the flooding had climbed trees to avoid the rising waters, a more serious consequence was the loss of much of the 1999-2000 maize harvest. Nevertheless, the fact that no lives were lost was largely due to the population being resettled in the villages on higher ground.

While there were various pragmatic reasons for the construction of this particular new village, the founding of Mavodze was also a part of the Frelimo government's larger policy of villagisation of the Mozambican countryside. Rapid rural development would be initiated by the building of communal villages where it would be easier for the state to provide health services, education, water and agricultural extension services (Hanlon 1990). This policy was accompanied by a complete overhaul of the administrative system. At the 1977 Congress Frelimo announced its formal transition from a liberation movement to a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party. The armed struggle against the colonial regime had succeeded and a new era devoted to building a socialist Mozambique was underway. At the village level the *grupos dinamizadores* (activating groups) that were designed to "safeguard and consolidate the gains of the revolution" (AIM 1978:43) were replaced by a party cell structure. The household, maintained Frelimo leader Samora Machel, would always be "the first cell of the party" (Urdang 1984:31). Groups of households would form a block that was headed by a block secretary. The block secretaries looked towards the head of the *bairro* (ward) for leadership. Several *bairros* formed the village that was run by a village secretary. The villages were arranged in clusters or localities each headed by a president. Groups of these localities formed an administrative post run by a *chefe do poste*. These *chefes* were controlled by a district administration. This system continued upwards from the district level to the provincial administration and then on to the central government in Maputo. People were aware of this political structure because it was mapped onto the physical layout of the communal villages. The village of Mavodze had been divided into four *bairros*. The houses in these *bairros* were arranged in a grid pattern and were grouped into different blocks (see Map 3). This structure had become so internalised

that people were able to describe the organisation of the political system from the household to the office of the President in Maputo.¹⁰

Frelimo's villagisation of the rural areas was initially a politically motivated campaign that aimed to "bring socialism to the countryside" (AIM 1978:42). However, as conflict began to spread through Mozambique in the late 1970s, moving people into the communal villages became less of an ideologically based policy and more of a military tactic (see Hanlon 1990:127-129). It was easier for the army to protect civilian populations, and for the government to limit local support for insurgents, if people were living in fixed settlements rather than in dispersed homesteads. As we have seen, this was not the case in Massingir where the villages were created shortly after independence. Nevertheless, while the village of Mavodze was constructed as part of Frelimo's political programme and not as a direct response to military action, the village and its residents did not escape the ravages of Mozambique's long civil war.

The Mozambican civil war has been subjected to thorough analysis elsewhere (see Hanlon 1990; Arabamsson & Nilsson 1995; Englund 2002; Finnegan 1992; Geffray 1990; Hall & Young 1997; Roesch 1992; Vines 1996) and is not the central concern of this thesis. Nevertheless, any contemporary account of life in Mozambique would be inadequate without considering the way in which the war affected the local population. The Mozambican conflict, as William Finnegan notes, was a "complicated war" (1992) and the way it was conducted and its effects varied throughout the country. Instead of glossing over the differences, in the introduction to his excellent book Harri Englund demonstrates the importance of highlighting the regional variation by analysing the nature of the conflict as it occurred in four different provinces (2002:13-21). Rather than repeat this analysis, I will concentrate on how the conflict was experienced in the region where I conducted fieldwork.

The residents of Massingir were affected by post-colonial conflict on two different occasions. The first occurred in the late 1970s when Rhodesian forces attacked the settlements and infrastructures in the Limpopo Valley as part of the Smith regime's

¹⁰ While people were familiar with the political structures, they were not always quite so aware of which individual held which specific office (see Chapter 4).

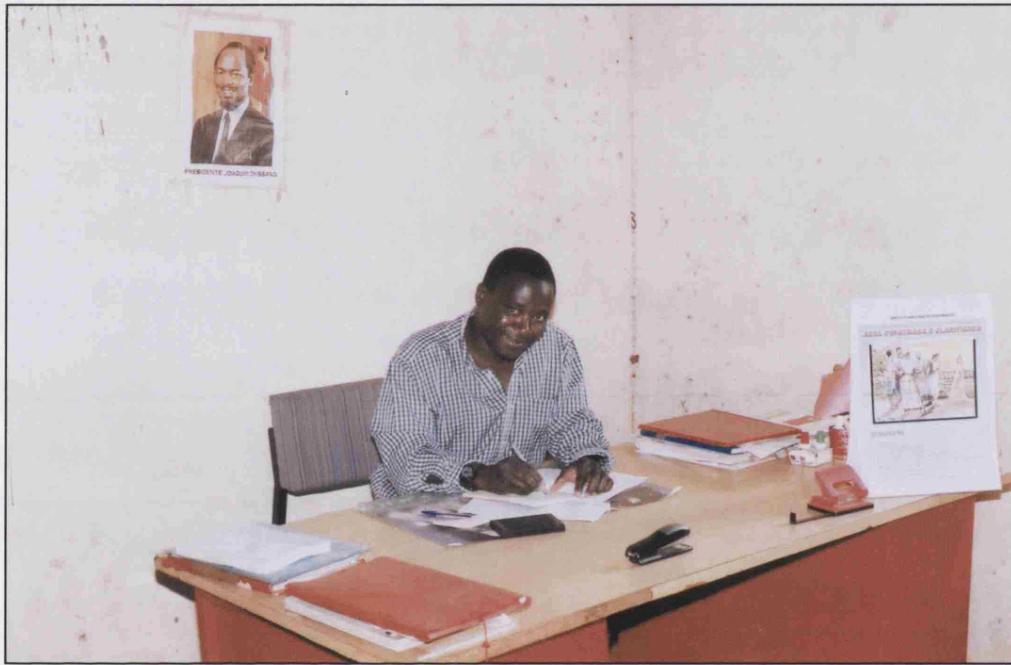


Photo 3: The *chefe do poste* in the administrative post

response to Frelimo's support of the Zimbabwean nationalist movements. Many of the local residents were recruited into the army and fought against this conventional force. When Smith was overthrown this fighting ceased and the region remained untouched by conflict until 1987.

The second occasion of conflict had more profound consequences for villagers' self-identification as Frelimo, and for their positive view of the Mozambican state. By the late 1980s Renamo, a movement initially set up by Rhodesian Special Forces as a destabilisation force and later supported by the apartheid regime in South Africa, had penetrated into Massingir from bases within South Africa. In December 1989 Renamo launched a surprise raid on Mavodze. Two people were killed and the surviving villagers fled into the bush; others sought refuge in South Africa or in more secure areas of Mozambique. The Frelimo government responded by distributing weapons and training civilian militias. Much of the population remained in the Olifantes valley, defending themselves and their property from repeated Renamo attacks.

The villagers of Mavodze were extremely proud of the fact that many of them remained in the area and fought on the side of the Frelimo armed forces. The state's policy of weapons distribution and training civilians to protect themselves further boosted Frelimo popularity in this region. Rather than the civilian forces assisting the military, the villagers saw the war in terms of Frelimo helping them to protect themselves from Renamo attacks. This experience further bolstered Frelimo's political standing in the region. This was demonstrated in the post-war 1994 elections when Frelimo dominated the polls throughout Gaza Province, and were overall winners of the national ballot.

The strength of local popular support for Frelimo had been founded on the positive interactions that had occurred between the residents and local state representatives, the state system that people were familiar with. This had been experienced when Frelimo had assisted people in resettling as a consequence of the Portuguese flooding the valley and through the local state assistance during the war. Following the end of the war, Frelimo's local support base has begun to shrink. Rather than dealing with the local state system, the lives of the residents of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin are increasingly being affected by the more abstract and remote national state. Alarmed by actions of this unfamiliar monolithic idea of the state — particularly the creation of the Limpopo

National Park — the residents are responding with local political action that no longer favours Frelimo.

Mavodze today: local livelihoods

While much of Mavodze was destroyed during the war, the village was rebuilt and repaired with the assistance of numerous international organisations and, by all accounts, the overall layout had changed little from the time of its construction to the period when I lived there (see Map 3). The village was divided into four residential *bairros* by the main dirt roads and a large central clearing. This central space contained the school building, the small health clinic, the administrative post office and the houses of the six teachers, nurse and *chefe do poste* (local administrator). In addition to these state amenities there was also the village borehole with a solar-powered pump that provided water for half the village on a daily basis. There were two small *barakas* (kiosks) that sold matches, cooking oil, soap, biscuits and other household items. When the fridges were working, the cold beers and soft drinks on sale at either one of the kiosks attracted a crowd of young men who spent the evenings chatting, comparing bicycles and gambling on card and draught games. There was a large *caju* (Amarula) tree that provided shade for a number of wooden benches where village meetings took place on a regular basis. Close to the school there was a dusty football pitch where, after vigorous shooing of the livestock, the inter-village football matches were played every fortnight. Several hundred metres to the south was the village dip-tank where each week the cattle from the surrounding villages were treated against ticks.

Mavodze had a population of just over 2500 living in 166 households. Families lived in small open compounds that usually contained a couple of houses, a grain store with a cooking area beneath it, a long-drop toilet and a large shady *caju* (Amarula) tree. The majority of the buildings were made from local materials, with mud and log walls and a roof of either corrugated metal sheeting or thatch. Several of the more affluent families in the village had built concrete houses with glass windows, fitted doors, concrete floors and one even had a solar panel (although this was broken for much of the time I lived in the village). While some of the families preferred to keep their cattle and small

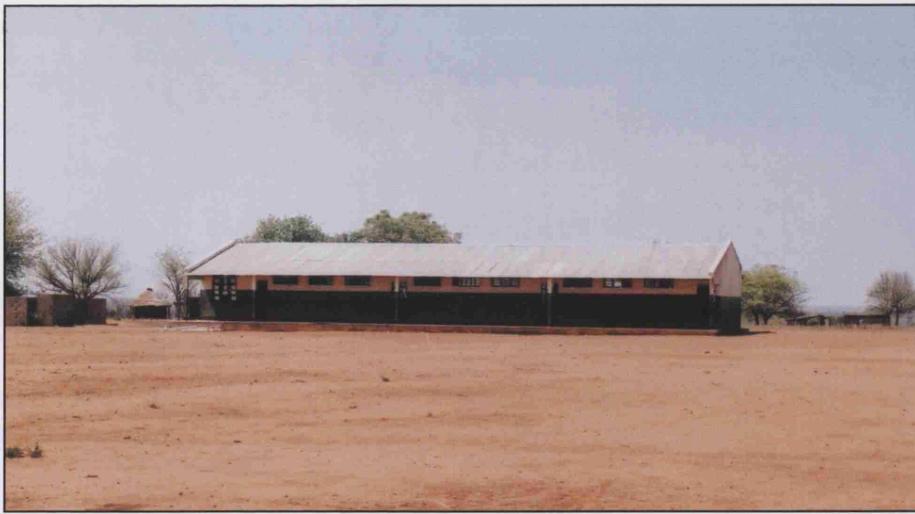


Photo 4: The school building in the central square of Mavodze

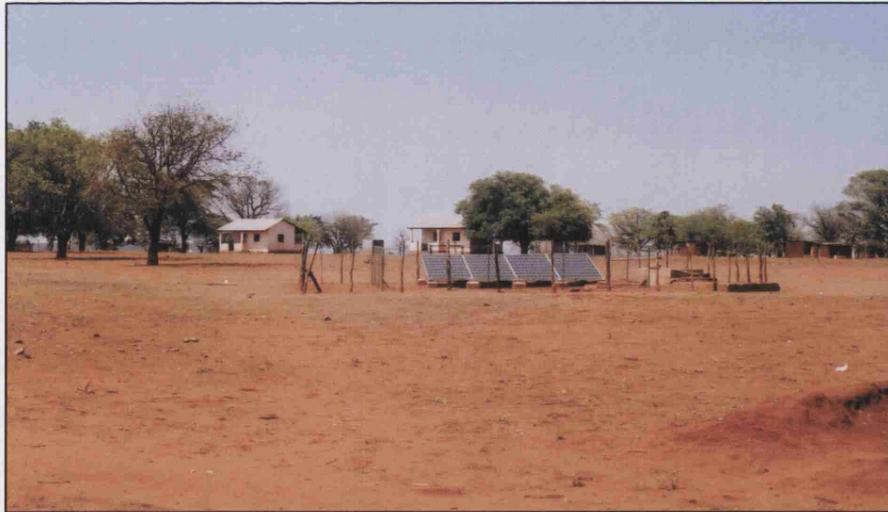


Photo 5: The solar-powered water pump in the centre of Mavodze

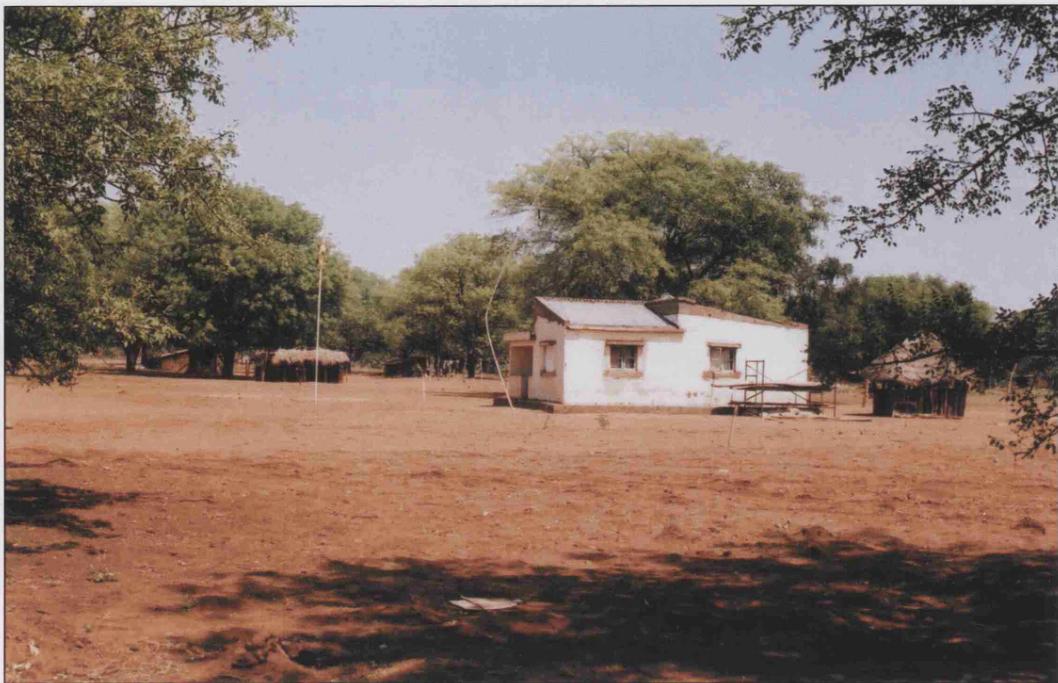


Photo 6: Administrative Post of Mavodze

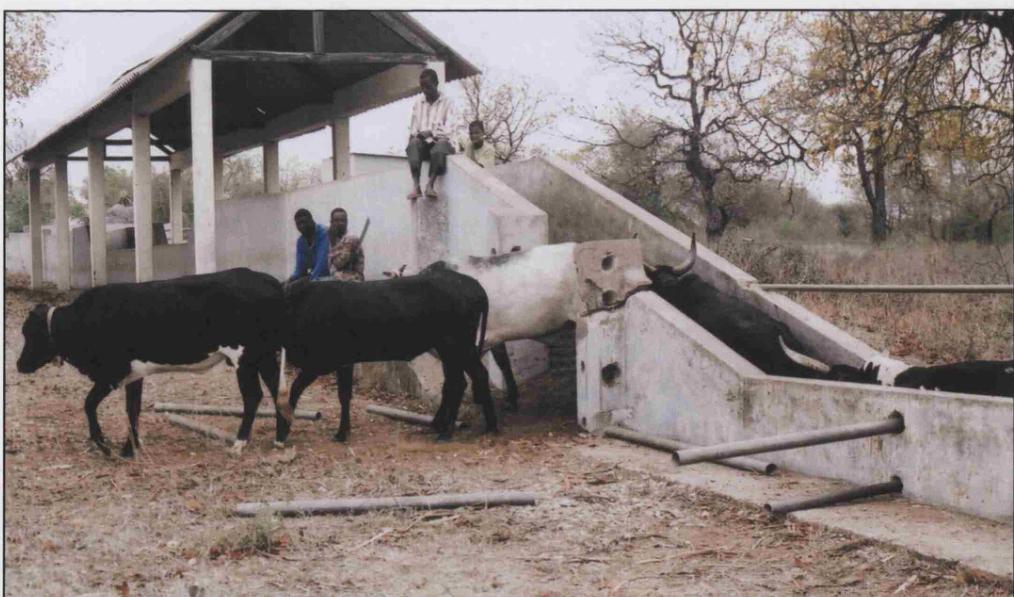


Photo 7: The Dip Tank in Mavodze

ruminants in the household compound, the majority of livestock-owners had corrals at the edge of the village or in the bush near the rivers and watering holes, where herd boys or other family members looked after the animals.

As much of the evidence in this introduction has indicated, the residents of Mavodze and the surrounding area engaged in a variety of activities to support themselves. With a population density of three people per square kilometre (Detry 2001), there was no shortage of land in the district and every household was involved in some level of agricultural production. The vast majority of families (over 93% in Mavodze) also owned livestock, mainly cattle, goats and poultry. Yet while cultivation and animal husbandry were important, we have also seen how the villages' proximity to the border and the policies of the Mozambican and South African states have resulted in a long history of local residents being involved in cross-border migratory labour. Rather than consider these as separate modes of production, anthropologists working in nearby Lesotho have demonstrated how these are connected through the household developmental cycle (Spiegel 1980; Murray 1981; Ferguson 1990). Historically in southern Africa, waged migrant labour has not been a lifelong career but part of a man's and a household's life cycle. The local manifestations and effects of this have varied throughout the region, but in Mavodze a young man would find waged employment, save his remittances, and return home to 'retire' and engage in agricultural production. The following two chapters of this thesis examine how this has operated in Massingir and how it has changed over the last two decades.

One of the most important aspects of migratory labour is that it provides the wages with which to purchase cattle. While animals are initially required for *lobolo* (bridewealth), having got married a young man will also want to continue to invest in cattle to establish his own herd. Cattle, as Ferguson notes, are not necessarily important as means of generating an income, but act as stores of wealth (1990:124). Migrant labourers would invest much of their salaries in cattle, and a herd would become an important source of economic, social and cultural capital.

People were reluctant to part with a head of cattle unnecessarily. During my 17 months in Massingir I never witnessed or heard of a farmer slaughtering a cow for consumption and it was only in times of great crisis that they would reluctantly consider the sale of an

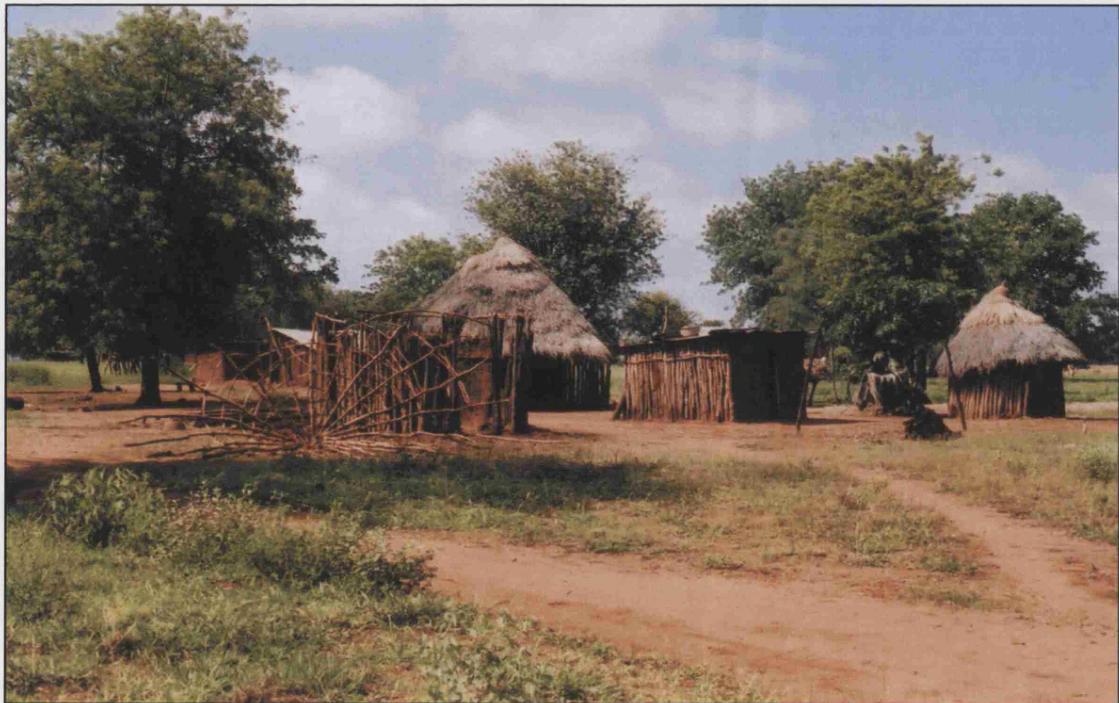


Photo 8: A homestead in Mavodze



Photo 9: A homestead in Mavodze

animal. This unwillingness to part with animals was compounded by the fact that many farmers were attempting to rebuild their herds following the war. Most households had lost animals during the Renamo raids on the village in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹¹ This occurred throughout the province and the number of cattle in Gaza fell from 418,000 in 1981 to only 50,000 in 1992.¹² The desire to rebuild the herds was not only an economic consideration, for, as has been noted elsewhere in Africa (see Herskovits 1926; Ferguson 1990), cattle-ownership also has important cultural significance. In the villages of the Shingwedzi basin, cattle ownership and care were primarily male domains and a successful herdsman gained social prestige. Cattle were important in terms of creating and maintaining social relations, most notably through the exchange of cattle as bridewealth at marriage, or generating political support through the loaning of teams to families without their own animals.

Cattle were of fundamental importance to the household agricultural activities. There were no functioning tractors in the village of Mavodze and people relied entirely on animal traction for draught power. With a low population density, the amount of land people could bring into production was dependent on their access to oxen for ploughing. Cattle reproduction rates in Massingir were low due to a combination of a limited knowledge of husbandry techniques, poor veterinary facilities and the absence of nutritional supplements. The notable exceptions to this were two farmers who had a sufficient number of animals to generate an income from cattle-breeding. One household owned over 120 animals and the other over 400 head of cattle. Herds of this size in Mavodze were exceptional, with the average family owning only 8.7 animals.

As a means of coping with the erratic and localised rainfall experienced in the region, households tended to cultivate a number of fields in different localities. For the village of Mavodze most of the families had at least one field in the Shingwedzi river valley, but many also cultivated land in other areas on higher ground or near other villages. During the dry season farmers were able to engage in flood retreat cultivation along the banks of the Olifantes River, growing maize and other crops on the moist fertile soils

¹¹ It was rumoured that the reason the family that owned over 400 cattle had survived the Renamo raids was that one member had fought with rebels in return for protection during the fighting. At the end of the war that son had fled to South Africa and remained in self-imposed exile.

¹² Information collated from documents held at the Province Livestock Services, Xai Xai.



Photo 10: Young boys with cattle

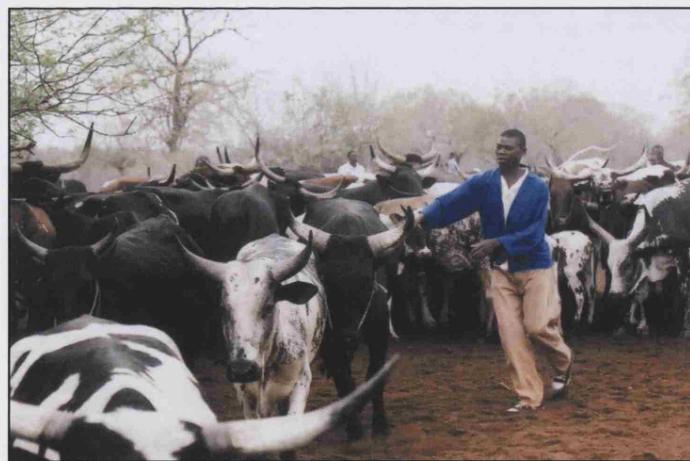


Photo 11: Cattle being taken to the diptank in Mavodze

that were gradually exposed as the water level of the reservoir dropped. The total amount of land cultivated by each family ranged between 1 and 10 hectares, depending on access to animal traction. Those that did not own cattle could hire teams from other villages, either for a cash payment of between 50,000-75,000 MZM per day (US\$2.17-3.26) or in exchange for providing labour in the fields of the owner. Only 27 of the families I spoke to in Mavodze did not own a team of cattle, but of these only 2 were unable to hire animals from elsewhere and were only able to cultivate a small amount of land by hand. In their work in Lesotho both Murray (1981) and Ferguson (1990) describe the decline in agricultural production and the increased dependence of households on waged labour in South Africa. I was unable to gather the historical data required to compare this to the situation in Massingir. However, from the figures that Ferguson provides, it would appear that agricultural production in Mavodze was of far greater importance to livelihoods than it was in his region of Lesotho. Ferguson notes that in a good year in Lesotho the average household would produce enough food to last 3.7 months (1990:124). In Mavodze people reported that in a good year they would be able to produce enough food to see their family through to the following harvest. Even during two years of drought that occurred during my fieldwork, which residents claimed were the worst since 1983, most households were able to produce at least three months' worth of food. Although the amount produced depended to a great extent on the rainfall, it was always assumed that households would produce most of their staple foodstuffs themselves. People were very reluctant to purchase food with cash. Money was used to buy other essential household items, invest in livestock and to pay for medical bills; spending money on food was considered wasteful.

Agriculture, then, was of key importance to the livelihoods of the villagers of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin and agricultural activities occupied much of their time. The agricultural calendar revolved around the rainy season that usually began in late November and lasted until late February or early March. In September and October both men and women undertook the task of preparing the fields and clearing the weeds and bushes that had accumulated over the previous months. With the arrival of the first rains the men began the ploughing using teams of oxen, the women and children followed the cattle, scattering the seeds saved from the previous year in the newly ploughed furrow. The women were usually responsible for weeding and protecting the crops from livestock and wildlife until the harvest the following March. Maize and groundnuts



Photo 12: Flood retreat cultivation in the Olifantes Valley

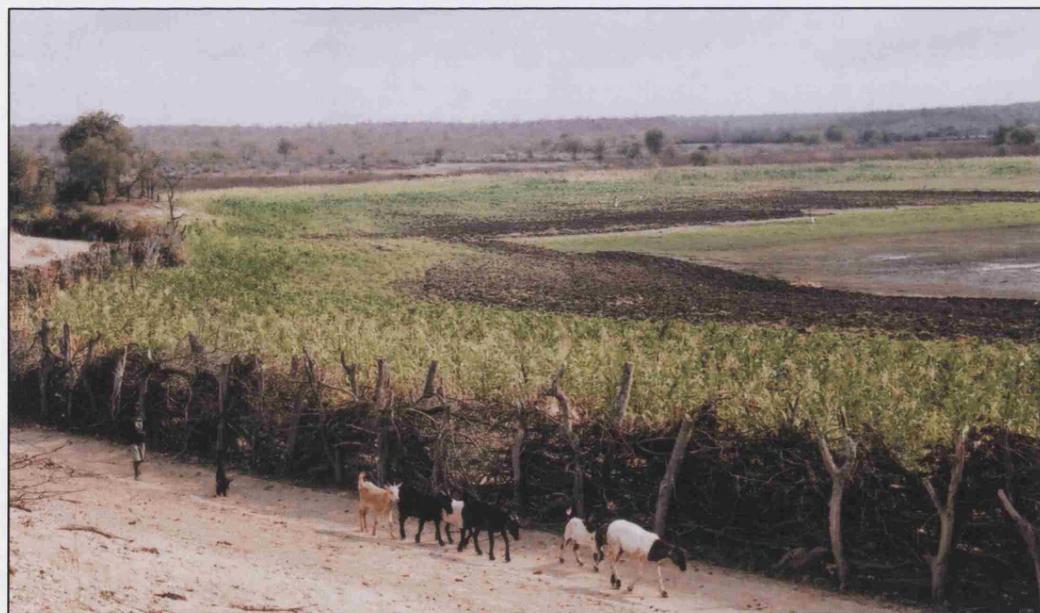


Photo 13: Flood retreat maize cultivation in the Olifantes Valley during the dry season



Photo 14: Ploughing in the Shingwedzi Valley



Photo 15: Woman without cattle cultivating a field in the Shingwedzi Valley

were the principal crops, but pumpkins, cassava, beans, melons and sweet potatoes were also grown.

Migrant labour, livestock-keeping and agricultural production were the three main economic activities of the people of Massingir. However, these were by no means their only source of income. As we saw in the opening section of this introduction, Fernando earned an income from selling fish that he caught in the Shingwedzi River, but he was an exception. Most of the other fishermen in the area were not local residents but had come from elsewhere in the province to fish in the lake behind the Massingir Dam. These fishermen lived in encampments near the water and would catch fish, salt it and sell it in Maputo. More common ways for the residents of Mavodze to earn money were through brewing local beer, hunting, the sale of mats and other handicrafts, working as hired agricultural labourers for some of the more affluent villagers, thatching and building houses, and selling local medicines. The other notable activity that many of the poorer families engaged in was the World Food Programme's (WFP) 'food for work' initiative. As I mentioned above, the 2000 floods destroyed much of that year's crop and were followed by two years of low rainfall. The World Food Programme sponsored a public works project whereby poorer families were paid with international food donations to do such tasks as clear the local roads or keep areas of the village clean. This programme was in operation for much of the time that I was in the field.

Researching the borderland

I spent 17 months in the field, from September 2001 to January 2003. The majority of this time was spent in the district of Massingir. I had become familiar with this region in 1997-8 while working for Vetaid, an international NGO that was implementing an EU funded agricultural support project in partnership with the government livestock services in southern provinces of Gaza and Inhambane. At this time there was a great deal of discussion among government officials and international donor community about the role that so-called traditional authorities played in political life in the rural

areas¹³. My interest in this issue developed as I noticed the content and rhetoric used in many of the discussions contrasted with my own observations of life in the villages in which I had been working with the livestock project. Although I was unable to investigate this further at the time, it formed the basis of my application to undertake doctoral research two years later. Another reason for choosing to return to Massingir was its proximity to the South African border and I was aware that migration across it played an important part of the lives of the residents. I had had a long term interest in issues associated with migration having worked with refugees from the Horn of Africa in Cairo in 1994-5 and then having studied migration as part of a Masters degree at the University of Edinburgh. While Massingir was an appropriate site to investigate some of the theoretical issues in which I held an academic interest, it was also a region of spectacular natural beauty in which I could happily envisage living for 17 months¹⁴.

My primary fieldsite was the village of Mavodze, in which I lived for much of my time in Massingir. Although I was based in one village, the fieldwork was not confined to a single setting. During the course of their daily lives, the villagers frequently travelled to neighbouring villages and the district capital and on many occasions I would accompany them. I adopted a methodology that involved 'following the people' and therefore the research could be seen to adhere to what Marcus terms multisited ethnography (1995). I am reluctant to embrace such terminology, however, as I cannot envisage any valid ethnographic account that — according to Marcus's definition — would not be multi-sited. While I often accompanied informants on their travels in and around the district of Massingir, I did not go with them when they crossed into South Africa. My thesis is concerned with the lives of people in Mozambique and, although I collected accounts of their experiences in South Africa, I carried out very little research there myself.¹⁵

¹³ My own experience of this debate began during a series of consultative workshops that were organised to discuss the implementation of the 1997 Land Law. These were attended by government officials and representatives of other interested organisations (see also Kloeck-Jenson 1997).

¹⁴ The outstanding natural beauty of the region was undoubtedly one of factors that brought about the creation of the Transfrontier Park. However, as I make clear in later chapters of this thesis, when planning this research I was unaware of the proposed development of the GLTP.

¹⁵ My decision not to conduct research in South Africa was based on a number of factors. One of the major considerations was that many of my informants crossed the border illegally, using an extremely dangerous route through the Kruger Park. I was unable, not to mention unwilling, to accompany them. As illegal immigrants it would have been difficult and time-consuming to locate them on the other side of the border and any attempt to work with them there may have attracted unwelcome attention from the South

Like many anthropologists, when I first arrived in my fieldsite I was greeted with what appeared to be a mixture of distrust and casual indifference. After inspecting my various documents, the *chefe do poste* (the local administrator) and the village secretary regretted that there were no spare houses that I could rent and suggested that I should use a tent until more permanent accommodation could be arranged. Apart from the more daring of the curious village children, the population either viewed me with suspicion or ignored me completely. In keeping with the arguments made above, the general consensus among the residents was at first that I was from Maputo and worked for the Mozambican state. When it became clear that this was not the case I was identified as a white Zimbabwean farmer who had been evicted off the land, a relative of the last colonial administrator, an agent of Renamo or a member of the South African armed forces. My repeated denials were rarely accepted and my inadequate explanations of what I was doing only served to heighten people's scepticism. In some despair I recalled a piece of advice given by a professor during a methodology seminar. "Do nothing," he had said. "Do nothing for the first few weeks except walk around the village." With seemingly few other options, I heeded this advice and walked around different parts of the village, twice or three times a day. Initially this made little difference, but after a while people would greet me and occasionally call me over to speak with them. Matters gradually improved over time, but the most significant change occurred when I decided to build a house.

I was still living in what the manufacturers had the audacity to call a two-man tent and, by the time the rainy season had arrived, it had sprung several leaks. There was no sign that the *chefe do poste* had managed to arrange any other accommodation. I therefore asked one of the men with whom I had grown quite friendly for some advice on how to build a mud hut and he suggested we should build it together. The process took about three weeks of what I considered to be hard work. We selected and felled the trees, then transported them into the village. These were chopped to size and bound together to

African authorities. Data collected from Mozambicans living and working in South Africa would have produced interesting comparative material but I do not feel the absence of this detracts from the arguments made in this thesis. There are a number of recent and on-going studies looking at Mozambicans and/or Shangaan on the South African side of the border (see for example Rodgers 2001; Niehaus 2002; Goloooba-Mutebi 2003), but very little work has been done on the Mozambique side of the border. This thesis seeks to make a start at addressing this imbalance.

form the walls. I bought six sheets of metal for the roof that were wired to the wooden frame. A neighbour's wife coated the walls with mud and when it was finished I looked at my new accommodation with a sense of accomplishment. This was not to last. One evening my pride and joy was exposed to its first rainfall. I looked on in horror as in less than two minutes most of the mud unceremoniously fell off the back wall; I had forgotten to account for an overhang to allow the water to drain off the roof. While I silently cursed my friend for not explaining this, the other residents found the whole incident hilarious. People walking past would stop, have a laugh and inform me that I should have built an overhang. The word spread and residents used to come from neighbouring villages just to laugh at the house. Some months later I even met a man in a South African casino who had heard the story of my house.

Although the house did little to improve my living standards, the reaction from the villagers 'broke the ice'. People began to accept the fact I was living in the village and many took an interest in what I was doing. My disastrous attempts at building a house not only made me approachable, but also signified that I was different from the other outsiders who visited the village. I had invested in a house and the residents now took seriously my intentions to stay in Mavodze for almost a year and a half. This was demonstrated when my neighbour walked past my house one afternoon and asked if I was going to the village meeting that one of the NGOs had arranged. I said I wasn't as I was still reluctant to associate with any of the development projects working in the area. He responded, "Come on. You should come. It concerns you too. You live here as well now".

The house was not only useful in terms of building relationships with the residents, but also was ideally situated to observe and research the political life of the village. It was constructed in the centre of Mavodze in the space that was usually the exclusive domain of the school, administration, public meeting place and other state institutions.¹⁶ It stood close to the Frelimo Party Office and only a couple of hundred metres from the administration building. This provided an ideal vantage point to observe the comings and goings of the village leadership and the visits of other state representatives from the district capital or elsewhere. In this way I was able to attend the larger and official

¹⁶ I was able to organise this by promising the house to one of the schoolteachers upon my departure.

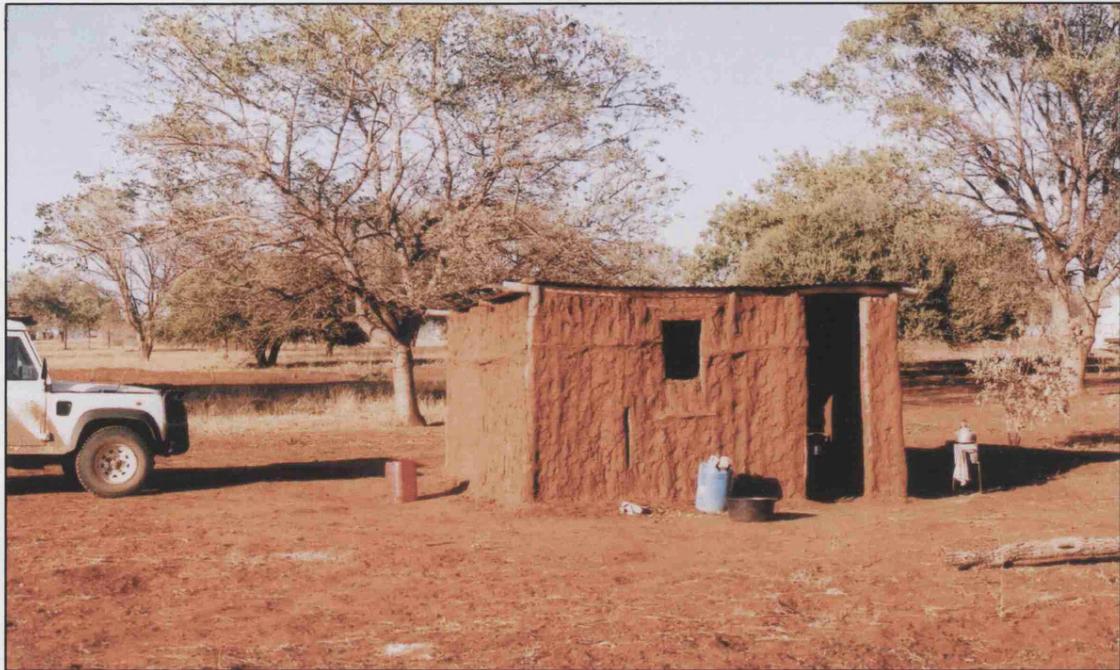


Photo 16: My house in Mavodze



Photo 17: With my field assistant in the Olifantes Valley

public political meetings and also, crucially, note the informal gatherings and passing discussions conducted by the different leaders. The questions and interviews that were based on these observations provided detailed data on the everyday workings of the state and the interactions between the local state officials and their constituents. It was only through being able to participate in and observe these political activities taking place on my doorstep that I was able to follow the process of appointing a new community leader and fully understand how the local representatives of Frelimo were able to maintain their domination over much of the political life in the village. Much of the information about the political side of village life was gathered through participation in formal village meetings and the observation of the unofficial encounters and informal discussions of the village leadership. Some other methodologies were employed when investigating the residents' labour migration to South Africa. With the aid of a research assistant, life histories of many of the older miners were recorded. Many of these interviews began as one-to-one sessions but developed into useful group discussions, as other former miners would join and contribute accounts of their experiences to the conversation. Investigating the experiences of the current migrants was often more problematic, as many of the young men were absent from the village for long periods of time. Those who were present were conscious that their migrations were often illegal and were suspicious of my questions. Over time I was gradually able to build friendships with some of these young men by providing transport for the village football team's away fixtures and by lending out my toolkit that was in high demand for fixing motorbikes and bicycles. While the older men reacted favourably to partially-structured discussions, I was able to learn more from the younger migrants during informal conversations and general 'banter'.

The activities and presence of the personnel working for the Limpopo National Park increased during the 17 months spent conducting fieldwork in Massingir. Due to the hostilities felt by the local residents towards the project and the general confusion that existed about the future of the villages, I was inundated with peoples' opinions and views about the park wherever I went. On my travels I would also frequently encounter the project staff and was able to discuss the progress of the park with them. It became increasingly clear that the interests of the local residents were inadequately represented in the processes of project design and management. I was invited to attend a number of different meetings and workshops as an independent observer. This role allowed me to

express some of the opinions and concerns of the local residents — though these were barely heeded — and also gain a better understanding of the organisation and management of the park and the role of the different institutions involved in the project.

It was obvious from my first visit to Massingir that ownership of a vehicle would make conducting fieldwork in the area considerably easier and so I purchased a second-hand Land Rover pickup truck in South Africa. As much as possible, I avoided using the vehicle in and around the village, partly because of the limited range of the fuel tanks, but also because many places were unreachable except on foot, we would meet other people while walking and people would often point out items or places of interest along the way (see Brody 1981). But when travelling further afield, I often gave people a lift. My informants were effectively trapped as they were confined to the cab of the truck for long periods of time with an anthropologist asking innumerable questions. Interestingly, I had experienced great difficulty in finding out about the events that occurred during the civil war. I was reluctant to pursue questions on such a sensitive subject in the village, but once in the car people would talk about it for hours. Having experienced this transformation several times, I asked one man why this was. He explained that travel within Mozambique during the war was extremely dangerous. People would rarely use the roads and only if accompanied with a military escort. This contrasts with the ease of travelling by car today, thus, my informant told me, car journeys remind people of the war.

After three months in the village, and as I began to feel the residents were increasingly taking me into their confidence, I employed a research assistant. Fernando was a village resident whom I had met in my first week of fieldwork. He had been happy to answer my questions and would patiently explain whatever was going on. Over time I had become increasingly dependent on him for information and advice and we eventually formalised the relationship. Although Fernando assisted with village surveys and collecting genealogical data, his main job was to act as an interpreter. I was relatively fluent in Portuguese when I arrived in Massingir, having learned the language when working in Mozambique in 1997-8 and having undertaken a refresher course in London in 2000. I could therefore work independently with the villagers who spoke Portuguese; mainly the village leaders and the large number of men who had served in the army. As my Shangaan improved I was able to talk to and understand far more of the residents.

However, while I could work without the assistance of Fernando if required, my proficiency in Shangaan was restricted to general conversation and throughout my time in the field I felt more confident working with a translator. This limitation obviously shaped my research and my relationships with informants, especially during the early stages of fieldwork. Nevertheless, as a consequence of my good working relationship with my field assistant and my ever-increasing knowledge of Shangaan, the data I collected was accurate, representative and reflected the views and opinions of the residents of Mavodze and the surrounding villages.

In the village I carried out most of my research through participant observation and informal, open-ended individual and group discussions. I felt awkward attempting to use a tape machine to record information, as it appeared to make informants uncomfortable, and so I opted to make brief notes during or after conversations which I would write up as a field diary at the end of each day. After several months I began using a camera as a part of my work. I distributed copies of all the photos taken and was subsequently invited to different events and ceremonies to act as photographer.

I also recorded 25 detailed genealogies and undertook a formal survey of 113 of the 166 village households. By using these more structured techniques I was able to build detailed sociological picture of the village. However, in addition to gathering quantitative data, the process of conducting household and genealogical surveys stimulated conversations with informants of a far broader nature than the specific questions that I was asking. For example, when asked questions for the genealogical survey my informants would begin talking about their sons who had migrated and were working in South Africa. The older men would often compare the situations that their sons were facing with their own experiences of migrating to work in the South African gold mines. Equally, when agricultural production for the household survey, people would be eager to discuss how the creation of the Limpopo National Park would limit their access to land in the future or how the animals that had been relocated from South Africa were damaging their crops. In keeping with the arguments I make in this thesis, I have not presented the statistical findings of the surveys or provided an analysis of inter-household differentiation. Instead, I have used much of the ethnographic material gathered from the discussions that were taking place while the structured interviews

were being conducted, as I felt these were the issues that the village residents were most concerned about.

I made every attempt to get a pluralist perspective on life in and around Mavodze, but the female voice is significant in its absence from this thesis. In part this reflects the difficulties in getting access to female informants for the male ethnographer in this area. In Mavodze there were very few opportunities when I was able to speak with a woman alone. Most would ask that I come back when their husbands or other male relatives were present. On such occasions the male relations tended to dominate the conversation. This is an important and significant gap in my work. It meant that I was unable to look at many of the interesting issues of the household division of labour, the role of women in the households of migrant male labourers and issues concerning children and childhood. The thesis, then, overridingly represents the male point of view: perhaps not entirely inappropriately since it is largely concerned with the experiences of the male residents of the borderland.

Finally, throughout this thesis I have changed many of the names of the residents of Mavodze. While every effort has been made to maintain ethnographic integrity, this has been done in recognition of current tensions and sensitivities that surround the political situation in Massingir in terms of the South African border, the creation of the National Park and the political changes that are occurring as a result of these. The place names have been preserved because the geographic location is important to many of the events recounted in the thesis.

Outline of the chapters

The central concern of this thesis is to explore how recent changes to the regional political landscape of southern Africa have affected the lives of the residents of the Mozambique-South Africa borderland. The underlying argument is that the changing nature of the different states, in this case mainly the Mozambican state and South African state, cannot be considered in isolation; any analysis must be sited within a broader regional historical perspective. The end of apartheid in South Africa and the end

of single-party socialism in Mozambique were not sudden events but gradual processes, the affects of which were certainly not constrained to the geographical boundaries of the states concerned. This thesis examines three interconnected themes: the historical importance and changing characteristics of labour migration from Massingir to South Africa; relations between local residents and the state in successive colonial, post-independence socialist and democratic eras; and the impact on regional inhabitants of the recent creation of a transfrontier conservation area.

Chapter 2 examines the matter of labour migration from the villages of southern Mozambique to the South African gold mines. As a result of agreements between the Portuguese colonial authorities, the South African state and the South African mining companies, for over a century hundreds of thousands of Mozambicans have crossed the border to work in the mines of the Witwatersrand. In this chapter, using material collected from the life histories of former miners, I argue that for the families living in the border villages of Massingir this migration has not only been important in economic terms, but has also developed into a rite of passage through which adolescent boys become socially recognised as men: going to work in the mines was a crucial point of individual transition for miners. It was also the means through which new conjugal families and households were formed. Thus this rite of passage holds significance for the entire village.

In the late 1970s the South African mining industry underwent considerable restructuring and one of the effects of this was a drastic reduction in its use of foreign labour. Chapter 3 examines why this change occurred, showing that it was partly as a result of the global economy but also a response to political changes that were happening throughout southern Africa. The chapter explores the consequences that this cutback in mining recruitment had on the villagers of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin: historically a source of much of the mining labour. I argue that the changing recruitment policies have resulted in a small minority of villagers being able to maintain a role in the mining industry. Rather than being short-term unskilled employees such as those discussed in Chapter 2, the current miners are trained, experienced and relatively well-paid. I argue that these ‘career miners’ are becoming an economic elite, or mining aristocracy, in the border villages where I conducted fieldwork. While the minority have been able to secure such jobs, the doors of the mining compounds are closed to the vast

majority of the young men of Massingir. Although the job opportunities no longer exist, the social and economic pressures for them to go to South Africa remain. This new generation of migrants is forced to cross into South Africa illegally to try and find work. The route they take leaves them exposed to the dangers of the Kruger National Park and vulnerable to exploitation and abuse once they arrive in South Africa. The changing nature of labour migration has resulted in increasing insecurities and tensions in the home villages.

Given this dependence on South Africa the question arises as to why the villagers of this borderland assert their Mozambican identity so strongly. In Chapter 4 I examine how Frelimo, the nationalist movement that fought against Portuguese colonialism, was able to rapidly generate local support in this area immediately after independence. I argue that the party was able to build upon this support base by assisting the villagers during the war against the South African-backed Renamo. This chapter argues that, in spite of Mozambique's shift to multi-party democracy at the end of the war, Frelimo has maintained its domination of local politics in Massingir and, in effect, continues to operate as single-party state.

Chapter 5 returns to the development of the Limpopo National Park, with which I began this introduction. Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated the way in which the system of labour migration was initially developed on the basis of cordial relations between Mozambique and South Africa, and then was reshaped in light of how these relations deteriorated after Mozambican independence. Following the end of the Mozambican civil war and the ousting of the apartheid government in South Africa, relations between the two states have improved. The development of the Limpopo National Park is a sign of this new cross-border cooperation. However, just as the use of foreign labour was of interest to the gold-mining industry, this chapter argues that the creation of the new park has been a result not only of improving bilateral relations between the two states, but also of pressure from a variety of other interested groups from both within the region and abroad.

One of the stated objectives of the National Park is to benefit the local residents. Chapter 5 argues that, far from being of benefit, the development of the park threatens the residents' livelihoods and entire way of life. I argue that the park is not only

interfering with local agriculture and livestock production, but is also hampering the important migration to South Africa. The park is being publicised as bringing down Africa's borders and fences, but this chapter demonstrates that, although this might be the case for animals and rich tourists with their four-by-fours, for the residents of Mavodze and the surrounding villages the park is paradoxically strengthening the international border and creating a far more difficult barrier through which to pass to find work in the neighbouring state. Unsurprisingly the park is far from popular among the people living within its borders. In Chapter 5 I outline some of the measures that the residents have adopted as a means of protesting against the development of the park.

In Chapter 6 I consider how this has become a political issue. The party's supporters in the villages of Massingir have regarded Frelimo's involvement in the creation of the park as a betrayal. They were — coincidentally — provided with an opportunity to express these sentiments by the national government's creation of new leadership positions in rural areas, known as the *autoridades comunitárias* (community leaders). This position was created as a consequence of ongoing debates concerning Frelimo's marginalisation of so-called 'traditional leaders' in favour of their modernising party system after independence. A decree was passed to facilitate the creation of local rural authorities. I argue that in Massingir the election of the candidates for this new position had little to do with concepts of modernity or tradition, but reflected the residents' move away from supporting Frelimo and their concerns to have a leader that they felt could adequately represent their interests against the growing threat of the Limpopo National Park.

2. Of Mines and Men: Labour migration as a rite of passage

Introduction

One afternoon in July 2002 most of the residents of Mavodze were gathered under the large *Amarula* tree in the centre of the village. After six months of discussions, negotiations and political drama, the village had finally selected the new community leader. When the decision was announced an argument broke out between one of the unsuccessful candidates and a number of the other men. The former *régulo*, the chief of the village during the Portuguese colonial period, began lambasting the newly appointed leader for being a South African and not from this area. Apparently, the new leader's father had been born on the other side of the border and had only come to Mozambique when his grandfather had died in a mining accident and his grandmother had returned to her paternal home here in the village. This provoked an uproar among the other men gathered around the tree. "Of course João [the newly elected leader] is one of us," one man replied, "he is one of us because of his link to South Africa." Many of the other men agreed, stating that it made no difference that João's father had been born on the other side of the border, his grandparents had gone to South Africa to work in the gold mines and therefore he was one of them. Indeed, they seemed to be suggesting the South African link counted positively in his favour. Once the discussion had died down and the crowd had dispersed, I asked one of my informants what had been going on. He explained,

We are all connected to South Africa. There is not a man in the village that hasn't been to *Joni*,¹⁷ that is what we do. If João has connections with South Africa, he must be one of us. That old man [the former chief] doesn't know what he is talking about. Even *he* worked in the mines when he was younger.

For the last 150 years labour migration has been an important feature of life in the southern provinces of Mozambique. Almost every man I spoke to in the villages where I was conducting fieldwork had, at some point, worked in neighbouring South Africa.

¹⁷ Literally referring to Johannesburg, but used locally as a generic term for South Africa.

Since the 1850s men have been crossing the border, finding employment initially on the sugar plantations of Natal and the diamond fields around Kimberly and then, following the discovery of gold in the 1880s, in the mines of the Witwatersrand. The profitability of the South African gold mining industry depended on the supply of cheap labour from neighbouring countries and as a result the mining companies, through their employment agencies, actively recruited throughout the region. Hundreds of thousands of Mozambicans left their home villages to work in the harsh and dangerous conditions of the mines of the Transvaal.

In this chapter I consider the reasons for this migration, showing its basis not only in the labour needs of the mining industry as mediated through state agreements, but also in the perpetuation of border villages' marriage and family structures. I examine how the South African gold mining industry depended on a ready supply of cheap labour and how the mining companies had to recruit labour from across the southern African region. In the case of Mozambique, I argue that this labour recruitment cannot be understood without exploring the relationships and dependences that existed between the Portuguese colonial government and the South African state. Labour recruitment was one of the key aspects of the relationship between these two states: I show the role that the states' policies and actions played in the migration of hundred of thousands of miners from the rural areas of southern Mozambique, and consider how the process of migrating to the gold mines is understood and discussed by the residents of the Mozambican border villages that have historically been the source of much of this labour. I argue that the process of migration to the gold mines has become incorporated into the social and cultural lives of the people of Massingir. For Mozambicans as for men from other parts of South Africa's 'labour reserve', working in the South African mines is understood as a rite of passage and a transition into manhood. Through leaving the villages, working in the gold mines, and returning with the appropriate goods, miners have split from their paternal homesteads, established their own homesteads, and continued the patrilineal system.

Labour migration, the Tsonga/Shangaan and anthropology

The experiences of labour migrants and the effect migration had on the societies that they left behind have been two of the classic concerns of the anthropological literature on Southern Africa; Mozambique has been no exception. However, it is interesting to note that perhaps the most famous ethnographer of the region, the Swiss missionary Henri-Alexander Junod, pays only scant attention to the subject. Although he was living in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) during the years 1889-95 and 1907-21 and witnessed the development of the labour system that recruited the men to work in the expanding industrial centres in the South Africa, Junod barely mentions migrant labour in his ethnography (1927[1915]). Nevertheless the historian Patrick Harries argues that labour migration was of key concern for Junod: although it is not addressed in detail in his work, Junod's concern about the widespread recruitment of Mozambican labourers was the driving motivation for his research (Harries 1981). Junod saw industrialisation as a threat to Tsonga rural culture and, as an anthropologist, considered his mission was to record these traditional customs and beliefs that he felt were facing extinction. This 'salvage anthropology', Harries argues, dovetailed with the interests of a broader range of critics of industrialisation to whom the corruption and squalor associated with the mines and urbanisation contrasted with their perception of the natural harmony and equilibrium of tribal societies in rural Africa (1994:xii).

In his two-volume monograph *The Life of a South African Tribe* (1912; second edition 1927) Junod meticulously documents the customs and beliefs of the Tsonga/Shangaan. His remarkable record describes a homogeneous rural tribe that was politically divided into patrilineal clans but united through language and shared customs. For Junod the patriarchal family formed the basis of Tsonga social life and their villages were simply enlarged families, presided over by a headman. Junod describes these villages as being engaged in mainly agricultural and livestock production with very little reference to any forms of waged labour.

The patrilineal relations of the Tsonga described by Junod were made famous by the debate over the analysis of their joking relationship. The problem was that the relationship between a man (ZS) and his mother's brother (MB) was characterised by

extraordinary disrespect, yet all other relationships were highly respectful and deferential. Junod, influenced by the evolutionist paradigm, explained this by arguing that the Tsonga had once been a matrilineal group and therefore the ZS would have inherited from the MB. The indulgent relationship was a vestige of this past. Radcliffe-Brown rejected this explanation, as there was no proof to substantiate it (1940b). He suggested a functionalist explanation, arguing that the MB-ZS relationship should be understood in the context of the other social relations. In Tsonga society a man's relationship with his father is characterised by control, while relations with his mother are warm and indulgent. The ZS-MB relationship is an extension of the latter. For Radcliffe-Brown the joking relationship expresses the ambiguity of people joined by one set of ties (marriage) and divided by others (lineage). Like Junod, Radcliffe-Brown does not seem to have considered the effects on social structure of wage work.

Although Junod concentrated his research on documenting the customs and traditions of the Tsonga and considered migrant labour an inappropriate subject of ethnographic investigation, subsequent anthropologists working in the broader region did begin to research the experiences of the men that were being recruited to work in the industrial complexes of Southern Africa. These included the scholars at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (and later the Manchester School) whose research concentrated on the causes and effects of migrant labour in rural areas. While Junod regarded industrialisation and labour migration as threatening the traditional cultures and social fabric of traditional African societies, many of the following generation of anthropologists concluded that this was not the case. For example, from his work on the Mambwe people of Northern Rhodesia in the 1950s, William Watson argued that the wage labour remittances were raising the standards of rural life and labour migration was acting to stabilise tribal society (1958). He argued that the migrants' wages preserved Mambwe family life and reinforced the political authority of the traditional chiefs. Similarly, Van Velsen suggests that Tonga migrants returning to Lake Nyasa were "actively stimulating the traditional values of their rural society" (1961:240); thus the overall effect of waged labour was to increase the social coherence of the Tonga villages.

The argument that migrant labour had a stabilising influence on rural societies ignores the exploitation and suffering that the African workforce had endured. Francis Wilson's powerful critique of the mining industry in the early 1970s demonstrated that while the

mining companies had earned vast profits, the working conditions for the Africans remained atrocious and in real terms the miners were earning less than they had in the 1880s (1972a). Other historically-informed studies have criticised the accounts of Junod and those like Watson and Van Velsen for the timeless image that they present of African societies. Colin Murray challenges this entire approach, arguing that migrant labour cannot be “regarded as an extraneous or incidental phenomenon whose ‘effects’ can be analysed with respect to the integrity or otherwise of a traditional system” (1981:173-4). Rather it must be seen as a process of fundamental transformation that has been occurring in southern Africa over the last 100 years. Using the example of bridewealth in Lesotho (*bohali*), Murray argues the continued importance of this institution among Basotho migrants must be understood in terms of the relations between the migrants and their rural kin: “*Bohali* is a mechanism by which migrants invest in the long-term security of the rural social system, and by which rural kin constitute claims over the absent earners” (1981:148). Thus the importance of bridewealth among Basotho migrants should not be conceived as labour migration bolstering or destroying traditional society, but as an indicator of the way that the economic and social aspects of migrant labour are inextricably connected.

In Mozambique Patrick Harries is also critical of the images of timeless traditional rural societies that are presented in the work of scholars such as Junod. He argues that such work was instrumental in constructing an ethnic identity that previously had not existed (1989). Harries shows that the Swiss missionaries, including Junod, played a part in conceptually amalgamating a diverse variety of groups, speaking a range of dialects, into a single ethno-linguistic ‘tribe’ known as the Tsonga or Shangaan. Harries demonstrates that Tsonga/Shangaan identity was consolidated and emerged as a new culture through the process of men migrating to work in the South African mines. The mining system was structured through ethnic segregation and the men from southern Mozambique were housed and worked together as Shangaans. In his later monograph, Harries shows that, in their encounters with other Africans and Europeans in the mines, the Mozambican migrants were exposed to new ideas, beliefs and commodities. These new experiences were incorporated into the miners’ lives, reshaping social relations

when they returned home (1994).¹⁸ This chapter concentrates on how the former miners of the border villages of Massingir have experienced the process of migrant labour and how they consider going to the mines as essential in the transition from adolescence to manhood. Before moving on to discuss how this is expressed through the narratives, rituals and everyday social relations in Mavodze and the surrounding villages, I must first outline how the systematised recruitment of labour developed and consider the role of the South African and Mozambican states in this process.

The South African mining industry and Mozambican migrants

Labour migration has been a feature of life in the rural areas of southern Mozambique for over 150 years. In accounting for its origins and perpetuation, the classic economic 'push' factors have certainly played some part. The region has low and erratic rainfall, a lack of ground water in the interior, and suffers from frequent droughts. This lack of water makes cultivation difficult and the presence of tsetse fly (until recently) limited the potential for livestock production. In the early 19th century constrained agricultural production was further disrupted by repeated Nguni incursions and by the 1820s southern Mozambicans were switching to migrant labour in order to support their families (Young 1977). The Portuguese colonial regime consolidated its control of the southern provinces by the late 1890s and began to accumulate considerable revenues from the labour migrations. As it became an increasingly important source of funds the colonial state introduced more coercive 'push factors', such as forced labour and hut taxes, to maintain the flow of migrant workers. This is discussed in more detail below.

South Africa was the obvious destination for the Mozambican migrants. At this time the South African plantations in the Cape and Natal suffered perennial shortages of agricultural labour. While African labour migration went some way to meet this

¹⁸ Similarly, Isak Niehaus demonstrates how Shangaan ethnicity in the South African lowveld has been reconfigured and has assimilated some of the characteristics of neighbouring groups, especially the Basotho (2002). However, Niehaus' analysis only applies to the South African Shangaan. He makes no mention of the far larger population living in Mozambique and, as was made clear in the introduction, I am wary of applying a single analysis to populations on both sides of the border because it would fail to take into account their contrasting historical contexts.

demand, it was only through importing labourers from the Indian sub-continent that the labour shortage in the agricultural sector was alleviated (Wilson 1972b:1). However, this was to prove to be a temporary solution, as the demand for labour in South Africa increased dramatically with the discovery of diamonds at Hopetown in 1866. By 1874 over 10,000 black workers were employed in the diamond mining industry (Wilson 1972b:2). While a limited number of Mozambican labourers were employed in the diamond and agricultural sectors (see First 1977; Katzenellenbogen 1982), the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 was to change the region forever. Demand for labour soared; within 13 years over 100,000 black workers were employed in the gold-mining industry (Wilson 1972b:3) and the mining companies were forced to recruit from across southern Africa.¹⁹

The major gold deposits in South Africa are of low-grade ore found in narrow, heavily faulted reefs that extend to considerable depths. Extraction requires either mechanisation or the use of a labour-intensive mining system. When the deposits were discovered the gold price was fixed and the cost of imported machinery was out of the mining companies' control, so labour costs were the only means of influencing profitability; the mining companies, therefore, decided upon a labour-intensive, rather than a capital-intensive, system. The companies realised that only through mutual cooperation could they keep the labour costs to a minimum, and therefore, in an attempt to centralise labour recruitment, they came together to form the Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines in 1889. The mining companies and the Mozambican government were interested in exploiting, expanding and regulating the existing movement of workers from Mozambique to South Africa. The Chamber of Mines did not want a free labour market to push up the cost of labour and the Mozambican government saw labour exportation as a means of increasing revenue. In 1896 an official agreement was signed between Mozambique and the Chamber of Mines giving the Rand Native Labour Association, later the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (Wenela²⁰), the monopoly over labour recruitment throughout the southern provinces of Mozambique.

¹⁹ For a detailed account of the early history of labour migration to South Africa in general see van Der Horst (1942), for the Mozambique-South Africa migrations in particular see Harries (1994).

²⁰ Like Katzenellenbogen, I refer to Wenela rather than WNLA or WENELA when discussing the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association to "convey some measure of the extent to which the Association has become more than just an impersonal organisation ... [and has] acquired a personality of

Controlling the system of labour recruitment was not only a priority of the mining companies. It was also of fundamental importance to the Mozambican and South African governments. The gold-mining industry has dominated the South African economy for the last 100 years, providing the country's principal source of foreign exchange and vast amounts of revenue through taxation (Jeeves 1985:3). The profitability of the mining companies has, therefore, been of interest to the state in terms of revenue, but also, as the apartheid system of government became more entrenched, the continued externalisation of labour became a key political concern. The South African economy remained heavily dependent on mineral extraction and the government feared that the unionisation of the workforce in this crucial sector could threaten the apartheid system. This could not occur if the majority of the labour force originated outside South Africa and was employed on only temporary contracts. If there were any serious problems a foreign labour force could simply be repatriated.

Equally, the system also benefited the Portuguese government in Mozambique. Through a system of deferred pay, the Mozambican state was able to generate important revenues from the migrating miners. The miner's salaries were paid in gold to the Portuguese government. This gold was sold on their behalf by the South African government, fetching the open market price. The miners themselves received their salaries in escudos calculated at a fixed official rate of exchange. The difference between this fixed rate and the gold price on the free market represented a considerable profit for the Mozambican government. The Portuguese state also benefited from this transaction. The miners only received 60% of their first six months' salary while they were in South Africa (First 1983:25), while the remainder of the wages were paid through the Wenela offices when the miner returned to Mozambique. The miner received no interest on this sum that had been held in trust. The accumulation of hundreds of thousands of salaries provided a large interest-free credit to the Portuguese colonial state. The system of deferred payments also ensured that the miners spent the majority of their wages in

its own." (1982:7) 'Wenela' is also used in the Association's own literature and the term is commonplace throughout Mozambique.

Mozambique, usually in Portuguese-owned trading posts.²¹ Thus, the colonial state derived funds from the miners' salaries through three different methods.

In addition to these revenues, the Portuguese were also able to benefit from the profits generated by the South African traffic moving through the port of Lourenço Marques. The port was the closest seaport to the South African industrial heartland of the Transvaal. The South African state needed access to the port in order to trade and the Portuguese were able to tax this freight as it was moved through their territory.

In 1909 and 1928 relations between the South African and Mozambican states were formalised by conventions agreeing that economic relations between the two countries were to be based upon the exchange of mineworkers, railway traffic quotas and favourable customs duties. The Portuguese allowed an annual recruitment of 100,000 labourers from southern Mozambique, the system of deferred pay remained in place, and the port at Lourenço Marques was guaranteed between 50-55% of all competitive zone traffic.²² The 'Mozambique Convention', as it became known, remained in place for 35 years and its principles continued to be the basis of economic relations between the two countries until Mozambique gained independence in 1975. Mozambique and South Africa were dependent upon each other's resources and, as Wilson noted in 1972, "there is a close symbiotic relationship between the two [states] so that any attempt by either side to break the economic ties...would be disadvantageous to both" (1972b:112).

This cooperation between the two states resulted in hundreds of thousands of Mozambicans leaving their homes to work in the South African gold-mining industry. While generations of Mozambican men have flocked to the gold mines, the opportunities for this legal migration have been dramatically reduced following changes made to the mining industry during late 1970s and 1980s (see table 1). Although Mozambicans are still employed as miners, the experiences of many of the younger

²¹ Although the system of deferred pay was an attempt by the Portuguese state to ensure that returnees would purchase consumer goods in Mozambique, there was a broader range of items on offer in South Africa and these were considerably cheaper than those on sale in Mozambique. As a result migrant labourers preferred to purchase as many consumer items as possible in South Africa and would use the deferred pay for the purchase of other goods such as food and cattle. This continues today, as many goods are still cheaper to buy in South Africa than in Mozambique.

²² For further details see Katzenellenbogen (1982:144-156).

generation of migrants differ considerably from those of their fathers. I discuss the experiences of this younger generation as they attempt to find work in the mines and elsewhere in Chapter 3. In this chapter I concentrate on the experiences of the retired miners that live in the border villages of the district of Massingir.

Table 1. Number of Mozambicans at work in South African gold mines, Selected Years 1903-1975

Year	Number	% of total black workforce
1903	49,470	73
1920	90,792	43
1936	88,404	28
1945	78,806	24
1956	102,900	30
1961	100,200	24
1970	93,203	25
1975	102,470	29

Sources: Katzenellenbogen (1982:159); Webster (1978:165); Isaacman & Isaacman (1983:33).

The miners' tales

As a young man, Ernesto Nkuna was one of the many who made the journey from Massingir to the gold mines of the Witwatersrand. He now lives with his son at the far end of *bairro* three in the village of Mavodze. In the afternoons he usually sits with some of the other old men drinking beer in the shade of the large tree in his son's courtyard. Ernesto was born in the Olifantes Valley during the colonial era before the construction of the village that exists today. He laughed when I asked him his age and said that he had absolutely no idea. However, after a lengthy discussion with his friends Ernesto estimated that he was between 55 and 60 years old. Ernesto explained that he had been living in his father's homestead in the valley when he first left to work in the Transvaal. "I was still a kid when I first went to *Joni*," he said, "but in those days all the

boys went to work in the mines. It was before I was married and in the time of the Portuguese. We had to pay their taxes or they would force you to work in their fields. One time I could not go back to the mine because my father was sick. The Portuguese came and said that I would have to do *chibalo* (forced labour). It was terrible because they beat us and paid us virtually nothing. It was much better working for the English in South Africa.”

When his father said he was old enough, Ernesto had gone to the Wenela recruitment office in the valley and had asked for a job. “The office is still there,” he said “but it is now a ruin.”

It was closed when the dam flooded the valley and now the bush has come back and covered it. When I was young it was very busy; people would come from all over the district to get a job. Wenela sent a group of us to Lourenço Marques where we caught a train to Komatipoort and they sent us to a mine near Johannesburg. On other occasions we could go straight through Pafuri and get to the mines without having to go through Komatipoort; that route was much quicker.

Ernesto was initially part of a drilling team but later took a more highly-skilled job after training as a winch operator at one of the deep mines on the reef. “Working underground was hard and very dangerous,” he said. “There were many accidents and sometimes people got hurt or killed. In the lower levels of the mine there were strange noises and it got very hot. At the end of the shift we were all tired and would go back to the compound to sleep. We did not have to cook because they had big kitchens that would give us food; this food was great and on Sundays they even gave us drinks.” One of the other men sitting with Ernesto nodded in agreement and began reciting the entire weekly menu that he been served at the last mine in which he had worked, some thirty years earlier.

The mining contracts were usually for 12 months and on completion each miner was issued with a ‘bonus card’. This card guaranteed the miner a new contract if he returned to the mine within 40 days of leaving. Ernesto said that he received a part of his salary in South Africa and the remainder he collected at the Wenela office on his return to Mozambique. “With my money I bought some clothes and food in South Africa and had

to pay taxes to the *régulo* (colonial chief), but I kept most of the money to buy cattle. When I was younger I had worked as a pasture boy and had been given some animals as payment for this work, but I did not have enough cattle to get married. I used my money from the mines to buy cattle and pay the *lobolo* (bridewealth) to my wife's father. I had to pay 15 head of cattle. After I was married I had to go back to *Joni* so I could get more animals, move out of my father's house and build my own homestead."

Ernesto served nine contracts in total at seven different mines. These contracts had not been served consecutively as Ernesto had returned to Mavodze for periods of up to four years in between jobs. He explained that he had worked in South Africa when he needed money. "When I had saved money," Ernesto told me, "I would spend time here. I am a farmer and I made my fields and lived with my family. If there was no rain or I needed money, then I went to Wenela and they organised work in the mines." He stopped migrating in the early 1970s because a Portuguese company began recruiting workers to construct a dam on a nearby river. With forced labour regimes a thing of the past, the logic of comparison had now switched, working in favour of local employment. "It was much better working on the dam," he said, "They paid us money and we could live near our families. The work was hard but it was much better than the mines."

Ernesto's story was typical of the life histories that I collected from the older men in Mavodze. Almost every man whom I met in the village had gone to work in the mines. Of the 113 households that I surveyed, each had either at least one male member working in South Africa, or one who had worked there and had since returned. The accounts of the other older men were similar to Ernesto's: all were recruited by Wenela and worked in the gold mines; most said that their motivation for migrating was to earn money and avoid the Portuguese system of forced labour; all said that they first went as 'boys' before they were married; most men would spend their earnings on cattle for marriage; all would talk about how tough the work was; most, having got married, returned to the mines and earned more money with which to establish an independent homestead; and all returned home to raise cattle and farm.

Despite the favourable comparisons with local labour that had originally driven Mozambicans to the mines, the working conditions there were far from appealing. Workers would spend long periods of time, often over 12 months at a stretch, away

from home. Mining was hard physical labour in the most uncomfortable of environments: deep underground digging in cramped, hot and poorly lit shafts. There were the constant dangers of rockslides, explosions, flooding or tunnel collapses. Dunbar Moodie describes working underground as an experience of danger and fear that gave rise to a culture in the mining compounds dominated by this fear and a sense of pride. He cites a Sotho miner who said, “Working in the mines is an agonising painful experience ... [it] is an extremely dangerous place.” (1983:180) Accidents were so frequent that Moodie commented that every miner he had spoken with could recount stories of injuries and near-accidents (1983; see also First 1983). This was certainly the case for the former miners who had returned to Mavodze. It was a popular pastime for a group of men to sit around the fire attempting to out-do each other with tales of increasingly more gruesome accidents that they had witnessed during their times in the mines. The details of these stories were often wildly exaggerated, but this did not diminish the message underlying the narratives. A former lift-operator frequently told one ghastly anecdote. He had worked at the controls of one of the lifts in a deep mine. At the end of each shift he would stop the lift at each level to bring the workers up to the surface. A bell would ring to warn the miners that the lift was about to move. At the end of one shift some men were still crowding into the lift after the warning bell had rung. Working on the surface, the operator had no way of knowing if the men were all onboard. On this occasion, when he brought the lift to ground level one of the miners had become stuck between the lift cage and the shaft and his right arm had been torn off.

Given that the mines were such terrifying environments in which to work, one might wonder why so many people migrated to find employment in the Transvaal. In discussing the economics of migrant labour a number of classic anthropological studies of areas from which the mining industry recruits workers have shown that the export of labour was enabling rural communities to feed a larger population and maintain a higher standard of living than would have been otherwise possible. For example Gluckman writes, “Many Lozi and other Barotse have to go out to work in white country for their money income. [The] lack of export crops and commodities and high rates of transport...make this essential” (1941:113). In Botswana, Schapera also attributes economic necessity as the underlying cause of labour migration to the gold mines (1947). However, with regard to Mozambique, Wilson states, “the situation is not quite

so straightforward" (1972a:128); it was not clear whether the 100,000 workers annually recruited by Wenela came forward because the economic opportunities were better in the gold mines or because the Portuguese labour policy forced them to leave their homes.

The poorly developed capitalist sector in Mozambique was unable to compete with its regional neighbours and, unable to attract workers, had to resort to coercive recruitment polices (Isaacman & Isaacman 1983:34). The Portuguese colonial government's native labour code of 1899 provided the legal framework for a system of forced labour, known as *chibalo*, that continued to operate in Mozambique in various guises until 1975.²³ *Chibalo* required six months of labour from every able-bodied African man.²⁴ *Chibalo* labourers were required for work in agricultural plantations, on road-building schemes, in public building construction, in laying and repairing railroads, in the ports, as domestic servants or for any other public or private tasks (Hanlon 1990:18-19). The working conditions were brutal. Labourers were not entitled to food or lodging, could be subjected to repeated beatings, and received little or no renumeration (Isaacman & Isaacman 1983:34). Those who refused to work were whipped and beaten, and those who fled did so at the risk of having their wives and daughters taken hostage and sexually abused (Isaacman & Isaacman 1983:42).

With such conditions it is little wonder that the men like Ernesto Nkuna sought to avoid forced labour and opted instead to work in the gold mines. While the *chibalo* system certainly increased the numbers migrating, it is also important not to underplay the economic advantages of working in South Africa. Marvin Harris notes that a man could earn more than twice as much working in the gold mines than he could in Mozambique (1959; see also Rita-Ferreira 1960). The relatively poor opportunities for agricultural production, discussed above, made the remittances from labour migration important to the livelihood strategies of southern Mozambican households. Thus, like elsewhere in the region, men migrated to the gold mines for the better economic opportunities that South Africa had to offer. Unlike elsewhere in the region these migrations were

²³ *Chibalo* was officially abolished in 1961 when Portugal joined the ILO, but in practice forced labour continued in Mozambique until Independence in 1975 (First 1983:xxvii)

²⁴ Women were legally exempt from *chibalo*, although in practice many were forced to work as well (Ross 1925:40).

systematically encouraged and sustained by the deplorable labour policies of the Portuguese colonial state. The economic rationale for Mozambicans leaving for the gold mines is undoubtedly important but at the same time one cannot ignore the role which inter-state relations²⁵ have played in shaping the system of migrant labour in the southern African region.

While the broader structural reasons for the migration to the gold mines could be glossed in terms of what used to be called 'push and pull factors', if we return to the story of Ernesto we can also begin to understand how labour migration has become integrated into the social and cultural life of the rural communities from which the migrants come. The former miners repeatedly referred to themselves as 'boys' or 'kids' when they first leave for South Africa. These 'boys' signed up at the Wenela recruitment centre and departed to serve their contracts in the mines. Having endured and survived the dangers in South Africa, they returned as men and with their earnings were able to purchase cattle with which to get married. In the cases of the majority of the miners whom I spoke to, they would return to serve several more contracts and use their earnings to purchase more cattle, consumer goods, tools and building materials with which to establish their own homesteads, independent of their fathers. This pattern has been repeated by generations of Shangaan from Massingir: not only had Ernesto's son been a gold miner but his father had spent time in the mines, as had his father before him. It is more than likely Ernesto's great-grandfather had also migrated to work in South Africa.²⁶ As generations of males left Mozambique as 'boys' and returned to establish their own households, the migration across the border has come to signify — or achieve — the transition from adolescence to manhood.

²⁵ There is a danger in this reproduction-centred analysis to treat the state and the mining capital in an undifferentiated and functionalist manner, thus underplaying the divisions between the different groups (James 1992:11; see also Burawoy 1976). While I am aware of the conflicts and differences that existed between the Mozambican and South African states, and between both of these and the various mining companies as well as the plantation-owners, my informants in the villages of Massingir saw them as undivided and monolithic. The state and mining companies were institutionally intertwined at every stage of the miners' migration to South Africa: from the motivation for migrating, the means of recruitment and their experiences in the mines, how they received their wages, to how they returned home. For the miners of Massingir, the state and the mining companies were so closely connected that the two would often be discussed as one entity.

²⁶ Similarly, Ruth First notes that many of the miners she interviews come from families that have a history of supplying labour to the South African gold mining industry (1983:86-107).

This pattern repeats one that has become familiar in other parts of South and southern Africa. David Coplan, for example, demonstrates its significance in the case of men from Lesotho (1994). In an analysis of the practices of the Xhosa of the Eastern Cape, Patrick McAllister (1980) demonstrates that the rituals and symbolic actions associated with migrant labour conform to Van Gennep's rites of passage (1960 [1909]). McAllister argues that the Xhosa he was studying were inherently conservative and that the only way in which they could come to terms with the effects of migration was to ritualise it. Analysing the rituals in terms of Van Gennep's model of separation, transition and incorporation, he argues that through these rituals the Xhosa are able to protect their culture from new values or ideas that may have threatened the home structure and ideology. Thus, the ritualisation of migration mitigates it as an outside threat and ultimately reinforces Xhosa conservatism. In the next section of this chapter I suggest that McAllister's use of Van Gennep's model may provide a useful way to look at the migrations from Mozambique to South Africa.²⁷ In doing this, I am more interested in the phases of separation and reintegration than in that of liminality, as my research concentrated on the rural communities that supply the migrant labour rather than directly examining miners' lives. I argue that at one level the rites associated with departure from Massingir are, like those of McAllister's Xhosa, concerned with conforming to and sustaining the dominant patriarchal social order of the home community. However, this is not the primary focus of the migrant on his return. Instead, the actions and practices of reintegration emphasise the dependent relationships between the migrating men and women who have remained at home, and their mutual obsession with material goods.

Leaving for the mines: ritual farewells

The first time that I heard about the various rites associated with people's trips across the border was while trying to establish the use of a small hut that stood in the corner of one informant's household. Standing about three feet high, it was clearly too small for

²⁷ In this chapter I distance myself from Van Gennep by discussing rites and rituals in a far more secular manner than that implied in his classic text.

habitation by either humans or other livestock. Was it to house chickens, I wondered? My informant, Jaime, laughed, saying that nobody would be so stupid as to build such a house for chickens, they can sleep in the trees. No, this was an *Ndumba* house. An *Ndumba* house is the site where families can consult their ancestors. Jaime explained that a family would construct an *Ndumba* house when the male head of the household died. If a family member wishes to consult this dead relative about an issue, he would make an offering of food, drink or tobacco, place it within the *Ndumba* house and ask for their ancestor's help. *Ndumba* houses should be full-size huts, but Jaime had not had enough time or money to build one; this was a temporary measure. Although men were permitted to sleep in the hut, there are strict rules that prohibit women from doing so, although they could enter to make an offering. I asked Jaime what sort of things people consulted their ancestors about. He gave the following examples:

When a boy decides that it is time to go to South Africa he will go hunting. He will kill an animal and keep some of the meat. He will then go and buy some *escalabisha* [beer] and some of the tobacco that his father used to smoke. He will take this meat, drink and tobacco into the *Ndumba* house and put the meat and tobacco on the ground. He will pour the *escalabisha* onto the ground around the offerings. He will say, "Father, it is time for me to go to *Joni*. I am going to find work." He will ask his father for good health, a safe journey and to watch him while he works underground. The boy may sleep in the *Ndumba* house on the night before he starts his journey. If he does this then he will not get harmed when he goes to South Africa.

It is the same after a marriage, a girl will take her new husband to her father's *Ndumba* house. They will offer drinks and she will present her husband. She will tell her father that she is going to leave his household and go and live with her husband's family. She will ask for good health. They will leave and go to her husband's house.

The first example used by Jaime in attempting to explain the *Ndumba* house was that of a young man going to South Africa. I subsequently discovered that people would contact their ancestors via the *Ndumba* house for any number of reasons, such as whether to sell a cow or not, when to start planting seeds, or asking for more rain. It is not inconsequential, however, that Jaime chose to emphasise the story of the young man going to the mines. I consistently found that people would use South Africa as a medium of explanation for a myriad of topics, both in response to my own questions

and when explaining something to someone else. Men would start an explanatory sentence with “When I was working in South Africa …” or when talking to young boys, a person would begin “When you go to work in South Africa …” Labour migration to the gold mines is embedded in all aspects of peoples’ lives.

The juxtaposition between the male and female in Jaime’s explanation is also interesting. He immediately follows the example of the young man wishing to leave his father’s homestead to seek work in South Africa, with that of a recently married young girl wanting to leave her paternal household to reside with her new husband. Marriage is seen as the means by which a girl becomes a woman and, in Massingir, travelling to South Africa in search of labour is the process by which a boy becomes a man. By using both in his explanation, Jaime is implying that, just as every woman is expected to marry, every young man will go to the gold mines. And the two are connected, as I will show further on.

The *Ndumba* house was not the only site where migrants would make pre-departure offerings to the ancestral spirits. I returned to Ernesto Nkuna’s house and relayed Jaime’s story, Ernesto nodded and confirmed that he had made, not only an *Ndumba* offering, but also a second offering at a Leadwood tree. This tree was in the valley and is now covered by the dammed Olifantes River, but before the building of the dam the tree had stood on the route to the Transvaal. Ernesto explained that miners and other labour migrants would leave an offering of tobacco at the base of the tree and ask the ancestors to grant them a safe journey and to ensure that they would return home safely. On their way back from South Africa the migrants would return to the same tree and leave a small deposit of money to offer thanks for the ancestors’ protection while they were away. Ernesto described how the ground around the tree gleamed as the sun reflected off the coins that previous returnees had left. “Nobody would take any money,” he said, “Nobody would touch it, they knew that that money was for our ancestors. That money was to protect us.”

I suggest that these different offerings that the departing miners made to the ancestors can be understood in terms of the pre-liminal phase of a rite of passage. Indeed, Van Gennep notes similar departure rituals being performed in a number of societies as far apart as Nepal and South America (1960 [1909]:15-25). These pre-liminal rites allowed

a more gradual progression into the liminal phase of Van Gennep's schema, which in this case can be equated to the period spent working underground and living in the mining compounds. Returned miners would often talk about their experiences in South Africa, highlighting the hardships and dangers that the miners experienced underground. Men would recount gruesome injuries, like the one mentioned earlier, occasions when tunnels collapsed or flooded, explosions that had occurred underground, or people they knew who had died. When I began discussing life on the mines on a one-to-one basis, the stories lost much of the bravado and heroism they'd had when told in a group context, instead exposing the extremely harsh physical nature of the work. The miners worked 10-hour shifts, six days a week, often in shafts no more than a metre high, lying on their backs to drill at the rock face. The environment was hot, deafeningly noisy and thick with dust. Heavy loads and equipment had to be carried and there was a constant fear of rock falls or explosions. "Working in the mines," one of my informants surmised, "is tough. It is a hard, hard life. Mining is not work for boys, it makes you a man."

We can see that once again my informant was emphasising that dangerous mine labour was a part of the transition from adolescence into manhood. If we look again at the rites carried out by the migrants before they left Mozambique, we can see that these pre-departure rituals served as insurance policies against the dangers that the miners would face in South Africa. They offered libations and tobacco to the ancestral spirits and in return received protection during their time away. While this was one way in which men talk about these offerings, I suggest in consulting the ancestral spirits, giving them food, drink and tobacco, and then sleeping in the sacred *Ndumba* house, a young man was concerned with more than simply protection. By carrying out these rituals he was reinforcing the social fabric of the community and was placating the dominant patriarchal social order. The offerings were made to the migrant's father (if not alive) and/or his patrilineage (if he was). In doing the rituals associated with departure, the young man demonstrated that, although he was departing for the mines, he remained committed to his home, his family and the traditions of his home society. Much like the example of the Xhosa in South Africa, the rituals of farewell that were made by the migrating men in Massingir also endorsed the kind of conservatism that McAllister spoke of.

The analysis of labour migration to South Africa as a rite of passage is my own, as the residents of Massingir did not discuss the issues in these terms. However, while there was no explicit comparison, the two concepts were certainly connected, for whenever my informants discussed more typical male rites of passage it was always in relation to migration or South Africa. For example on one occasion, I was listening to a radio station that was being broadcast from South Africa with a group of men. One of the stories making the news headlines was that five young men had died on the side of a mountain near Johannesburg. They had been attending a 'traditional' initiation school, which according to the news report, taught young men about their culture and traditions and would perform the 'traditional' circumcision operation. On completion of the various rituals, the initiates would return to their home communities as men. The five teenagers had died from pneumonia and septic wounds caused by beatings and circumcision. One of my companions shook his head in disgust, commenting, "We used to have the same thing here but it was stopped many years ago." None of those gathered, all aged between 30 and 40, had been through such an initiation, but they all said that their fathers and grandfathers would have had to. My friends were somewhat hazy about the details but insisted that young men had to go into the bush for a number of weeks, during which time their manhood was tested by having to live off the land and cope with wild animals. The young men would be circumcised and would return to the community as 'real' men. "That was a long time ago," one man told me, "we do not do it here anymore. Some of us go through such a ceremony when we go to South Africa, but most of us choose not to."²⁸

Good goods: relations of return

While I argue that the rituals associated with departure in Massingir expressed a concern with sustaining the social order of the home community, those associated with return suggested rupture and fission. It is this phase of 'reintegration' on which I now

²⁸ A female initiation rite, known as *vikhoba*, continues to be observed in Massingir, although I was never able to discover all that much about it. My male informants said the details of this were a secret that the women keep to themselves. The most I was able to learn was that the initiation took place in the evenings of May and June, when the young women go to the house of one of the older women and they are taught to dance, housework and "all the other things that make them good wives!"

want to focus. The array of consumer goods which returning miners brought home form a dominant theme in the narratives associated with labour migration. On their return from South Africa miners were far less concerned with sustaining existing social relations with their lineages, rather they concentrated their efforts in establishing and cementing new relationships. The consumer goods with which they returned were crucial to these efforts.

McAllister describes two Xhosa rites of return, both of which centre on the alcohol that a migrant is expected to bring back (1980). The first is the formal presentation of bottles of liquor by the migrant to specific individuals followed by a series of speeches, welcomes and thanks. There may be more than thirty adults at such affairs and the festivities can go on for up to three days (1980:220-225). The second ritual described by McAllister is the *Umsindleko* beer drink. This is a much larger ceremony involving members of the whole community. Quantities of beer are brewed and elders, representatives of the returnee's lineage and of the wider community give a series of speeches (1980:225-234). Through these ceremonies the returning Xhosa migrant is publicly reaffirming his commitment to his household and the values of the society. In this way the rituals of return are as concerned as those of separation with conservatism and the patriarchal order.

This contrasts with the situation in Massingir in significant ways. While there is a similar tendency to come home with at least one bottle of liquor, the consumption of this alcohol is an altogether *private* affair. I attended one such occasion, by accident, on my way back from trudging around one informant's maize fields. It was a hot day and my water supplies had run out. I collapsed in Trazente Chauque's compound desperately dehydrated and asked for some water. Unfortunately, Chauque did not have any water but smiled and, to my horror, handed me a mug filled to the brim with a vile cocktail of brandy, gin and red wine. Although this was the last thing that I wanted to drink, Chauque was celebrating the return of his son and I was obliged to join in.

Chauque explained that this was a custom that had been carried out by men returning from the gold mines. He told me that when he was a miner he had always brought several bottles of liquor back from *Joni*. He would make a small offering to the ancestral spirits, as is the custom when drinking any alcohol, and would share the rest

with his father and brothers. Chauque's son, who was immaculately dressed in newly pressed trousers, a football shirt, a new baseball cap and gleaming white trainers, had just returned from South Africa and the custom was being repeated. During my time in Mavodze I was able to witness two more similarly private events. On each occasion the head of household explained to me that had been the custom of returning miners, and the new migrants of today were expected to continue the tradition.

This small private libation and the offering of money at the Leadwood tree, mentioned earlier in this chapter, can be considered rites of return. However, these were very much token gestures and it was the public consumption of other goods that formed the most important part of a returnee's homecoming. McAllister dismisses the items such as "foodstuffs, clothes etc." that the returnee brings home as having little significance for the Xhosa (1980:241). In Mavodze, however, it was the consumption and distribution of these "other items" that was important. This was clearly illustrated to me, through the characteristically dramatised and compacted mode of ritual, during a spirit possession ceremony that I attended.

I had been invited to the ceremony by a neighbour and watched the proceedings with him and his family. Shortly after we had all arrived three women began drumming. Another woman emerged from a nearby *Ndumba* hut, walked briskly into the central circle and sat down on the mat. She removed her headscarf and at once began to tremble and enter into a state of trance. The three female drummers changed their rhythm and a spirit was summoned. This spirit was a local man, Masacane Valoi. He was very angry with the women and rearranged himself to face the men, turning his back on the group of women. He called to the young boys, some of whom were watching; others who had been distracted were playing under a nearby tree. The boys came over and sat in a huddle in front of the spirit. The spirit sent the young girls out of the compound. He put on a smart green floral-patterned shirt and a cap emblazoned with the name 'Orlando Pirates' — one of South Africa's two most popular football teams. The spirit shook hands with all of the boys and began to tell a story:

I lived in this area when I was young. My father had many cattle in his corral and it was my job to tend to his animals. I would take the cattle to grazing areas and to the rivers and pools so they could drink. My friends also had to look after their fathers' cattle and we

would go together. We would catch fish in the river and make traps for animals. We would cook this food on a fire. Those were good times. When I got older I saw one girl who was fetching water from the river. I liked her and we went into the bush together. She told me that I had to go to *Joni* and work underground so that I could earn money to marry her. I went to *Joni* and worked for a long time and saved my money. I came back and I married the girl. She then said that I had to go back and earn money to buy her things. I went back to the mine and worked hard. In South Africa I bought her a pot and came back home. She did not like the pot I had bought her and she cried and shouted. In the middle of the night she woke up, stabbed me with a knife and killed me.

The spirit finished his story and told the young boys “when you go to work in the gold mines, remember me and I will look after you.” He then looked at me and told the boys that he was afraid: my presence there reminded him of the white men who’d been in charge of the mine in which he used to work. The possessed woman started to tremble and the spirit left her. The drummers slowed their tempo and the other women began to sing. The ceremony continued into the evening, with several other women becoming possessed. However, my analysis will concentrate on the spirit of the murdered miner.

The narrative that the spirit directed towards the young boys demonstrates the idealised pattern of male development: young boys spend their prepubescent years herding their father’s cattle; after adolescence they travel to South Africa to work in the gold mines; returning home with their earnings, the boys marry; they return to the mines to earn more money with which to set up their own, independent household; and now at home they will live off agriculture and livestock production. However, there is more to what the spirit said than teaching the young boys that it was expected that they would, like their fathers and grandfathers before them, go and work in the gold mines of the Transvaal. A part of what drove the murdered miner back to the mines was the need to satisfy his wife’s desire for material goods. He was killed because the goods he had returned with failed to satisfy his wife’s expectations. This spirit possession is indicative of the way that the accumulation of material goods has become embedded in the miners’, and former miners’, narratives of kinship, work and marriage.

In his ethnographic study of the neighbouring Gwambe people in the 1940s, Fuller attributes numerous changes in patterns of consumption to the male exodus to South

Africa (1955): there was an increasing use of furniture such as tables, chairs and cupboards that men were bringing back at the end of their contracts (p.163); people acquired the habits of drinking tea, coffee or cocoa and using sugar and condensed milk, having been exposed to these new commodities in the mine compounds (p.233); leisure time was spent in a different manner with the introduction of football and card games (p.165 & 234); even styles of haircut changed, Fuller argues that people preferred to shave their heads — originally explained “by the frequency of hygiene shaving in mines” but later apparently a fashion choice (p.172). To credit all of these changes to migrant labour alone ignores the other complex changes that were going on within Mozambique at that time due to the expansion of Portuguese colonialism. However, there can be little doubt that the new patterns of consumption, as well as having something to do with these changes, owed much to migrants’ earning power, new exposure to popular cultural styles, and easy access to mine-based trading stores.

If we return to the spirit possession ceremony, in each instance of possession the medium changed her clothes. These changes were made to signal that a specific spirit had inhabited her body. For example, when possessed by a former army general, she wore two chains of beads symbolising belts of machine-gun ammunition across her chest. In the case of the miner who was murdered by his wife, the medium put on a new green shirt and an ‘Orlando Pirates’ cap, thus resembling a young migrant with his sartorial smartness and his awareness of South African soccer trends. The medium’s new shirt and cap signalled her possession by a former miner.

To make a further point about the significance of migrants’ clothing: we saw when I visited Chauque’s compound that his son was immaculately dressed for his homecoming; he wore the same outfit to the going-away party that I organised at the end of my fieldwork. While the son had put on his best clothes, his father, Chauque, apologised to me for the condition of the clothes that he was wearing. He regretted that the clothing that he had brought back from the mines had long since perished. “The clothes I brought back from *Joni* looked good,” he told me. “When I came home I looked like a man who had made it.” In contrast, he was now dressed in an ill-fitting old jacket and a T-shirt that his son had brought back from his recent trip to South Africa. Chauque complained that the items didn’t fit very well and that the jacket had a hole in it. He looked down at the outfit and laughed. “It is always like this,” he said. “When I

came back from the mines I brought my father some cheap old clothes. Someone was selling them in the mining compound. They didn't fit him either. It was much more important that I bought good clothes for myself. That is the way it should be."

Another former miner recounted similar feelings to me after his jacket sleeve had fallen off whilst he was laying a floral wreath at a poorly attended Armed Forces Day ceremony organised by the local state officials. He had complained that his son had given him the jacket and it had probably been bought cheaply in South Africa. As the old man stood holding the errant sleeve in one hand and the exposed shirt of the other arm flapped in the wind, this appeared to be a clear demonstration of the selfishness of youth. While the father was standing there in clothing that was falling apart at the seams, his son, no doubt, was lying at home listening to music from his new radio, dressed in shiny new sportswear. The story demonstrates themes more complex, however, than the self-interest of the younger generation. The rituals undertaken by a migrating miner on his departure are concerned with maintaining a connection to his lineage, his father and his paternal homestead. Having worked in South Africa, however, a returnee is more concerned with separation. The libation of alcohol and limited distribution of third-rate gifts are little more than gestures. A returned migrant is far more focussed on distancing himself from his paternal household and establishing his own. Rather than acknowledging old relationships, the returning migrant is concerned with creating and sustaining new social relations.

Most of the wages earned by a migrant on his first visit to the mines would be used to purchase cattle to pay the bridewealth needed for marriage. The bridewealth, or *lobolo*, was — until relatively recently — about 15 head of cattle. Interestingly, in Massingir the preference remains for bridewealth to be paid in animals, unlike in other parts of Southern Africa where waged labour has heralded a shift in preference from cattle to cash. Indeed cash is not even used to purchase the cattle; farmers instead often prefer to exchange animals for consumer goods that the migrants bring back from South Africa. The marriages are usually arranged with families within the region but from outside the village. The new wife would then come and take residence at her new husband's father's house. After marriage the priority for a young man is to earn enough money to establish his own household, as it is only by doing so that a man becomes fully mature. To do this the migrant must purchase his own cattle to build up a herd for the new

household, as discussed in the introduction. Equally important, however, is the purchase of consumer goods from South Africa.

The importation of South African goods at one level was purely functional; the items were simply much cheaper on the other side of the border. However, the provision and consumption of goods were crucial in forming and maintaining conjugal relations. The woman who was possessed told the story of a miner whose wife sent him to South Africa to bring her consumer goods but was eventually murdered by her because the pot he brought her was inadequate. This 'pot' condenses what in reality was a whole range of consumer goods: anything from clothes to huge wrought-iron bed-frames. Whenever I visited the homesteads of retired miners and began to discuss their experiences I was inevitably shown the goods that they had brought back to equip their household. Men would pull out rusting trunks and display the tools, kitchen utensils, paraffin lamps and ageing radios that they had bought in *Joni*. I would be ushered into their huts and shown the tables, chairs and wardrobes they had brought back for their wives. On several occasions I was asked to translate English instructions and labels that the miners had puzzled over during the years that they had been back in the village.

As we have seen, the rites performed by the miners of Massingir on their departure are in some ways similar to those of the Xhosa as described by McAllister, in that they are both associated with endorsing the dominant social order and are symbolising the individual's loyalty to the paternal homestead. The actions of the miners returning to Massingir, however, differ considerably from those of McAllister's Xhosa. McAllister details a series of rituals and practices performed by the returning Xhosa migrant that reincorporate him into the family home. These actions all involve the sharing of commodities and the migrant accepting the moral authority of the home. In Massingir this is not the case. The consumption of commodities concentrates on the individual and his wife. The focus is on the migrant himself rather than on the paternal home. Some gifts are distributed to agnatic kin, but the distribution occurs in private and the gifts are acknowledged to be of poor quality and little value. In the villages of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin the miners return to their home community as men and the public consumption of the goods that they bring with them serves to demonstrate their change in status to the wider community.

While the actions and practices taken by the miner on his return to the village all appear to indicate a public severing of ties to his father's household, this cannot be seen as the returned miners distancing themselves from the old order. By breaking away from the paternal homestead and establishing his own, the miner is in fact reinforcing and continuing the patrilineal system. The resources acquired by several trips to South Africa allow the miner to get married, build his own house and buy his own cattle. With this the returned migrant can start his own family and has the means to sustain it through agricultural and livestock production. Although the actions of the miner on his return are concerned with severing his individual ties to his paternal homestead, he is ultimately reinforcing the existing patrilineal system in the same way that his father and grandfather had done before him.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, it is instructive to open the discussion to a wider context. There is a large and growing literature that explores the links between economic production, migration and the consumption of goods. Much of this is concerned with how the consumption of goods plays a role in shaping people's identities. For example Mary Beth Mills looks at the migration of rural women to Bangkok (1997). Although these women are engaged in low-status low-wage labour, their experiences of exploitation are mediated by the aspiration to participate in new patterns of consumption. Through the purchase of clothing, cosmetics and other consumer goods, these women seek to construct new identities through which to overcome their marginal position in society. Similarly, Michael Kearney argues from his work among the Mexican communities migrating to California that social categories such as 'peasant' or 'worker' that were previously determined by modes of production must be rethought in terms of consumer habits (1996). Carla Freeman echoes these sentiments in looking at female information processors working in Barbados (1998). Freeman shows how through the purchase of imported designer clothing and other consumer goods these women attempt to set themselves apart from the other factory workers.

In many ways the practices of the Mozambican miners explored in this chapter resonate with this idea that people who go to work are partially defined by the goods created within the capitalist economy. Certainly the migrants' obsession with clothing and how this was publicly flaunted around the village on their return could be seen as an expression of their new identity. A returned migrant's proudly-displayed clothes and consumer goods demonstrate to the other residents that he has overcome the dangers entailed in migration and has returned home as 'a man'. However, rather than just focusing on individual identities, this chapter has shown how the process of migrant labour was also concerned with social connections and the creation of dependent relationships. It is insufficient to consider 'consumption' and how it enables people to create new identities, without thinking about how miners transform the social contexts into which they return.

In the Mozambican border villages the migration of generations of men to the gold mines has been understood as both a transition for individuals and as a means of reinforcing the social system (see also Harries 1994 and Murray 1981 as referred to earlier). Indeed, as is shown by the discussions about village leadership with which I opened this chapter (and will return to in Chapter 6), working in the gold mines has become a key feature of local social and cultural identities. Equally, labour migration has been of economic significance to the region. Due to the limited potential for agricultural and livestock production, the remittances brought home from the mines are important sources of household income. The monies earned and goods brought back by the miners are used to pay the *lobolo* (bridewealth), build a homestead, and invest in cattle for agricultural production and for sale in times of crisis.

While migration to the gold mines is considered of local economic and social importance, this chapter has also demonstrated the state involvement in its development. For the last 150 years relations between South Africa and Mozambique have been founded on labour migration and access to transport links. Until 1975 both states have deliberately encouraged labour migrations through an array of different policies. For the Portuguese colonial government the miners provided a key source of revenues through different systems of taxation and deferred pay. The South African economy and political system was dependent on cheap foreign labour and access to the Mozambican

ports, thus maintaining the relationship based on labour and transport also suited the South African state.

The cooperation of the two states shaped the nature of the migrations for the miners in Massingir. Although the recruitment of miners was managed and organised by Wenela, the private company established by the mining companies, the terms of the migration were defined by the conventions agreed between the Mozambique and South African states. This ensured that all the miners were legally crossing the borders and were legally able to work in South Africa. The agreements detailed the number of miners that could be recruited and the length of their contracts. The agreements between the states controlled all aspects of the miner's salaries, including the exchange rates at which the salary was based and where and how often the monies were paid. Through this system of deferred pay, the states were also able to control where and how the miners could spend their wages.

This highly controlled system of labour migration continued until the 1970s. The states' interests and involvements in the system had defined how the men of the border villages had worked in the gold mines, framed how they understood South Africa, and influenced the village social and cultural system. In the mid-1970s this situation was to change. Political upheavals reshaped the inter-state relationships and changed the politico-economic structures throughout the region. At the same time the South African gold-mining industry was undergoing massive internal changes that were to redefine the role of its labour force, most notably reducing its dependence on foreign workers.

The next chapter considers how these changes have affected the villagers of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin. As we have seen, through the experiences of the former miners migration to the gold mines has become a socially recognised transition from male adolescence into adulthood. This expectation continues and is expressed through the narratives of the retired miners and through rituals such as spirit possession. However, due to the mining companies cutting back the foreign labour force there are far fewer job opportunities in the mines that are open to young Mozambicans. I examine how the migrants from Massingir have responded to this problem and how trends of migration have changed in the light of the restructuring of the South African mining industry.

3. Mining Aristocrats and Lion-Dodgers: The changing nature of Mozambican labour migration

Introduction

A young boy came to my house and said that his father was home and wanted to speak to me. I had visited Solomão Valoi's homestead several weeks earlier hoping to speak to Solomão about his experiences working in the South African gold mines. His second wife had informed me that her husband was still in *Joni*. However, his contract was due to finish in a couple of weeks and I should come and speak with him when he returned home. Solomão was sitting in the shade eating breakfast and motioned for me to sit and join him. He apologised that he was not at home when I had visited and explained that his previous contract had finished only a week ago and he had come home for a six- or seven-week holiday.

It was his first trip back to Mavodze in 14 months and he was planning to build a new cement house for his third wife with the materials he had brought back from South Africa. His homestead already contained two large brick houses complete with windows, doors and concrete floors. We walked over to where two men were digging in the ground and Solomão explained that this was going to be the site of the cement house. He was anxious to see it finished before he returned to the mines. His next mining contract was due to begin in early April and he told me that he would catch the bus to Maputo and then cross the border several days before the contract was due to start, so that he would be sure to get to the mine on time; he did not want to lose this job.

Solomão was in his late forties and had worked in the gold mines since 1975. Like most of the miners in Massingir, he had been recruited through the Wenela office in the Olifantes valley. During his 27 years of experience he had been employed on eight different mines in the Transvaal and had worked as a lift-operator, in a two-man drilling team and as part of a team transporting ore to the surface. "The company says that I am now a 'team leader' or 'supervisor' but everyone in the mines still calls us 'boss boys',"

Solomão said, “I’ll show you my qualifications.” He went into one of the houses and came back minutes later with a plastic folder. “These are my certificates” he told me and handed over the package. I opened it and pulled out a number of laminated A4 sheets of paper. Each stated the qualification that Solomão had obtained: “Certificate of General First Aid 1993”; “Certificate of Mine First Aid”; “Certificate of Mine Rescue 2000”; “Certificate of History, Safety and Philosophy of Mining”. Solomão explained that the only Mozambicans mining companies would employ were those who had years of experience and qualifications like these. “I have no problem getting new contracts”, he said,

They have my file at the Wenela offices in Xai Xai, Maputo and Ressano Garcia. When a mining company needs someone with my qualifications, the people at Wenela look through the files and send a message to say that I have another contract and I should go to such-and-such a mine on a certain day. It is easy for me. All the Mozambicans who work in the mines these days are like me, they are old men who have been working in *Joni* for many years.

Two other miners whom I interviewed told stories similar to that of Solomão. Both were ‘boss boys’ and had worked in the gold mines for more than 20 years. Solomão explained that the South Africans no longer recruit novice miners from Mozambique:

They tell our boys that the jobs are taken. The South Africans tell us that we are taking their jobs. Before the South Africans did not like to work underground, they said it was too dangerous. Now they have no other jobs. They want to work in the mines. Our boys cross the border and try to get work, but there is none. They have to sell things on the street to earn money for food. This mining business has changed.

Solomão’s final statement is something of an understatement. During his 27 years of service, the South African mining industry has experienced not the slight change that his modest phrase suggests but a fundamental transformation. This chapter argues that this transformation has occurred both as a result of the mining companies reacting to changing economic circumstances and also as a consequence of the changing political situation in southern Africa. Continuing the theme from the beginning of the previous chapter, it examines how the end of colonial rule in Mozambique in 1975 affected

relations between the South African and Mozambican states and the impact that this has had on the pattern of labour migration. The strained relations between the two states and the restructuring of the mining industry initially resulted in far fewer employment opportunities for the men of Massingir and southern Mozambique: despite later rapprochement between South Africa and Mozambique the South African economy has experienced continuing problems, with its mining sector being among those worst hit. The experiences of the contemporary miners, like Solomão Valoi, contrast with those of Ernesto Nkuna and the other miners that were discussed in the previous chapter. In contrast to an earlier pattern in which most villagers worked in the mines for several years and then return to the village to engage in agricultural production, far fewer men are able to work in the mining sector today. Those who are do so as highly trained, well-paid career miners.

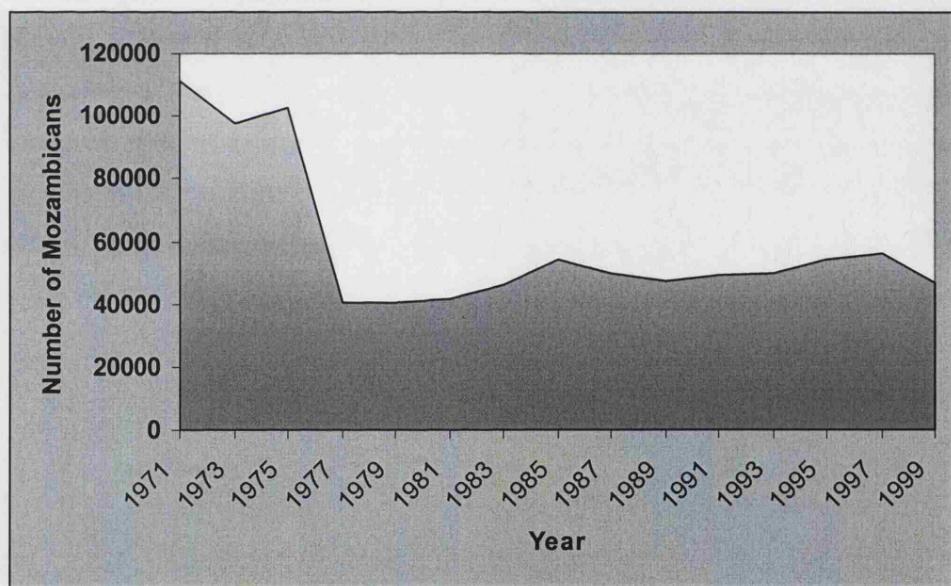
While men like Solomão Valoi who have secured work in the mining industry are emerging as a local elite or a 'mining aristocracy', the majority of the residents of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin have not been as fortunate. The previous chapter demonstrated that working in the mines was of social, economic and cultural significance to the people of this region. I argue in this chapter that, although there are no mining jobs available, the social, cultural and economic pressures have remained. The majority of young men of Mavodze and the surrounding villages have been unable to work in the mines and instead enter South Africa as illegal migrants. Rather than crossing the border with work permits and documentation issued by Wenela, these new migrants have been taking the hazardous route through the Kruger Park and searching for whatever jobs are available to them. This chapter explores the experiences of these new migrants and considers the effect that these changing patterns in labour migration have had on social relations in the border villages of Massingir.

Restructuring the South African mining industry

During the late 1970s the South African mining industry underwent a fundamental transformation. The most significant change for the villagers of Massingir has been the

mining companies' considerable retrenchment of foreign labour. While almost every male resident over the age of 40 *had* once been employed in the mines, very few remained in this employment. Of the households that I interviewed, only 6 had male members currently working in the mines. If one looks at the mining industry in general the percentage of foreign labourers working in South African mines fell from almost 80% of the entire workforce in 1972 to just over 30% in 1977 (from Crush 1995:32). This new policy of labour 'internalisation', as it was termed by the International Labour Organisation (see for example Stahl 1979), resulted in thousands of Mozambicans losing their jobs (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Average number of Mozambicans working in the South African Mining Industry, 1971-1999.



Source: South African Chamber of Mines, personal communication; TEBA Maputo, personal communication

The substantial body of literature that addresses this issue shows that the drastic reduction of the foreign labour force was due to a combination of different factors. Of these the freeing-up of the international gold price on the international markets was pivotal (Crush *et al* 1991:105). In 1944 the gold price was fixed at US\$ 35 per ounce at the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference at Bretton Woods, USA. By the

1960s global demand for gold was so strong that the price was forced upwards. In an effort to uphold the status of the dollar the United States and other major Western powers formed a gold-pool, pledging their combined gold reserves in defence of the fixed gold price. Demand continued to rise and the gold-pool collapsed in 1968, forcing the IMF and the central banks to broker a new two-tier agreement whereby central banks would trade gold at a fixed official price and other gold could be traded on the free market. In 1978 the IMF finally abolished the official price of gold and allowed central banks to value and use gold reserves as they saw fit. The South African Reserve Bank set the price of US\$163 per ounce.²⁹ Prices on the open market rocketed to US\$305 in 1979 and peaked at US\$805 in January 1980 (Lang 1986). Over the last two decades the price has fluctuated between US\$300-500 per ounce.

South Africa is the world's largest producer of gold and its industry has consistently accounted for between one-third and one-half of total global production (US Library of Congress 1996). The massive hike in world gold prices, therefore, resulted in windfall profits for the mining companies. These extra revenues allowed increased mechanisation of the industry, most notably seen in the Anglo American Corporation's operations in the Orange Free State (Seidman 1995). The increased dependence on technology reduced the need for manual labour and resulted in gradual layoffs across the sector. A second consequence of the rising profitability of the gold mining companies was an increase in workers' wages. The Chamber of Mines had come under growing international criticism for their wages policy following the publication of Francis Wilson's book *Labour in the South African Gold Mines* (1972a). Wilson demonstrated that, in real terms, wages in the mining industry had decreased over the preceding eighty years (Wilson 1972a:141; see also Crush *et al* 1991:105). The higher revenues, generated from the inflated gold price, allowed the mining companies to increase wages to a level that could compete with other sectors of South African industry. This coincided with a general recession in the South African industrial sector such that more generous wage structures encouraged a surge in native South Africans applying for positions in the mining sector. For the first time in its history the mining industry had a labour supply that exceeded demand. The consequence of this shift from

²⁹ For further details on the history of the world gold market see Lang (1986).

a predominantly foreign to an internal workforce was the dramatic cutback in mine labour recruitment from elsewhere in southern Africa, including Mozambique.

The increased mechanisation and rising wages were facilitated by the steep rise in the gold price, yet these were changes that could not be instigated overnight. Figure 1 clearly shows that the number of Mozambican miners fell very sharply between 1975 and 1977. This drastic reduction not only affected the Mozambican miners but was reflected across all the foreign work forces in the mines. It had been precipitated by two political incidents that had occurred in the mid-1970s. Firstly, in 1974 Malawi banned recruitment of its nationals following an aircraft crash near Francistown (Botswana) that killed 74 miners returning from service in South Africa. The Malawian government's decision suddenly to withdraw 120,000 miners (approximately 30% of the workforce) highlighted the mining industry's vulnerability to action taken by supplier states that were becoming increasingly hostile to the apartheid government. These fears were further realised the following year when the Portuguese colonial regime in Mozambique collapsed and was replaced by the socialist Frelimo government. The Mozambican workforce, at that time, was the largest foreign labour contingent in the mines and the threat of further disruption to this crucial resource forced the mining companies to pursue a policy of labour internalisation (de Vletter 1987:200; see also Coplan 1994:250). The reduction in foreign labour, therefore, although facilitated by the increased gold price, must be considered to be a response to the broader political changes that were occurring throughout the region.

The potential to use the mining industry's dependence on a foreign workforce as a political tool had been realised as far back as 1960 when the then Tanganyikan government halted all organised labour migration to South Africa in protest against the Sharpeville Massacre.³⁰ Even after the cutbacks of the 1970s the instrumental use of migratory labour continued. If we return to Figure 1, we can see that between 1983 and 1985 the number of Mozambicans working in the South African mining industry increased from 45,836 to 54,223. This 15% increase was a result of the Nkomati Accord signed by South African President P.W. Botha and Mozambican President Samora

³⁰ An incident in March 1960 in the South African township of Sharpeville where police opened fire on a crowd of anti-apartheid demonstrators, killing 67 people and injuring a further 180 (Frankel 2001; Harris 1988).

Machel in March 1984. The Accord was an agreement on “non-aggression and good neighbourliness” whereby both countries would refrain from interfering in each other’s internal affairs (Hanlon 1990:257). In other words, South Africa agreed to cease its support of Renamo and its war of destabilisation, and Mozambique to end all support to the ANC other than political, diplomatic and humanitarian aid. The destabilisation war, combined with poor economic policies, had financially crippled Mozambique and the prospect of increased labour exportation, with its potential to generate revenue, was an important factor in bringing its government to the negotiating table (de Vletter 1987; Hanlon 1990).³¹ While, for the most part, the Mozambican government upheld its part of the agreement, South Africa flagrantly disregarded the accord (Hanlon 1996:16). (That the accord was ultimately limited in its extent was shown by the fact that a new agreement based on labour exportation and use of the Maputo Port was later considered necessary. It was discussed but was never signed by either country).

The issue of Mozambican migrant labour was again used as a political instrument in October 1986. A landmine blast injured six South African soldiers travelling in a military vehicle close to the Mozambican border. The South African government attributed the attack to the banned ANC, who were allegedly operating out of Mozambique. In retaliation for this incident, the South African foreign minister Pik Botha announced that all of the 60,000 Mozambican workers employed in the mining industry would be repatriated on the termination of their contracts (de Vletter 1987; Jones 1986; Laurence 1986). The mining industry, which had not been consulted on this decision, immediately protested against it; the sudden loss of this number of workers would have severe economic ramifications. An agreement was finally reached between the Department of Manpower and the Chamber of Mines whereby the government climbed down and effectively repealed the repatriation order.

This incident illustrates the complex symbiotic relationship that existed between the mining industry and the apartheid state. The decision to repatriate the Mozambican miners was politically motivated, yet the response by the mining companies shows that

³¹ It is interesting to note that before Frelimo came to power at independence many of the more radical socialist elements in the party advocated stopping migrant labour to South Africa on the grounds that it was feeding an oppressive capitalist system. However, on gaining control the government found that it

there were limits to the extent of state control over this sector of the economy. The mining companies understood the economic repercussions of this action and convinced the state to reverse its decision.

While the South African state did not repatriate all the Mozambicans employed in the mines, the changing political relations between the two countries and the economic changes that had affected the mining industry have drastically reduced the number of Mozambicans employed in the industry. If we return to Figure 1, the number of miners employed in 1999 had slipped back down to pre-Nkomati Accord levels and remained much lower than levels of the mid-1970s. As the number of jobs available in South Africa dropped, the Mozambican population grew by over 25% and therefore the demand for the few jobs available increased dramatically. In 1975 approximately 17% of all males between the ages of 15 and 60 years old and resident in Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane provinces (the principal areas of labour recruitment)³² were working in the South African mining industry. By 1997 this had fallen to only 8%.³³

These cutbacks have not only reduced the number of job opportunities for young men in Mozambique, but have also affected the way in which labour is recruited from the region. In a 1998 study, Fion de Vletter explores how the position of the Mozambican mining workforce has changed following the end of apartheid in South Africa. He interviewed over 455 miners and their families in the recruitment depots and throughout the southern provinces of Mozambique. Table 2 is taken from de Vletter's study and shows the district of origin of those of his interviewees who came from Gaza Province.

could not afford to lose the substantial revenues generated by the miners and the migrant labour system continued (Murray 1981:29).

³² Interview with Nathaniel Nhanlale, Office Co-ordinator TEBA Xai Xai (November 2002)

³³ Calculated from the 1980 national census (Direcção Nacional de Estatística 1985), 1997 national census (Instituto Nacional de Estatística 1997), Chamber of Mines (personal communication) and TEBA Maputo (personal communication).

Table 2: District of Origin of Miners, Aug/Sept 1996

District of Gaza	Number	Percentage
Xai Xai	49	26.7
Chokwe	39	21.3
Chibuto	36	19.7
Manjacaze	28	15.3
Bilene/Macia	16	8.7
Other	15	8.2

Source: From de Vletter (1998:16)

The districts that supply the majority of the miners, Xai Xai, Chowke and Chibuto, are the most urbanised in the province. There are so few miners originating from the more rural districts of Massingir, Chicualacuala, Mabalane, Massengena and Chigubo, that these areas have been simply amalgamated into the category of 'Other'. While further empirical evidence is required, it does appear that there has been a shift in migrant labour recruitment from predominantly rural areas to the more urban or peri-urban areas of Mozambique. As the demand for labour has diminished, the mining companies have cut back their recruitment operations across southern Africa.³⁴ In Mozambique Wenela downscaled its operations by closing all its rural recruitment centres. This had a particularly large impact on the communities in Massingir given the remoteness of this district. While it had been relatively easy for men from Massingir to drop in at the Wenela office in the Olifantes valley, its closure forced them to travel all the way to the Wenela office in Xai Xai: a journey that is both expensive and time-consuming. Even having made this trip, there is no guarantee that a job will be waiting at the other end. Conversely, it is relatively easy for those young men living close to the Xai Xai office to pass every so often and enquire after work. It is therefore more likely that the jobs available will go to those people living in, or closer to, the town containing the recruitment office. Thus recruitment favours the urban Mozambicans far more than

³⁴ Between 1975 and 1993 TEBA/Wenela reduced the number of its stations in southern Africa by almost half (Head 1995:130-131). For further details of the changing nature of TEBA/Wenela's operations see Rowett (1995).



Photo 18: The former Wenela recruitment office in the Olifantes Valley, Massingir



Photo 19: The TEBA/Wenela recruitment centre in Xai Xai

those living in the remote areas such as the villages of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin. While the mining companies have reduced their dependence on Mozambican labour over the last three decades, by no means have they entirely done away with the Mozambican miner. The 1986 incident when the mining companies argued against the repatriation of the entire Mozambican workforce demonstrates its continued importance to the industry. In 2002 there were still over 50,000 Mozambicans employed in the gold mines (TEBA personal communication). This is a drastic reduction from the levels of the 1970s, but is still, nonetheless, a significant figure. Equally — despite Wenela's emphasis on urban recruitment — there are still men like Solomão Valoi working in the mines who come from the rural districts of Southern Mozambique. While these men remain part of the mining workforce, their lives differ considerably from those of the older miners who were discussed in the previous chapter.

Career migrants and the labour aristocracy

Solomão and the other miners had all been recruited by Wenela and had gone to work in the mines through the same legal route as thousands before them. However, they had not followed the pattern described by those former miners in the previous chapter, whereby a migrant uses his wages to build up enough capital to get married, construct an independent household and retire to live off agricultural and livestock production. Solomão and the other present-day mine-workers in Mavodze were all in their late forties and had been working in the mines for more than 20 years. During this period they had gained numerous qualifications and held positions that carried considerable responsibility: they were not unskilled manual labourers who simply dug shafts but were skilled and highly experienced team leaders (for details of the role of team leader see Moodie 1980). The 1986 repatriation order was based upon the South African government's assumption that the foreign African workforce in the mining industry was unskilled and easily replaceable; but in the case of Mozambican miners like Solomão, it was not. These were skilled men with many years of experience carrying out specialised jobs. Solomão was a team leader who was trained in mine rescue techniques. The labour retrenchment of the 1970s changed the foreign workers from unskilled men who could seek employment as and when they required cash into highly-trained career-orientated

employees, or “rural commuters” (Moodie with Ndatshe 1994:42), who returned home only for leave (de Vletter 1987:201).

This shift came about through the introduction of re-engagement certificates or, as the miners term them, ‘bonus cards’. Solomão Valoi was so anxious to arrive at the mine in time for his next contract that he was planning to leave several days in advance, just in case he was unexpectedly delayed *en route*. His anxiety was due to the fact that he, like all miners going on leave, had been issued with a ‘bonus card’ stating that he had to return for a new contract within a specific period or risk being replaced. If replaced, a Mozambican miner stands little chance of getting another contract.

While the ‘bonus card’ system ensured that experienced miners would serve back-to-back contracts, the labour retrenchments made it very difficult for young men with no experience, or novices, to find new mining jobs. In the 1980s hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of young men camped outside the Wenela depot in Maputo waiting for a chance to go the mines (Head 1995:130). This informal settlement disappeared during the 1990s, but it remained the case that thousands of young men would arrive at the centre if word had spread that Wenela was recruiting novices. Today, the supply of labour from Mozambique exceeds the mining companies’ demand to such an extent that Wenela has completely ceased its recruitment of Mozambican novices.³⁵

Despite the mining companies’ cut-backs and Wenela closing its gates to novices, some young Mozambicans have been able to find employment in the gold-mining industry. One such miner who lived in Mavodze was Six Valoi.³⁶ I had met Six in a bar in Massingir, a week earlier, and had given him a lift back to Mavodze. He worked in an African Rainbow Minerals gold mine in South Africa’s North West Province and was back in Mozambique for a six-week break before his next contract started. Six had purchased various building materials in South Africa and was spending much of his time carrying out neglected odd jobs in and around his homestead. I strolled over to Six’s house to collect some spanners that I had lent him and found him sitting in the

³⁵ Interview with Nathaniel Nhanlale, Office Co-ordinator TEBA Xai Xai.

³⁶ ‘Six’ was his official name, as it appeared on his identity card. Six’s father had worked in the mines and, like many former miners, had named his children after English words and phases he had acquired whilst in South Africa.

shade tinkering with an old plough, listening to his enormous stereo system that he ran off an old car battery. The door that he had been using my tools to fit still flaunted its 250 Rand — relatively expensive in the local setting — price tag, and Six was obviously pleased with his morning's work. He invited me to sit down and we began to chat.

Six was 29 years old and had been working in an African Rainbow Minerals' mine for the last three years. He commented that he had been very lucky to get the job in the gold mines and explained that it was getting increasingly difficult for Mozambicans to get mining contracts in South Africa. Six had been fortunate that his uncle was a 'boss boy' (team leader) in a Rainbow Minerals' mine and had put forward Six's name when he had heard in 1999 that the mine was recruiting new miners. At that time, Six had been working illegally in South Africa since 1989 and was able to organise official documentation and identity papers through the mining company. These papers, much treasured, were now securely stored in the house: he went inside for a moment and returned with his laminated identity card and 'bonus' papers that guaranteed him his next contract. He proudly showed me the documentation and said that he would go back to South Africa early because he did not want to lose this job. "Losing this job would be a disaster" he said. "It'd be impossible to find anything else like it."

Starting at the beginning, he recounted the story of how he came to be working illegally — and later legally — in South Africa. In 1989 he and four friends fled Mavodze village as the incidence of Renamo attacks on villages in Massingir district was increasing. As well as fleeing the violence, they also hoped to find work in South Africa. The group of five had followed the border northwards and had crossed into the Kruger National Park. They travelled at night and hid from the police and park patrols during the day. Although they were all afraid of the wild animals, especially the lions for which the National Park is famous, they managed (in a manner rehearsed by countless illegal migrants both before and since) to cross the Park without mishap in two days. They headed towards Phalaborwa, where one member of the group had family living nearby.

Six had anticipated following in his father's footsteps by working in the gold mines. He quickly learned from the other Mozambican refugees, however, that this was

impossible. Instead, Six walked from farm to farm asking for work and eventually was offered a job picking oranges on an estate near Tzaneen. The job proved to be short-lived and he was soon forced to seek another. For ten years he had worked as a labourer on farms and construction sites. He would get jobs either by approaching the farm or building site directly or by joining groups of other unemployed men who waited at crossroads for potential employers to drive past and offer a day's work. As a migrant with no legal status, Six said the pay was very low and they had no legal rights: "Some of the *boers* [the generic term used by Mozambicans for white South Africans, literally 'farmers'] would make us work for four days and then on the fifth, when they were supposed to pay us, they would say we had to go or they would call the police." In 1996 Six had, indeed, been deported in this way, but he later returned and found employment as a miner:

The police came to the building site and asked to see our papers. We did not have any papers, so they arrested us and put us in their *bakkie* [van]. We were taken to a police station and they arranged for a man to drive us through the Pafuri border post and then on to Chokwe. I didn't want to go to Chokwe and so I paid the driver some money and he dropped me off just after the border post. I was back in Mozambique and decided to go home, I had not seen my father for a long time. I had saved some money and used it to get married. However, I could not stay here in Mavodze, there is no work. I went back to *Joni* [South Africa] and carried on working on farms. I sent some money to my wife when I had some, but it was not enough. One day I received a message from my uncle to say that he had found me a job for the mining company. I went to their office and they gave me the job. I was very lucky. It was only because of my uncle that I was able to arrange the work on the mine. I am now legally allowed to be in South Africa and get paid well. You see why I don't want to lose this job at the mine. I am lucky to have it.

Six was indeed fortunate to have found work in the gold mines; of all the mineworkers in Mavodze, he was the only one less than 40 years old. In spite of this age difference, Six's attitude was similar to that of Solomão Valoi and the other older miners in that he considered mining to be his career. Six wanted to return to the mine before the date specified on his 'bonus card' to be eligible for another contract. He had no wish, even in the long term, to stop mining and settle in the village and begin agricultural production,

as the previous generations of men from Mavodze had done in the past. Six was a miner and had no intention of giving up this position.

Although Six Valoi had joined the ranks of the other career miners in the village, the way in which he obtained his first job differs considerably from the experience of the other mineworkers. The older miners, such as Solomão, had all been recruited through the Wenela offices within Mozambique and had migrated to South Africa equipped with the appropriate documents to pre-arranged jobs at specific sites. Six, on the other hand, had first crossed into South Africa illegally, walking through the Kruger National Park with a number of companions. He had worked in temporary jobs on farms or construction sites and due to his lack of documentation had been deported. Six's fortunes had changed when his uncle, an established miner, had recommended his nephew to the mining company as an appropriate candidate to begin work as a novice. With a limited number of new positions available, many of the mining companies have introduced this system of recruitment-through-referral when wishing to employ new workers.³⁷ By taking on the sons or close relatives of long-serving miners, the companies reward existing staff for their length of service and also ensure the loyalty of their new employees. Six Valoi was recruited as a part of one such 'special order', as the mining companies refer to this partisan recruitment policy.

This changing recruitment policy has had profound effects in the villages of Massingir. The previous chapter demonstrated that remittances from migrant mine labour have long been acknowledged as a source of wealth for rural households. In the late 1970s Andrew Spiegel argued that rural differentiation in Lesotho was cyclical and dependent to a large extent on the household developmental cycle (1980). Households comprising young couples were largely landless but received an income from the absent husband. In time, the household acquired land and directed some of the wages into hiring labour to work in the fields. The head of household, soon retiring, could then depend on the income of his adult sons until they left to establish their own households. The following phase is less secure as the household received no external income and capacity for agricultural production might be depleted due to lack of implements, draught power and

³⁷ Interview with Nathaniel Nhanlale, Office Co-ordinator TEBA Xai Xai

labour. Whatever differentiation occurred would later be reversed when the new generation of mine workers left home to fund its own new households.

If this was the case when Spiegel was conducting fieldwork in Lesotho, the situation today differs markedly. Following the cutbacks in the foreign workforce in the mines, far fewer men get the opportunity to work underground and those who do now operate along the lines of career miners rather temporary migrants. More recently, David Coplan has argued that the men in rural communities in Lesotho who work in the mines are showing signs of developing into a “labour aristocracy” (1994:252). A similar phenomenon can be seen in the villages of Massingir. If we return to the story of Solomão Valoi, we can see that he is using the wages he earned from his secure mining job to construct a *third* cement house for his *third* wife. The cost of building one cement house is well beyond the reach of most households in Mavodze and having three wives is a sure sign of affluence. It is also noticeable that Solomão is not constructing the house himself; rather, he is able to hire others to do this for him. Although the career miners, such as Solomão Valoi, are becoming increasingly more affluent, relative to those without work in the South African mines, this group does not yet top the village economic hierarchy: the households whose large herds of cattle survived the war remain the economic elite.³⁸

While the mining families are not yet the economic elites of the villages of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin, I suggest that this is likely to happen. Coplan’s use of the term ‘aristocracy’ is particularly apposite, for Wenela’s nepotistic method of recruiting novices ensures a miner’s son will ‘inherit’ his father’s job. If we look at the case of Six Valoi, he was able to gain access to a relatively well-paid career because his uncle was a miner. Those families with existing access to this important resource are unlikely to relinquish it. When an older miner is preparing to retire, one of his younger male relatives can be recommended as a novice and the ‘mining dynasty’ is reproduced. Although there is no evidence to support this yet, as this recruitment policy has only been recently adopted, I suggest that the economic power wielded by those families that have men working in the mines will continue to increase.

³⁸ Economic wealth does not necessarily translate to political power. Local political life is explored further in Chapter 4 & 6.

Hazardous journeys: from miners to migrants

This reduction of mining recruitment is not unique to Mozambique as the overall downturn in the mining sector has seen changes throughout the southern African region and most authors foresee these resulting in calamity for those living in this area. Ferguson (1999) observes retrenchment on the Zambian copperbelt and notes that workers have left the urban areas and have returned to the countryside, thus shattering the expectations of an 'African modernity'. Dunbar Moodie argued that the entire region will be affected by the downturn in the gold industry: "whole areas of the Southern African countryside have been able to survive because they are reservoirs of potential labourers for the mines—and [they] now face disaster because of changing recruitment patterns or mine labour retrenchment" (Moodie with Ndatshe 1994:11). Harri Englund states that the "end of employment in the South African mines caused an undeniable economic decline" in Mozambique-Malawi borderlands (2002:115). Judith Head predicts that the reduction in migrant labour will be a "catastrophe" for Southern Mozambique (1995:136) and it takes little deciphering to ascertain the gist of Gay Seidman's argument in her paper entitled *Shafted: The social impact of down-scaling in the OFS goldfields* (1995). The consensus among nearly all commentators is that the retrenchment would have disastrous consequences for the communities supplying the labour.³⁹

In the previous chapter I argued that the migration of large numbers of Mozambican men to work in the South African gold mines during the Portuguese colonial period was

³⁹ One of the few who differ from this opinion is de Vletter (1998). He argues that, despite cutbacks that have taken place across the board in the mining industry, levels of recruitment in Mozambique have been gradually edging upwards and may soon surpass those of Lesotho (at present the largest supplier of foreign labour to the mines, although its labour force has also been cut). It is true that the mining companies prefer to recruit Mozambican workers, as they are perceived as more industrious, less militant and accepting of working conditions more onerous than those that other miners will tolerate. However, de Vletter's optimism, in part, stems from his methodological approach. His research team interviewed 160 miners' wives in the provinces of Inhambane, Gaza and Maputo and 455 miners at the TEBA/Wenela depots at Ressano Garcia and Johannesburg and the Algos depots (another agency that recruits for the mines). It is not surprising that informants who are exclusively miners, or are married to miners, have a rosy outlook on the migrant labour situation, since they are still in employment and earn a relatively good income from a reasonably secure job. Different conclusions might have been reached had the methodology incorporated the details of former miners, young men currently searching for employment in the gold mines, or those living far from the TEBA/Wenela posts.

of economic importance and had been incorporated as a social and cultural phenomenon into the lives of the residents of Massingir. Although the gates of the mines now appear to be permanently closed to most rural Mozambicans, there remains a pressure — both economic and socio-cultural — for young men to migrate as miners. However, as there are so few job opportunities available, for most of them this is impossible. Instead, rather than going to Wenela and obtaining work through the legal avenues, the young men of today are forced to cross into South Africa as illegal migrants and find whatever work they can.

If we return to the story of Six Valoi, what made his story exceptional was his luck in being recruited by the mining company having been referred by his uncle. What makes it more typical was the way in which Six's experiences began. Six had left Mavodze with a group of friends and they had illegally crossed the South African border by walking through the Kruger National Park at night, avoiding the police and attacks from wild animals. Throughout the period that I lived in Massingir, small groups of young men, similar to that described by Six Valoi, were regularly crossing through the park and illegally entering South Africa.

The groups usually consisted of between four and seven young men, all dressed in relatively smart-looking clothes with small rucksacks on their backs and carrying five litre bottles of water. In the heat of the afternoon, whilst I was sitting in the shade writing up field notes, they would often approach my house and request some water. In an average week I would see three or four of these bands of young men walking northwards to cross the Kruger Park, if I was driving I would often stop and offer them a lift as far as the fence. The youths whom I spoke to were not always local residents but had often travelled from as far away as Xai Xai or Manjacaza districts or even Inhambane Province, former recruiting areas of the mining industry.

It is impossible to calculate exactly how many Mozambicans enter and work in South Africa, but in Mavodze the vast majority of households had at least one family member who had crossed the border and was working illegally. The district director of immigration, Sr. Ibrahim Faki, explained that the number of migrants varied throughout

the year.⁴⁰ The busiest months were from March to July when people cross the border to find work harvesting fruit in the numerous farms along the western boundary of the Kruger National Park. Sr. Faki estimated that more than 50 people per week cross the border during this period and about half this number cross during the other months of the year.⁴¹ He confirmed that these migrants came not only from Massingir but also from throughout the provinces of Gaza, Maputo and Inhambane. In 1995-6 the South African Department of Home Affairs repatriated 289,114 illegal Mozambican immigrants (Africa Confidential July 1997).⁴² Although by no means all of these would have crossed the border in Massingir, this statistic does provide some sense of the enormous numbers of people involved.⁴³

A number of informants told me that this clandestine migration across the border was not a new phenomenon. Even during the peak periods of mine recruitment, illegal border crossing took place. One informant told me that, if one needed some money to pay taxes or to buy something but did not want to work the length of a whole contract in the mines, one could take the two-day walk to cross the border and find temporary work on a farm or on one of the smaller mines on the edge of what is now Kruger Park. Although some people preferred to cross this way, even at that time, far fewer did so than today. The universal consensus, among everyone from field informants and government officials to the popular press and academics (see for example Davis & Head 1995) is that the rate of illegal migration from Mozambique to South Africa has increased dramatically.

There were two ways that migrants could cross the border into South Africa. The first was to walk through the Kruger Park, as Six and his friends had done. The alternative route was to travel south and cross the border between the Park and Swaziland. In the 1980s the South African government erected 63km of Norex electrical fence in an attempt to close this border area to ANC operatives who, the government claimed, were based in Mozambique. The fence was designed to carry a lethal current of 1,000 amps

⁴⁰ Interview 21st October 2002.

⁴¹ As director of immigration Sr. Faki is responsible for preventing this illegal migration and therefore his statistics can be seen as a very conservative estimate of the numbers crossing the border in this area.

⁴² Estimates of the number of illegal migrants that are in South Africa must also be treated with caution as figures are often inflated to justify military and policing budgets (Human Rights Watch 1998).

and up to 3,300 volts (Human Rights Watch 1998). Attempting to cross this fence often proved fatal: the most reliable estimate of the number of Mozambicans killed while attempting to cross is in the region of 200 a year (de la Hunt 1998:125).⁴⁴ Despite the unprecedented danger associated with this border fence, several of my informants claimed to have crossed it. They described a number of elaborate, and often harebrained, schemes to avoid electrocution, including tunnelling under the fence; chopping a tree down so that the tree fell onto the fence, breaking down the barrier and short-circuiting the electric system; and even simply propping up the live wires with a very, very dry stick and crawling underneath.

Melvin Weigel argues that this border policy has no other precedent. While the US-Mexico border has electric sensors, it has no capacity to kill or injure. There are few other areas in the world where illegal migrants regularly die when crossing international borders. Most deaths that do occur are as a result of natural boundaries such as African migrants drowning in the Straits of Gibraltar *en route* to the EU or Haitians and Cubans drowning on their way to Florida (Weigel 1998:100-1). With the gradual liberalisation of the apartheid regime and the moves towards multi-party democracy, the voltage and current flowing through the border fence were reduced to a non-lethal level in 1990.⁴⁵

While many Mozambicans died attempting to traverse the electrified border, the migrants from Massingir rarely used this route. Instead they opted to cross into South Africa through the Kruger National Park. Like crossing the fence, this too could be a dangerous journey. Six Valoi mentions that he and his travelling companions were afraid of the wild animals living within the Kruger National Park. The Kruger Park was designated a South African National Park in 1926 and extends over 19,485 km² along the South African-Mozambican border. Six Valoi's concerns about the fauna living within the park are quite justified: a recent report estimates that Kruger contains over 7500 elephants, 3000 white rhinos, over 2000 lions, and 1000 leopards, not to mention

⁴³ Many of those repatriated may have been refugees who had fled the violence in Mozambique during the 1980s.

⁴⁴ Minnaar & Hough (1996) suggest a lower figure of 96 people who were killed by this fence between 1986-9. Regardless of the exact body count, it is clear that when the fence was set to 'lethal', it was indeed fatal to many of those attempting to cross it.

⁴⁵ Alarmingly, high-ranking officials in the ANC government including Joe Modise (Defence Minister 1994-1999) and the Home Affairs Minister, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, have called for the fence to be switched back to 'lethal mode' to restrict the flow of illegal immigrants (Africa Confidential, July 1997).

other dangerous animals such as crocodiles and hippos ('t Sas-Rolfes 1996). It is the risk of a lion attack that instils the most fear into the young migrants whom I spoke to in Massingir. This risk is quite real. During my 17 months of fieldwork there were three fatal lion attacks on people attempting to cross into South Africa. The director of immigration said,

We do not know how many people die because it depends whether the South African wardens find a body or not. The lions do not eat the whole body, they leave the head,⁴⁶ but often other animals will take the bodies. We estimate about 7 people are killed every month. It is much worse during the dry season because the people do not light fires and the lions are more likely to attack.

I spoke to several South African game wardens working in the Kruger Park who said that the patrols often find the remains of victims of lion attacks who can be identified as being Mozambican by remnants of identity documents or from Mozambican currency being found in the vicinity of the body. One warden claimed that Mozambican coins had been found in the stomach of a lion that had been killed. The South African wardens reported that some of the lion populations are changing their territories to hunt along the principal routes being taken by the Mozambican migrants. Anecdotes from conservationists working in the Limpopo National Park also appear to suggest that lions in certain areas of Kruger Park are changing their behaviour in relation to the increased traffic of people walking across the border.

The young men of Mavodze respond to these hazards with a sense of bravado. Much like the older miners discussed in the previous chapter, the young men tell often-exaggerated anecdotes about the dangers associated with their migration. The stories recounted by the young men who have returned from South Africa are not, like those of their fathers and older counterparts, associated with the risks of working underground. Rather, they recount the perils of travelling on foot through the Kruger Park. I heard such stories when the young men met to play cards or draughts close to the *barraka* in the village. In an attempt to outdo his friends, each would embellish the story, often resulting in absurd exaggeration. One said,

⁴⁶ The name of one of the rivers in the Shingwedzi basin is *Madose*, meaning beard. It was so named because a lion attacked a man in that valley and all that was found of him was his bearded jawbone.

One time I was walking across to *Joni* with about 5 other people. We were sleeping and I woke up to see a lion coming through the bush. I woke up everyone else and we started throwing rocks and making noise. An elephant was nearby and heard all the noise and got angry. The elephant started screaming and pushing over trees. The noise of the elephant scared the lion away.

Another boasted,

One time Jose and I were walking through the park. We did not want the *boers* to catch us so we slept without lighting a fire. Jose was asleep and felt something brush against his foot. Thinking it was nothing he rolled over. It brushed him again and as he was still half asleep, he thought it was nothing. On the third time he woke up and saw a lion standing over him. He could not even throw a stone because he was so scared. I was braver and started shouting and throwing rocks and sticks. The lion then ran off.

The adventures recounted by the young men reflected the dangers and tension associated with crossing the game park. The bravado and boastful nature with which such anecdotes were told indicate the extent to which the youths had confronted these dangers and, through exchanging stories, they were demonstrating to each other that they had proven themselves as men. They had grown up listening to their fathers recount tales of mining accidents, the hardships of working underground and how the migrants were men enough to overcome these problems. With no hope of finding work in the mining industry, the young men of Massingir could not engage in such story-telling and instead adapted the same meta-narratives to elaborate upon the perils involved in their own experiences of migration.

These stories indicate a noticeable shift in emphasis from those told by the former miners, discussed in the previous chapter. Both sets of stories concentrate on the dangers that the men face and demonstrate the narrator's bravery in overcoming these difficulties. While the stories recounted by the miners recall incidents that occurred underground, the young men of today are unable to find jobs in the mines and therefore cannot share the same stories. Instead, they tell of the dangers involved in their migration; the actual journey across the border. Unlike the miners, the young men of today distinguish between the migration and the labour. For the miners these two

concepts were bound together; one could not work in the mines without migrating. The migration and the mining were inseparable. The miners' rite of passage was working in the mines; the journey was an insignificant part of this. For the young men of today the migration has become a challenge in itself, one that is distinct from the problems associated with finding work.

The former miners were dismissive of these tales of the younger generation and would mock the stories of bravery in the Kruger Park. My particular favourite was a story that I heard in one old miner's compound during the *caju* season:

Four young men were crossing the Kruger Park on their way to find work in South Africa. They had walked a long way and stopped to get some sleep. In the middle of the night, one of the young men woke up and heard a noise in the bushes. There was obviously a large animal prowling around close to their camp. He jumped up and shouted, "There's a lion! There's a lion!" He began to hurl rocks and sticks at the clump of bushes from where the noise originated. Two of his companions, now awake, joined in, desperately throwing anything they could get their hands on in a frantic attempt to scare the lion away. During a lull in their bombardment and much to their surprise, the lion stopped moving around and began to shout at them, "Stop! Stop you idiots! I'm not a lion! It's me! It's me, your mate! I only got up to have a piss!"

The older men denigrated the feats of young men by retelling their tales of adventure as jokes. The former miners would tell me that the hazards faced by the younger generation were trivial. "They know nothing of danger," one old man told me. "These kids are just walking through the bush. They are scared of animals. Animals are nothing." The experiences of their sons were dismissed as nothing more than a walk in the park. In mocking the young, the older men were not only bolstering their own achievements and bravery, but also sustaining the pressure on the young migrants to continue to try and find work in the mines. By ridiculing the achievements of the younger migrants, the older generation is arguing that the only way to become a 'proper man' in this society is to be a miner.

Finding work in South Africa: bad jobs with low wages

Having completed the hazardous clandestine journey into South Africa, a young migrant must look for work. Before finding a job in the mines, Six Valoi had worked illegally as a labourer on farms and construction sites. Many of the young men in Mavodze recounted similar experiences. Almão had first travelled to South Africa in 1990. He had earlier travelled to Xai Xai and applied for a mining job at the Wenela office, but had returned to the village empty-handed as the company was not recruiting novices at that time. Almão explained that he did not have a passport so had to cross into South Africa through the Kruger Park. He had stayed in South Africa for almost three years and had lived in Rustenburg, Johannesburg and Malelane. He had taken whatever jobs he was offered, working in Johannesburg as a labourer on a number of construction sites, picking fruit on several large farms in Malelane, and making bricks in a factory in Rustenburg.

The experiences of Six and Almão are typical of those of other illegal migrants in Mavodze. Of the households that I had surveyed in the village, 66 had family members working illegally in South Africa. Only 29 of these were aware of what type of employment the relative had found: 12 worked in agriculture; 11 in construction, 4 were hawking cigarettes, cassettes, clothes or other items on the streets; and 2 were working as illegal security guards. These positions were nearly always at the lowest end of the job hierarchy and illegal Mozambicans would usually be only employed on an informal and temporary basis; with virtually no chance of job security or stability; with considerable risk of redundancy; and with the attendant problem of having to move from place to place in order to find new employment.

The labourers' undocumented status leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Human Rights Watch states that undocumented migrants working as farm labourers are among the lowest-paid workers in South Africa, earning on average as little as US\$1-2 per day (1998:36). My evidence supports this, although returning migrants in Mavodze stated that they had been paid slightly more than the salaries stated in the Human Rights Watch report. Miguel Valoi had returned from South Africa in 2002. Miguel's last job had been picking oranges from orchards on a farm in Mpumalanga Province. He had

been standing at a crossroads with a group of other unemployed migrants and one of the foremen from a farm had picked up a group of them and offered them some work. The workers were paid 32 Rand (US\$ 3.20) per 100 bags of oranges they filled. Miguel had managed to fill a hundred on his first day and the foreman said that if he continued to work at that pace he could have the job until the harvest was completed. Miguel had moved into a bunkhouse on the farm and was provided with food in the evenings. The job had lasted just over two weeks. Miguel reflected that the job had been one of the better ones he had been given during his two and a half years in South Africa. It was good pay and he was given board and lodging. The worst jobs, he told me, included selling goods on the street. He had spent several months selling cigarettes and confectionery on a small stall in Johannesburg. There were so many other people trading the same items that it was hard to make anything at all. "If the other vendors found out I was a Mozambican they would beat me and steal my goods. The South Africans didn't like us taking their work."

The Mozambican migrant workers were subject to physical abuse not only from their South African competitors, but also from the police. If apprehended by the authorities illegal migrants would be arrested and detained until they could be repatriated to their country of origin. For Six Valoi, detention had been uneventful and he had been taken back to Mozambique without any incident. However, not all the young men from Mavodze had been so fortunate. In the early 1990s the South African police had arrested one young man, whom I shall call Arturo to respect his wish for anonymity, in the Northern Province (renamed Limpopo Province in 2002). He protested and claimed that he was a South African and had lost his identity card.⁴⁷ The police did not believe him. The young man insisted that he was telling the truth. The police handcuffed his hands behind his back and tied his feet together with a length of rope. The rope was thrown over a hook in the ceiling and the young man was lifted up by his feet. A large drum of water was placed under him and the police lowered him into the drum. He was repeatedly dropped into the water until he eventually admitted that he was from Mozambique. The police then beat him with the hosepipe that had been used to fill the water drum and he was deported several days later.

⁴⁷ This was a plausible excuse because the Shangaan live on either side of the border and use a very similar dialect.

The illegal status and the threat of torture and deportation leave Mozambican migrants in South Africa highly vulnerable to exploitation from more unscrupulous employers. Six Valoi said that some of his South African employers had threatened to have him deported unless he left the worksite without his wages. This practice appeared to be common.⁴⁸ Luis Zitha told me about a time when he had been working on a farm and the foreman had said that the workers were to be paid every fortnight. They had worked for 12 days and then the foreman had called the police. Luis had been put in the back of a van and driven off to a police station before being sent back to Mozambique via Komatipoort. Luis said that losing the 12 days of wages was bearable, commenting, “We weren’t being paid much anyway”. The problem was that he had been in South Africa for two years, during which time he had saved some money and bought many goods to bring home. He had left these at a friend’s house. “When they took me back to Mozambique, I had to cross back into South Africa to go and collect these things. There were so many of them that I couldn’t carry them all back through the Kruger Park. Can you see me running away from a lion carrying this table and those chairs?” He indicated the furniture in his compound and laughed. “No, I had to pay someone to drive all these things through the border and I walked back with the lions.”

Clandestine crossings, consumption and crime

Luis’ story tells us something about a further aspect of the illegal migration experience. In chapter 2 we saw that the purchase of commodities in South Africa was a fundamental part of labour migration. The miners would use their wages to purchase goods in the mining compounds and would pick these items up at the Kawena distribution warehouse on their return to Mozambique. Luis’s account of his deportation and subsequent return to South Africa to collect the goods that he had purchased demonstrates that, despite the shift away from legal organised migration, the consumption of South African commodities remains important to these new, illegal migrants. The undocumented migrants are working and travelling outside the framework of the law and therefore cannot use the same institutionalised distribution

⁴⁸ See also Human Rights Watch (1998:39)

structures utilised by the miners. Some men will literally carry their purchases back to Mozambique. I spoke to one former South African immigration officer who had caught a man attempting to carry an old car battery, four used car tyres, two sets of broken caravan steps and a plastic table capable of seating six, back to Massingir. The man was transporting this assortment of bric-a-brac, item by item, through the Kruger Park. Luis laughed at the mere suggestion that he should carry his goods home, opting instead to pay someone to drive them through the border post and deliver them to his doorstep. For the most part, and for those who had earned enough to be able to afford it, this was the preferred means of transporting items home.

A whole transport network had developed in response to the changing patterns of labour migration. Private taxis (*chapas*), usually minibuses with trailers — or, for those servicing more rural areas, pick-up trucks — would collect goods from previously arranged places in South Africa and deliver them back to the villages in Mozambique. Mavodze was serviced by two of these private entrepreneurs: James and Nikeas. James had been born in the neighbouring village of Massingir Velho, but had lived in South Africa for most of his life. He held a South African passport and drove a relatively new, South African-registered, four-wheel-drive Ford pick-up. Being in possession of all the correct paperwork, he mostly used the principal official border crossing point between Mozambique and South Africa at Ressano Garcia. He said that he did the trip between three and four times a month,

I drive around the farms, villages and towns in South Africa where I know people from Mozambique are working. I speak to people and tell them that I will be leaving on such-and-such a day, from such-and-such a place. The word spreads and on that day there will be a group of people and a pile of things that I carry across the border. I leave the goods in my aunt's house and people inform their relatives that they must come and collect the items that I have delivered. Sometimes I bring people with me. For a person with a passport it costs 200,000 MZM (US \$8.70) and for those who don't have the correct papers, 1,500,000 MZM (US \$65). The price goes up because I have to give some money to the border guards or take a 'bush road' that bypasses the border post.

Nikeas lived in Mavodze and ran a far less professional operation. Although Nikeas had a Mozambican passport, he lacked a driving licence and his car, to the best of my



Photo 20: A toilet constructed from South African road signs and other bric-a-brac brought back by a returning migrant

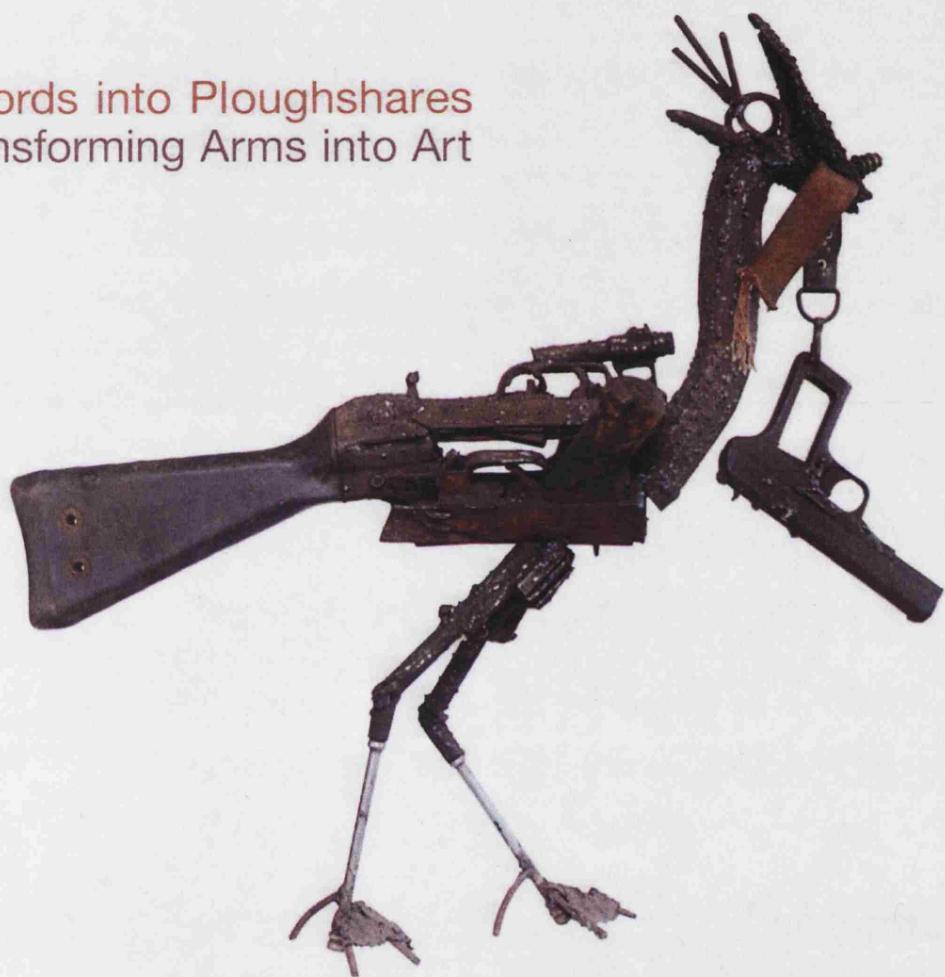
knowledge, was registered in neither South Africa nor Mozambique. It lacked a starter motor and—for most of my time in the village—a passenger door, not to mention road tax, registration documents or insurance. Nikeas ran his operations through the more ‘relaxed’ border post at Pafuri. Pafuri is about 280 km north of Mavodze at the juncture of the South African, Mozambican and Zimbabwean borders: a drive which takes between nine and 14 hours depending on the state of the roads. The border post is a rundown former Portuguese trading post inhabited by a couple of dusty border guards and a customs official. The officials are notoriously lax in checking documentation and Nikeas claimed that it cost as little as 50 Rand (US\$5) to persuade the guards to let his vehicle, loaded with un-documented people and goods, across the border. However, despite their apparent differences, Nikeas and James offered much the same type of service; both making a living by transporting goods and people across the border.⁴⁹

The clandestine labour migration results in the illicit movement of goods not only from South Africa into Mozambique, but also from Mozambique into South Africa. Throughout my time in Massingir, people frequently referred to the weapons that had been distributed by the government during the civil war, acknowledging that many of these armaments had not been decommissioned despite the signing of the peace treaty. During one such discussion I passed around a catalogue that I had been sent from a Christian Aid-sponsored art exhibition that had been showing at London’s Oxo Gallery. The exhibition featured the results of a project known as ‘Transforming Arms into Ploughshares’ that had been operating in Northern Mozambique during the mid-1990s. The project encouraged people to surrender their weapons in return for construction materials or tools such as sewing machines and ploughs. Local artisans and artists would then transform these old weapons into pieces of public art. The exhibits shown in the catalogue are remarkable and provoked much discussion among my informants in Mavodze. However, when I explained the idea of exchanging weapons such as AK-47s or bazookas for sewing machines or ploughs, they laughed at me. ‘These people in the

⁴⁹ The changes in the mining industry have drastically reduced the amount of material being purchased through Kawena, the distribution company that operates in the mining compounds and delivers throughout Southern Africa. In response to this, the company has recently begun sending representatives around the farms and rural areas of South Africa in an effort to gain the business of the Mozambican farm workers. The company has also expanded its business in Mozambique by opening commercial outlets for non-mining customers (discussion with Alex Vagos, Manager of Kawena Xai Xai, 2/12/02).

OXO

Swords into Ploughshares
Transforming Arms into Art



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Christian Aid
We believe in life before death

Photo 21: Cover of the Christian Aid exhibition displayed at London's Oxo gallery

north are stupid," they said, pointing at my glossy brochure. "Why would they want to swap such a fine weapon for a plough? They could sell it in South Africa and buy a hundred ploughs." One man explained that many people still had their weapons from the war. In Machamba and Mapai (two villages north of Mavodze), for example, there are people who know the location of the Renamo arms and ammunition caches. If these individuals wish to sell a weapon, they will contact a friend in South Africa and strip the gun into smaller pieces. These pieces are given to the young men walking across the border. Each migrant is told that he will receive some money when his piece of the weapon is delivered to a specified location.

The South African police force seized 5,256 firearms that were being smuggled in from Mozambique between January and May 1994; this had dropped to 1,222 by the following year (SAPA 1995). Although this figure has since dropped further to only 372 arms seized between August 1999 and October 2000 (Hennop 2001), the smuggling of firearms from Mozambique into South Africa continues. Other items are also smuggled into South Africa by illegal migrants. During my fieldwork a large jam-jar of uncut diamonds was taken off one migrant by a Limpopo National Park game warden, there were persistent rumours that drugs were being trafficked across the border and I was able to speak to one group of poachers who continued to trade rhino horn and elephant tusks.

Stephen Ellis documents the South African security services' involvement in ivory-, gem-, drug- and arms-smuggling while attempting to destabilise neighbouring countries, including Mozambique (1994). He controversially argues that members of the military and white elite continue to have interests in these illicit trades. They use such contacts to "retain their capacity to destabilise South Africa at least until such a time as they are convinced the country has a stable government in which white interests are adequately protected" (1994:68). While I remain unconvinced by this final point, Ellis' discussion of the criminalization of the African state in both this article and in his subsequent work with Jean-François Bayart and Béatrice Hibou (Bayart *et al.* 1999) is of interest in this context. The involvement of state agencies, whether sanctioned or not, in illicit smuggling activities is of course cause for concern. However, the experiences of the clandestine Mozambican migrants reveal the less sensational, but nevertheless illegal,

activities that occur at an everyday level by those crossing the border and the Mozambican and South African officials who are responsible for patrolling it.

The transport of consumer goods and people across the border by the likes of Nikeas and James is dependent on the South African and Mozambican border officials turning a 'blind eye' or accepting the occasional bribe. Through accepting, and in some cases demanding, bribes the state officials are perpetuating the activities of the smugglers (see also Coplan Unpublished, on the movement across the Free State-Lesotho border). The beatings and torture administered by the police, as described by those migrants who had been deported from South Africa, fall well outside the remit of the law.⁵⁰ The practices at border crossings and police brutality are among the more apparent aspects of the criminality of state officials. However, a far subtler degree of state criminal activity is exposed in the stories of the migrant workers. Many of those clandestine migrants who had been employed on construction sites and, especially, farms reported being arrested and deported following police raids on the premises. While undocumented workers should be repatriated, those employing these illegal immigrants should also be prosecuted: the evidence suggests that this is not occurring (Human Rights Watch 1998). Far from clamping down on illegal labour practices, the state is encouraging the exploitation of these undocumented workers. By arresting and deporting workers before they receive their wages, the police are providing the — predominantly white — farm owners with a cheap, if not free, workforce.

Welcome home? The new migrants and returning to the village

The changing nature of labour migration has resulted in significant changes to the social, cultural and economic life of the Mozambican villages that have historically supplied South Africa with its foreign workforce. The clandestine migrant labourers earn considerably less than their few legal counterparts who continue to work in the mines. A farm labourer will earn between US\$1-3 per day, while I estimate that an

⁵⁰ The instances of police brutality are not limited to the South African authorities. The Mozambican game wardens operating within the LNP would frequently punish poachers and illegal migrants by beating the soles of their feet, as well as extracting the legally stipulated monetary fine (see Chapter 5).

average miner would earn about \$4 per day. The difference is compounded by the fact that a miner has a job that is guaranteed for a specified period of time, normally between 12 and 14 months. A young man who has crossed into South Africa illegally has virtually no job stability and will often have to spend the small amount he has earned from one job supporting himself until he can find another. He is also, as we have seen, vulnerable to exploitation and abuse from employers and faces the constant threat of deportation. It is, therefore, very difficult for a young Mozambican who is in South Africa illegally to save any money.

The difference is further compounded by miners' receiving full board and lodging and thus having few day-to-day living expenses. This, together with the system of deferred pay, discussed in Chapter 2, which means that the miner will be paid only 40% of his wages in South Africa and will collect the rest of his salary once he returns to Mozambique at the end of the contract, enables miners to save money. Where miners thus return home with the majority of their income, there is no such proviso for the illegal migrants. Any income that clandestine migrants are able to save is quickly converted into consumer goods to bring home and while they may return with new clothes or a radio, unlike the miners it is unlikely they will be able to return with many savings.

The fixed length of service in the mining sector makes it certain that the miner will return home on a regular basis. This is not the case for the young men who cross illegally. The miners usually return home every 12-14 months. However, in all the examples given above clandestine migrants do not return for periods of up to three and four years. The young men explained that it requires much more time for them to save enough money to make it worthwhile returning to Massingir. It would be a sign of failure for them to return empty-handed.

In earning less money, returning less frequently and having a less secure system of transporting goods home, the clandestine migrants are less able to support their families in Massingir than the miners. Employment instability makes it much harder for a family in Mozambique to contact relatives working illegally in South Africa, as the workers have to travel around so much more. Therefore, during times of crisis at home, such as the catastrophic floods of 2000 or the prolonged drought of 2001-03, the family can

have difficulty informing the men working across the border of any problems. Even if a family does succeed in contacting its breadwinner, he may not be in a position to assist financially. The older residents of Mavodze frequently complained that their sons were not sending food, money or clothing from *Joni*. The older men would grumble that, when they were working in the mines, they would send home food and money to their families; why weren't today's young people doing likewise? Very often men would complain that their sons would return from working with new clothes and fancy radios, but would bring nothing to eat nor money with which to buy food. The purchase of consumer goods, as I have argued in the previous chapter, had been an important feature of labour migration for generations and I do not think that my older generation of informants were resentful of this aspect of the younger migrants' behaviour. The cause of contention lay in the fact that today's migrants earned far less than the miners of the previous generation and they were spending such a high proportion of their wages on the consumer goods that they had very little else with which to return to the villages. In the past this extra money had been used to assist kinsmen and others in times of crisis; today's migrants were returning without such funds. The older generation assumed that the young men were frittering away their money on women and drink in South Africa and were angry that very little was returning to the villages in Mozambique.

The issue of bridewealth cattle (*lobolo*) was a bone of particular contention. I demonstrated in the previous chapter that during the heyday of migrant mine labour the young men would return to the village at the end of their first contracts and use their wages to purchase cattle with which to pay the required bridewealth to their potential father-in-laws. Having married, the young miners would return to South Africa and earn money to establish an independent homestead, complete with their own herd of cattle. These animals could be purchased in exchange for consumer goods from South Africa or, more commonly, with the deferred wages that miners would receive in cash on their return to Mozambique. As we have seen, the changes in migratory labour have resulted in lower wages paid in cash for casual labour, in contrast to the system of deferred pay. Today's migrants, therefore, return home with much less cash than their predecessors. With less money, the young men lack the purchasing power to buy the number of cattle required for the *lobolo* payment. At the same time the price of cattle has increased. During the war a great number of cattle were stolen or killed: the total cattle population

in Gaza province fell from 418,000 in 1981 to only 50,000 in 1990;⁵¹ and during the same period in Mavodze, almost every household lost most, or all, of their animals. With fewer, more expensive cattle and fewer migrant remittances made to rural households, the young men are unable to pay the standard *lobolo* of 15 heads of cattle.⁵²

Members of the older generation are anxious to rebuild their cattle herds following the losses incurred during the war. They regard bridewealth payments as a means of doing this. Even before the war, *lobolo* payments were an important means by which the older generation would sustain a cattle herd. Due to poor environmental conditions and limited animal husbandry techniques, cattle reproductive rates are low in this area and the herds are gradually depleted as households are forced to sell animals to raise money in times of crisis to pay for items such as medical costs, food or clothing. Cattle are important as a source of status (see Ferguson 1990), a means of production through traction, and as a source of cash and means of saving. People are mistrustful of banks and prefer to invest any money they have in livestock. The older men regard the *lobolo* cattle as a type of pension with which they can support themselves as they get older. As a result, the older men demand as many animals as they can in exchange for their daughters' hands in marriage. As the older men want as many animals as possible and the young men do not have the resources to provide this number, heated negotiations now take place over the *lobolo* payments. The fall in bridewealth from 15 cattle to anything between six and three animals indicates that young men are gaining the upper hand in these negotiations, but this much lower rate represents a source of considerable tension between the generation of former miners and the younger generation of illegal labour migrants.

Disagreements over bridewealth have, my informants reported, led to more young couples leaving the village and eloping. This became a common topic of conversation after the daughter of one man fled with her boyfriend to South Africa. The father had been demanding a *lobolo* payment of over 20 cattle which his prospective son-in-law

⁵¹ Information collated from documents held at the Province Livestock Services, Xai Xai.

⁵² Frelimo attempted to limit *lobolo* payments to only three animals as a part of its campaign against local traditions that the party dismissed as backwards and impeded the modernisation of the country (see Chapter 4). There was a general consensus among both my informants and the local Frelimo representatives that this had not been enforced, as cattle were transferred over a period of time and not in a single batch.

could not afford. The father, famous for his stubbornness, refused to lower his demands. The young couple had stolen some of his chickens and left the village. The father was outraged and called a public meeting, where he proposed that a group of men should track down the couple and the young man should be killed. While the others attending the meeting did not take this suggestion seriously, the old man's anger was clear to everyone. After the meeting several informants explained that people were concerned about the rising number of couples leaving the village to avoid bridewealth payments. Ten years ago, they said, such instances were rare, but in recent times eloping was becoming increasingly common.

Even for the couples who did not elope, the consequences of the shift from a mining workforce to illegal migrant workers has changed the way in which households develop. In the previous chapter we saw how migrating to the mines acted as a rite of passage for young adolescents. In this chapter I have argued that, although the mines are no longer an option for most residents, young men are turning to illegal migration and informal sources of employment. The problem is that this new form of migration does not offer the same economic rewards or the structured system that mining once did. While young men are able to migrate, they are less able to accumulate the resources necessary to leave their fathers' homesteads. Even if a young man can raise enough for the brideprice with which to marry, his lower wages and lack of job security make it difficult to establish his own herd of cattle and supply the other resources needed to form their own homestead. As a result households in Mavodze appeared to be getting larger. It is of course difficult to qualify this with empirical evidence on the basis of only 17 months of fieldwork. Clearly, individual households expand and contract over time according to the domestic cycle, and therefore one cannot classify homesteads into completely separate categories at any one point in time. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence from my informants did suggest a change might be occurring due to the new patterns of migratory labour. People would comment that 'normal' homesteads comprised between 8 and 15 people, usually with one or two adult males. They would talk disapprovingly or with pity about the size of the households of the 'new migrants'. These were much larger, ranging from 20 to over 30 people and with 6, 7 or 8 adult males. With growing households and reduced access to animals, it becomes more difficult to cultivate enough land to support these larger families.

Conclusions

In the previous chapter I argued that the large-scale labour migrations from Mozambique to South Africa developed not only as a response to economic needs, but also as a result of political agreements and cordial relations between the two states. The agreements and mutually beneficial policies that developed between the mining companies, the Portuguese colonial government and the South African state shaped the lives of generations of Mozambicans living in the southern provinces of Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane. As the chapter demonstrated, migrating to the gold mines gained far more significance than that of simply earning a living; it became entrenched in the social and cultural fabric of the rural communities. Becoming a gold miner in South Africa was a rite of passage for the young men of southern Mozambique: through mining they became accepted as a man; through mining they could marry; and through mining they could establish their own homestead to continue their lineage.

This chapter has examined how this situation has changed. Just as the system of migrant labour was established through economic need and agreements between states, this chapter has demonstrated how the economic circumstances of the 1970s and disagreements between states overhauled the labour system, transforming the lives of those living in the areas that have historically supplied the mining workforce. The abolition of fixed gold prices allowed the mining industry to invest in mechanisation and raise miners' salaries. This reduced the mining companies' dependence on vast amounts of cheap foreign labour. At the same time the political landscape of southern Africa was undergoing massive change. The former colonies surrounding South Africa were gaining independence and these frontline states were taking an increasingly firm stance against the racist polices of the South African state. Migrant labour became used as a political weapon, wielded by both sides, in the struggle against apartheid. Anxious to protect this vital sector of the economy the South African state and the mining companies sought to internalise the mining workforce as much as possible, resulting in massive job losses throughout the former supplier states.

It was widely predicted that this labour retrenchment would be a disaster and result in the economic collapse of the rural areas across the region. In Mozambique the number

of miners sent to the goldmines has been cut by about 50%. In this chapter I have argued that these reductions have, indeed, disadvantaged those living in rural areas, as Wenela has closed its network of rural recruitment centres in favour of several key depots located in the national and provincial capitals. Nevertheless, despite the retrenchment a small number of men from the villages of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin continue to be employed in the mines. Their experiences, however, differ considerably from those examined in Chapter 2. Rather than serving several contracts in the mines as relatively unskilled labourers, the few men from the villages who are employed today have become skilled, well-paid career miners. They do not work for several years and return home to be absorbed into agricultural production, but continue working back-to-back contracts in South Africa. When these professionals are due to retire, or when new workers are needed, the mining companies limit recruitment to the immediate family members of their existing employees. Consequently, these few families are able to sustain a good secure income and relative to the other villagers are emerging as a rural economic elite; a 'mining aristocracy'.

While in the past employment opportunities in mining were open to nearly all of the young men in the village who wanted them, following the downscaling only a very few were lucky enough to be miners. The vast majority of young men were unable to follow their fathers to the gold mines of the Witwatersrand. Although the gates of the mines were closed to most, the social and economic pressure to go to South Africa remained. Young migrants were forced to cross the border illegally and risk the hazardous journey through the Kruger National Park. Unable to engage in telling the stories of the dangers of the mines, as the miners of previous generations had done, the young men exchange similar tales to emphasise their bravery and masculinity in relation to the perils of crossing the Kruger Park. Rather than migration and mining being synonymous, the young men's tales now stress the dangers inherent in the act of migrating, differentiating these from the relatively uneventful experience of the workplace itself.

Where previous generations of villagers had gone to South Africa as miners through the Wenela recruitment system, the new migrants cross the border illegally and struggle to find employment. The jobs that are commonly available are as temporary labourers on construction sites or as seasonal agricultural labourers. I have demonstrated that these jobs are poorly paid and highly insecure and the workers are susceptible to exploitation

and deportation back to Mozambique. These limited prospects have resulted in many migrants participating in smuggling and other illegal activities to subsidise their incomes.

With less ability to earn and save money, the new migrants are reluctant to return home without the consumer goods that are expected of returnees. While miners returned home at the end of every contract, new migrants can stay away for periods of up to three or four years. This high degree of absenteeism and the fact that, even when they do return, few migrants have been able to save much money have resulted in growing tensions between those migrating and the home communities. The young men are unable to provide sufficient numbers of cattle for bridewealth and cannot save enough money to establish their own households. As a result there is a growing divide between those families who have access to mining labour and those who do not. The cyclical pattern of economic differentiation described by Spiegel (1980) among migrants in Lesotho is no longer appropriate for the contemporary migrants from Mozambique. Those who have secured jobs in the mining industry are able to repeatedly renew their contracts and develop long-term mining careers. These families are able to maintain their advantageous position due to the nepotistic recruitment policies adopted by the mining companies. The young men from families that are unable to find positions in the mines are forced to cross into South Africa illegally and take temporary jobs that leave them open to exploitative employment practices and low wages.

In this chapter and the previous one I have argued that the lives of the residents of Mavodze and the surrounding villages have been shaped by their social and economic dependence on South Africa. With the neighbouring country being of such importance, one might ask whether these people have not come to identify themselves with it. Or do they have a 'borderland' identity as some of the literature suggests is likely? As I have indicated, neither of these is the case: instead, they continue to identify themselves as Mozambicans. Studies of migration have noted how migrants often gain a sharpened sense of their own identity while they are away. In her work in Johannesburg among female migrants from South Africa's Northern Province, Deborah James observes that the women's commitment to their home region is strengthened through absence and by living elsewhere (1999). We have seen in Chapter 2 that Patrick Harries argues that Mozambican Shangaan identity was shaped by the labourers' migrations to South

Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (1994). The evidence presented so far in this thesis has demonstrated that migration continues to play an important role in the lives of those living in the Mozambique-South Africa borderland today. However, my aim here is not to demonstrate how this sense of Mozambican identity is sharpened while being away but rather how it gets consolidated while back at home. In the following chapter I argue that the strong sense of nationalism held by the residents of Massingir owes much to their experience of local political life and, in particular, the way that Frelimo has come to dominate politics in this region.

4. Frelimo and the single-party state

Introduction

“There is only one political party around here. In this region we only have Frelimo; there are no other parties”, explained my friend Joaquim as I bought a couple of beers at the village *barraca* (kiosk). Joaquim was the director of education for the administrative post of Mavodze. That evening he was venting his frustration at having to close the village school in order to provide a venue for the Frelimo leadership to host a meeting during which elections were held to appoint members to the various local party committees. “In this part of Gaza Province, this is the way it is,” continued Joaquim,

If I want a government job, I have to be a member of Frelimo. There is no other way. That is why all those people are on the committees; they have to be part of the party to keep their jobs. If the district administration found out that I was in Renamo, for example, I would lose my job. There is no other party here. It is only Frelimo.

These were sentiments that were echoed time after time during the 17 months that I spent living in Massingir. Frelimo was referred to as ‘*The*’ political party and most people would use the term ‘party’ interchangeably with the terms ‘government’ or ‘state’. During my time in Massingir I never saw any Mozambican political insignia other than that of Frelimo.⁵³ The regional leaders had told me that there were no Renamo supporters in this area; according to the *chefe do poste*, not one single vote for Renamo had been cast in this area during the 1994 general elections.

The situation that I experienced in Massingir appeared to be in stark contrast to the overall impression given by numerous political scientists and development practitioners that herald Mozambique as one of ‘Africa’s success stories’ in its effective transition from a single-party state to a multi-party democracy (Rotberg 2002:503; Ellis 2004).

⁵³ T-shirts and posters carrying slogans and symbols of the South African ANC were common and indicate how strongly the region is affiliated with the neighbouring regional superpower (see Chapters 2 & 3). However, there was never any sign of support for other Mozambican political parties.

While there have been two nation-wide multi-party elections and the parliament sitting in Maputo has for over eight years included delegates from several parties, there is no sign of pluralist politics in Massingir. Frelimo dominates the political scene: there is little to indicate that the one-party system has ever been replaced.

In this chapter I chart how Frelimo came to dominate the political landscape in Massingir and illustrate how, to all intents and purpose, the one-party system continues to operate at a local level despite the move to pluralism at the national level. I argue that, although Frelimo was relatively unknown in this region before independence, at the end of colonial rule the party capitalised on anti-Portuguese sentiments and was able to quickly generate local support. Due to unique local circumstances Frelimo's rural polices, that had proved extremely unpopular elsewhere in Mozambique, were warmly welcomed in the Lower Shingwedzi Basin. The party was able to bolster this local support during the civil war by assisting the local residents with weapons and training to protect themselves from Renamo attacks. Following the end of this conflict, Frelimo has been so successful at sustaining its popularity that other political parties have been unable to establish a foothold in the region. This chapter explores how the local Frelimo leadership achieved this and how this achievement has influenced local understandings of the state and political system.

Single-party regimes in Africa and Mozambique: theory and practice

Across Africa, single-party systems emerged as a common form of government following the end of colonialism. The rise of African nationalism following the end of World War II had put the European colonial powers under increasing pressure to leave the countries that they had occupied for much of the previous two centuries. During the late 1950s, as a result of either armed struggle or more peaceful negotiations, the colonial powers began their withdrawal from the continent. Most African countries had gained independence by organising a single nationalist movement. This had come to symbolise the struggle against the colonial regime and became the major party following independence (Wallerstein 1961:95). Many thought that the only way in which these newly independent states could avoid crumbling into chaos was through

uniting under one party to strengthen and build the nation; party diversification would result in instability. As Immanuel Wallerstein argued in the early 1960s, “the choice has not been between one-party and multi-party states; it has been between one-party states and either anarchy or military regimes or various combinations of the two” (1961:95). Such views were echoed by Africa’s new political leaders: in the Congo Patrice Lumumba argued that divisions would lead to the suicide of Africa (cited in Zolberg 1966:50); in Guinea Sékou Touré said that without this political unity, colonialism in Africa would prevail by seeping into the cracks caused by internal cleavages in African society (cited in Zolberg 1966:44); in Tanzania Julius Nyerere argued that, “to minds moulded by Western Parliamentary tradition and Western concepts of democratic institution, the idea of an organized opposition group has become so familiar that its absence immediately raises a cry of ‘dictatorship’” (cited in Zolberg 1966:48).

This optimism about the potential of the one-party African state was not to last. The prevailing notion that single-party governance was fundamental to uniting and strengthening states that had suffered years of colonial oppression began to be questioned. By the 1980s the lack of pluralist politics was becoming synonymous with corruption, fraud and bad governance (see Apter 1999 on Nigeria; Rotberg 2002:206-8 on Zaire). Far from creating political stability, Jean-François Bayart argues, “one of the crucial issues in the *unstable* political life of Africa is the recurrence of authoritarian, totalitarian or despotic situations” (1986:109, italics added). He dismisses the cultural justification that pluralism is somehow un-African; nobody, Bayart says, continues to believe the African adage that ‘two bull-crocodiles cannot live in the same river’ (1986:109). Democracy, human rights and valuing the idea of the individual may be the products of Western history. However, these concepts were first introduced with colonialism and have become integrated into political cultures to such an extent that they cannot be simply eradicated with vague references to authenticity (Bayart 1986:109; see also Clark 1998:46; Wiseman 1996).

This kind of rejection of cultural ‘special pleading’ has taken root in the international community. The notion that a single-party system of government is required for African development was superseded by the theory that a pluralist democratic system of government is the necessary foundation of a successful state. It was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War that, according to many authors, heralded an

era in which the push for democracy replaced the fight against communism as the underlying principle behind Western foreign policy (de la Gorgendiere 1996; Golooba-Mutubi 1999). Although the Comaroffs (1997) dispute this periodisation, observing that international pressure for democracy was being applied long before the Berlin Wall came down, there remains little doubt that the post-Cold War hegemony of the United States as the single world superpower (militarily and, perhaps more importantly, economically) has increased this pressure. This pressure is not merely rhetorical; the failure to conform can lead to the imposition of trade sanctions, exclusion from international organisations, refusal of credit, debt relief or even humanitarian aid. With the end of the superpowers' rivalries, African statesmen are no longer in the bargaining position they occupied throughout the Cold War; instead of playing one side against the other to benefit from economic or military support, they now have little choice but to conform and be happy with what support they are offered (Plank 1993:408). This lack of choice has not always translated into the successful implementation of multi-party democracy, as my discussion of Mozambique, and southern Mozambique in particular, will make clear.

In many ways Mozambique has more or less followed the trajectory outlined above. Frelimo spearheaded the struggle against Portuguese colonial rule. Frelimo was founded in Tanzania in the early 1960s and its armed uprising took the form of guerrilla warfare, mainly in the northern provinces of Mozambique. In 1974 a faction of the Portuguese military, disheartened by the continuing colonial wars, staged a coup in Lisbon and overthrew the right-wing administration of Marcelo Caetano⁵⁴. The collapse of the regime in Portugal forced the colonial administration to the negotiating table and, under the terms of the Lusaka Accord, Mozambique gained full independence on the 25th June 1975. When the Portuguese pulled out, Frelimo was the only significant movement that could take over power and so the movement, as it was then known, assumed control of the new state. Frelimo, like other leftwing nationalist movements in Angola, Congo, Ethiopia and Tanzania, argued that a single-party socialist government was required to unite the new country, redistribute wealth, provide services to the people and revitalise the flagging economy (Clark 1998:45). The party's hegemonic sway was undermined,

⁵⁴ Stanley Payne (1995: 312-317) argues that, while the authoritarian regime that was established by the military in Portugal in 1926 was right-wing, it could not be considered fascist. He argues that the leadership rejected the fascist movement and was hostile to fascist culture in general.

however, by forces of destabilisation unleashed as a result of its support for African nationalist movements in neighbouring white minority-ruled countries. These countries' governments launched campaigns of destabilisation against Frelimo-governed Mozambique, the principal tools of which were the Renamo guerrilla insurgents who conducted a campaign of brutal destruction and civil war throughout Mozambique from 1978 until 1992.

While Renamo began as a destabilisation force backed by UDI Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa, it later gained local support as an alternative to Frelimo in areas of Mozambique where the state's rural and economic policies had proved to be deeply unpopular. By the late 1980s the political climate in southern Africa had changed and external support for Renamo was drying up. Years of civil war, drought and economic mismanagement had brought Mozambique to its knees. Both sides were under immense international pressure to negotiate a lasting settlement. In 1992 the Rome Peace Accord was signed and Renamo agreed to cease fighting in exchange for the end of single-party rule. A new constitution was drafted and elections were held. In 1994 Frelimo won the first multi-party elections, winning 44% of the ballot. Renamo, which had been relaunched as a political party, secured 38% of the vote. The elections were universally hailed as a success and, having staged a second national vote in 1999 (in which Frelimo secured a second term in office), Mozambique is now said to have a functioning multi-party democracy.

Viewed in these terms, Mozambique's transition — from civil war, through peace and single-party rule, to pluralism — appears to be quite remarkable. However, as Richard Crook has commented on the transition to multi-party politics in Côte d'Ivoire, “[it] would be unrealistic to expect that the legacy of more than thirty years of single-party and single-presidential rule could have been wiped out in one single electoral contest” (1995:36). This is equally true for Mozambique; the gap between the international assessment of that country's achievements and the actual situation on the ground is considerable (Alden 2001:101). The fact that multi-party elections took place need not necessarily imply pluralism. Joaquim's comments, with which I opened this chapter, indicate that the practice of multi-party democracy has by no means diffused throughout the country. In order to establish if this is the case we must heed Jonathan Spencer's (1997) recent call for anthropologists to investigate post-colonial politics with real

empirical vigour and, more locally, Harry West's (1998a:74) insistence that confusions that exist in Mozambique today can only be understood through understanding how people at the local level are experiencing the transition to democratic governance.

A number of recent studies have concentrated on local understandings of the politics in the post-war era in Mozambique. Harri Englund has looked at the transition from war to peace and democracy in rural communities on the Mozambican-Malawi border (2002). Jocelyn Alexander studied attitudes to local authority in Manica Province, central Mozambique (1997). Harry West has been investigating power relations in communities living on the Mueda Plateau in the far northern province of Cabo Delgado (West 1998b; 2001; 2003; West & Kloeck-Jenson 1999). Lars Buur and Helene Kyed have observed the recent implementation of Decree 12/2000 dealing with community leaders in Sussundenga District, Manica Province (2003). In every case the authors note the various and numerous problems and limitations of the political reforms that are taking place in each area. All of the studies provide evidence that seriously undermines the presumption that the transition from single-party to multi-party politics has been an outright success. What distinguishes these studies from my own is Renamo's presence in the areas concerned. While all these writers explicitly highlight the shortcomings of the current state of Mozambican pluralist politics, in each of the examples there are representatives of the opposition parties (principally Renamo) present in the area and these individuals are recognised as legitimate political actors. West recalls bouncing along in a pick-up truck with one Renamo activist and visiting the Renamo headquarters (2003:92-93). Alexander visited Renamo-controlled areas and interviewed Renamo's director of education (1997:14). Englund observes that although Frelimo officials attempted to force Renamo officials to keep a low profile (2002:177), there could be no doubt that there was genuine support for the opposition in the region where he worked. These areas, then, contain at least the ingredients for a multi-party system.

The situation in Massingir was very different. Joaquim was not exaggerating when he told me over a beer that there was only one party present in the area around Mavodze and Massingir. Despite repeated attempts to find evidence of opposition parties throughout my time there, I never once heard of any residents having supported or even thinking of supporting any party other than Frelimo. There was absolutely no evidence

of pluralism — or prospective pluralism — in voter behaviour or in the way the state operated.

In order to understand how and why Frelimo has retained effective single-party rule in the district of Massingir and why there is a complete absence of any other political parties, we must begin with the historical perspective on how Frelimo came to gain popularity in the region in the first place.

Frelimo-isation & villagisation of Mavodze

From the perspective of people in Massingir, the liberation struggle had always been abstract rather than an experienced reality. Although Frelimo had been fighting the Portuguese since the early 1960s, nearly all of the fighting had occurred in the northern provinces of Mozambique.⁵⁵ Frelimo was relatively unknown elsewhere in the country. Residents of Mavodze explained that during the colonial era it was very difficult to receive news about what was occurring elsewhere in the country. A number of the older men reported that they had heard a bit about Frelimo and the liberation struggle from colleagues while they had worked as migrant labourers in the South African goldmines. However, until independence, nobody from Mavodze and the surrounding villages had met a member of the liberation movement.⁵⁶ Mario, one of the older men in the village, described to me the first time a representative of the new government arrived in Mavodze:

The first time that we met someone from Frelimo was in 1975. In those days we did not live here in the village but in the Olifantes valley. One day a soldier from Tete, called Jorge Degodine, arrived in the valley and asked to meet all the people who lived nearby.

⁵⁵ For further information about the war of independence see: Isaacman & Isaacman (1983:79-109); Newitt (1995:517-538).

⁵⁶ The lack of involvement of people in this area in Frelimo's liberation campaign contrasts with neighbouring areas of the southern Mozambique. Elsewhere in Gaza province, people crossed the border and travelled through Rhodesia to join Frelimo and fight against the Portuguese in the north of Mozambique. One explanation for this was that much of the nationalist ideology was fostered in the mission-based education system in the southern provinces. However, there was no mission activity in the vicinity of Mavodze and the other villages of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin.

He told us that he was Frelimo solider and had been fighting the Portuguese in the north. Jorge Degodine told us that Frelimo had beaten the Portuguese and forced them to leave Mozambique and return home. Frelimo was in charge; they were now the new government. His job was to go from place to place on his motorbike and tell the people that Frelimo was now ruling the country and what this meant. We did not know what Frelimo was; most of us had not even heard of them. Degodine told us that Frelimo was the name for the group of people that had forced the Portuguese to go and were now the government for us, the people of Mozambique. There was a new president who was called Samora Machel. He was a Shangaan from near Chokwe. Jorge Degodine told us that Samora was a good man and liked the people. Samora was not a leader who would only feed himself. He told us that together we would build a new country. Frelimo did not like the old system. We would not have to do forced labour or pay hut taxes. Jorge Degodine said that the old leaders were part of the Portuguese oppression. They were part of the old Mozambique and could not carry on with their work. He said that we needed new leaders. He told us Chauque would make a good village secretary. He had heard that Chauque could speak Portuguese and could write because he had worked in the *cantina* (trading post) with the Portuguese for many years. We agreed that Chauque would make a good leader and he became the secretary of Mavodze. Degodine said that there was a lot of work to do and that Chauque could not do all this work by himself, he would have to appoint a group of men to help him. Chauque and this group were the first to be a part of Frelimo and responsible for organising our area.

I heard similar versions of the same story from a number of village residents. In every case, what struck me as surprising was the fact that the village residents appeared to readily accept this new situation without so much as batting an eyelid. To summarise Mario's account: a stranger arrived unannounced at one's doorstep bearing news of the previous government's demise and claiming to be a representative of the new regime. He then told the residents that their leaders were now obsolete and appointed a man with no leadership experience to run their affairs. The majority of people accepted this without serious debate. I found this account scarcely credible. In my own experience it had taken me months to earn an inkling of trust from just a few village residents. Most villagers probably remained convinced that I had some ulterior motive for being there, despite 17 months of local residence. How had this man Degodine won the people's support so easily?

There is, of course, the likelihood — as with most oral histories — that my informants' memories of the episode were coloured by the subsequent events of the last 25 years. It could be the case that Frelimo had become popular at a later date and that this popularity had altered people's memories of the initial reception of the party. However, a detailed analysis of the event, within the local context, suggests a number of reasons why the population of Mavodze readily welcomed Frelimo as the new government, despite never having any prior experience of the party's activities.

The people of Massingir had loathed the Portuguese colonial regime. Residents of Mavodze recalled having to plant fields of cotton for the Portuguese, rather than being free to grow the food crops they needed to survive. Failure to pay taxes resulted in Mozambicans having to undertake six months of forced labour (*chibalo*) away from their families and in the harsh conditions of the Portuguese-owned farms near Chokwe, or repairing roads and railways elsewhere in the province. At independence the Portuguese administrator and his staff had left. As the news of independence and liberation spread, it is little wonder that Frelimo was popular; its struggle had freed the population from the oppressive colonial regime.⁵⁷

Despite the fact that most, if not all, of the fighting during the war for independence had taken place in the northern provinces of Mozambique, the residents of Mavodze saw themselves, in retrospect, as united with Frelimo in the battle against the Portuguese. This sense of unity stemmed from the history of the Gaza Empire that had dominated the region in the 19th century and had held out against repeated Portuguese attempts to expand their occupation inland. Stories about Gungunhana, the last ruler of the Gaza Empire, were extremely popular in Mavodze. People would tell me how their Shangaan grandparents and ancestors had fought against the Portuguese with Gungunhana at the end of the 19th century. "The Gaza Empire had been very strong and the Portuguese could not conquer us", my field assistant told me. By his account, it was only with the aid of the Chopi, a rival neighbouring tribe, that the Empire was brought to its knees.

⁵⁷ In fact the victory was not Frelimo's alone. Most commentators agree that it was the sustained pressure of fighting long wars against the nationalist movements in several colonies (Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau), rather than the outright military success of any single nationalist movement, that had led to the collapse of the Caetano regime in Portugal, and ultimately independence for the colonies (Saul 1985; Arabamsson & Nilsson 1995).

The Portuguese wanted to control all of this land, but Gungunhana would not let them. Even with all of their guns and armies, the white men could not defeat us. The Portuguese did not know what to do. It was only because the Portuguese went to the Chopi people who live in Inhambane for help that they were able to defeat the Gaza Empire. The Chopi knew how to get Gungunhana and so they laid a trap. The Portuguese captured Gungunhana and sent him into exile in the Azores. The white man then had control of our land.

Whether by this means or not, Gungunhana's defeat in 1896 and the subsequent collapse of the Gaza Empire marked the end of African resistance and the expansion of Portuguese control from the coastal regions into the interior. This control lasted until Frelimo came to power in 1975. The residents of Mavodze saw their forefathers' battles against the Portuguese and Frelimo's war of independence as part of the same fight. Indeed the grandfather of Frelimo's president Samora Machel had served in Gungunhana's court (Hanlon 1990:189). Frelimo, therefore, must be a force for good as it had rid the residents of Mavodze of the Portuguese and was on the same side, and been involved in the same battle, as their ancestors.

There was also an ethnic dimension to Mavodze residents' initial acceptance of Frelimo. Although Jorge Degodine, the first representative of Frelimo to arrive in the area, was from the northern city of Tete, many of the movement's leadership were Shangaan people from Southern Mozambique. All three of the party's presidents, Mondlane, Machel and Chissano, were born in Gaza Province. As early as the 1960s there were concerns from within the movement that southerners were beginning to dominate the party (see Saul 1985:57).⁵⁸ This domination has continued: the three southern provinces of Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane are seen as a Frelimo stronghold and, conversely, Frelimo is seen very much as the party of the Shangaan. Residents of Mavodze must surely have been more at ease accepting Frelimo as their new leaders than members of another 'outside' group.

This ethnic affiliation, the historical legacy of having fought the Portuguese, and the fact that Frelimo had liberated the country, all contributed to the way in which Frelimo

⁵⁸ Renamo continues to criticise Frelimo as being the party of southerners (see Hoile 1994).

was initially accepted in Massingir. However, while these factors certainly helped establish the legitimacy of the new government, Frelimo was quick to build upon this initial support by taking advantage of a set of unique local circumstances. As mentioned in Chapter 1, during the final years of colonial rule the Portuguese had been engaged in damming the Olifantes River. By independence this dam was almost complete and the valley in which the population lived was beginning to flood. Frelimo were able to build local support by assisting the displaced residents construct a new settlement.

Before 1977, as Chapter 1 describes, 'Mavodze' referred to an area rather than a village per se. The population lived in dispersed homesteads in the Olifantes Valley, cultivating land and producing livestock along the banks of the river. The Olifantes is a major tributary of the River Limpopo that flows through Gaza Province and empties into the Indian Ocean near the provincial capital Xai Xai. Much of the agricultural production of Gaza Province depends on the fertile soils of the Limpopo Valley and the majority of the population lives on its floodplain. In an attempt to regulate the flow of the Limpopo, allowing irrigation and flood control, the Portuguese decided to dam the River Olifantes at Massingir. Work on the dam was begun in 1972 by a consortium of Portuguese companies headed by TAMEGA. Construction was completed in 1976. However, less than a year after completion the dam displayed major distress defects and as a result the irrigation potential of the dam was seriously impaired.⁵⁹ The sluice gates now lie unmounted by the side of the slipway below the dam and the reservoir has, since completion, been filled at barely half of its designed storage capacity.⁶⁰ Despite the defects, the construction of the dam resulted in the flooding of much of the Olifantes valley. Residents of Mavodze recalled that the reservoir filled rapidly during the floods that affected southern Mozambique in 1977. It became obvious that they could no longer continue to live on the Olifantes' floodplain.

⁵⁹ The most serious fault is due to the increased uplift pressure at different locations near the toe of the dam. It is mostly believed that this is due to the existence of highly pervious layers and geological faults under the dam that were not adequately treated during design and construction (Marcus Wishart, environmental consultant to ARA-SUL, personal communication 2003)

⁶⁰ A US \$40.6m loan from the African Development Bank is currently being used by the Mozambican Government to rehabilitate the dam and a smallholder irrigation scheme. This 'second phase', as it is known locally, is due to be completed in 2006. People in the area always refer to the second phase as including the installation of hydroelectric turbines, thus providing electricity to this region. However, electricity production would be limited, due to height and volume of water restrictions, and it is unlikely that any hydro-electric element will be included in the work.



Photo 22: Massingir Dam in the dry season



Photo 23: The flooded Olifantes Valley where the population used to live

At the same time that the dam was being built and Mavodze's agricultural land was being flooded, Frelimo had replaced the Portuguese government. On coming to power, the Frelimo government was determined to end the social and political oppression that had prevailed under the colonial regime. It envisaged the future of the country as lying "in the building of a modern economy based on mechanised farming and a spread of industries" (Newitt 1995:547). In September 1975, Frelimo organised the first national agricultural seminar that proposed the regeneration of Mozambican agriculture through a system of communal villages (Marsh 1976); these were to become "the backbone of rural development" (Hanlon 1990:122).

The people of Mavodze and the surrounding villages were forced to leave their land and homes by the floodwaters caused by the Portuguese-built dam. Residents explained that the Portuguese had intended to move the entire population affected by the dam out of the area completely. Frelimo, however, allowed people to stay and suggested moving to higher ground and building communal villages as an alternative.⁶¹ Several of my informants discussed the events leading up to the building of the village of Mavodze:

After the rainy season some men from the district came to visit Chauque [the new Frelimo secretary] and said that he needed to call a meeting. One of the men was called Chambone and he was the district administrator. He said that we could no longer live in the Olifantes valley. It was much better for us to live together in a village so that we could all work together. We knew that we could not continue to live in the valley. The Portuguese had built the dam and the water was building up behind it. Our fields were getting flooded and the river would have soon covered some people's houses. The administrator told us that we should build a village on the high ground at the top of the valley. We would have to clear the bush and build a road. He told us that he would tell Chauque how to build the village and how to organise the work.

The new village was organised in much the same way that you see it today. It was to be laid out in neat lines and people would live much closer together. Before it was different, we lived in homesteads that were very spread out; you couldn't even see your neighbour's house. The village was split into four *bairros* [wards] by a road that ran

⁶¹ Ironically, draft proposals for the Limpopo National Park state that within the next ten years the population of the area may be resettled to the same region envisaged by the Portuguese 30 years ago (LNP 2003; AIM 2004a).

through the centre. In the centre we had to clear an area that was to have the cooperative shop, a school, a football pitch, an area for village meetings, a health post, and a Frelimo Party office built in the middle. Each of the *bairros* was divided into blocks and we were allocated squares of ground where we could build our houses. Chauque told us that we should build our corrals for the cattle and goats on the edge of the village, not next to our houses.

When we had cleared a road through the bush, Frelimo brought a truck of zinc roofing sheets from the district and gave out 15 sheets to each household, to help us build our new houses. They also used the truck to help us move the logs that we had chopped to build the houses, corrals and granaries. It was a lot of hard work. At first we had to carry on going to the river to get water, but in 1982 the party put in tubes and a diesel pump so that we had water in the middle of the village. We built a school and Frelimo brought a schoolteacher to come and teach our children.⁶²

Frelimo intended the communal villages to allow access to schooling, health facilities, a co-operative shop, clean water and quality housing (Hanlon 1990:121). Frelimo saw the arrangement as a new social contract, in which the people would build the villages and the government provide the amenities (West 2001:131). With their homesteads and farmland being lost under the water of the reservoir, the residents of Mavodze were more than happy to participate in Frelimo's process of villagisation. Their choice was of course somewhat determined by the fact that the Portuguese had initially built the dam. But, in any case, the fact that people were happy to move and participate in Frelimo's villagisation programme contrasts with the experiences of villagisation described elsewhere in Mozambique.⁶³

The French anthropologist Christian Geffray undertook research in the rural district of Eráti in the northern province of Nampula during the 1980s. His central argument is that Frelimo's rural policies alienated many communities and this discontent swelled the ranks of Renamo supporters, allowing the civil war to spread (1990). Alice Dinerman correctly observes that the two axes on which Geffray's thesis turns are the discontent generated by Frelimo's villagisation programme and the party's refusal to recognise

⁶² Taken from a group discussion held in Mavodze (22/04/02).

⁶³ For example, villagisation was an especially unpopular policy in the Zambezi flood plain.

traditional authority (Dinerman 1994:571; see also Fry 1990).⁶⁴ Geffray's work has been subject to much criticism. Bridget O'Laughlin argues that the temporal and spatial boundedness of Geffray's work results in him presenting a distorted and static account of the rural discontent (1992a; 1992b). She states that Geffray homogenises the peasantry and ignores the internal class relations that existed in rural communities. On a more theoretical level, Dinerman shows how Geffray's argument was not necessarily vindicated by his own evidence and that he was guilty of naturalising tradition at the moment when it was becoming increasingly politicised (1994). Others have despaired at how Geffray's thesis developed in a single district in Nampula has been applied without serious questioning to the entire country (see for example Englund 2002). While I agree with all of these critiques, there is little doubt that Frelimo's policy of communal villagisation was often the source of much discontent. Harry West notes that, in Cabo Delgado, some farmers were forced against their will to leave their homesteads and settle in a communal village (2001:134), and even pro-Frelimo writers observe that villagisation was often unpopular and people were forced to move (see for example Hanlon 1990; Egerö 1987). By 1982 Frelimo itself recognised that the collectivisation of the countryside was not going well (Frelimo 1982:24-25).

These criticisms notwithstanding, the hostility arising from villagisation was not as prevalent in Gaza as it was in the more northern provinces. Otto Roesch attributes this to the massive popular support Frelimo enjoyed in the province. Roesch argues that this support was so strong that peasant farmers, although preferring to live in their dispersed settlements, moved to the communal villages "out of a sense of duty and obligation towards Frelimo" (1992:466). Such devotion to Frelimo may have been present in the villages near Xai Xai, where Roesch worked, as these communities had had a longer and more intense relationship with the party. I do not think this could have been the case in Mavodze. The people had not encountered Frelimo until after independence in 1975, and although I have argued that a number of factors may have generated initial support for Frelimo these were not enough to generate the unquestioning allegiance described by Roesch.

⁶⁴ I return to Geffray's work and address issues relating to traditional authority in Chapter 6.

For Mavodze we may turn Roesch's argument on its head. It was in fact the process of villagisation that played a crucial part in endearing the local population to Frelimo, rather than alienating it from the party. The people living in the area disliked the Massingir Dam that had been built by the Portuguese; not only was the reservoir flooding their farmland but several villagers had been killed in a quarrying accident during the dam's construction. The Portuguese had caused these woes. Frelimo arrived in the area having pushed out the colonial power and was now not only offering to help relocate the population away from the floodwaters, but was also supplying building materials and amenities for a new village. The residents described how Frelimo had brought roofing sheets for the new houses and transported building materials to the site of the new village. However, I was later to find out that it was in fact TAMEGA, the construction company, which had provided this assistance. One informant from outside the village recounted how the Frelimo officials from the district had only escorted, rather than provided, the TAMEGA trucks that had brought the materials from the construction site to the village. It was only the villages that had been affected by the flooding of the Olifantes Valley that were being compensated; all of the neighbouring areas that were also encouraged to resettle in communal villages received no such material help from the government, for no funds were available. In Mavodze, and the other villages surrounding the dam, Frelimo had successfully appropriated the compensation package that had been allocated to the disturbed communities by the construction company and had distributed it as its own. Frelimo had built upon those factors that had initially warmed the local residents to the organisation: the historical connection in the struggle against the Portuguese, ethnic affiliations to the leadership, and, of course, their final deliverance of liberation from colonial rule. The party capitalised on the legacy of the Portuguese damming of the Olifantes River by 'providing' the materials and logistical support to a resettlement that was inevitable. In Massingir, unlike many other areas of the country, local residents welcomed the process of villagisation and Frelimo consolidated and built upon the local support that had been generated on its arrival in the region.

Villagisation, however, entails far more than simply moving house. During the late 1970s the government of Guatemala undertook a campaign of villagisation similar to Frelimo's in Mozambique. Looking at this Latin American example, Finn Stepputat demonstrates that villagisation was concerned with stabilizing rural areas and forming

sites of governance (2001). Stepputat argues that three forms of stabilization underlay the process of villagising the countryside: special stabilization, whereby only the successfully settled areas were able to benefit from development infrastructures; social stabilization, in which a community was organised through establishing committees, public meetings and communal labour; and finally symbolic stabilization, in which public space was arranged as a site of governance by including features such as a central plaza including a school, clinic and administration building (2001). Stepputat's model can be usefully applied to show how Frelimo's policy of villagisation in Massingir was also a process of governmentalization.

If we return to my informants' description of how the village was built, and if we look at the sketch map of the village of Mavodze as it stands today (Map 3), it is clear that Stepputat's concept of symbolic stabilization, or creating sites of government, is as applicable to the Mozambican as to the Guatemalan context. At the centre of Mavodze there is a central plaza, which accommodates the school and the houses for the teachers, the health centre and the nurse's house, the water point, the village football pitch, the public meeting site, the administration building and administrator's house, the Frelimo party office, the flagpoles flying the party flag and the flag of the republic, and the several small shops that serve the village. This is an organised public space in the very centre of the village that contains all the state institutions and houses the state employees. However, in Mavodze it is not just the central plaza but the entire village that can be described as a site of governance. The grid layout is clear from the sketch map. The village is split into four *bairros* (wards), each of these into blocks and then the blocks into household compounds. The spatial organization of the village allowed Frelimo easily to survey the goings-on in the village, operating, as Harry West has observed, in much the same way as Jeremy Bentham's panopticon discussed by Foucault in his analysis of the modern prison (Foucault 1979; West 2001:132). Throughout my fieldwork the ease with which village activities could be observed meant the village leadership — like the fieldworker — always knew what was happening in the village.

Frelimo's 'unobstructed surveillance', as West puts it (2001:133), was not only a result of the way in which villages were spatially arranged. It also owed much to the means of social organization that was undertaken to achieve what Stepputat calls social

stabilization (2001:300). On arriving in Massingir, Frelimo was not only interested in villagising the rural population but also organising a new political system, as my informant Mario (see above) explained:

Jorge Degodine [the Frelimo soldier who was the first party representative to meet the village residents] said that the old leaders were part of the Portuguese oppression. They were part of the old Mozambique and could not carry on with their work. He said that we needed new leaders.

The existing political structure, led by the village *régulo* (chief), was dismissed as backward and as having collaborated with the Portuguese regime.⁶⁵ Frelimo initially replaced the system of *régulos* with *grupos dinamizadores* (activating groups), such as the group of men appointed to assist Chauque in Mavodze, that were established as a short-term measure to “safeguard and consolidate the gains of the revolution” (People’s Power 1978:43). Later, a more structured system was developed based on a party-cell model. Selected Frelimo party members would be responsible for different parts of the village. A secretary would be in charge of the village and assisting him would be the leaders of the four *bairros* (wards). Each *bairro* was divided into blocks and a secretary appointed to oversee it. Therefore, each physical subdivision of the village had a leader appointed by Frelimo that was responsible for the people living in that area. In this way the spatial organisation of the new villages was complemented by the newly-introduced political structures. Together, these techniques allowed the single-party state to extend its control over the rural population.

Frelimo’s intention to replace the colonial regime with a new Mozambican state (Hall & Young 1997:71) was not only being realised through the spatial arrangement of the communal villages and the introduction of the new political structures, but also through the service provision that was provided in the new villages. One of the features of the new village of Mavodze was the school in the central plaza. Prior to the construction of the new village, the only educational facilities in the area were at a local mission complex over 40 km away. Education was the Frelimo government’s number one budgetary priority and on coming to power the party launched an extensive national

⁶⁵ The position of the dismissed ‘traditional’ authorities is discussed in Chapter 6.

literacy campaign (Hall & Young 1997:56). Although this had relatively little impact in Mavodze, as most people remained illiterate, education was concerned with far more than simply teaching people to read and write. Schooling was a part of creating a Mozambican national sentiment: the building was adorned with the national flag; pupils would sing the national anthem; they were taught the history of their new country. This process was replicated at public meetings and the other public buildings also flew the national flag. The party set out to build a new nation-state and, as this was a single-party state, the nation and Frelimo were inextricably connected. To the people of Massingir, the state was the party and the party the state: to be a part of the new Mozambique was to be a part of Frelimo.

Thus, Frelimo was more or less an unknown organization in Massingir before 1975. However, when the party did arrive and began to establish its presence the local residents — for reasons outlined above — initially warmed to it. Through constructing a new village and introducing a new leadership system, Frelimo was able not only to bolster support but also to enjoy considerable control over the rural population. This control became increasingly important as the armed conflict with Renamo began to escalate in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Villagisation was increasingly to become a military tactic rather than a means of organising social development (Bowen 2000; Roesch 1992).⁶⁶ In the next section I look at how Mavodze and the surrounding villages were affected by the war and argue that this experience further united the population behind Frelimo.

Massingir 1978-1992: the uncivil wars

In the second month of fieldwork in Mavodze I asked one of my informants where he had lived during the war. I was somewhat surprised when he responded, “Which war?” Despite Renamo’s having been created and largely funded and supplied by

⁶⁶ The use of villagisation as a military tactic has been observed in various conflicts throughout the world, for example it was a technique employed by both the guerrilla fighters and government troops in the conflict in Guatemala (Stepputat 2001).

neighbouring states,⁶⁷ the majority of scholars and commentators regard the conflict that affected most of Mozambique following independence as a civil war, that started in the late 1970s and lasted until the signing of the Rome Peace Accord in 1992 (see Finnegan 1992; Nordstrom 1997; Africa Watch 1992; Hanlon 1991; Hall & Young 1997). The residents of Mavodze and the neighbouring villages did not see it like that. Their experiences of this period led them to distinguish between two separate and very different wars: that against Ian Smith and that against Renamo.

The war against Ian Smith and white minority-ruled Rhodesia was understood in terms of conventional warfare. People described this fighting as being between one army and the other, with neither side deliberately targeting civilians. This first war began shortly after independence. A number of the village residents were conscripted into the army and were trained as infantrymen and artillery operators. Although the war did not directly affect the villages in the Shingwedzi basin, as much of the combat in Gaza Province took place in the Limpopo valley, the village residents learned about the fighting from these men who had fought in the army. The Ian Smith government had begun attacking Mozambique in an attempt to destabilise the country and stop Frelimo support for the Zimbabwean nationalist movements that were using Mozambican territory as a base for their liberation struggle. According to Ken Flower, the former head of Rhodesian intelligence, the Rhodesian raids into Mozambique primarily targeted military and economic infrastructures (Flower 1987:244).

This interpretation is borne out if one looks at Gaza Province. Here it was the road and rail bridges in the Limpopo transport corridor that were hit particularly hard. Mozambican forces responded with heavy artillery attacks in an attempt to keep these attacks at bay (Hanlon 1990). A Rhodesian aircraft was downed during one unsuccessful raid that was designed to destroy one of the dams on the River Limpopo; one can still see the dusty remains of the fuselage proudly displayed in the centre of a roundabout near Chokwe. However, it was not to be a decisive Mozambican military victory that brought to an end the 'first war' as experienced by the residents of

⁶⁷ Initially Rhodesia (until 1979) and then later South Africa (1980-92) (see Flower 1987; Winter 1981).

Mavodze. Rather, it was the success of Zimbabwean liberation movements and the end of white-minority rule that halted the external aggression.

In taking up arms against Ian Smith's regime, Frelimo maintained its credentials among the people of Massingir as a liberation movement. However, while Frelimo gained a certain amount of prestige among residents for having united with the Zimbabwean nationalist movements, it was the 'second war' — against Renamo — that was to have a far greater impact on people's lives. Ultimately, it would firmly cement Frelimo as the only legitimate party in Massingir.

The origins of Renamo, formerly known as MNR (Mozambican National Resistance), are closely connected to the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization (CIO). Although the Renamo leadership maintains that discontented Mozambicans formed the organization to fight Marxism, with the Smith government offering only limited support (Dhlakama, cited in Africa Watch 1992:21), most analysts agree that the Rhodesian secret service created Renamo as a force with which to destabilise the Frelimo government. Operating out of Rhodesian bases, Renamo ran guerrilla raids on Frelimo targets in Mozambique and broadcast anti-Frelimo propaganda through a radio station known as The Voice of Free Africa. In April 1980 Zimbabwean independence threatened to cut off Renamo's support and supplies. However, neighbouring South Africa at this time was taking an increasingly aggressive stance against the black frontline states and, as Zimbabwean independence loomed, the Rhodesian CIO asked the South Africans to assume sponsorship of Renamo (Africa Watch 1992:26). The South African military agreed to this and, in the words of the head of the Rhodesian intelligence service, took over the operation "lock, stock and barrel" (Flower 1987:262). The apartheid regime in South Africa was now Renamo's major backer, supplying everything from equipment and military bases to intelligence and training (see Winter 1981; Flower 1987).⁶⁸

⁶⁸ While there is no doubt that Renamo was supported, if not established, by the Rhodesian and South African military, the debate continues over how much internal support the organisation generated within Mozambique and has produced a large body of literature (cf. Hoile 1994; Vines 1996; Bowen 2000; Hanlon 1991; McGregor 1998; Geffray 1990; Gersony 1988; Minter 1998). This is not a debate I intend to address in detail in this thesis, because, as I will show below, Renamo had no legitimacy whatsoever in the region where I conducted fieldwork.

The 'first war' against Ian Smith had, for the most part, little impact on the people of Mavodze. The 'second war' had a far greater one. Residents reported first hearing about Renamo, now covertly supported by South Africa, between 1984 and 1985 when forces first entered Gaza Province near Pafuri, a border crossing some 180 km north of Mavodze. Over the next four years Renamo moved southwards along the River Shingwedzi, establishing a base in Machamba, some 70 km away. During this period residents of the villages to the north had been fleeing their homes and resettling in Mavodze, which was assumed to be more secure. By 1989 Renamo forces controlled most of the Shingwedzi basin and in December launched their first direct attack on the village of Mavodze, killing three people and stealing food and cattle. This chronology partly explains why the people of Mavodze saw the civil war in terms of two wars. The conflict with Ian Smith's Rhodesian army had finished in 1979, Renamo did not appear in Gaza until 1984, and had little impact on people's lives until at least a couple of years after that. The seven or so years of peace that had elapsed between the two periods of fighting clearly separated them into two different conflicts: for the residents of Mavodze, the 'first war' started in the late 1970s and the second in the mid-1980s.

The second difference between the two wars was the identity of the enemy; the people of Massingir could see that they were fighting two different enemies. While the 'first war' was against the Rhodesian army, Renamo was an unconventional guerrilla movement that was supported by the South African government. The proximity of the villages to the South African border allowed people to see the South African aircraft flying over Mozambican territory. During their habitual migrations back and forth across the border through the Kruger National Park (see Chapters 2 & 3), residents could see the South African military openly supporting Renamo. It was an open secret that Renamo used South African bases in and around the National Park at Phalaborwa and Skukuza. White South Africans, according to the villagers, were frequently spotted with Renamo forces operating on the Mozambican side of the border. On several occasions when I was visiting villagers in their fields, people we encountered joked that if they had seen a white man with two Mozambicans walking in the bush ten years ago they would have shot us all for being Renamo.

It was not merely a matter of timing and the enemy that differentiated the two wars; it was the nature of the warfare itself. As I mentioned above, the residents of Mavodze

perceived the war with Rhodesia in terms of one army fighting another. In the second war, Renamo explicitly and brutally targeted civilians. During their first attack on Mavodze in December 1989, Renamo troops not only killed three people, they also decapitated them, threw the bodies in a latrine, and left the heads on stakes in the middle of the village plaza. Subsequent attacks on the village during the next three years were equally horrific.⁶⁹ Not only were people killed but also the health, education and veterinary infrastructure that Frelimo had provided during villagisation was destroyed. This destruction and brutality were by no means unique to Mavodze. Observers noted Renamo atrocities occurring throughout the country. Africa Watch observed that Renamo acquired a reputation for savagery (1992:27); the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs accused Renamo of carrying out “one of the most brutal holocausts against ordinary human beings since World War II” (Roy Stacey, cited in Hanlon 1991:47); and Robert Gersony, in a report for the US State Department, compared Renamo’s activities to those of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia (1988).

While brutal violence was a hallmark of Renamo activities throughout Mozambique, the levels of brutality varied regionally. Gersony identified three notional areas of Renamo operations, the ‘tax’, ‘control’, and ‘destruction’ zones (1988). The tax zones were usually found in rural areas with dispersed populations, where Renamo soldiers could move freely and demand ‘contributions’ from farmers. Gersony notes that instances of murder, rape and kidnapping were less frequent here than elsewhere. The control zones were more oppressive, with more demands made of the local population and more severe punishments administered. Often close to Renamo bases, local people living in these areas were forced to grow food for troops, men forced to act as porters, and sexual demands made of women. Rape, beating, mutilation and murder were common punishments. Gersony’s third category, the zones of destruction, speaks for itself. These were frequently areas that had an affiliation to Frelimo. When Renamo attacked, troops targeted officials and civilians, structures and infrastructures. Public executions, extensive looting and kidnappings were frequent and indiscriminate. As a Frelimo

⁶⁹ Informants recounted numerous brutal attacks in great detail. I prefer not to follow Nordstorm’s example in her ‘ethnography’, *A Different War Story*, in which she presents numerous wartime atrocities in detail for no apparent reason other than to shock the reader (1997).

stronghold, Gaza Province, like much of southern Mozambique, was considered a zone of destruction (Wilson 1992; Hall & Young 1997:169; McGregor 1998).⁷⁰

In Mavodze a large number of people fled these attacks. Almost a quarter of households abandoned the village and fled across the border to South Africa, while others sought refuge in the more secure urban areas of Mozambique such as Chokwe or Massingir Town. However, the majority of residents (69% of households) chose to stay and fight back. As Renamo had gradually infiltrated the Province from the northern border town of Pafuri, the residents of the villages to the south had time to prepare themselves. Solomao Valoi, one of the village leaders, explained what had happened,

People from the villages of Macandazul, Chimangue and Machamba had been attacked. They were running away from Renamo. They told us about what had happened to them. We knew that this would also happen to us. Some people decided to leave and go to *Joni*, but most would not. The [Frelimo] commanders came into the village and told us that we could have guns to protect ourselves. We took them and fought back.

Volunteers from the villages were issued with weapons and given rudimentary training by the Frelimo forces that were stationed in Massingir. After the militia had repelled the first Renamo raid, residents saw that the village was vulnerable to attack and abandoned it in favour of an encampment on a steep-sided hillock in the Olifantes Valley, known as *Maiaman*. From here, the villagers would venture out during the day to cultivate their fields and graze cattle, and retreat to the camp at nightfall. Despite this more secure camp, the militia patrols and the presence of Frelimo forces in the area, over the next three years Renamo mounted numerous other attacks, killing, kidnapping and raping residents, looting cattle and property, and stealing or destroying crops. Nevertheless, the encampment was never abandoned and the people of Mavodze took a great pride in having played a part in resisting Renamo.

In the light of the atrocities inflicted during the 'second war', it would have been unthinkable for any resident of Mavodze to have so much as contemplated voting for

⁷⁰ Using material from the border areas of the Maputo Hinterland, McGregor argues that the situation in the Renamo zones of destruction was far more complex than has been hitherto understood (1998), but my evidence indicates that the situation in Massingir did, indeed, approximate to Gersony's wholehearted model of destruction.

Renamo in the elections that followed the end of the war. Residents had suffered, fought and died to resist the rebel movement; it was inconceivable that they would now vote for its candidates. Renamo had caused nothing but suffering throughout the war, whereas Frelimo had actively supported the local residents. It had been Frelimo commanders who had trained the male volunteers to fight. It had been Frelimo forces that had supplied guns, landmines, and ammunition for this militia. It had been Frelimo forces that had fought alongside the village residents to keep the Renamo guerrillas at bay. The experiences of the 'second war' in Massingir had not only rendered Renamo un-supportable, but also had yet further established Frelimo as the only legitimate party that could be voted for. Ironically, although the war ultimately brought pluralism to Mozambique, in Massingir it only further consolidated Frelimo's single-party domination.

Sustaining single-party rule in a multi-party state

The Mozambican civil war ended in 1992 and a pluralist political system has, supposedly, been in place since the multi-party elections were held in 1994. However, by the time I carried out fieldwork in the villages of Massingir, almost a decade later, there was still no manifestation of pluralism on the ground. Frelimo was, in effect, continuing to rule through a one-party system. Thus far, this chapter has addressed the origins of Frelimo's support in Massingir since independence; I now examine how the party has sustained this local monopoly in spite of the move to political pluralism at a national level. The key to understanding how this has happened lies in examining the lack of local disengagement between the party and the state and the resulting appropriation by local political actors of state, and other, resources in order to bolster Frelimo party popularity.

These interlinked processes were clearly demonstrated during the Frelimo Party elections that occurred in Mavodze during my fieldwork. The Frelimo Party headquarters for the administrative post of Mavodze was a small half-finished hut that stood about 50 metres from my house. The office was rarely the site of great activity: the party secretary would cycle over from Massingir Velho in the late morning, rest his

bike up against a nearby tree and spend the afternoon inside the hut before cycling home again at about 4:30 pm. Curious to know how he spent his afternoons in a completely bare, semi-constructed hut, I called in on him on two separate occasions; both times I found him fast asleep on the floor. One afternoon in February, on my return to the village from a morning visiting fishermen on the lake, I was surprised to find the office the scene of much commotion. About a dozen bicycles were parked up against the tree; the *chefe do poste* and other village leaders were coming and going with great wads of papers; people were engaged in animated discussions and disagreements; there was even a visitor from the district capital, Massingir. I was eventually able to collar the party secretary to ask him what was going on. "Elections," he responded, "tomorrow the Party is having its elections. We will vote for the secretary and the members of the committee."

The following day I was introduced to 'Comrade Francisco', the First District Party Secretary, who had arrived at the party office on the motorbike usually used by one of the directors in the district administration. The village school had been closed for the day so that the Party could use one of the classrooms for the proceedings. Later in the morning, the delegates and party members from the villages of the administrative post began to arrive in Mavodze. They were ushered into one of the schoolrooms and sat at the desks: At one end of the classroom, in front of the blackboard, a committee of dignitaries sat facing the arrivals: the *chefe do poste*; the director of the school; the incumbent party secretary; the district party secretary; the president of the locality; and the *fiscal* (tax collector and assistant to the *chefe do poste*). The *chefe do poste* stood up and began the meeting by shouting "Viva o Partido do Frelimo!" and punched the air with his fist. "Viva!" the crowd responded with a similar gesture. And again, "Viva Frelimo!" "Viva!" The *chefe do poste* introduced Comrade Francisco who initiated some singing. His song began "Chissano, Chissano, You are our one President. Chissano, Chissano, You have built us schools and roads. You are our President." This was quickly followed up with another chorus of "Viva Frelimo".

The incumbent party secretary stood up and gave a speech documenting the party's recent, and not so recent, achievements. He described how Frelimo had freed the country from the Portuguese, how the party had founded the village. He recalled the suffering that had occurred at the hands of Renamo and how Frelimo had protected

people and had fought the 'bandits'. When the war was over, the secretary continued, Frelimo had rebuilt the school and health post, had brought in teachers and the nurse, had installed the solar-powered water pump and rebuilt the cattle dip tank, had helped restock the farmers' cattle herds, and brought food aid during the floods. At the time, many of these claims surprised me, as I knew much of this reconstruction work had been undertaken by a variety of national and international non-governmental organisations: a German organisation had funded the reconstruction of the school and clinic; a Mozambican NGO had rebuilt the dip tank with financial assistance from German churches; a British NGO had been involved in the cattle restocking; UNICEF had installed the water pump; and the World Food Programme had provided the emergency food aid during the floods. This appeared to go unnoticed by everyone else and the secretary's speech received several rounds of applause.

Once he had finished, the *chefe do poste* explained how the voting would take place. All party members would be given a ballot paper and should put a cross by the name of the candidate who they wished to elect. There would be several ballots, as four committees had to be elected as well as the post of Party Secretary for the administrative post. As the name of a candidate was read out, s/he would stand up so that the other people could see who was who. Of those announced, I recognised the director of the school, the *chefe do poste*, four of the school teachers, the village secretary, tax collector, dip tank attendant, head of the water committee, and each of the four heads of the *bairros*; all of the major positions of responsibility in the village.

The voting took place and people posted their ballot papers into a cardboard box at the front of the classroom. During the voting, I asked one of the lesser-known candidates why he had put his name forward for election. He told me that he hadn't. He had no idea how his name had come to be on the ballot paper and that he did not even want the position, so much so that he was intending to vote for one of the other candidates. The votes were counted in front of the electorate and the results read out and written on the black board. There had been little change: my friend who hadn't wanted the job was not elected, the secretary remained the secretary and the bulk of the committee remained the same, including all the men who held the positions of responsibility in the village.

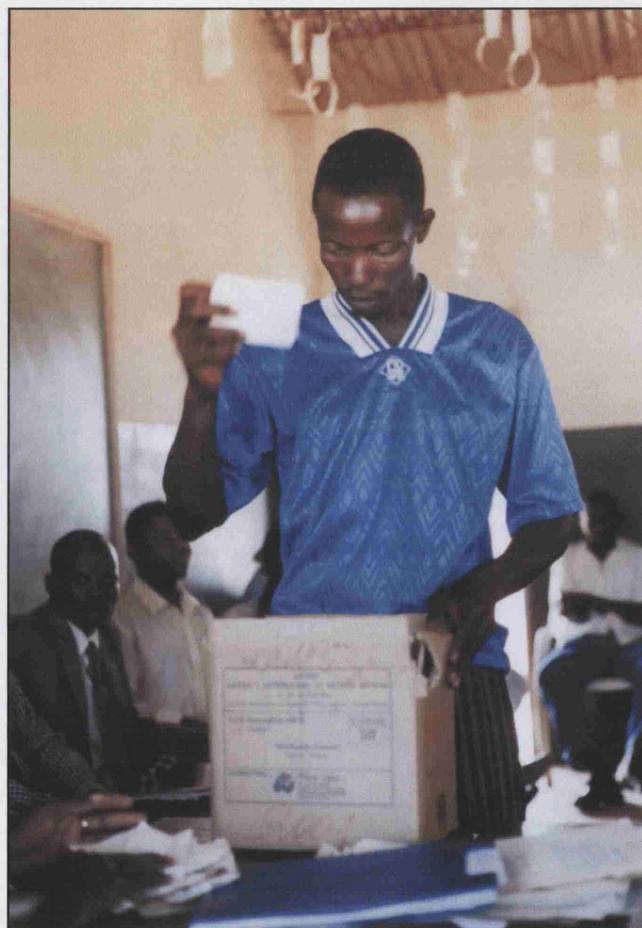


Photo 24: Voting in the Frelimo elections

During the election and interviews conducted in the days following it became clear that local state officials were simultaneously holding important party posts. As one interviewee confirmed, "Frelimo? Oh, they are all Frelimo. All of those people: the secretary, the president, the *chefe do poste*; they are all Frelimo. To get any job around here you need to be a part of Frelimo." It also rapidly became clear that the same political elite had held these positions for the last two decades. There are fixed terms of office for each of the state and party jobs; for example the position of village secretary came up for renewal every five years and the job of party secretary every two years. Although these exact terms of office were not always strictly adhered to — the current party secretary had held the position since 1995 and the village secretary could not remember the last time his office had been renewed — there had been a periodic turnover of officials occupying the positions of authority since independence. However, rather than appointing new figures, the political establishment simply rotated themselves around the different jobs. For example, we can trace the series of people who were appointed to the position of village secretary. Chauque had been appointed to this position following independence in 1976. In 1983 he fell ill and stood down. Chauque then became one of the heads of the four village *bairros* and appointed Armando Jorge Valoi as his successor. Armando was village secretary until 1987, when the head of one of the *bairros*, Armando Manuel Mbombi, replaced him. Armando Manuel Mbombi served as village secretary until 1989 and was then made Frelimo secretary, later being replaced by Armando Jorge Valoi (the former village secretary). Armando Manuel Mbombi went on to become, and is currently, the *fiscal* for the administrative post. In 1989 the head of one of the *bairros*, Alberto Coshang Valoi, was made village secretary and he has retained the post until today.

Those individuals that had been appointed as the village secretary and had completed a term in office have subsequently gone on to serve as party secretaries, *bairro* secretaries, and even as tax collector. The older former leaders, such as the first village secretary, Chauque, although not holding official office, continue regularly to attend most of the party and state administrative meetings as part of an *ad hoc* council that provides advice to the incumbent officials. The local population, therefore, is presented with more or less the same group of leaders who have dominated the political system by rotating important jobs between themselves. Even the former leaders who hold no

official positions continue to *look* as though they hold some position, since they continue to attend all the public and private meetings.

In this way the same local leaders have dominated political life both during the time of the one-party state and, now, after the shift to multi-party rule. With the same group occupying the state positions and the party offices, they are able to dominate all significant spheres of public life. It is this political elite that convenes all public meetings, that is responsible for conflict resolution, that controls the water supply, the cattle dip tank, and the distribution of food aid. It is to members of this group that visitors to the area must first present themselves. Through this control, the political elite (and by association, Frelimo) is able to maintain its grip on power.

Some of the mechanisms by which this is achieved were evident during the Frelimo elections, described above. References to the suffering inflicted on the local residents by Renamo and that Frelimo had come to their assistance were inevitably raised at every public occasion that I attended. The narratives of the war presented by the political leaders were always the same: Frelimo forces joining forces with and supporting the local residents in order to keep the demonic Renamo guerrillas at bay. Through the constant retelling of these stories, the memories of the war were never allowed to fade. Not only did this herald Frelimo as the party of saviours, but it also sustained the fear and mistrust of Renamo, consequently never allowing the opposition party to establish so much as a toehold in the region.

Another, and equally important, means by which the Frelimo elite could retain political domination was through the control and appropriation of development resources. All visitors, whether government representatives or not, were obliged to first meet with the village secretary or *chefe do poste* on arrival in the area. Any organisation wanting to operate in the area had to work with the political elite. When visiting households, touring villages or inspecting fields, either the village secretary, tax collector or *chefe do poste* would act as a 'guide'. If a village meeting were to be convened it would be chaired by one of the same individuals. When NGOs selected beneficiaries or offered jobs as a part of a project, the political elite would, one way or another, assist with the selection process. Village residents would see the (Frelimo) village leaders taking part in every development project or scheme. The party leaders could therefore easily

appropriate the work completed by either the state or NGOs as their own. This was clearly demonstrated during the election speech, in which the secretary reeled off the various NGO contributions to the post-war reconstruction as Frelimo's doing. In addition, the appropriation of state resources and activities, such as the provision of the teachers and healthcare staff, not only bolstered the party's popularity, but also continued to equate Frelimo with the nation. Through party officials' frequent use of school and government vehicles, national insignia (such as the flag of the Republic) became familiar as symbols of Frelimo. Thus, supporting Frelimo was equated to supporting Mozambique; not to do so would be unpatriotic.

In order for the Frelimo leaders to retain control of political life in Massingir it was essential that 'politics' remained a local matter. It is true that political discourses at a national and even provincial level were centred on pluralism. Discussions about the upcoming municipal elections, the gradual decentralisation of power from Maputo, and heated parliamentary debates between the two major parties, dominated the Mozambican media.⁷¹ Rarely, however, did these discussions filter through to the residents of Mavodze. This was clearly demonstrated to me during the Carlos Cardoso Murder Trial. In November 2000, Cardoso, a respected independent journalist, was shot dead in his car near his Maputo office while investigating a banking corruption scandal. The Mozambican authorities came under a barrage of international pressure to bring the perpetrators to justice. In March 2001 the police arrested 6 men for the murder and the case was brought to court in November 2002. The trial was broadcast live on Mozambican radio and television. During the course of the trial several of the defendants confessed to the murder but alleged that the killing had been ordered by Nymphine Chissano, son of President Joaquim Chissano. When this revelation came out I was in Maputo and later travelled to Xai Xai. The trial and allegations had caused a sensation: people were glued to their televisions and radios; one could not get served in shops or restaurants because the staff were hidden behind their newspapers; conversations on buses and taxis were of nothing else. The rumours and conspiracy theories about murder, theft and corruption at the highest levels of government spread like wildfire. When I returned to Mavodze, however, none of the residents had even

⁷¹ Although the lack of independent media throughout Mozambique ensured that such coverage, for the most part, was favourable to the Frelimo government.

heard about it. There was no discussion about the trial, the murder, the president's son or government corruption; quite simply nobody knew about the events that were causing such a furore elsewhere in the country.

Geographic isolation was part of the reason why Mozambican national news rarely arrived in Mavodze and the villages in the Shingwedzi basin. The national press was not widely distributed in the rural areas. Newspapers were seldom seen in the district capital, let alone the villages; in 17 months I never once saw a person reading a newspaper in Mavodze. However, even if the newspapers had been circulated in the rural areas few people would have been able to read them. The papers were printed in Portuguese. Due to the low levels of education in the villages of Massingir few people were literate in their mother tongue language, Shangaan, and even fewer able to read Portuguese.

This relative isolation also limits the local consumption of Mozambican radio. The two Mozambican radio stations that broadcast in Gaza do not have coverage that extends throughout the province and, although it is occasionally possible to pick up Radio Mozambique or Radio Gaza in Massingir, reception is poor and erratic and people tend not to listen to either. However, due to the proximity of South Africa and the installation of radio masts in the Lebombo Mountain range, it is possible to receive clear signals from many of the FM stations transmitting from across the border. There are a number of different stations broadcasting in different languages including English, Afrikaans, Zulu, and, most importantly for the residents of Massingir, Shangaan. Residents depended on these broadcasts for their news, sports and even radio soap operas. All of these, of course, were targeted at a South African audience and were, therefore, South Africa-centric. The result of listening to these stations was that people in Massingir knew exactly what was occurring in the neighbouring country in terms of sport, politics, economics, weather and even celebrity gossip but virtually nothing of current events in Mozambique. This became apparent when I spent an afternoon of listening to a Kaiser Chiefs⁷² football match with Arturo Valoi. Arturo provided me with a detailed commentary of the numerous injury problems that had befallen his beloved 'Chiefs' throughout that soccer season. We also had a long conversation about South African

⁷² One of South Africa's two most popular football teams.

politics with Arturo grilling me about my opinions of Thabo Mbeki's response to Mugabe's much-talked-about land reforms. He knew all about the World Summit on Sustainable Development that had recently been hosted in Johannesburg and could even make some sense of the so-called New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). However, when I asked about the Cardoso trial or other recent events that had occurred in Mozambique, he was ignorant. From listening to his radio, Arturo was fully versed in South African current affairs but was completely unaware of what was happening in his own country.⁷³

Through the lack of access to media the residents of Mavodze were often not aware of events occurring elsewhere in Mozambique. However, this was not always the case with the *chefe do poste*, village secretary or other members of the political elite. The *chefe do poste* possessed a radio that could intermittently receive the national news, and being able to speak Portuguese the *chefe* was able to understand this. Through this limited access, the village leadership were able to disseminate the news items that they regarded as appropriate. In their case it was unsurprising that they were unwilling to discuss the Cardoso Trial, as it dealt with corruption and murder within the highest echelons of the Frelimo leadership. This stain on Frelimo at a national level could blemish the party's image at the village level.

The minimal access to the media was one means by which politics in Mavodze and the neighbouring villages was kept 'localised', and thus firmly in the hands of the Frelimo elite. While this isolated the population from many of the debates and criticisms of the government that were being made at a national level, the residents were also isolated from much of the political apparatus that existed at the provincial and district levels. There was little contact between the district administration and people in Mavodze. The district administrator only twice visited Mavodze whilst I was in the field. The first occasion was to prepare for an official visit by the provincial governor and the second was when he accompanied the governor himself. One informant told me that during the last governor's visit he went to one of the villages with the district administrator. The governor was served some food and began to talk with some of the people. He asked

⁷³ For more detailed examinations of broadcasting and its affects on rural life in Africa refer to the collected essays in Fardon & Furniss (2000). For the role of broadcast media in African politics see the papers in the edited collection by Hyden *et al.* (2002).

them if they knew the administrator, they responded that they had never seen the man before and did not know that he was the administrator. The governor asked the administrator, "How do you do your work when your people do not know you? What have you been doing?" The administrator was replaced two weeks later. It appeared that the current administrator had learned from the mistakes of his predecessor and was making his first visit to the villages in his constituency to pre-empt any awkward questions during the governor's visit.

Just as the district officials would rarely visit the outlying villages, the villagers almost never went to the district administration. Theoretically, if a resident had a problem that could not be satisfactorily resolved by the *chefe do poste* in the villages, the matter would be referred up to the level of the district administration. In reality, however, this rarely happened.⁷⁴ A person taking a matter to the district tribunal would have to be accompanied by various members of his family and other friends to assist him in stating his case. A return journey from Mavodze to Massingir in a local *chapa* (pick-up truck taxi) costs 30,000 MZM (US\$1.30). The cost of transporting the required number of people to a hearing was beyond the means of the majority of village residents.

Many people stated that not only was the cost of transport too high, but the potential penalties that one could incur at the district level were far more severe than those handed out in the local administrative post. One farmer whom I spoke to had been unhappy with the *chefe do poste*'s judgement that he must pay another man a sack of maize worth 277,000 MZM (US\$12.04) as his cattle had eaten some of the other man's crops. I remained puzzled as to why he had not appealed against this unfavourable ruling at the district tribunal. He told me that, if he did pursue the matter to the district level and the judgement went against him, he would have to pay compensation, not in maize, but in cattle — a far more valuable commodity.⁷⁵ He could not afford to risk receiving such a penalty and so he was forced to accept the *chefe do poste*'s judgement.

⁷⁴ I heard of only one case that ever reached the district tribunal and that was when one of the wealthiest men in the area hit and killed a man while driving his truck back from town, having spent the day drinking beer in the local bar. The driver was mysteriously acquitted of any wrong-doing and suffered no retribution. Rumour had it that, before the trial, each of the men sitting on the tribunal had received one head of cattle from the defendant.

⁷⁵ The average head of cattle cost 2,500,000 MZM (US\$109).

In addition to the economic factors, people from the rural areas of the district were unwilling to take disputes to the district administration because it was outside their sphere of influence. Within the village or administrative post people had a wealth of connections that they could rely on. Through kinship ties or friendships, people could often influence decisions made by village leaders, but such negotiations were not possible at the district level. The district officials were further abstracted from village life; they were often from outside the region and perceived as a threat. Villagers, unless wealthy or powerful, saw themselves at a distinct disadvantage in the context of the district tribunal and were, therefore, very reluctant to pursue matters further than the administrative post.

The discussion of politics in Mavodze was centred on the village. The local political elite had succeeded, for the most part, in isolating the villages of the Shingwedzi basin from the discussions related to pluralist politics that were going on elsewhere in Mozambique. Through a variety of mechanisms, including the appropriation of state and non-state resources to bolster party popularity and the revival of memories of the recent war, this leadership had sustained the almost total domination of Frelimo in the locality of Mavodze, despite the national move to pluralist politics. The one-party system continued to operate in the multi-party state.

Dawning disillusionment

While Frelimo monopolised political life in Massingir and remained relatively popular among local residents, the party was not beyond criticism. When I arrived in the region in 2001, several villagers complained about the way the party/state had responded to the disastrous flooding that had occurred in the region the previous year. In February 2000 a combination of a prolonged rainy season and successive cyclones resulted in the catastrophic flooding of the Limpopo basin and wreaked havoc throughout Gaza Province.⁷⁶ Sited high on the plateau between two rivers, the village of Mavodze was not directly affected by the floods. However, as I discussed in the introduction, the River Shingwedzi burst its banks and swamped the fields that people had cultivated on

⁷⁶ For further details on the Gaza floods see Christie & Hanlon (2001).

the flood plain. A number of farmers were unfortunate in getting caught in the floods and had to seek refuge in trees for several days. The floodwaters destroyed that year's crops and many households were left without food or seeds with which to replant. The neighbouring village of Bingo fared worse as it was situated in the Shingwedzi basin and many of the houses were washed away. One of the farmers affected by this disaster told me that afterwards, when the flooding had subsided, people went into town to get food.

Some people went as far as Chokwe to get help. In the towns we saw that the party was helping people. There were new buildings and the party people had new cars. People were receiving food and seeds, so they could plant new crops. In Mavodze, nobody helped us. It was then that we saw that this government is no longer for us. This government is a government for people in towns and cities. We, the people in the countryside, are alone. We saw that after the floods.

On another occasion, the village leadership was meeting in the shade of the tree near the *chefe do poste*'s house. I asked one of the villagers whom I was walking with what the meeting was about. He shrugged and said he didn't know. "Ah, it's just them. All of them love to talk. That is all they do these days; talk, talk and talk. They can talk for hours, but they never do anything anymore. They tell us they will do this and bring that, but most of these things never arrive."

These expressions of dissatisfaction were limited to a minority of my informants and nearly all of these explained that their complaints were related to the recent behaviour of the local Frelimo representatives. Nevertheless, this discontent indicates that, although the local party/state were appropriating the activities of the various NGOs that were working in the region, this was not enough to satisfy the expectations of all the villagers. The small-scale interventions by NGOs were not a sufficient alternative to state service provision in the rural areas. Although the local state representatives would often discuss development initiatives or promise better healthcare, frequently they were unable to deliver such improvements to their constituents. As more promises were left unfulfilled, there was a growing sense of scepticism with the villages. This was initially restricted to general mutterings of discontent aimed at the *chefe do poste* (the senior state representative in the villages). However, as I explore in the next chapter, these

isolated and relatively minor complaints about the actions of the party/state were to develop into far more serious and widespread protests following the development of the Limpopo National Park.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have argued that, while there has been a change from a single-party to a multi-party state at a national level in Mozambique, there has been virtually no effort made to turn this into a reality on the ground in the district of Massingir. Indeed, everyday behaviour demonstrates that there has been neither a disengagement between the Frelimo party and the state nor an emergence of other political parties. The almost total dominance of Frelimo allows the party to continue to rule this region as a one-party state. Heeding Hansen and Stepputat's recent call for more detailed study of what ruling parties actually do when they rule (2001:28), I have examined how Frelimo's continued domination of political life is due, in part, to historical legitimacy, ethnic affiliation and the legacy of the brutal civil war, but also to the mechanisms and techniques utilised by the local political elite in sustaining, for the most part, the popularity of the party through the appropriation of resources and isolating local politics from events that are occurring elsewhere in the country.

Although there is little doubt that the one-party state remains a reality in Massingir despite Mozambique's multi-party system, this is not to argue that residents are unaware of the transition to democracy that occurred at the end of the war.⁷⁷ Far from it. Indeed, like elsewhere in the country, there was a high turnout in the first general election in 1994 and people frequently recounted casting their ballots.⁷⁸ By voting, residents of Massingir considered themselves to have become part of a democracy and would often talk about this. The concept of democracy was usually invoked in terms of "We can do what we want now; we have democracy." This argument was used by several of the

⁷⁷ Using the example of South Africa, Steven Friedman has noted that political systems that are dominated by a single-party are still democracies if they hold regular electoral contests, the opposition parties are free and civil liberties are respected (1999:97-99).

farmers who opted to move out of the communal village and build homesteads closer to their fields, an action that had been forbidden before the war. Democracy was therefore understood in terms of freedom rather than being, as is often assumed, associated with pluralist politics.

One of the effects of the single-party domination of local politics has been that the boundaries between Frelimo, the state and the nation have become indistinct. For the residents of Massingir, it was Frelimo that created an independent Mozambique by liberating the population from Portuguese colonial rule. In adopting a single-party system after independence Frelimo 'became' the Mozambican state. For the residents of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin there was no distinction between the party and the state; indeed, the two concepts were used interchangeably. On coming to power, constructing a sense of 'the nation' was an important priority for the Frelimo state. President Samora Machel spoke of the need to abolish tribal, regional, racial and religious distinctions and to concentrate on building a new country (Machel 1981:43).

This philosophy may not have been successfully implemented throughout the entire country, but it was readily adopted in Massingir. While labour migration to South Africa continued to be an important aspect of people's lives, this chapter has shown that it has been through their experiences of Frelimo in local political life that the residents of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin have fostered a strong sense of national identity. For the villagers to support Frelimo was also to support the new Mozambique. Equally, loyalty to Mozambique equated to loyalty to Frelimo.

The local support for Frelimo, and its nationalist political agenda, was further bolstered during the fighting against Renamo, in what the villagers termed the 'second war'. Frelimo had offered material assistance in the form of weapons and training that had enabled the villagers to protect themselves. The consequence of this was that the villagers saw themselves fighting alongside Frelimo, defending both the village and the party from Renamo attacks. However, the position of the villages added an additional nationalist component to the fighting. The close proximity to the border allowed the

⁷⁸ This election has been often considered a vote for peace, with the end of the war taking a higher priority than any other political issue (see Alden 2001). The voter turnout has decreased in subsequent elections.

villagers to observe the South African government's support of the Renamo forces. Men and supplies were brought through the border via the Kruger National Park. As a result, fighting Renamo was also regarded as defending the Mozambican nation-state.

The local experiences of the war rendered any local support for Renamo as a political party, impossible and Frelimo has sustained its political domination in this region despite the introduction of pluralist politics. However, as the final section of this chapter suggested, recently there has been some erosion of the party's grass-root support in the villages of Massingir. In the next chapter I examine how this disenchantment with the Frelimo state has become more widespread. I return to the discussion about the Limpopo National Park, with which I began this thesis, and argue that the development of this park threatens the livelihoods of the residents of this region, by not only hampering agricultural production (as we saw with Fernando's field), but also in terms of making labour migration even more problematic. Faced with this threat, the villagers have mounted a campaign of physical resistance to interfere with activities of the park authorities. In addition to the day-to-day problems that the park has caused the residents of Mavodze and the surrounding villages, its development, I argue, has marked a significant change in the way the state operates in this region. This change has not simply caused the local populations to resist the park, but also has led them to question their long-held political allegiance to Frelimo.

5. The Limpopo National Park: A park for the people?

Introduction

The short vignette with which I began this thesis describes Nelson Mandela releasing 25 South African elephants into Mozambique in October 2001. With much hype and publicity, this event was the first of a series of animal relocations from South Africa to Mozambique: it paved the way for the creation of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP). This park will eventually join conservation areas in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, forming the largest borderless game reserve in Africa.

Mavodze village lies within the Mozambican section of this superpark, known as the Limpopo National Park. Unbeknownst to me, or the people I had come to study, this was created shortly after I arrived in the region. Although the elephants that had been released by Mr Mandela had caused some damage to fields in the Shingwedzi Valley, this was an isolated event. Shortly after their release, this herd broke through the border fence and returned to South Africa. For the most part, the fact that we were living in a National Park made little difference to the way we lived our lives. This was soon to change.

One of the first signs that the situation was about to change occurred when I was driving into town with a number of other villagers. This journey usually took about 40 minutes and was, on the whole, uneventful. On this occasion we had almost reached the potholed asphalt that led into town, when we turned a corner and a man dressed in green combat fatigues stood in front of a newly constructed checkpoint, blocking our way. He asked to see my passport and relevant documents for the car and, with a colleague, began searching through the various sacks of maize, bundles of clothing, drums of water, bicycles, chickens — and people — that were squeezed into the back. Everyone clambered out and unloaded their belongings and we all stood by the side of the road wondering what was going on. One of the guards informed us that the area was now a National Park, and it was his job to check that we were not transporting any illicit products obtained through poaching. Having meticulously checked the vehicle and its

load, the guards allowed us to go. We all clambered back in, one of the guards lowered the chain barrier and we continued into town.

There was already a gateway at the spot where the checkpoint now stood, which had been constructed some months previously. The gateway had consisted of two lengths of fencing on either side of the road and a large green sign proclaiming that this area was the Limpopo National Park, a joint development venture between the German Development Bank and the Government of Mozambique. Despite a number of trophy-mounted antlers that had been added for decoration, the new construction was uninspiring and had been largely ignored by most people in the nearby villages. Our experience signified a change to all that. The new construction was no longer a decorative gateway to the new National Park, but a checkpoint manned by armed guards that would now control all access to the villages situated between the Olifantes and Limpopo Rivers.

As soon as we had passed the checkpoint the apathy felt about the park disappeared and people erupted in outrage at what had just happened: Who were those guards? Why were they searching us? What were they looking for? How long would they be there for? What was this park all about? How else would it affect peoples' lives? The animated discussions continued as I dropped my companions off in town. By the time I returned home that evening, the news had reached the village and had been greeted with uproar. Residents had been aware of the creation of the Limpopo National Park for some time but the establishment of the checkpoint marked a watershed in relations between the residents and the Park authorities. This was the first time that the Park had directly affected the lives of the people living within its boundaries.

In looking at how the first 14 months of the Limpopo National Park has affected the residents of Mavodze and the surrounding villages, this chapter continues to explore how the changing cross-border political relations between the Mozambican and South African states shape the lives of these people. In the previous two chapters we have seen how the souring of relations between the neighbouring states following Mozambican independence resulted in changes to the patterns of labour migration and brought war to the villages of the Shingwedzi Basin. With the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa in 1994, the hostilities between the neighbouring states ceased. The Great

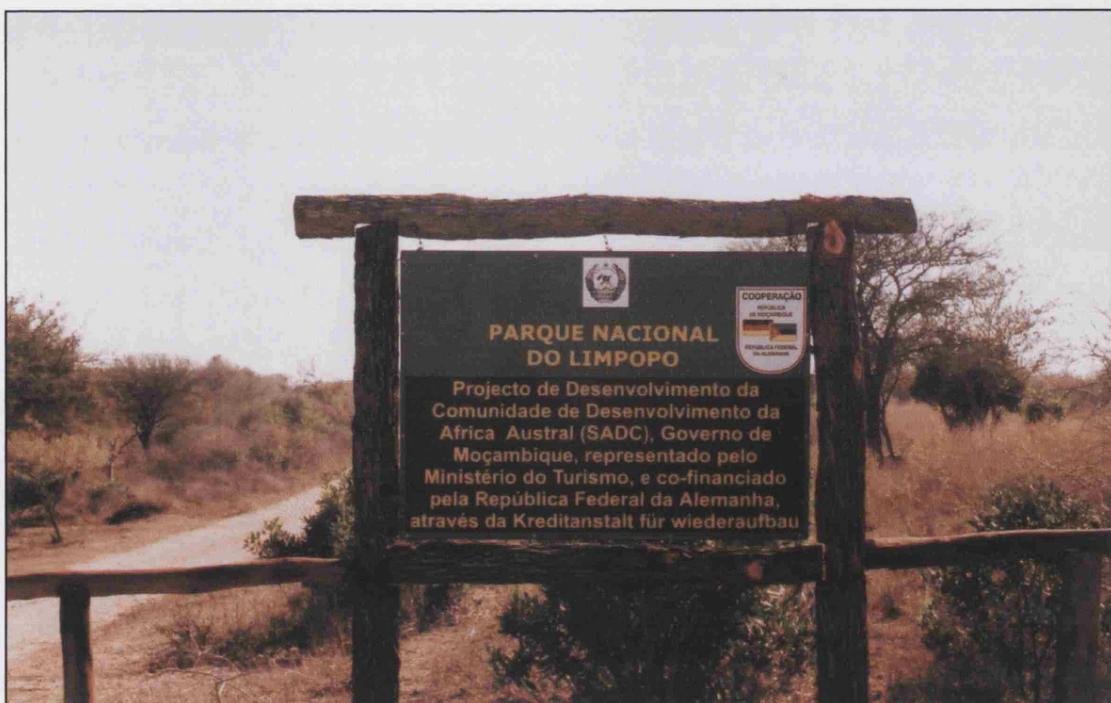


Photo 25: The Limpopo National Park entrance sign at the new checkpoint



Photo 26: The Limpopo National Park animal sanctuary

Limpopo Transfrontier Park, with its emphasis on fostering cooperation and the tearing down of border fences, has been heralded as a symbol of this new regional unity.

Regional unity, however, is not the only objective of the park. This chapter explores some of the other vested interests — real and potential — that the different states have in the development of the Transfrontier Park's development. Equally, as we have seen already in this thesis, border relations are not only a matter for the neighbouring states, but often concern other institutions or interested parties. As earlier chapters have argued, labour migration between Mozambican and South Africa was not simply a matter of interstate cooperation but also involved the interests of the mining companies. Likewise, in its later manifestation as illegal border-crossing it served the interests of farmers seeking to exploit cheap and vulnerable labour power. Similarly, this chapter argues that the development of the Great Limpopo National Park has involved a far broader range of interested parties than just the Mozambican, Zimbabwean and South African governments. An array of different groups, including NGOs, European Banks, international conservation groups and intergovernmental institutions, has been associated with the design, funding, creation and management of the superpark. This has not only led to confusion among local residents as to the ownership of the park, but also resulted in further changes to the way that the state operates in the Mozambique-South Africa borderland. In the previous chapter, I noted how Frelimo had appropriated some of the services that had been 'outsourced' to NGOs in this remote region. In this chapter I argue that the development of the park has led to a further 'outsourcing' of the duties that were once thought to be the responsibility of the state, including some of the more coercive aspects of governance.

This chapter argues that, rather than benefiting the residents of Massingir, the park is endangering their livelihoods and threatening their way of life. There has been little attempt to involve the local residents in the planning and design of the new park and consequently their interests have been marginalized. I argue that the park jeopardizes the agricultural basis to local livelihood strategies as well as further limiting the possibilities for labour migration. Although at a regional level the creation of the park is concerned with taking down fences and removing borders, for the residents of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin it is doing quite the reverse. While the fences will be removed, these were never the major obstacles for the young men of Massingir migrating to work

in South Africa. The problems were always the animals and the guards. The Transfrontier Park seeks to increase both of these. Rather than dismantling the border, for the people of Massingir, the Limpopo National Park is creating a more impermeable one.

Background to the Limpopo National Park

In 1969 the Portuguese colonial government designated the region in which I conducted fieldwork a hunting concession known as *Coutada 16*. In theory this was to preserve the wildlife populations and other natural resources so that the (white) colonial elite could hunt for big game trophies. In practice, however, the limited capacity of both the colonial and post-colonial states made it difficult to enforce conservation laws. Indeed, few of my informants were aware of the area's conservation status prior to the establishment of the Limpopo National Park (LNP). In November 2001 the Government of Mozambique upgraded the conservation status of *Coutada 16* and renamed the area the Limpopo National Park (Boletim de Republica, Decree 38/2001). The park covers an area of over one million hectares, from the Zimbabwean border to the north, the South African Kruger National Park to the west, the Olifantes River to the south and the Limpopo River to the east.⁷⁹ While this entire area was officially designated as National Park, during the first 14 months of its existence most of the activity on the ground was concentrated in the 'wildlife sanctuary', a fenced-off breeding area between the South African border and the village of Massingir Velho (see Map 2) where transferred animals from the Kruger National Park were released. Although vast in itself, the Limpopo National Park forms only a part of a larger regional conservation project that will eventually link the LNP with the Kruger National Park in South Africa, and the Gonarezhou National Park, Manjinji Pan Sanctuary and Malipali Safari Area in Zimbabwe. Known as the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP), this massive transfrontier superpark will cover over 35,000km², an area larger than that of Belgium.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ The western boundary is still not entirely clear, as there appears to be a contradiction between the coordinates and the geographic description provided in Decree 38/2001 (LNP Management Plan, Second Draft 2004:6).

⁸⁰ The three heads of state signed an international treaty to establish the GLTP in Xai Xai on 9 December 2002, although Mozambique and Zimbabwe are yet to fully ratify this agreement.

It is envisaged that the park will eventually be one component of an even larger, 100,000km², Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) spanning the border regions of South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe (see Map 1).

While these conservation projects are recent developments and have yet to be fully implemented, the concept of bi- or multi-lateral cooperation in this field is not new to Southern Africa. General Jan Christian Smuts first raised the idea of a transfrontier park in the 1920s, when he proposed a game reserve linking the Kruger Park to Rhodesia (Wolmer 2003:268). The concept was toyed with again in the 1930s and 1940s, when a larger park was conceived, spanning areas of Rhodesia, South Africa, Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique) and the Bechuanaland Protectorate (now Botswana) (Duffy 1997:443; Wolmer 2003:269). The Dongola Board, as it was known, was eventually shelved due to objections raised by the powerful mining and cattle-ranching industries in the region. In the 1970s a Portuguese biologist rekindled the debate by suggesting a joint Mozambique-South African conservation area encompassing the Kruger National Park and *Coutada 16*. However, once again this failed to come to fruition as Portuguese colonial rule came to an end and Mozambique gained independence in 1975. It was not until the early 1990s, when the South African National Parks Board commissioned a feasibility study on the Mozambican side of the border (Tinley & van Riet 1991), that the long-held plans for the international conservation area began developing into reality.

The concept of transfrontier natural resource management is by no means unique to Southern Africa; a global tourism conference held in Vancouver in 1988 listed 70 different transfrontier nature reserves throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia, as well as Africa (Thorsell & Harrison 1990:13-15). The number of such parks has continued to increase since this conference and the notion of transfrontier conservation areas has become a well-established paradigm in the conservation discourse. The ideological framework of this derives in part from the romantic eco-centric philosophy of 'bioregionalism' that emerged in North American counterculture during the 1970s (Wolmer 2003:262; Aberley 1999). This essentially argues that place should be defined by "its life forms, its topography and its biota, rather than by human dictates; a region governed by nature, not legislature" (Sale 1985:43, cited in Wolmer 2003:262). This notion is a move away from creating islands of protected biodiversity, which has, until recently, been the dominant practice in African conservation, in favour of a more

holistic approach that attempts to encompass a far larger area (Koch 1998). In the case of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, the idea is to remove the fences and other 'artificial' or 'man-made' boundaries and create a vast 'natural' ecosystem. In doing this it is hoped that biodiversity is increased, the gene pool enlarged and the migratory ranges for large mammals extended.

This latter point has been particularly emphasised in the context of the Limpopo Park; much has been made in the park's publicity material of the re-establishment of so-called 'ancient' routes of animal migration,⁸¹ especially those of elephants, which had existed before the imposition of the 'unnatural' borders by the colonial powers.⁸² The elephants were of key importance to the GLTP. The elephant population of the Kruger National Park had exceeded the park's recommended carrying capacity by approximately 2000 and the South African authorities were anxious to avoid the damaging publicity associated with a large elephant cull. The relocation of the South African animals to Mozambican territory would alleviate the elephant problem in Kruger and avoid the need for a cull. For this reason the South African National Parks Board (SANParks) was especially enthusiastic for the Limpopo National Park to accept the animals and applied considerable pressure on the LNP authorities to organise this relocation as quickly as possible.

Regional ecology was not the only consideration that led to the establishment of the Transfrontier Park. The project, as William Wolmer notes, has appealed to a far broader coalition of interests (Wolmer 2003). This not only encompasses biologists and conservationists but also the neo-liberal development fraternity, including the German Development Bank (KfW⁸³) and the World Bank. The tourism potential of the massive park was seen as a means of generating substantial revenues for all three participating

⁸¹ The ecological basis to these 'ancient' migratory routes of large mammals is disputed by Norman Owen-Smith, who argues that migrations within Kruger Park are north-south, rather than east-west, and therefore it is unlikely that there will be anything more than local animal migrations within the GLTP (personal communication 2004). The quick return of 'Mandela's' elephants to their home territory in the KNP raises further doubts to the ecological basis to the Transfrontier Park.

⁸² See for example Goodwin's article in National Geographic (2001b) or the pamphlet promoting Mia Couto's (a Mozambican author and ecologist) recent book launch in the UK (Serpent's Tail & Arcadia 2004; see also SANParks 2003).

⁸³ Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau.

countries — particularly through increasing existing park-based revenues. Although the Kruger Park attracted over one million tourists in 2002 (South African Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 2003), the park is still not operating at full capacity. By creating the largest protected area in Africa, it is hoped that the prestigious superpark will attract more visitors to the region, especially from North America and Europe. The South African tourist infrastructure is far more developed than that of Mozambique or Zimbabwe, but the larger park has attracted considerable interest from the private sector and it is hoped that the park will have a ‘honey-pot’ effect and increase tourism development throughout the region. Mozambique’s extensive unspoilt coastline, in particular, is hoped to add a ‘surf-and-turf’ dimension to the visitors’ experience; having explored the game parks, tourists can then relax on the pristine beaches and explore the coral reefs of the Indian Ocean.

The Transfrontier Park’s potential to increase tourist revenue is undoubtedly attractive to the governments of the three states involved in the project, but there are also broader political motivations to participating in the scheme. Transfrontier Parks such as the GLTP are also often termed ‘Peace Parks’. This is based on the idea that a transfrontier conservation project is not only preserving an ecologically important area, but is also fostering inter-state collaboration and cooperation through the joint management of this environment. A transfrontier conservation area is seen as having the potential to diffuse border disputes or tensions stemming from competition over natural resources and also to generate greater trust between the different governments (McNeil 1990). This latter point has been particularly important in Southern Africa where, under the apartheid regime, South Africa was involved in covert warfare against many of the frontline states, including Mozambique (see Chapter 4). Through the establishment of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, it is hoped that “nature has the power to heal [the] old wounds” (Koch 1998:54) between the two former enemies. South Africa in the early 1990s, despite the continuing process of reform, remained politically isolated: involvement in conservation projects, such as the Transfrontier Park scheme, was one way it could rejoin the international community.⁸⁴ This was especially relevant for the

⁸⁴ During the 1970s the WWF launched a fundraising scheme known as the 1001 club, whereby 1001 individuals paid US\$10,000 to become members of this exclusive organisation. Members included business and establishment figures from all around the world, including Robert McNamara, Prince Philip, and Henry Ford II, as well 60 white South Africans. Few other international clubs welcomed white South

white-dominated South African wildlife industry, as it was felt that through this regional cooperation it could begin to distance itself from its infamous apartheid past.⁸⁵

All three of the participating nations stood to benefit from the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, yet South African interests were very much the driving force behind the project. Much of the impetus for this came from the Peace Parks Foundation (PPF), a South African NGO that had been established in 1997 by Anton Rupert, a South African tobacco millionaire and former president of WWF South Africa.⁸⁶ In 1990 Rupert met Mozambique's President Chissano to discuss establishing a permanent link between protected areas in Mozambique and neighbouring Swaziland, Zimbabwe and South Africa (PPF 2004b). Rupert was also instrumental in generating World Bank interest in the project (Wolmer 2003:270), gaining the personal support of Nelson Mandela (see Chapter 1) and, through the Peace Parks Foundation, securing over Rand 65m⁸⁷ of funding from the German Development Bank (KfW) and other smaller donors. The Mozambican Ministry of Tourism has joined with the Peace Parks Foundation to "assist the [Mozambican] National Directorate of Conservation Areas (DNAC) in overseeing the development of the Limpopo National Park" (GLTP 2004). Although the Peace Parks Foundation is officially only *assisting* the Mozambican Government, in fact the South African organisation plays the dominant role in managing the Limpopo National Park.

The Project Implementation Unit, directed by an employee of the Peace Parks Foundation, is responsible for the day-to-day management of the LNP and developing the systems and infrastructures needed to make the project a success. This is a considerable task. Although the area has been declared a National Park, the various governments have agreed to the principle of a transfrontier project and it has the backing of a number of prestigious regional and international organisations and donors,

Africans at that time and the 1001 club provided them with an opportunity to mingle and do business with other international tycoons (Bonner 1993:68-69).

⁸⁵ There is evidence to show that South African military and wildlife personnel were involved in poaching and smuggling ivory during the apartheid era (Ellis 1994). The South African wildlife authorities also acquired a reputation for the forced relocation of people living in areas designated as protected areas (see Fabricus & de Wet 2002).

⁸⁶ Rupert was involved in the creation of the WWF 1001 club and has had close ties to extreme rightwing Afrikaner organisations (see Ellis 1994; Bonner 1993).

⁸⁷ Approximately US\$7m.

anyone familiar with the region will know that the Mozambican side of the park cannot really be compared to South Africa's highly-developed Kruger National Park. The Mozambican sector lacks even the most basic infrastructure: there are no roads or bridges, let alone the accommodation, electricity or water supplies required to attract the mainstream tourist market. The wildlife populations, especially those of the large mammals, were decimated during the civil war and have yet to recover. Like many other regions of Mozambique, the park and the surrounding area contain an unknown number of landmines which render the area unsafe. Due to these and other constraints, the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, although agreed in principle, has yet to be officially inaugurated and the international border between South Africa and Mozambique remains unchanged. For although a small section of the border fence between Mozambique and South Africa was ceremonially removed after the signing of the tri-partite agreement by the heads of state in December 2002, this was a publicity event that made no difference to the status of the border: the fence and border posts remain, the immigration services continue to patrol the area, and the migration laws remain unchanged.

Although the transfrontier aspect of the project has yet to become a reality, work has commenced on developing the Mozambican sector of the park. The project implementation unit began training staff towards the end of 2001 and work on the ground began in earnest in early 2002. The planning and development of the Limpopo National Park was intended to follow a so-called 'new approach' to conservation management that had gained prominence in Africa during the early 1990s.

A new approach to conservation in Africa

By the late 1980s it was clear that wildlife management throughout Africa was in crisis. Illegal hunting had drastically reduced wildlife populations and resource extraction in protected areas continued unabated. The preservationist model that underpinned park management systems throughout Eastern and Southern Africa was proving ineffective (Fletcher 1990; Gibson & Marks 1993). This policy of enforced exclusion of people from vast tracts of land in order to preserve the 'unspoilt' landscape and its fauna had

stemmed from colonial ideologies of preserving game populations for predominantly white hunting expeditions (Grove 1987), such as those conducted by the Portuguese in *Coutada 16*. This echoes the popular Western dual perception of Africa: that in which the continent is either seen as a hellish heart of darkness engulfed in war and savagery, populated with faceless peoples suffering from famine and disease; or as an unspoilt Eden where great herds of animals are free to roam the pristine luscious grasslands under expansive blue skies. The most notable difference between these two views of the continent is that the image of the African hell is constructed around people, whereas the African Eden is empty of Africans entirely. Outdated and inadequate, policies based on these images of Africa needed to be replaced: international conservation organisations and African wildlife departments looked for new approaches to wildlife management.

This search coincided with a broader trend in development studies to encourage the participation of local people in the design and management of programmes that were intended for their benefit; a shift from 'top-down' to 'bottom-up' planning and practice, to use the development jargon (Roodt 2001:471; see also Oakley & Marsden 1984; Korten 1990; Chambers 1997). Embracing this new approach, conservationists emphasised the need to balance the overall goals of protecting wildlife with the needs of the people living in and around the parks and protected areas. This involved a shift away from the isolating preservationist strategy of old, to a more inclusive concept of conservation involving more integrated projects that attempted to "ensure the conservation of biodiversity by reconciling the management of protected areas with the social and economic needs of local people" (Wells & Brandon 1992:ix). These calls to include 'local participation' and 'community development' as part of conservation projects are now ubiquitous from the level of the World Bank to the smallest NGO, although they are often framed in the more contemporary terms of 'social capital' and 'civil society'. The redistribution of the benefits of conservation projects to the people whose livelihoods have been affected is central to this new approach (Neumann 1997:561). Without involving the "participation and cooperation of the rural people whose lives they will invariably alter", warn Anderson and Grove, "policies for National Parks, game reserves, forest production and soil conservation programmes are unlikely to be successfully implemented" (1987:9).

In keeping with these current trends in conservation policy, the management plans and publicity material of The Limpopo National Park (and, by association, The Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park) embrace this inclusive community development approach. One of the primary objectives of the Limpopo National Park, as stated in the Management Plan, is to:

Ensure the participation of local communities in the development and management of the LNP and to ensure an equitable flow of benefits to these communities. Such benefits should include equity-sharing in tourism developments and operations, human resource development and capacity building, employment creation, the development of SMME [Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise] opportunities and improved natural resource management leading to improved livelihoods. (LNP Management Plan 2004:9)

The Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park website states that the park “will be a world-class eco-tourism destination, with extensive private sector involvement, but managed to optimise benefits for sustainable economic development of local communities” (GLTP 2004). Nelson Mandela, speaking as patron of the Peace Parks Foundation, also noted the importance of local participation in the scheme:

If the government unilaterally decides to establish transfrontier parks without consulting the community, then the community will not cooperate. But if the community is properly consulted and becomes part of the process, then they will cooperate —especially if they derive some benefits from the transfrontier park system. (Cited in Goodwin 2001a:30)

All of this rhetoric neatly conforms to the so-called ‘new approach’ to African conservation, but how does all of this convert into practice on the ground? In the next part of this chapter I demonstrate that those involved in early stages of development and implementation of the Limpopo National Park failed to adequately consider the interests of the people living within the park boundaries. Far from including or benefiting them, the activities, thus far, have compromised and endangered their livelihoods.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ When I left the field in January 2003 measures were being taken to readdress the issue of the people living in and around the park. I have no means to assess the changes that have taken place during the period since I left Massingir. The argument presented in this chapter, therefore, is based on data collected during the first 14 months of the Park’s existence.

When the Government of Mozambique abolished *Coutada 16* and created the Limpopo National Park in 2001, the residents living within its boundaries remained oblivious to the change. Despite all the calls for the participation of local residents in the planning and design of conservation projects, the people living in the Limpopo Park were not even informed, let alone consulted, about the redesignation of what they understood to be their land into a new national — soon to be international — conversation area. Some residents were vaguely aware that the region had previously been officially designated a hunting concession, but this had made little difference in terms of everyday life. There had been virtually no enforcement of the conservation laws and people were free to hunt and use the area's natural resources as they pleased. As one informant put it to me, “*Coutada 16* means nothing to us; it only exists on their [the Government's] maps. This is our land and we can do what we want with it, as we have always done.” In actual fact, initially, the upgraded status of the region had no effect on day-to-day activities and the villagers, like me, continued our lives as usual, blissfully ignorant of the fact that we were now living in a National Park.

When the news of the National Park was finally announced to the villagers in the Shingwedzi basin, they paid little attention. The new park had been described as a new ‘project’ that was going to be working in the region: a term not unfamiliar to people, as since the end of the war in 1992 a whole host of organisations had come to the villages with their ‘projects’. For the most part, these had been small-scale programmes concerned with rebuilding infrastructure, restocking animals, providing clean water, vaccinating children, training agricultural extension workers, or distributing food aid. Some families benefited directly from such interventions, but they had little overall effect on village life. It was based on this understanding of ‘projects’ that people dismissed the ‘park project’ as nothing to be concerned about.

As we saw in the opening section to this chapter, the residents’ initial lack of concern was not to last. The situation changed when the park authorities constructed a checkpoint, manned by armed guards, to control the traffic to and from the villages of the Shingwedzi Basin.

Transforming hunters into poachers

The two men who had searched my car were part of a contingent of 29 Mozambican game wardens who were the first to be recruited and trained to work in the Limpopo National Park.⁸⁹ The warden positions had been advertised in Massingir, but the minimum educational requirement excluded nearly all the residents of the park. Instead, the applicants came from elsewhere in Southern Mozambique, either from Maputo, Inhambane, or from other districts of Gaza. Many of those whom I spoke to had received military training and been soldiers for Frelimo during the civil war. Sixty applicants had been short-listed and had attended an assessment process in Massingir, where their physical fitness, tracking and bush skills, and basic firearm techniques were evaluated. Thirty successful applicants were then sent to the South African Wildlife College near Hoedspruit, South Africa, for further training. This training, selection and recruitment process was organised and carried out by former members of the South African military, now working as conservationists. The transformation of the former South African military operatives into conservationists is ironic, not only because there is evidence to suggest that the South African Defence Force was heavily involved in ivory smuggling and poaching during the war (see Ellis 1994), but also because many of the wardens who were being trained were former Frelimo troops who had fought against the South African-sponsored Renamo rebels. Once trained, the wardens were organised by the anti-poaching coordinator, a former Mozambican Army Major, and posted within the Park. These wardens were to become the focus of many of the grievances expressed by the Park's residents.

The primary role of the field rangers was to protect the park's wildlife. This brought them into direct conflict with the local population. Until this point my neighbours and informants had never been subject to hunting prohibitions: trapping animals and hunting with dogs was a source of meat, a means of protecting crops, and also important in terms of making ritual offerings to ancestral spirits (see Chapters 2 & 6). And

⁸⁹ When I left the field in January 2003 there were only these 29 wardens (or field rangers). However, recruitment and training continued and by the end of December 2003 there were 73 rangers deployed in the Park (PPF 2004a).

prohibitions, it seemed, had initially been scarcely necessary. Several of my informants stated that, although hunting was important to them, only a small number of animals were actually killed because of the limited technology available. One man told me, "Hunting without guns is not easy. A man cannot kill many animals with only dogs or traps. He may kill one *gazelle*⁹⁰ and share it with his family and friends. That will be sufficient." This situation was different during the war with Renamo when the government formed civilian militias and began distributing semi-automatic assault rifles. "With an AK [AK-47]," my informant continued, "hunting is much easier. In a single day a man could kill five or six animals. All we had to do was wait by the river at dusk and the animals would come to drink. We had so much meat we all grew fat." Other people also reminisced about the abundance of food shortly after Frelimo had distributed weapons in the region. One of the fishermen explained that his job became far easier, "All we had to do was row out into the lake and drop in a couple of grenades. The fish would just float to the surface."⁹¹ Such statements might appear to suggest that the need for wildlife conservation was, indeed, acute, but the level of hunting was about to revert back to something closer to its former state.

This bountiful period was not to last; hunting, even with guns, became more difficult as the game populations dwindled and more dangerous as the frequency and brutality of Renamo attacks in the area increased (see Chapter 4). At the end of the war firearm possession was outlawed and there were several, albeit largely unsuccessful, attempts to collect the weapons. Although many guns remained hidden in the area rather than being surrendered to the UN or Frelimo,⁹² for the most part these are no longer used for hunting, largely due to the lack of ammunition and the threat of punishment if caught with a weapon. Certainly during my time in Massingir, both in 1997-8 and 2001-3, most people hunted only on a limited basis using either traps or dogs.

In mid-December 2001 — soon after the incident with the checkpoint — a contingent of field rangers visited Mavodze and organised a village meeting. The guards explained

⁹⁰ *Gazelle* was the generic term used locally to refer to all antelope species.

⁹¹ Another fishermen told of a similar, but more effective, fishing technique that involved attaching a grenade to an anti-personnel mine and then throwing this lethal device into the lake.

⁹² A number of informants told me that there were large weapons caches buried in the Park and on several occasions I was shown handguns and automatic rifles that were left over from the war (see also Vines 1998:40-42).

that they had been trained in South Africa and were going to be patrolling the area to protect the wildlife. Hunting — or poaching, as it was now termed — was no longer allowed and their role was to enforce this ban. A similar change occurred in Rhodesia during the colonial period, where new laws redefined African hunters as poachers and established the white settlers as gamekeepers whose role was to protect the animals from the Africans (Hill 1996; see also Gibson & Marks 1995). This reclassification indicates that the creation of National Parks and other conservation areas is not simply a matter of redefining boundaries and establishing protected areas, but also involves a redefinition of people's roles and statuses. However, while the newly-trained rangers assumed their anti-hunting message was clear, the villagers interpreted the new regulations in quite different terms.

The villagers understood 'hunting' as referring to killing large mammals such as elephants or rhinos. Since such animals had not been seen in the area for years and hunting them without firearms was considered ludicrous, they had no complaints about the new prohibition. Nobody considered it to mean that hunting antelope and other smaller mammals had become illegal, so people continued to snare and hunt such animals as they had done before. They were therefore shocked and furious when the game wardens arrested a man for killing an antelope. The 'poacher' was taken to the ranger station near the new checkpoint and interrogated. During the course of this he was badly beaten and fined 4,500,000 MZM (US\$195) — an astronomical amount in local terms — and released.

Corporal punishment was widely used in the process of establishing the presence of the park and the authority of its personnel. Over the course of my fieldwork, I spoke to three other men who had been arrested, fined and also badly beaten up by the field rangers. All four reported that they had received beatings to the soles of their feet and one claimed that the rangers had burned his feet using embers from a fire.⁹³ The news of this abuse spread quickly through the different villages. It did nothing to legitimise the enterprise and compounded the atmosphere of fear and general distrust of those working for the park. After one man was arrested and fined for fishing in one of the rivers,⁹⁴

⁹³ Similar reports of abuse by park rangers have also been reported by Rachel DeMotts (DeMotts 2003)

⁹⁴ The park manager later apologised for this error and returned the money and confiscated nets.

people became increasingly confused about which activities were permitted and which were not.

This sense of confusion was widespread. One of my friends explained, “We don’t understand why they [the field rangers] have done this. Why were those men beaten? They were not even hunting within the park. They were hunting by the river, a long way from the park. We know where the park is; we put up the fence. The *gazelles* they killed were nowhere near that area.” Although people were now aware that a park had been created, many understood this to be just the small sanctuary area that had been fenced off near the village of Massingir Velho. The animal sanctuary was a 350 km² enclosure that straddled the South African border to the west of the village (see Map 2). The creation of the sanctuary was the first part of the process to restock the Limpopo National Park with game. The animals that were being relocated from the Kruger National Park were brought in by truck and unloaded in the sanctuary. The area was designed to provide a secure environment, allowing these animals to reproduce: once populations had grown they would be released into the larger park.

It was not surprising that local residents had assumed that the sanctuary and the park that everyone had been talking about were one and the same. The sanctuary had been the focus of much of the Project Implementation Unit’s work during the first year. The villagers had witnessed or, in some cases, been a part of the frenzy of activity that had been going on there: vehicles drove from Massingir to the sanctuary on an almost daily basis; bulldozers had created a network of new roads through the bush; 45 men from Massingir Velho and Mavodze had been employed to erect the fencing; and busloads of journalists, film crews and other VIPs had been brought in to witness the game releases or tour the area. With very little activity evident outside this reserve, the villagers understood the sanctuary, rather than the entire area in which they lived, to be the new National Park and therefore considered it perfectly acceptable to continue to hunt outside the fenced-off zone.

The prohibition of hunting, and the punishment beatings and exorbitant fines for those continuing to hunt, were not the only sources of conflict that had erupted between the park authorities and the people living inside it. The annexation of land and water sources for the animal sanctuary caused a series of altercations in Massingir Velho,

which later resulted in several relocations. Four families living within the area were forced to leave the enclosure and resettle in the village. Interestingly, the park authorities had been unaware of their presence in the area and it had been the *chefe do poste* who had ordered them to move. The *chefe do poste*, who remained an adamant believer in Frelimo's post-independence policy of villagisation, had disapproved of people living outside the communal villages for some time but had been unable to do anything about it. The creation of the sanctuary provided him with the means of reintegrating these "backward people" into the more "developed villages". The fact that the *chefe do poste* used the activities of the park to pursue his own personal political agenda is by no means unusual for, as Ferguson has demonstrated in Lesotho (1990), development programmes often result in the extension of political authority through one guise or another.

While the forcibly resettled people were extremely unhappy about their situation, their numbers were too small for this to become a major source of conflict. A far greater problem was the restricted access to cultivable land and important water resources.

Threatened livelihoods

The animal sanctuary extended from the South African border to the Olifantes River. While much of this area had been used only for hunting or grazing cattle, the area near the river was important for flood-retreat maize cultivation during the dry season and for collecting water. The fences erected for the sanctuary prevented the villagers from gaining access to these vital resources. One of the men from Massingir Velho explained that the village borehole did not provide enough water for the entire population and so people had to use water from the river, both for their own consumption and for that of their livestock. As compensation for the restricted access, the park authorities offered to instal a second borehole in the village. While some villagers agreed that this was a fair settlement, others continued to oppose the sanctuary. "They promise us a borehole now, but when will it come?" asked one old man. "These sort of people always come and tell us they will do something and it never happens. All they do is talk. I want to see this borehole and pump; only then will I agree to this." Another man was concerned about

his livestock, asking, "A borehole is great for the people but what about the cattle? There will not be enough water. The cattle must drink from the river." Ultimately, however, the park authorities swept these problems aside, the sanctuary was completed, and a new borehole was promised for the village.

At one level the complaints expressed by my informants reflect their fears relating to the development of the park, but they are also indicative of residents' responses to state planning in general. The state planners no doubt intend their blueprints to be straightforward, but in practice such bureaucrats frequently disregard the messy realities of human life (see also Ferguson 1990:194). The residents of the villages of Massingir had learned this through experience: boreholes had been dug in the past but left without pumps through lack of funds; the cattle diptank had been rehabilitated but nobody had been trained to use it; extension officers had been employed but their motorbikes lacked the fuel to travel to the villages. It was unsurprising that residents viewed the borehole proposed by the park to compensate for the restricted access to the river with some suspicion. As it transpired these suspicions were well justified for, although the sanctuary was completed in June 2002, the new water source was not unveiled until 12 months later (PPF 2003).

The fence that had been built around the sanctuary prevented the villagers cultivating some of their land and restricted access to the river, yet it did not prevent animals that had been relocated from Kruger Park getting out. Shortly after the restocking began, small herds of antelope could be spotted grazing by the roadside between Mavodze and Massingir Velho. These were readily identifiable as South African animals by virtue of their lack of fear of motor vehicles, having been conditioned to their presence in Kruger Park. A number of residents reported seeing antelope and other animals, including zebras and kudu, in the area near the sanctuary. Although, as mentioned below, these animals were easy to hunt, they also constituted a threat to people's crops. Several farmers told me that they had seen animals eating the crops in their fields, both in the Shingwedzi and Olifantes Valleys. This enraged local residents because food supplies were already very low as a result of the lack of rain; seeing a protected animal eating what little they had been able to grow, and being unable to add it to their food stores, was too much to bear.

In addition to animals escaping from the sanctuary and destroying crops, there was also a problem of the increasing presence of lions in the area. The implementation unit had agreed not to move any predatory animals into the park while people were still living there. However predator-free, the sanctuary adjoined the Kruger Park that is famous for its lion population. If harmless animals could escape the sanctuary, more dangerous ones were equally able to enter it. In December 2002 a number of game guards reported seeing a pride of lions entering the sanctuary from Kruger Park by crawling under the fence. Shortly after this I received a number of reports from farmers who claimed their cattle had been victims of lion attacks. Although I could not substantiate these reported attacks, people living in Mavodze and the surrounding villages became increasingly worried about this threat to their herds but could do little to protect them.

Predators were not the only threat to the livestock in the area. As we have seen, one of the reasons for the shelving of the plans for a cross-boundary conservation area in the 1930s and 1940s was the objection raised by the cattle-ranching industry in the region. The ranchers saw the transmission of disease from game to domestic herds as a threat to their business, particularly the risk of Foot and Mouth Disease and Bovine Tuberculosis. This risk has not disappeared. Elsewhere measures against the spread of diseases have been taken. In Zimbabwe for example the European Union has committed €10m for a veterinary fence to protect livestock.⁹⁵ In Mozambique, however, the lack of such precautions has left the local cattle herds vulnerable to infection. The first outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) was reported in September 2002 and by November a ban on the movement of animals within Gaza Province came into effect. Although the park authorities attributed the outbreak of the disease to a herd of buffalo that had come into the area through a hole in the border fence created by the 2000 floods, rather than to the restocking of animals that they had initiated, the local population blamed the Limpopo National Park. They were convinced that the animals that had been introduced by the park had transmitted the disease. “These buffalo have been in this area for years,” commented one cattle-owner, “We have never had a problem with disease until now. The disease only arrived when they started bringing in their animals. The park caused

⁹⁵ These funds have been put on hold due to political instability and donor concerns (Wolmer 2003: 272). An electric fence has been built along the Botswana-Zimbabwe border by the Botswanan Government officially to restrict the spread of FMD, but various parties suggest that it is to limit the influx of Zimbabwean migrants (BBC 2003; Carroll 2003)

this problem." Livestock sales, as discussed elsewhere in this thesis, were of particular importance to the livelihoods of people in the area and the quarantine regulations compounded existing hardships due to the lack of rainfall (see Chapter 1).

The myth of creating employment

Far from benefiting from the creation of the National Park, the local residents saw the project as extremely detrimental to their livelihoods, as outlined above. During the first 14 months of its existence, the Limpopo National Park had forced a number of families off their land and excluded others from arable land and water sources in the Olifantes Valley. The field rangers had physically assaulted a number of people and supplementation of diets with game meat was no longer permitted. People understood the relocation of animals from South Africa to have caused the destruction of crops, spread Foot and Mouth Disease among their cattle, and increased the number of dangerous predators (especially lions) hunting in the area. It is debatable whether all of these problems were a direct result of the creation of the park, but the villagers in the Shingwedzi valley were in no doubt about who was responsible: "This park is a very bad thing," my field assistant told me. "It is causing us so many problems. If it carries on like this I do not see how we will be able to continue to live here. When they first came here, they [the park authorities] said that it was a good thing and would give us jobs. They were wrong. They have given us nothing but shit."

His statement appears to give the lie to one of the primary objectives of the Limpopo National Park: that of providing new employment for the local population. But there is evidence that this objective itself was unrealistic: contrary to popular belief, in general National Parks rarely provide many job opportunities for local residents (Gibson & Marks 1995). In the case of the Limpopo National Park, residents were excluded from the positions of field rangers because they failed to meet the level of schooling required for the job. There was also concern that local rangers would be put under pressure to cooperate with, or at least turn a blind eye to, village residents hunting in the area. A number of villagers were temporarily employed to assist in erecting the fence surrounding the game sanctuary: it is likely that future employment opportunities will

be limited to this periodic and poorly paid manual labouring. It is unlikely that the lodges and safari companies applying for the Limpopo Park concessions will be eager to recruit unskilled and poorly educated staff who cannot speak either Portuguese or English, for anything but the most menial of positions. The jobs for the residents that were promised with the creation of the park do not appear to be forthcoming. This situation is not unique to the Limpopo National Park, or indeed Africa. In his work in Nepal, Ben Campbell observes that the people living close to the Langtang National Park appeared to be paying the highest cost for the creation of the conservation area, in terms of loss of livelihoods, and yet were benefiting from very little of the wealth that it generated (2000). Similarly, Tanzanians living in the proximity of the Arusha National Park have received few of the benefits from the project, and yet, like the villagers in Massingir, have suffered from physical violence, crop damage and hampered livestock production as a result of the park's wildlife conservation programmes (Neumann 1998).

Local resistance to the National Park

The resentment that the local residents felt towards the park did not go unexpressed. The villagers had repeatedly asked the *chefe do poste* to bring Major Zineo, the anti-poaching coordinator and 'head' field ranger, to the village so that the hunting situation could be discussed. Expecting a rowdy reception, neither Zineo nor the *chefe do poste* had wanted such a meeting to take place. Zineo thought that such meetings were not his responsibility but that of the recently appointed Community Liaison Officers. The *chefe do poste* knew that an angry public meeting would reflect badly on his leadership. After a different instance of the field rangers beating and fining a man caught hunting in the area, another public meeting was held in Mavodze. One of the men attending this meeting stood up and asked the village leaders why the meeting with Zineo had still not taken place. The meeting grew increasingly more heated as other people voiced their concerns. When the *chefe do poste* attempted to calm things down, a number of the men stood up and shouted that they would set their own roadblocks by felling trees and lighting fires on the road, forcing the park vehicles to stop and give the residents a chance to voice their objections directly to project staff, a tactic also adopted in Zimbabwe as a response to unpopular conservation schemes (Alexander & McGregor

2000:621). Another man, a former soldier, told the meeting that the villagers did not have to put up with the park. They had fought to protect their land from Renamo. They still had guns. They could fight again; this time against the park.

As the antagonism between the park authorities and the villages continued, I heard such threats of violence on numerous occasions. Although these were never carried out, people employed less dramatic means of confrontation, more akin to the everyday forms of resistance described by James Scott in his work among Malaysian rice farmers (1985). Scott notes that large-scale, organised peasant uprisings have been relatively uncommon and argues that it is more important to understand *everyday* forms of resistance. By this he refers to “the ordinary weapons of [...] powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth” (Scott 1985:29). Crucially, resistance utilising these “weapons of the weak”, as Scott terms them, requires little coordination or planning, avoids direct confrontation with authority, and can be instigated by individuals rather than organised groups. Mozambican villagers employed such tactics in resisting the park. Several of the villagers who were employed by the Project Implementation Unit to build the fence around the animal sanctuary told me that they were deliberately doing as little work as possible. They laughed as they explained how people would arrive late and leave early and take a break whenever the boss—a portly Afrikaner they had nicknamed ‘The Warthog’—turned his back. Theft was another common means of ‘getting back’ at the park. Two of my neighbours managed to steal a large coil of the wire used to make the fence. This was hidden in the scrub until they found a man who was prepared to exchange it for an ox. Other villagers started stealing the solar panels used to generate the electric current that ran through the animal sanctuary fence.

The most common response to the efforts of the park authorities to preserve the wildlife was, ironically, to escalate hunting activities. Increasing levels of hunting have been observed as a tactic used in response to conservation projects by people throughout the world: for example by the Maasai in the 1960s (Lindsay 1987), by Zambians living near game management areas (Gibson & Marks 1995), or by people near the Langtang National Park in Nepal (Campbell 2000). The local response to the Limpopo National Park was no different. To my delight, as by this stage I had acquired a taste for it, the

amount of game meat available in the village began to increase after the game guards had started abusing local residents. On one occasion, while eating roast antelope in the fields near the Olifantes River, I asked my host if he was worried about being caught by the rangers. "Ha!" he snorted, "Those park people know nothing. Look how many of them there are and look at how much land there is. They can't catch all of us. We will show them. The more they beat us, the more animals we will kill. They are helping us by bringing in these stupid South African animals. These are easy to catch." He gestured towards our next course roasting on the fire, "This one didn't even know to run away. Easy. Those park people think we are stupid. Ha! They are the ones who don't know what is going on."⁹⁶ Rather than using the organised violent uprisings that they had threatened, local residents engaged in more surreptitious, individualistic forms of protest. By using everyday forms of resistance the local residents felt that they were able to counter, at least in some way, the Limpopo National Park's growing encroachment into their lives.

When considering Scott's concept of everyday resistance there is always a danger that an over-zealous ethnographer can read resistance into actions which the people themselves might not consider to be an attempt at subversion at all. My friend's gleeful comments made whilst eating his roast antelope clearly demonstrate that this is not the case in this instance. He was explicit in explaining that the hunting was a protest against the actions of the park wardens and the fact that by killing the animal he considered himself to have taken a swipe at the park authorities appeared to allow him to enjoy his meal even more.

Another, more practical, problem with Scott's analysis is that if everyday resistance is *too* everyday, it becomes invisible. In other words if the actions that are intended to impede unequal power relations are too subtle, they may go unnoticed by the force that people are attempting to subvert, thus rendering the resistance useless. Initially this was the case with the residents' actions against the Limpopo National Park. While the villagers understood the actions to be a protest against the park, the park authorities

⁹⁶ Due to the high number of visitors, the animals in the Kruger National Park are used to human activity. Unlike the Mozambican animals, the animals in KNP rarely run away from people or the noise of vehicles. This lack of timidity made the South African animals relocated to Massingir far easier to hunt than their more wily Mozambican counterparts.

considered these activities as opportunistic criminality and endeavoured to clamp down yet further. However, as this response did little to ease the tensions or curtail the thefts and poaching, the authorities began to change their behaviour. The growing resentment felt by the people living in the park began to be noticed by the park authorities and attempts were made to rebuild relations with the residents of the park.

Rebuilding community relations

Members of the Project Implementation Unit began to admit that they had 'got off on the wrong foot' in terms of community relations and were, I think, genuinely anxious to rectify the mistakes that had been made. One of the mechanisms intended to increase local participation in the planning and development of the park was the establishment of committees in each of the villages. These were to be made up of about seven local leaders, selected by the villagers. They would convene to discuss problems related to the National Park, and it was envisaged that information relating to the park would flow both to and from the local residents through these committees. I was temporarily away from the field when the project staff established the committee in the village of Mavodze, but on my return I made enquiries as to what had happened. It took me a long time to find anyone in the village who knew that a committee had been formed, and it was even difficult to establish who sat on this new committee.⁹⁷ When I was able to track down some of the committee members, not one was clear about what the committee was for or why it had been formed. This lack of awareness was not coincidental: the National Park committee in Mavodze did not convene a single official meeting during the rest of the time I was in the field.

The lack of interest in the newly-formed committee was not unique to the park project. Almost every organisation that had come to work in the region had insisted on convening public meetings to form village committees that would be involved in their new project. People had lost count of the number of committees that had been formed in

⁹⁷ Most people assumed that it would consist of the same group of Frelimo leaders who sat on every other village committee (see Chapter 4).

Mavodze: there were water committees, livestock committees, goat-restocking committees, women's committees, agricultural committees, food relief committees. The list was endless. It was hoped that convening public meetings and forming village committees could ensure local participation in a new project. The reality, however, was quite the reverse. There were so many of these events, held by so many different organisations, that people were ignoring them. As farmers and fishermen, villagers had far better things to be doing during the day than waiting around for hours to see if another delegation would show up to talk at them for a few hours. It was hardly surprising that local residents took such little interest in the park's village committee; they were 'committee-ed out'.

In addition to the village committees there were other attempts made to involve people in the planning process of the Limpopo National Park. A number of local leaders were invited to attend meetings in Maputo and Massingir, but the villagers expressed their dissatisfaction about their involvement. One man told me that the problem was that the wrong people were going to these meetings. "It is always the school teachers or the *chefe do poste*. They are like you," he said, "they live here but they are not one of us. They just work here. They do not care what happens to us as they collect their salaries every month and soon will leave for a job somewhere else. They do not represent us and they do not tell us anything about what is going on." On the occasions when other village residents attended meetings, logistical problems, such as the lack of translators, severely hindered their involvement. A number of times one 'community representative' explained that he felt unable to voice his opinion at these meetings because it was too daunting being surrounded by more powerful people: "Men had come from South Africa, from America, from all over the world. The Minister was in the room with his directors and other chiefs. Who am I? What could I tell them?" In spite of the efforts made by the park management to instigate a more 'participatory approach', the residents of the Limpopo Park continued to feel uninformed and excluded from the decision-making process.

The evidence from the first 14 months of the Limpopo National Park's existence clearly shows that the people living in the area were not benefiting from the development in any way. Despite the supposed dawn of a new era of integrated community-based conservation management in Africa, the residents of the Limpopo Park were

inadequately informed and barely consulted about the development of the project. In terms of local participation in the planning and management processes, the people living inside the park were not even informed about its creation, let alone asked for their opinions and concerns. The creation of the park has done nothing to improve residents' lives. Indeed, far from it. Since the park was established people's livelihoods have come under increasing pressure and people have been subjected to serious human rights abuses, including torture. In response, and quite understandably, individuals have retaliated by mounting covert resistance in the form of petty theft and increased poaching and have threatened to resort to organised violence in order to obstruct further infringements on their way of life.

Conservation and the expansion of state power

It comes as no surprise to anthropologists that conservation programmes, or development projects in general, often fail to meet their objectives and in some cases may actually have a detrimental effect on the people's lives that they were intended to benefit. The creation of national parks in Ethiopia's Lower Omo Valley in the 1970s, for example, threatened the pastoral activities of the Mursi people who lived in the region and left them far more vulnerable to famine during periods of low rainfall (Turton 1987). Similarly, the evidence from the early stages of the implementation of the Limpopo National Park also suggests that, far from benefiting the local residents, the development is having a negative impact on their lives. Although in this case it is particularly important that these problems are brought to light, as the park is widely heralded as a showcase project for transfrontier conservation areas throughout Southern Africa, I think it is too early, not to mention unproductive, to dismiss the whole project as a failure. Instead, in this final part of this chapter I will follow James Ferguson in his analysis of a development project in Thaba-Tseka, Lesotho (1990), and concentrate on some of the broader political consequences that have resulted from the creation of the Limpopo National Park.

Ferguson concludes his study by arguing that the principal outcome of the Canadian-funded agricultural development programme was not to raise levels of production in local farms, but to increase state control in the area. The infrastructures built by the

programme allowed a host of government services to become available in the previously remote region. These included a new post office, a food-for-work programme, seed supply, livestock marketing, a police station, immigration control office, a taxman and new healthcare workers. The provision of such services is often regarded as an indicator of 'development', assumed to be of unquestionable benefit to people, but, as Ferguson points out, the role of a government is not only to serve its people but also to govern them. The introduction of this local government machinery, Ferguson argues, cannot be disassociated from the issue of power; indeed the arrival of each institution expanded and strengthened state power throughout the district (1990:253).

Similar processes have been observed in African conservation projects. In a critique of the internationally acclaimed CAMPFIRE programme (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources), Kevin Hill argues that the initiative has increased the power and presence of the state in marginal areas of Zimbabwe (1996; see also Alexander & McGregor 2000). Through introducing a locally-managed conservation policy that derives revenues from hunting, the Zimbabwean government has succeeded in gaining legitimacy and recognition from the participating communities and at the same time has created a rural taxation programme on a commodity that would have otherwise provided no financial benefits at all. Exposing a darker side to this phenomenon, Nancy Peluso notes that some states, or state interests, also appropriate the conservation concerns of international environmental groups as a means of controlling productive natural resources (Peluso 1993). This, she argues, can include the use of violence and coercion in the name of conservation, allowing the state to control people living in marginal areas or minority groups that challenge the state authority (1993:47; see also Neumann 1998).

If we return to the example of the Limpopo National Park, the use of coercion and violence to control resources that Peluso (1993) describes is apparent in the behaviour of the field rangers. The rangers, who were trained by former military operatives, and in many cases had been soldiers themselves, enforced the anti-hunting laws by the threat or use of violence;⁹⁸ those villagers caught hunting were subjected to beatings and/or

⁹⁸ The widespread use of military-trained scouts and military-style tactics to enforce the law in protected areas or National Parks is also noted by Gibson and Marks (1995:941).

torture. The expansion in control was not limited to the poaching laws. One of the local shopkeepers complained to me that since the park had been created he had been forced to buy a commercial licence from the district administration. He had never been required to have one before, but unfortunately an official from the provincial capital who had been visiting the park had stopped to buy a cold drink and noticed he was not displaying the required paperwork. Several days later he had been forced to purchase the licence, which he had framed and now hung on his shop's mud wall. Such instances were inconvenient and expensive to those concerned, but did not really affect most of the village residents. A far more widespread and serious problem was to arise when it became apparent to the residents that game wardens were not only controlling poaching but were also attempting to control the illegal movement of people across the Mozambique/South African border.

Bringing down borders?

The Limpopo National Park spans the Mozambican/South African border, a frontier that for a long time has been used by illegal migrants to cross between the two countries (see Chapters 2 & 3). Throughout my time in Massingir groups of young men could be seen walking through the villages within the park, heading towards South Africa in the hope of finding work. Shortly after the field rangers were deployed, a number of the migrants reported that rangers were harassing, robbing or arresting them as they attempted to cross the border. One man explained to me that his son had left with some friends to find work in South Africa and he had been stopped by some of the game guards. They had threatened to beat him if he did not give them money. The man's son had given them what little money he had on him and had been forced to return to the village. A group of rangers had accosted another man on his way back from South Africa. They had stolen the goods he had purchased with his wages. He had been particularly alarmed, as he was unaware that the LNP had been created while he was working in South Africa and was thus unaware of the identity - and source of authority - of the group of armed men who had robbed him. Other migrants, rather than being robbed, were arrested by the field rangers and taken back to the district capital. The game wardens' harassment and ability to arrest people created another obstacle on the already difficult route for those wishing to enter South Africa illegally.

The dual role of the park rangers as both game and border guards was accepted by the local government officials. The Director of Immigration in Massingir explained to me that the creation of the park had been of great assistance to his department. He was responsible for controlling over 175km of border with a total staff of 30, and without vehicles or — until the creation of the park — a radio. Since the park had been declared, the South African government had given his department a radio and the two immigration services now coordinated patrols. The director explained that his department and the park wardens had joined forces and were “fighting the same fight. It is much easier now,” he explained. “The park has more men, more vehicles, weapons and radios. We work together.”

The South African interest in coordinating and expanding border controls was clear. The region has long been known as ‘Crooks Corner’. While some smugglers were relatively harmless, transporting household goods across the remote and poorly controlled frontier (Chapters 2 and 3), others used it to smuggle less legitimate materials in and out of South Africa. I had seen guns, drugs and gems leaving Mozambique and stolen cars and motorbikes coming in (see Chapter 3; see also Vines 1998; Synge 1997; Connor 2003). The South African authorities were anxious to stem this illegal trade and also to reduce the number of illegal migrants coming in search of work. The cross-border cooperation as a result of the park was one means of achieving this (see also Wolmer 2003). It is unlikely that the illegal migration will ever be completely eradicated, as people have been avoiding the controls on the South African side of the border for years. And, as mentioned in Chapter 3, there are at least some employers in South Africa for whom the access to cheap and vulnerable labour power from Mozambique is a great advantage. But expanding this control and increasing the number of wild animals on the Mozambican side of the border will make it increasingly more difficult for people to cross without using official border posts.

For the people living in and around the park, the attempt to increase border control was a double blow. As we have seen above, the creation of the park limited the potential of agricultural and livestock production through which most families made a living. Now the park was threatening to interfere with the labour flows on which most households were economically dependent. In Chapter 3 I argued that, as the gold-mining industry

has reduced its foreign force, young men from Massingir continue to cross into South Africa to find work. Without proper documentation, rather than migrating legally through border posts, as the generations of miners before them had, the young men today are forced to cross the border illegally through the dangerous Kruger National Park. The creation of the Limpopo National Park and the Transfrontier Project has increased the dangers faced by these young men. There will be more animals, more armed patrols and more cross-border cooperation. Migrating to South Africa will become increasingly difficult.

The new park, heralded as opening the way for 'an Africa without borders', is bringing down the barriers for the animal populations but erecting new ones for the people who had been crossing back and forth for generations. This irony was not lost on the residents of the park. A number of villagers, myself and representatives of the Mozambican, South African and international media were invited to witness the release of another group of elephants that were being relocated from Kruger National Park. During one of the many speeches, a government official proclaimed that the Transfrontier Park would "open the border". At which point one of the villagers laughed and said to me, "Open the border? What is he talking about? When was this border ever closed? For us they are not opening the border; no, they are building a bigger one." The Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park was tearing down the boundary for animals and wealthy passport-holding tourists in four-wheel drive vehicles, but was creating a new and larger one for people living in the area, to whom crossing the border was a crucial part of their daily lives.

Expanding state power: Which state? What state?

The creation of the Limpopo National Park undoubtedly restricted the activities of the people living in the area and, as I have argued above, brought with it a greater level of control and regulation than had previously existed in this marginal area. Unlike Ferguson's example from Lesotho, however, it is not sufficient to label this as an extension of *state* power or control. Ferguson demonstrates that the overall effect of the Thaba-Tseka development project was an influx of state institutions such as the police

force, taxman or government agricultural service into a previously marginal region. These institutions were clearly recognisable as a part of the Lesotho state. This is not the case with the Limpopo National Park in Massingir. The creation of the park has not brought institutions clearly associated with the Mozambican state into the area. Instead, the area is being managed and developed with the assistance of a South African-based NGO (Peace Parks Foundation) that is contracted to the Mozambican Ministry of Tourism and largely funded by the German state development bank (KfW). On first glance this distinction may appear pedantic, for the Peace Parks Foundation works for Mozambique's Ministry of Tourism and it is the Mozambican Government, therefore, that is responsible for the National Park. The reality on the ground, however, suggests something different. The roles of the Peace Parks Foundation, the Mozambican Government and the South African authorities appear to overlap and this ambiguity, coupled with the overall lack of information about the project, has resulted in much confusion among the residents about who is responsible for the new park. Exactly which forces or institutions are gaining control over them, therefore, is unclear.

The presence of NGOs in the region was nothing new to the people of Massingir. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, many of the services were provided by non-governmental organisations, including agricultural and livestock extension, some of the health care provision, the construction of the school, borehole, cattle dip tank, and other infrastructures. Indeed, it could be argued that the state was retreating from the more remote rural areas and 'outsourcing' the service provision to non-governmental organisations. However, although the NGOs may have become the service providers, due to a lack of information — or indeed misinformation — people living in the region often understood these organisations to be a part of the Mozambican state or Frelimo itself (see Chapter 4). This was not the case for the Peace Parks Foundation and the Limpopo National Park. Rather than being seen by local residents as a part of the Mozambican state, the park was perceived as a South African project.

One of the main reasons why the Limpopo National Park was considered to be a South African project was that all of the senior members of the Project Implementation Unit appeared to be white South Africans. In fact this was not the case. While the Project Manager and Finance Manager were South Africans, the Park Director was a

Mozambican. Nevertheless people living in the region understood the director to be working for the South Africans. This misunderstanding was due to the Mozambican staff's habit of wearing green military-style uniforms, while the South African staff would wear civilian clothes. From their experiences of military service during the war, many of the villagers understood that the people wearing the civilian clothes were usually responsible for making the decisions and those in uniform simply carried out their orders. The same, many local residents thought, must be true with the park personnel. It was the South Africans who were in charge of the project; the uniformed Mozambicans were merely their subordinates.

It was not only the difference in staff clothing that led local residents to understand the park as South African. During the first stages of the park's development, funding for the Mozambican-registered vehicles had not yet arrived. Members of the project management, therefore, used their personal, South African-registered, vehicles. As discussed earlier in this thesis, the vehicle in which an outsider arrives is an important means of identifying him. For the most part people could usually establish the identity of a person and what they wanted from registration plates, logos embossed on the side, colour, make, and overall condition of the vehicle they were driving (see Chapter 4). The people working for the park drove new South African-registered vehicles with no logos and thus local residents assumed that the park was a South African project. These suspicions were only further confirmed when people established that the park personnel were arriving in Massingir having driven through the Kruger Park (a border crossing restricted to all other vehicles), rather than the road from Chokwe that everyone else had to take.

The final reason why people thought of the project as South African was that they understood the establishment of the Limpopo National Park and the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, not as the creation of a new park, but as an expansion of the existing Kruger National Park. There was a general feeling that the South Africans were taking Mozambican land so that they could have a bigger game reserve. One of my informants at the elephant release explained:

They [the South Africans] say that they are giving us their animals. This is not true. Those are our animals. They are Mozambican elephants. The South Africans stole them



Photo 27: Elephants being released into the Limpopo National Park

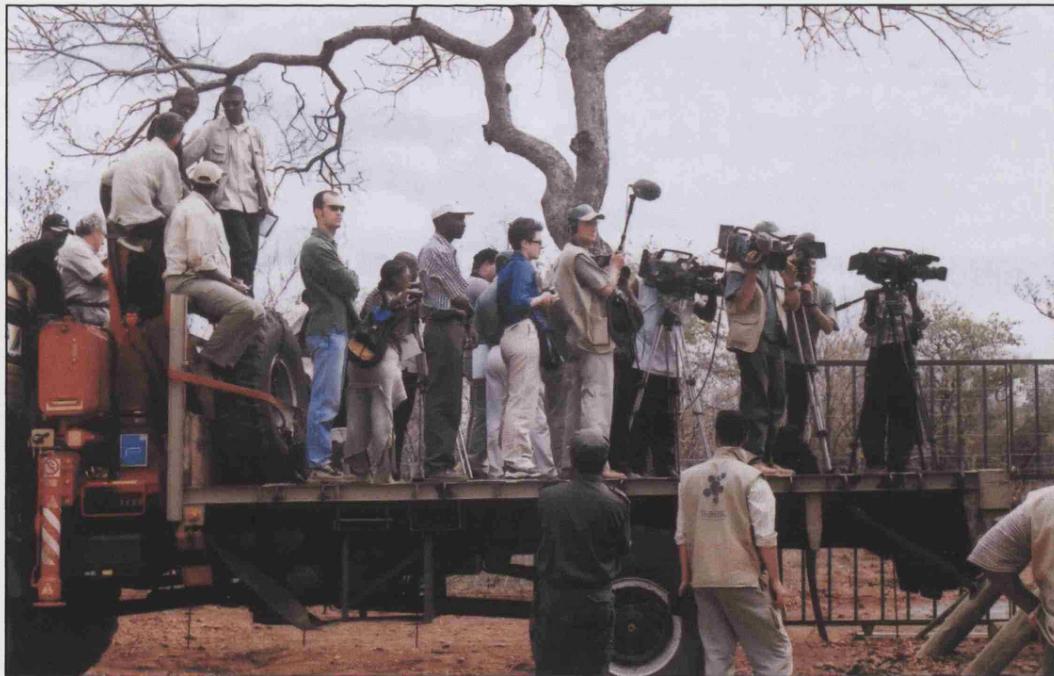


Photo 28: The international media at a Limpopo National Park elephant release

at independence. When the South Africans were building their border fence they waited until it was almost finished and then flew helicopters over this region. The helicopters herded up all our animals and drove them through the gap in the new fence. When the animals were in the Kruger Park, the *boers* [a generic term used for all white South Africans] closed the fence and our animals could not come back. Now they are giving us back our own animals. We are not stupid. We can see what they are doing. They tell us that they are giving us something new but really they are just taking our land. Soon they will have our animals *and* our land.⁹⁹

This idea that the National Park was a means by which the South African government could annex Mozambican territory was commonly held throughout the villages in the park. People were puzzled why the Mozambican government had allowed this to happen. It was initially thought that Renamo must have been responsible. This was partly because Renamo had received South African support during the civil war and local residents feared that the problems related to the park were a form of revenge being inflicted by their former enemies. There was also a general feeling among people living in the region that their party, Frelimo, would never engage in a project that would cause such disruption to their lives. Nevertheless, as the activities of the park increased, it became increasingly clear to the residents that it was not Renamo but the Frelimo government that was responsible for their ills. They could not ignore the signs: the governor visited the area; high-ranking government and party officials toured the area in the park vehicles; the Mozambican Minister of Tourism was discussing the project on South African radio; and eventually President Chissano met the presidents of South Africa and Zimbabwe in Xai Xai and personally signed the tripartite transfrontier agreement. One of my informants, Luis Zitha, summed up village opinion during one of our conversations:

In Mavodze we are all soldiers; most us didn't run away to South Africa or Chokwe during the war. We stayed here and fought with guns; some of us died. We had tactics: we left the village and lived on top of that mountain in the bush. We carried AKs [AK-47 assault rifles], posted sentries and planted mines to protect ourselves. When the

⁹⁹ I was told the story about the South Africans rounding up the game in the region and driving across the border at independence a number of times. Although I cannot confirm that this did actually occur, the same event is also referred to in PAWS (2001).

bandits came, we would fight back. They could not beat us. We fought and suffered with Frelimo, but what are we getting back? Look at my old clothes, people are hungry and that lot [the Frelimo leadership] fill their pockets. They have food and clothes. We fought for them and we haven't had anything back from them. They tell us that they will do this or they tell us they will do that, but they do nothing. In reality, it is worse than nothing. Now the government has made this park. We will have nothing but problems. We will not be able grow crops, our cattle will be taken by the wild animals, it will be impossible to live here anymore. They have let us down.

There was a widespread sense of betrayal among the residents of Mavodze. Since capturing the local imagination after independence, people had considered Frelimo as 'their' political party. Through its involvement in creating the park that was threatening people's livelihoods, Frelimo had let their rank-and-file supporters down. The local Frelimo leadership could no longer represent them. Residents knew that the leaders who occupied the lower ranks of the party hierarchy would never contradict their seniors (see Chapter 4) nor act to promote village interests in the face of centrally-determined policy.

This shift of support away from Frelimo did not translate into support for the other national party, Renamo; for no matter how badly Frelimo had let them down it would be unthinkable for people in this region to back the former rebels (see Chapter 4). Later that year (2002) the local residents were given an opportunity to vent their anger through 'the ballot box'. As a result of much national and international debate, the Mozambican government was pressured into passing a decree that allowed rural 'communities' to appoint their own leaders. Many commentators assumed that throughout the Frelimo stronghold of the southern provinces people would simply instal an existing party leader to fill this new position. In the villages of Massingir, however, the tensions generated by the creation of the Limpopo National Park promised a quite different outcome, as the following chapter will demonstrate.

Conclusions

I want to draw this chapter to a conclusion by returning to the work of James Ferguson that has been cited a number of times throughout the argument. As I have indicated above, Ferguson argues that the lasting effect of the Canadian-funded Tsaba-Tseka development project that he studied was the expansion of state control into a previously marginal area (1990:253). In this case the development of the Limpopo National Park brought the apparatus of governance closer to the remote villages of Massingir: border controls have been tightened; wardens have enforced a hunting ban; and checkpoints have been erected in an attempt to control the movement of illicit goods. While there has been a similar expansion of the mechanisms of control, the case of the Limpopo National Park is quite different from Ferguson's work because in Massingir the expansion of control has not been achieved by expanding the state institutions. In Lesotho it was the state institutions such as the army, police, or treasury which arrived with the development programme. With the Limpopo National Park, although the Mozambican state retains sovereignty, the day-to-day control has been the responsibility of a private organisation. The men patrolling the park, manning the checkpoints and arresting poachers are not employed or managed directly by the state but through the Project Implementation Unit, directed by the Peace Parks Foundation.

There is of course nothing novel in the outsourcing of functions that have formally been the domain of the state. In Chapter 4 we saw how a number of different NGOs have been responsible for the supply of a variety of services to outlying rural areas, such as Massingir, since the end of the war. Such services have included agricultural and veterinary extension work, supplying sanitation infrastructure, assistance in providing healthcare, building schools and distributing food aid. However, as Ferguson notes, government is not just a machine for delivering services, but is also a device for governing people (1990:225). The functions of the state that have been previously carried out by NGOs in Massingir have all been related to service provision. In the case of the Limpopo National Park, the Mozambican state has begun to outsource some of its responsibilities that are more directly associated with the more coercive aspects of governance, such as policing and border control. Interestingly, in a recent article Michel-Rolph Trouillot notes this increasing 'privatisation' — as he terms it — of state

functions but suggests that the duty that remains entirely the preserve of national government is guarding national borders (2001:132). The case of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park refutes even this: this chapter clearly demonstrates that the maintenance of the Mozambique-South Africa border is becoming the responsibility of the various different groups involved in the transfrontier conservation initiative.

While the development of the Limpopo National Park in Massingir has resulted in a significant change in the way the Mozambican state operates in the area, the residents of Mavodze and the surrounding villages were concerned with the way in which this affected them on a day-to-day basis. One of the primary objectives of the park was to ensure that the project benefited the local residents. This chapter has argued that, far from benefiting the villagers, the park is threatening their livelihoods. The introduction of game animals and appropriation of land limits agricultural and livestock production. This problem is set to worsen as the activities of the Project Implementation Unit expand beyond the animal sanctuary. The conduct of the game wardens has resulted in growing animosity between the park authorities and the local residents, with villagers that have been caught hunting being punished with beatings and heavy fines. Finally, although the creation of the park has been publicised as dismantling Africa's borders, paradoxically, for the residents of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin, the park further impedes their access to neighbouring South Africa, which — as we have seen elsewhere in this thesis — is crucial to this borderland economy and fundamental to local social and cultural relations.

The outsourcing and dominant position of South African institutions in developing the Limpopo National Park initially created confusion among the residents over who was to blame for their misfortunes. The park project was identified by most as a South African initiative. However, people were not clear about why or how the Mozambican government had allowed the South Africans to move onto its land and cause so many problems. In the early stages of the park's development it was widely held that it was all Renamo's doing, but over time it became increasingly clear to the villagers that 'their' Frelimo party was actively involved and supported the development of the park. They felt angry and betrayed.

Local residents threatened violent protest to halt the development of the park. While this did not materialise, I have argued in this chapter that people mounted a campaign of what James Scott terms everyday forms of resistance such as theft and increased levels of hunting. In addition to this form of protest, the residents of Mavodze were presented with an opportunity to voice their discontent in quite another way. Ferguson argues that the development process strengthens state bureaucracy and has a depoliticising effect; he terms it an “anti-politics machine” (1990:256). This was not the case for the residents of Limpopo National Park. At the same time that the park was being developed, the Mozambican government was reforming part of the political system in rural areas. A new position of ‘Community Leader’ was created. The holder of this new role was to be appointed by the people of the villages. In the next chapter I outline how the residents of Mavodze were able to use the appointment of this new official as an opportunity to demonstrate their opposition to Frelimo’s support of the Limpopo National Park.

6. Decree 15/2000 in Massingir: local politics, local protest

Introduction

As we have seen in Chapter 4, the abandonment of the single-party state and adoption of multiparty democracy in Mozambique did little to alter the realities of local politics in Massingir. Frelimo continued to dominate local political life and, although there were sources of local discontent such as the creation of the Park, there had been no noticeable separation of the party and the state. While little changed at the local level, the move towards liberal democracy initiated a number of public debates at a national level, including that of the role of so-called ‘traditional authorities’ in local governance. During the 1990s a wide range of interest groups put the Frelimo government under considerable pressure to formally recognise the authority of the ‘traditional leaders’, many of whom had lost their positions when Frelimo came to power at independence. In response to this, the government passed a decree in 2000 that created a new political position in rural areas, known as the ‘community leader’. This individual would be appointed by the people living in his area and would be responsible for governing that region.

This chapter examines the appointment of the community leader in the village of Mavodze. The multiple threats that the Limpopo National Park posed to people’s livelihoods, and other changing local circumstances, had led people to question their loyalty to Frelimo. Although supporting other political parties remained unthinkable, the election of a Frelimo-backed candidate was no longer inevitable. All three of the main candidates who stood for election attempted to appropriate ‘traditional’ issues in order to bolster their support, but ultimately the village residents backed a candidate who was neither from Frelimo nor could be identified in any way as ‘traditional’. Indeed, the elected candidate’s qualities were neither ‘traditional’ nor ‘modern’ in the terms laid down by the national debate: his salient quality, instead, was his perceived capacity to represent their interests in the continuing conflict with the National Park.

The *chefe da terra*: A traditional leader or colonial relic?

In the process of deciding where to locate my ill-fated house my friend Jaime suggested that I should talk to the *chefe da terra* (chief of the land), as he could allocate me a plot of land on which to build. However, when I met the *chefe da terra*, he said that I could build my hut wherever I wanted to, as it was nothing to do with him; he no longer decided these matters. He suggested that I should ask Chauque who, he claimed, was the village secretary, for a plot of land. Knowing that Chauque was not the village secretary and not wanting to get passed from one village leader to another as I had done on earlier occasions, I instead opted to ask the advice of Joaquim, the director of education for the administrative post. Joaquim said that the following year the school would need another house for a new teacher. If I were to donate my house to the school when I went back to England, I could build it on the ground designated for state amenities in the centre of the village. This suited me perfectly and, several weeks later, I dismantled my tent and moved into my newly built mud hut.

I continued my research from the comfort of my new accommodation. However, following the process of obtaining the land for my house, I remained curious about the role the *chefe da terra* played in the village. Earlier enquires about what he did had yielded little apart from the fact that he was the former *régulo* (chief of the area during the colonial period) and his current responsibilities included carrying out certain 'traditional' ceremonies during the year. To my frustration, further questioning produced no additional information. I decided to pursue my investigation along different lines: '*chefe da terra*' literally translates as 'chief of the land' and I speculated that he might play some part in land distribution. I began to ask people how they had acquired the land used for cultivation and what, if any, role the *chefe da terra* had played in this process. One informant, Xavier, told me that when he had wanted to cultivate a new field in the Shingwedzi valley he had walked along the river until he found a section of uncultivated, overgrown bush. He had asked the people who farmed the adjacent land whether the area he had selected was being used by anyone. As it was not, Xavier began to clear the trees, bushes and undergrowth and the following season he ploughed the

land and produced a maize crop. "It is much easier these days," Xavier explained, "Now we have democracy, we can do what we want."

In the old days, during the time of the Portuguese, we had to consult the *chefe da terra*. He was the head of the village at that time. We would go to him and ask him where we could make our fields. The *chefe da terra* would allocate the land he wanted to give us. Now, all we have to do is find an area with good soil and clear away the bush. It is also better now because in the old days we had to pay taxes to the *chefe da terra*. That was a lot of money. These days, all we have to pay is 10,000 MZM (US\$0.43) each year to Armando [the government tax collector]. Recently, however, the *chefe da terra* has been asking us for money again. Sometimes I fish in pools that are left when the River Shingwedzi runs dry. The *chefe da terra* wants to charge me 300,000 MZM (US\$13) to fish in these ponds. This is crazy. It only costs 67,000 MZM (US\$2.91) for an annual government licence to fish in the reservoir, where there are more and bigger fish. That old man is crazy. There is no way I'm going to pay him anything and there is nothing he can do about it. His days are over; he is no longer in charge. He just wants money for beer.

Showing somewhat more deference for the position of chief was the account given by Jaime, who had originally suggested that I visit the *chefe da terra*. When I asked him about how he had arranged his fields he said that he had inherited some of the land from his brother, but more recently he had brought another maize field into production in the Shingwedzi Valley. Unlike Xavier, Jaime had approached the *chefe da terra* and asked him where he could start a new field. Jaime explained that the *chefe da terra* knew about the land. The *chefe da terra* knew the location of the best soil and it was the *chefe* that was in charge of these 'traditional things'.

In the colonial times the *chefe da terra* was called the *régulo* and he worked with the Portuguese. When the Portuguese left, our government came to power and the *chefe da terra* was told that his work had finished. The Party said that he still had colonial ideas and could not be a part of the new Mozambique. The Party said that we should have new leaders and we agreed. The war came and there was a lot of confusion. After the war the *chefe da terra* was allowed to control the land and the traditional things—he is not allowed to control people. The *chefe da terra* also has to run certain ceremonies, for example if the rains do not arrive, he has to talk with the spirits of the ancestors and they tell him what to do to bring the rains. He knows about the land and farming. When

there is a harvest we should bring him some of our crops, but many people don't do this.

Jaime's description of the *chefe da terra* was accurate, for, as we will see, he did organise the first-fruit ceremony in the village and some village residents continued to consult the *chefe da terra* in matters relating to the land or to ancestral spirits. Yet, as Xavier's testimony demonstrates, not everyone thought of the *chefe* with such deference. Although Jaime and Xavier are both recounting the realities of life in Mavodze, their differing opinions are also representative of two sides of a broader debate. Xavier regarded the *chefe da terra* as a relic of the past who had no official capacity to influence village life; his role had been replaced after independence by the 'modern' state apparatus. Jaime, on the other hand, understood the *chefe da terra* to have regained some authority at the end of the war and to have become, once again, responsible for land allocation as well as other spiritual and ceremonial duties, such as maintaining harmonious relations with the ancestral spirits. The importance and new-found legitimacy of these activities had, from Jaime's perspective, reinstalled the *chefe da terra* as an important player in local politics. These opposed positions reflect the two sides of a debate central to conceptions of politics not only in Mozambique, but also throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa. It is a debate about the role and position of 'traditional' authority in contemporary African society.

The modernist and custom-orientated tendencies, alluded to by Jaime and Xavier, lie at the heart of Africa's current political predicament (Mamdani 1996). The liberal solution, Mamdani argues, has been to "locate politics in civil society, and the Africanist solution is to put Africa's age-old communities at the centre of African politics" (1996:3). The former is advocating a system ensuring civil rights and the latter, defending cultural heritage. This dichotomous view not only results in a deadlock in terms of practical politics but it is also "a paralysis of perspective" (Mamdani 1996:3). In his book *Citizen and Subject*, Mamdani suggests that the way out of this impasse is not through passionate argument for either side, but by investigating both the language of rights and that of culture in their historical and institutional context. Through a process of simultaneous critique and affirmation it is possible to arrive at a synthesis that transcends the polarity between the two positions.

Mamdani's underlying argument is that contemporary forms of African power and authority fragment resistance and continue to reproduce the 'bifurcated' institutional legacy that was principally forged through the colonial experience. While this may be the case, Mamdani fails to achieve his initial objective of formulating a synthesis that transcends the traditional/modern dichotomy that he claims is responsible for Africa's political woes. In fact, by shaping much of his analysis in terms of dualisms such as traditional/modern, savage/civilised, or rural/urban, Mamdani weakens his argument by reproducing the dichotomy that he attempts to transcend. Too little attention is paid to the way in which many of the boundaries between such concepts are overlapping and blurred; as a result Mamdani sharpens the divides that he is attempting to transcend (see also O'Laughlin 2000; Greenstein 1997).

Part of the problem with Mamdani's argument is his pan-African approach; his case studies are drawn from situations as far apart as Zimbabwe and Libya. Drawing on a range of ethnographic material, Harry West and Scott Kloeck-Jenson present the debates that Mamdani addresses in the context of the post-war political reforms of contemporary Mozambique (1999). They argue that many of the tensions relating to the issue of 'traditional authority' stem from the way the debate is framed. To understand the matter in terms of black and white, traditional and modern, is too simple and ignores the historical variations and local circumstances. Only by applying the 'local lens' can we begin to understand the intricacies of the role 'traditional authority' is playing in the contemporary political environment.

In this chapter I argue that the national debate on traditional authority is masking the problems that exist at a local level in Massingir. The national political debate continues to be framed in the terms of civil society and democracy in urban areas and traditional authority in rural communities.¹⁰⁰ From this assumption, two contrasting political systems are being conceived under the single banner of decentralising state power. In (some) urban areas political reforms are bringing about local elections and real changes, however, in the rural areas debates on political reform are limited to contestations about the so-called re-emergence of traditional authority. As a result of this, in Massingir local

¹⁰⁰ Although people living in rural areas are aware that the one-party state was replaced by a democratic system at the end of the war, in practice the one-party system continues to operate in many areas (see Chapter 4).

political actors are actively seeking to appropriate ‘tradition’ as a means to their own ends. While this might well have been expected, the specific local circumstances have resulted in this appropriation occurring in a way nobody had anticipated. As it turned out, the appointment of a ‘traditional’ leader¹⁰¹ ultimately had nothing to do with tradition or any link with the past whatsoever. The people of Mavodze used the language and technologies of power that they had at hand to appoint a new leader who they considered had the capacity to represent them and deal with the problems that they faced at the time.

Tradition as a national debate

Following the ‘scramble for Africa’ in the late 1800s, the European powers, primarily Britain, France and Portugal, began to consolidate their newly annexed territories. Beginning in British territories and quickly adopted in other colonies, including Mozambique, colonial administration was established based upon the principle of indirect rule;¹⁰² local government was run through indigenous political institutions and the representatives of these were subservient to colonial administrators. Thus there existed a dual system of law: the customary law to which native Africans were subject was counterposed against the civil law that had jurisdiction over European residents (Comaroff & Roberts 1981; Roberts 1984; Roberts & Mann 1991; Hamnett 1977). This system assumed “the existence of self-governing tribes as the underlying units of native political organisation” (Moore 1994:18). Chiefs and leaders were selected from these units to rule their peoples according to traditional laws and customs.

Indirect rule, however, was not the continuation of the status quo but a fundamental transformation in the nature of the chiefship. The Mozambican colonial administration

¹⁰¹ The position created by the government in response to the sustained pressure to recognise so-called ‘traditional’ leaders was known as the ‘community authority’. The legislation states that this individual need not necessarily be in anyway ‘traditional’, however, it was generally understood—both locally and nationally—that this was the government’s way of recognising ‘traditional leaders’. See below.

¹⁰² The Portuguese, Belgian and Italian colonial powers adopted the system of indirect rule. The French used a system of direct rule (see Mamdani 1996:82-90).

adopted the system known as the *indigenato* (native labour code) to control and extract forced labour from rural communities. Key to this was the system of indirect rule that gave customary authority in the rural areas to local ‘chiefs’ or *régulos*, while urban dwellers were governed by civil law (Coissoro 1984; Sachs 1984). As one Portuguese colonial official commented, “the common law should be applied by a qualified jurist ... the questions relative to usage and customs should be judged by the administrator because it is he who is conversant with local customs and the dominant mentality” (Moneira 1956:231). As well as presiding over disputes, from the 1930s onwards the *régulos* were also responsible for allocating land and collecting hut and head taxes for the Portuguese administrators (see Honwana 1988; Isaacman 1985; Isaacman & Isaacman 1983; Vail & White 1980). Their other task was to arrange the six months of compulsory labour (*chibalo*), in plantations, on roads, rail and other public works, which the overwhelming majority of African males had annually to undertake in order to pay their taxes (Isaacman & Isaacman 1983:41; Hanlon 1990).

When Frelimo succeeded the Portuguese administration in 1975 it swiftly adopted a Marxist rhetoric in which feudalism and capitalism were neatly encapsulated as the twin enemies. The *indigenato* not only encompassed both of these categories, embodying the process of colonial capitalist extraction through the mechanisms of feudalism, but was also based on traditional values that stood in the way of the progress and modernisation of the revolution (Hall & Young 1997:65). At independence the new government abolished the colonial administrative structures and introduced a highly centralised party-state framework through which to govern the country. The *régulos* were dismissed and party secretaries appointed in their place (see Chapter 4). *Grupos dinamizadores* (activating groups) were created to mobilise the population to ‘continue the struggle’ and overcome the legacies of colonial rule. However, it was not only the political system that was overhauled. Frelimo’s new state was to be built on scientific socialism. Traditional beliefs in ancestral spirits and the power of witchcraft were dismissed as irrational and backward: such ‘superstitions’ would hold back the development of Mozambique as a modern state. Traditional practices were branded ‘obscurantism’ and were banned. Offerings to ancestral spirits, rainmaking ceremonies and speculation about witchcraft were no longer tolerated. Only through ‘modern’, ‘rational’ thought would Mozambique overcome its problems.

The abolition of the traditional political system and dismissal of the chiefs, like Frelimo's policy of villagisation (see Chapter 4), appears to have been deeply unpopular in some areas of the country (Geffray 1990). As I outlined in Chapter 4, Geffray argues that the resentment triggered by Frelimo's mismanagement of rural affairs caused the population to support Renamo during the civil war. Geffray thus presented the war in terms of an ideologically motivated struggle between the socialist modernisers of Frelimo and Renamo, the defenders of tradition. While there is little doubt that some ex-chiefs did support Renamo's fight against Frelimo, much of the evidence suggests that Geffray's conclusions, based on research conducted in the northern province of Nampula, cannot be applied throughout the country (see Chapter 2). Both Minter (1989) and Gersony (1988) counter the argument that Renamo was a legitimate political movement that generated grassroots support through recognising the former chiefs, by citing evidence from refugees who fled areas of fighting and by interviewing former Renamo soldiers. Both researchers come to the conclusion that Renamo was, primarily (and certainly initially), an externally-supported force that generated internal participation through coercive force, terror and violence. This debate between the 'traditionalists' and the 'Renamo-as-an-external-force-brigade' has generated much academic discussion (Hoile 1994; Vines 1996; Bowen 2000; Hanlon 1991), but will not occupy me here. Whether or not Renamo had any political justification during the war is, for our purposes, purely academic. What is clear, however, is that during the early 1990s Renamo transformed from a fighting force to a legitimate political party. Capitalising on the widespread rural discontent with Frelimo was a means for Renamo to gain support, and playing the traditionalist card was a key part of this. The success of this policy was demonstrated when Renamo secured over 30% of the national vote in the 1994 elections (Vines 1996; Wood & Haines 1998). As the official opposition, Renamo has continued to pressure the Frelimo government to recognise traditional authority and to officially reintegrate traditional leaders into the system of government.

At the same time that the opposition was arguing for the reintegration of traditional authority, the Frelimo government was coming under mounting pressure from the international donor community to instigate further political reforms. Since joining the IMF in 1986, foreign aid to Mozambique has increased from US\$360m in 1985 to US\$700m in 1987, reaching US\$1000m in 1990 (Hanlon 1996:16). This has remained at roughly the same level for the last decade: in 2001 Mozambique received US\$935m

of foreign aid, accounting for almost 26% of the total gross domestic product (World Bank 2003). This external support comprises such a large sector of Mozambique's economy that the government has become dependent on further assistance. Such dependence severely weakens the autonomy of the state, for to maintain the influx of foreign aid the government must be seen to adhere to the policies being promoted by the donor organisations (see Hanlon 1991 & 1996; Plank 1993). During the late 1980s the main thrust of such policies was for the government to abandon the single-party state and adopt a pluralist democracy. With elections in 1994, the international community heralded the transfer to democracy as a great success (see Chapter 4). However, in keeping with the rhetoric of the day, international organisations have continued to push for further political reform to ensure sustained 'good governance'.

A key component of this notion of 'good governance' has been the idea of decentralisation. With the underlying premise that "good governments are closer to the people" (Litvack *et al.* 1998:5; World Bank 1997), decentralisation, in this context, is defined as the process by which central government shares part of its power with other groups within the country (Mawhood 1993). This is a highly ambiguous concept, for in practice it can mean anything from devolving power — successfully transferring control from central government to locally representative and autonomous individuals and institutions — to merely deconcentrating central control by relocating officers at different levels and points in the national territory (Crook & Manor 1998). Nowhere is this ambiguity more clear than in the case of political decentralisation in Mozambique; its definition is completely dependent on context. In urban areas it usually refers to the creation of formally-elected municipal governments; in rural areas it is associated with the recognition of traditional leaders. The package of nine laws (2/97 & 3-11/97) — covering the structure of local government, finance and elections — applied only to urban areas. These reforms were originally envisaged to apply to 139 towns and cities (Law 3/94), but this was eventually reduced to 33 elected councils in the first local elections held in 1998. Despite the large number of problems encountered in the 1998 elections (and again in the recent 2003 local elections), voter registration lists were updated, a civic education campaign launched, polling stations staffed by independent observers, and the local councils were ultimately elected. While these reforms resulted in an elected local government and the decentralisation — albeit limited — of political

power in some urban areas, no such reforms were discussed for rural areas (Mozambique Peace Process Bulletin 1997; see also Diniz 2003). Rather than discussing democratically-elected municipal councils, the debate over political decentralisation in rural areas has centred on the issue of traditional authorities.

Thus, the pressure on the Frelimo government to recognise the authority of traditional leaders was coming not only from the opposition parties, but also from a broad range of international donors advocating 'good governance' and 'decentralisation' as solutions to all Mozambique's problems. As Harry West observed: "Everyone in Mozambique — from the United Nations to the World Bank to USAID to NGOs such as Oxfam, CARE and Save the Children — was talking about traditional authorities and their role in a democratised Mozambique" (1998:70).

While there is evidence of the increased importance of re-traditionalisation, to borrow Chabal's term (1996:32), in debates about Mozambican local governance, the term 'traditional' is highly problematic. In respect of Africa more generally, Coquery-Vidrovitch asks when this so-called traditional period was. Was it before the colonial era? Before the Islamic expansion? Before the Bantu expansion? She concludes, "the static concept of 'traditional' society cannot withstand the historian's analysis" (1976:91). Similarly, political institutions in Mozambique, West and Kloeck-Jenson argue, have been subject to so many transformations it is futile to search for a coherent traditional political entity emerging phoenix-like from the ashes of the civil war (1999; see also West 1998). One cannot simply revive a system of 'traditional authority' as an authentic, age-old form of African governance because such a thing does not exist. Politics — whether it is lineage-based, autocratic, or democratic — is a dynamic process, and participants respond and adapt to social and cultural change. Those who are claiming to represent traditional values must be considered modern political actors who are negotiating their position and relationships in the contemporary political landscape, rather than living fossils of a romanticised (mythical) African past.

Ironically, it was not only the proponents of a recognition of traditional authority that had romanticised 'tradition', but also Frelimo, the party that had attempted to eradicate traditional leaders and the values that they represented. Frelimo hardliners argued that

“colonialism irrevocably disrupted historical continuities between ‘genuine’ African political institutions and today’s claimants” (West & Kloeck-Jensen 1999:480). As a consequence, as we have seen in Chapter 4, on coming to power Frelimo dismissed the system of *régulos* as backward and an obstacle to the development of a modern Mozambican state, and replaced it with a new party-based system of local government. Nevertheless, by the 1990s and despite their antipathy towards ‘traditional authority’, the Frelimo government eventually conceded to the pressure to address the issue of ‘tradition’. As Luis Honwana, a former cabinet minister, said, “we didn’t realise how influential the traditional authorities were, even without political power...we are obviously going to have to harmonise traditional beliefs with our project” (cited in Finnegan 1992:125).

This ‘harmonisation’, however, was a gradual process. The acceptance that traditional authorities have a legitimate role to play in local politics and government was initially referred to in the 1991 constitution and in articles in subsequent legislation (see for example, articles 1, 10 & 11 of the Land Law GOM 1997). Until recently, however, the recognition of traditional authority remained little more than a gesture, taking the form of minor clauses or articles in legislation that primarily deals with other matters. Although ‘traditional authority’ was referred to in new laws, the whole concept remained ambiguous. Nowhere was it made clear either what values traditional authorities might represent or how they were going to be incorporated into the existing socio-political structures (i.e. the local version of the one-party state, as laid out in Chapter 4). It was not until June 2000 that, as a result of considerable pressure, the Mozambican Council of Ministers directly addressed the issue with a single piece of legislation and created the position of community authorities in Decree 15/2000.

The decree establishes a link between ‘community authorities’ (*autoridades comunitárias*) and local state bodies¹⁰³ and aims to extend the state apparatus to levels

¹⁰³ Eventually, in 2001 the Ministry of State Administration (MAE) proposed a new law that would give more power to administrations at the lower levels of districts and administrative posts. However this separate law, known as the law for ‘Local State Bodies’ (*Órgãos Locais do Estado*), has yet to be passed. The drafts that have been circulated show that officials will continue to be selected rather than elected and the process appears more akin to the deconcentration of state power than any meaningful decentralisation similar to that seen in the urban areas (draft copy with author; see also Mozambique Peace Process Bulletin 2001).

below the localities (Buur & Kyed 2003). The community authorities are expected to work with the other local state institutions (i.e. the *chefe do poste* and district administration, see Chapter 4) to “mobilise and organise the participation of local communities in the realisation of plans and programmes for economic, social and cultural development” (Decree 15/2000). These ‘community authorities’ are defined as being “traditional chiefs and other leaders recognised as such by their respective local communities”. This rather vague definition not only allows recognition and state formalisation of traditional leadership (required in the 1991 Constitution), but also, as Joseph Hanlon points out in the Mozambique Peace Process Bulletin, allows the inclusion of the other leaders introduced by Frelimo since independence, as well as religious leaders, teachers, nurses and traditional healers (MPPB August 2000).

The Decree lists the many specific duties that are the responsibility of the community leader, including conflict resolution, peace keeping, crime prevention, facilitating/encouraging justice and social harmony, registration of the population, tax collection, facilitating/encouraging civic education, land distribution, securing employment opportunities, securing food, facilitating housing construction, seeing to public health and education, protection of culture and the environment, and road construction. In return for carrying out these numerous duties, the leader is entitled to use the symbols of the Republic, to use a uniform, flag and badge, and to receive an income calculated on the basis of the amount of tax he has collected.

The duties and responsibilities associated with the new position are not dissimilar to those of the former *régulo*. Much like his colonial predecessor, the community leader is responsible for the key tasks of administering local justice, land distribution and tax collection—of which, it must be noted, he receives a share as salary. Indeed, on closer inspection it is not just the position of community leader that is reminiscent of the colonial system of indirect rule, the entire process of decentralisation could be viewed as being based on a colonial blueprint. The political reforms in Mozambique have, like the policies of the Portuguese, widened the urban-rural divide. Decentralisation in the urban areas is based on civil law and electoral processes. Decentralisation in the rural areas is founded on customary law and a return to ‘traditional’ leadership.

While this argument may be proven correct, if the analysis is left at this we leave ourselves open to the same criticisms that have been applied to Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject*. In order to understand the complexities of what is occurring, we need to go beyond the debate as it is being discussed in the national press, academic literature and the corridors of power. We need to see how this process of decentralisation and the recognition of so-called traditional leaders is being played out locally. How was the Decree 15/2000 received and implemented in the villages of Massingir?

Decree 15/2000 in Mavodze: The return of the *régulo*?

In the village of Mavodze, the first that I had heard about any possible changes to the political system was when I was sitting with a group of men who were complaining about the *chefe do poste*. One of the men was angry because he had not been allocated a place on the 'food-for-work' programme that had been launched in response to the continuing drought. "The problem," he explained, "is that those people from the government only give the opportunities to their friends. They only help each other. They don't care about anyone else." The other men in the group nodded in agreement. One of them shrugged and said, "Soon, it won't matter. We will be able to choose our own leader. One of our own people." His companion frowned and shook his head, "What are you talking about? Don't believe any of it. They tell us that these things will change, but you know what will happen, it will stay the same. One of that group¹⁰⁴ will take the job. Nothing ever really changes." They were talking about the new position established by the decree.

The *chefe do poste* later explained to me that in November 2000 all the district administrators and *chefes do postes* had been summoned to a meeting in Xai Xai. At this meeting the provincial officials told them about Decree 15/2000. In response to pressure from the opposition, the government had created a new position in the village leadership, to be known as the 'community leader' (*autoridade comunitária*). The community leader would be the new head of the village, replacing the village secretary,

¹⁰⁴ The Frelimo-dominated village leadership — see Chapter 4.

who would, with the other existing village leaders, assist this new community leader in his duties.

In January 2001 the *chefe do poste* received a letter from the provincial administration instructing him to call meetings in each of the villages within his administrative area to inform the residents of the new legislation. I arrived in Mavodze shortly after this meeting had taken place and the residents were in the process of putting forward names of candidates that they wished to fill the position. Initially, there were dozens of names being presented to the *chefe do poste*; almost every extended family in the village had nominated a member to become the new village leader. Eventually, however, over the following few months, the list began to shrink. People began to discuss the attributes of potential candidates when walking to their fields or while drinking beer in the afternoon: Fernando, who made charcoal, was dismissed as he spent most of his time away from the village; Filamone was considered too lazy; Domingos was too old; Alexandre untrustworthy; Almão had died of malaria; and Julio had gone back to South Africa. By April 2002, the list had been whittled down to three candidates: Antonio Machungel Valoi, David Fabian Nuquer and João Amos Valoi.

Of the three, two had already had some experience of village leadership. Antonio Valoi was the *chefe da terra* and former *régulo*. In terms of the national debate, Antonio would be regarded as the 'traditional leader' of the type that Frelimo had initially repudiated and Renamo had campaigned to reinstal into a position of authority. He was in his late sixties and had, with the exception of several years spent working in the South African gold mines, lived in the area his entire life. Antonio had no formal education, was illiterate and spoke no Portuguese. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, at independence Antonio had been stripped of his position as village leader. He then lost much of what was left of his political influence when most of the arable land he had formally controlled was flooded due to the construction of the Massingir Dam. Antonio was not particularly affluent: he owned three head of cattle and three goats, cultivated one field in the Shingwedzi Valley, and his son ran a small shop in the village selling cold drinks and minor household goods.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ For much of my time in Mavodze this shop was closed due to lack of stock.

David Nuquer was the president of the locality and deeply entrenched in the existing leadership structures. He was a staunch Frelimo supporter and attended all the various public and private meetings held in Mavodze and the other surrounding villages. David was in his early sixties and, unlike the *chefe da terra* Antonio Valoi, had not been born in Mavodze but had moved into the area in 1978. He could read and write in Shangaan, but spoke poor Portuguese. In contrast to the *chefe da terra*, David was one of the most affluent men in the village. There were seven houses within his homestead and he owned two motorcycles, an ox-drawn cart, several bicycles and a fishing boat. He had a herd of 123 cattle and well over 20 goats. David loaned cattle, on an annual basis, to eight different families living within the locality in return for manual labour in his fields. He cultivated four large fields that had produced over 100 sacks of maize that year (the average household harvest was 28 sacks).

Of the three candidates, João Valoi appeared to be the wild card. In contrast to the other two, neither João nor any of his family had held positions of responsibility within the village. Being in his mid-forties, João was much younger than the *chefe da terra*, David Nuquer, and the rest of the existing village leadership. Up until this point he had not shown any interest in getting involved in local politics. He was loosely connected to the Frelimo state system as he was married to the village nurse and lived in one of the state houses in the centre of the village, but this was a distant connection and until this point João had done little to involve himself in political affairs. João was not particularly wealthy. He had, like most men in the village, been to work in the South African goldmines—his father had been born in South Africa—and had used his wages to build a homestead. Like all the households in the village, João had a number of fields in which he grew maize and other food crops. While the agriculture was for consumption, unusually João earned an additional income by trading cattle. He had used some of his wages from the gold mines to buy cattle from other farmers in the region and had taken them to sell in one of the markets in Maputo. As a trader, he was well known in villages throughout the area and he was identified as a person who had frequent contact and could negotiate with ‘outsiders’.

The final decision on which of the three candidates would become the community leader was to be made at a public meeting in July 2002. The decree itself is vague as to

how the community leader should be appointed.¹⁰⁶ It does not refer to a model of elected local government, but if several individuals compete for the position, a system must be established for making a decision. In Mavodze voting with a show of hands at the public meeting would make the appointment. Although I did not establish who made this choice, I suspect that it was the local Frelimo party members, who dominated the local political scene, who had done so. On another occasion the *chefe do poste* had explained how other leaders are usually appointed to public office: “we [the Frelimo leadership] usually nominate the person whom we want and say to the people: ‘Do you want this man to be your new village secretary?’ They usually agree with us and it is decided.” It was by adopting this technique, amongst others, that the village leadership had been able to dominate political life for the last 30 years (see Chapter 4). I assumed that the same thing would happen with this new position; Frelimo would manipulate the process to instal its own supporter, David Nuquer, as the ‘traditional leader’.¹⁰⁷ After all, the party dominated all other facets of local political life. Why would this be any different?

If, for some reason, the Frelimo-supported candidate did not become the community leader, then the only other possible result I envisaged was that the *ex-régulo*, now *chef da terra*, Antonio Valoi, would win. Perhaps I had misread the situation: perhaps, as the opposition and other organisations had argued, there was far more support for the former leader than I had imagined? Perhaps Geffray’s theory was correct and abolition of the ‘traditional’ system of leadership was deeply resented by the rural population and the lineage chief would be reinstated?

I was therefore shocked when, on the day of the ‘election’, João Valoi—whom I had dismissed as a non-starter—gained the most support and was subsequently elected as the new community leader. The Frelimo-backed candidate, David Nuquer, was second

¹⁰⁶ The term ‘community’ is also problematic. A community is not a monolithic, homogenous, settled entity, however this is the meaning implied in the decree. A community will contain categories of people differentiated along many lines including sex, age, and economic status. If it is defined by geographical context it will have to include immigrants, those with no ancestral ties to the land or to each other (Buur & Kyed 2003; Ribeiro 2001; Western & Wright 1994). In the case of the villages of Massingir, community was defined geographically in terms of the communal villages and therefore included the entire adult population.

¹⁰⁷ Opposition parties and others had also raised concerns about this at the national level (Buur and Kyed 2003).

and the former *régulo* Antonio trailed in third. The winning candidate represented neither the 'traditional' nor the 'modern' side of the dichotomy. Neither the Frelimo candidate who supposedly represented the modern state, nor the candidate who would have been supported by the traditionalists, had carried favour with the people of the village. A 'third way' had been triumphant. But it was unclear in my mind why the residents had given their support to João Valoi.

I was later able to find an answer when I interviewed people about the circumstances that led up to this public meeting of July 2002. We must understand the context in which the appointment was made and how the three candidates had attempted to gain the support of the other village residents.

A tale of two ceremonies

If we return to Jaime and Xavier's contrasting perspectives on the role of the *chefe da terra* we can see that, while Xavier dismisses the old man as an obsolete relic, Jaime stresses the importance of the various ceremonies that the *chefe* was expected to perform. Jaime explained that the *chefe da terra* was responsible for maintaining harmonious relations between the villagers and the ancestral spirits. A chief ought to manage this by performing certain ceremonies, one of which was the first-fruits ceremony. The performance of this ceremony that year was to be of great importance in influencing the election of the new village leader.

At the beginning of February 2002 a young boy arrived at my house and said that I should come to the *chefe da terra*'s house. When I arrived, a crowd of people had gathered around a tree in the centre of the family compound. The men sat on seats arranged around a large clay urn filled with *caju* juice (an alcoholic drink produced from the fruit of the *Amarula* tree), the women sat on mats on the ground behind them. More people were arriving. Each guest carried a plastic container or clay urn filled with drink. To one side of the tree four women sat on reed mats peeling the bright yellow skins off the fruit and scooping the juicy fruit into plastic buckets; tomorrow's batch of

caju. My friend Matthias explained that this was a *xivula* ceremony.¹⁰⁸ The ceremony marked the official start of the *caju* season (this usually ran from late January until early March), when the fruit was ripe and the drink could be produced. People would present an offering of their first batch of *caju* juice to the *chefe da terra*. The *chefe da terra* would make an offering of the juice to the ancestral spirits to ensure that they were content and had not been forgotten.

As people arrived, calabashes were filled with drink and passed around. Each person drank their portion and then refilled the calabash and passed it on to the next person. As people got drunk, the women began to sing and clap. Several of the old men got up and began a stamping dance. A part of the dancing had a transvestite theme: men would take a *capulana* (a patterned cloth used by women as skirts, headdresses or for carrying babies) from one of the women and wrap it around their waists, they would then stick their backsides out, mimicking the women, and dance the women's dance. These performances resulted in much jeering, laughter and clapping. As the drinking continued there were repeated calls for food. However, no one was willing to contribute meat or maize. Within two hours the drink had run out, many men and women had fallen asleep, and those left standing began to stagger home.

The most remarkable aspect about the *xivula* ceremony was the complete lack of ceremony. No speeches had been made, there was nothing to signify the start or the end of the proceedings, nor had there been any solemn ritual offering of drink to the ancestors — in fact the *chefe da terra* played no part in the proceedings, he simply sat in his chair, positioned slightly away from the main gathering of men, and had a few drinks (the *chefe da terra* later told me that he made the offering to the ancestors in private). People arrived, drank themselves paralytic, and left. While this absence of ceremony was disappointing to a young anthropologist in search of elaborate rituals, the events at the *chefe da terra*'s house clearly demonstrated that Frelimo had not succeeded in its quest to eradicate the traditional beliefs that it saw as an obstacle to the

¹⁰⁸ Junod documents a ceremony called “*The luma of bukanye*” in which drink produced from the first fruit of the *nkanye* tree is offered to the ancestors and the chief (Junod 1927 [1912] I: 369-377). The ceremony described by Junod, although containing more elaborate rites, appears to be very similar to the *xivula* ceremony that I attended.

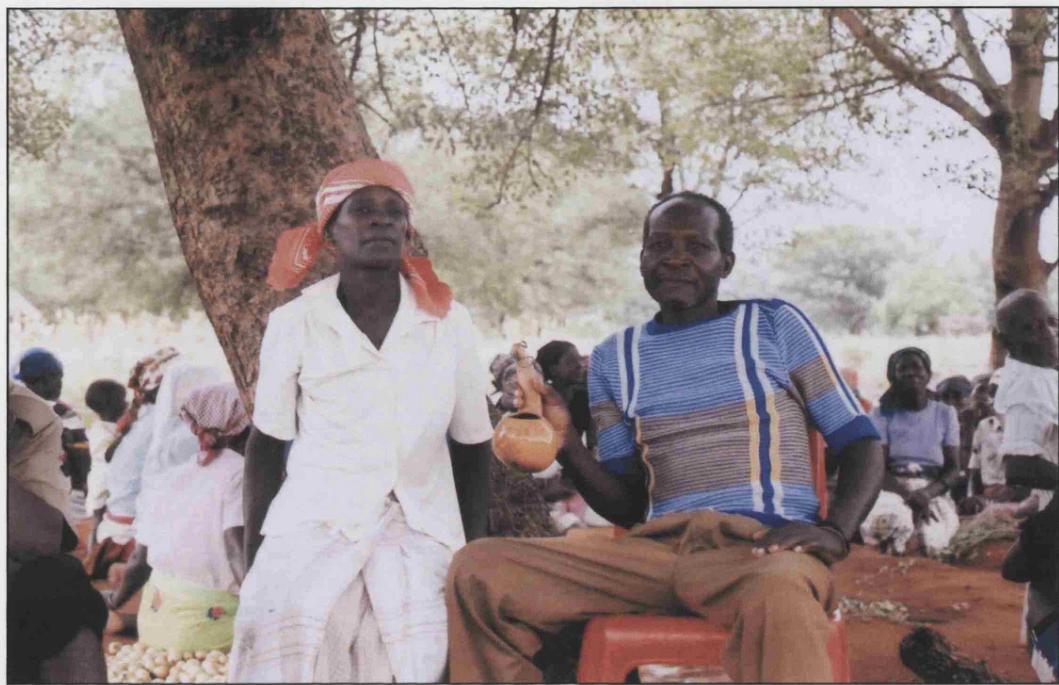


Photo 29: Drinking *caju* at the *chefe da terra*'s *xivula* ceremony

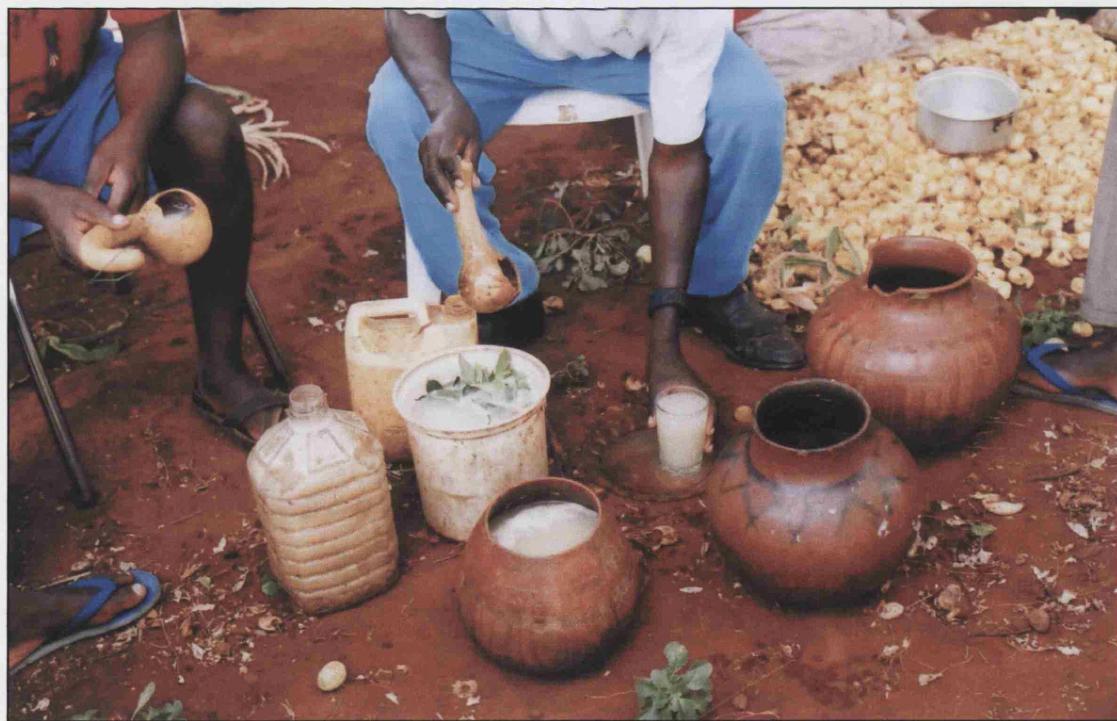


Photo 30: *Caju* brought to the *chefe da terra*'s *xivula* ceremony

country's development.¹⁰⁹ The *xivula* ceremony had been well-attended and almost everyone had brought an offering of *caju*. It would be easy to dismiss the popularity of the event as an excuse to have a good time, rather than carrying any other significance. However, as I shall show below, such a dismissal would misrepresent the facts.

I was not the only one to notice how well-attended the *chefe da terra*'s *xivula* ceremony had been. As I was walking home from the *chefe da terra*'s house, I bumped into the *chefe do poste*. He had not been invited to the ceremony, but had come along in the final half-hour. The *chefe do poste* had been amazed how many people had been there but despaired that the ceremony had been so unorganised and, as he put it, so uncivilised. It was terrible, he thought, that it had taken place on a Sunday. The ceremony should have been an official state function, properly arranged with food and drink, to which he could invite the District Administrator (his immediate boss). "These events," he said, "should be done properly. They should be organised." The *chefe do poste* decided that, with David Nuquer (the locality president and one of the three candidates for the position of community leader), he would organise the 'official' *xivula* ceremony the following Saturday. He would borrow a rifle from the police in town and shoot some antelope. There would be meat, people would bring drink, and the ceremony would be performed 'as it should be'.

The next Saturday, when I returned to Mavodze after visiting informants in the neighbouring village of Bingo, I found a group of people beside the *chefe do poste*'s house, waiting expectantly. A table, complete with tablecloth, had been laid and about 25 people dressed in their best clothes sat on plastic chairs and benches in the shade of the *chefe*'s *caju* tree. The *chefe do poste*'s wife and several other women were preparing food in the cooking hut. The *chefe* explained that he had been unable to obtain a rifle from the police station in town, and given the area's recently declared status as a National Park, had not been allowed to hunt the antelope. However, he had informed so many people that there would be meat at the 'official' *xivula* ceremony ("because there had always been meat at such events in the old days"), that to save face he had been

¹⁰⁹ I saw evidence of this in other villages throughout Gaza Province. In one extraordinary case, in a village near Xai Xai, Frelimo had told residents to stop believing in the ancestral spirits that were said to inhabit a nearby forest. When I visited in 2002, the forest had grown to be completely impenetrable. The residents told me that nobody had entered the forest since 1975. Despite the lack of firewood and other forest resources in the surrounding areas, nobody had so much as touched the sacred forest. The people's beliefs in the ancestral spirits had continued in defiance of Frelimo's attempts to eradicate them.

forced to buy a goat to feed his guests. The *chefe do poste* had invited the District Administrator from Massingir and they were awaiting his arrival. I took the seat I was offered at the table and waited with them.

The crowd of people who sat waiting was much smaller than the number who had attended the *xivula* ceremony at the *chefe da terra*'s house, and had a very different social profile. Those attending the previous ceremony were mainly the older men and their wives, the village healer and his friends, and people who played little part in political life in Mavodze. Few of these people were present at the ceremony hosted by the *chefe do poste* and David Nuquer. Instead this event was patronised by the village leaders and their families: all four of the *bairro* leaders, the village secretary, the various Frelimo party officials, and all of the schoolteachers.

The administrator was expected at 10 o'clock. When, by 11:30, he had still not arrived, it was assumed he was not going to come and so the *chefe do poste* stood up to begin the ceremony: "Viva Frelimo!" he shouted and punched his fist in the air. "Viva!" responded the crowd. "Viva Presidente Chissano!" "Viva". David Nuquer stood up and gave a speech. He announced that they were gathered to hold a 'traditional ceremony' to ensure the sustained prosperity of Mavodze. The *chefe do poste* had been unable to provide game meat, but instead had provided a goat. For the next ten minutes David recited a long and detailed list of the achievements of Frelimo.¹¹⁰ He recounted how the party had fought the Portuguese and gained independence, how it had built the village and provided the school, the health post and the water point. He told how they had fought and defeated the Renamo bandits and how under President Chissano the country was developing. He concluded his speech with another triumphant round of 'vivas'.

The *chefe do poste* thanked David and began his own speech. He re-emphasised the many achievements of Frelimo and then explained that the administrator had been invited to attend the ceremony, but had for some unfortunate reason been delayed. The *chefe do poste* asked the *chefe da terra* (who had been asked to attend) to publicly offer some meat and alcohol to the ancestors. The *chefe da terra* stood and walked to a nearby tree. He knelt down and poured a libation on the ground and then returned to his

¹¹⁰ A technique adopted by the Frelimo leadership to maintain popular support (see Chapter 2).

seat. The *chefe do poste* announced there was meat for everyone to eat and sat down at the table. Those of us sitting around the table were served with goat stew and rice, and then the rest of the crowd were offered the rest of the meat. Unfortunately, very few people had brought any *caju* and so there was far less alcohol available than there had been during the previous ceremony. As a result, the *chefe do poste* had little success in his attempts to get people to dance. Once the food ran out people began to disperse home, leaving the *chefe do poste* and David alone on the porch looking dejected. The *xivula* ceremony had not gone to plan: the administrator had not arrived; most of the village had ignored the event altogether; and even those who had attended had not brought any food or drink.

While one might seek partial explanation for the failure of this ‘official’ *xivula* in the presence or absence of alcohol, or in the contrast between spontaneous custom and ‘invented tradition’, there were other issues at play here. That the second *xivula* ceremony had been such a disaster came as no surprise to people in the village. “Why did they [the *chefe do poste* and David Nuquer] think we would come?”, one of my informants commented. “That lot [Frelimo] have been telling us not to do these things for years. We shouldn’t believe this and we shouldn’t believe that. And now *they* decide to host a *xivula* ceremony. What did they expect?” The Frelimo leadership’s turn-around, and new embracing of the very concepts it had described as ‘backward’, was viewed with suspicion by many of the village residents. The *xivula* ceremony was regarded as a transparent stunt that been organised to bolster support for the Frelimo candidate. The party’s blatant attempt to appropriate local tradition had backfired.

The second *xivula* ceremony had been a crass attempt by the local Frelimo leadership to demonstrate the national party’s change in policy and show that the party was now willing to recognise ‘traditional’ values and beliefs. This sudden and unexpected u-turn was greeted with suspicion. The ceremony isolated the existing Frelimo supporters who had spent years contemptuously scorning others’ belief in such ‘superstitions’. By staging a public ceremony, the leadership had conceded that Frelimo had been wrong to deride these ‘traditional beliefs’. While this had served somewhat to humiliate those hardline Frelimo supporters who had formerly campaigned so vigorously against tradition, the ceremony did nothing to attract those villagers who continued to practise

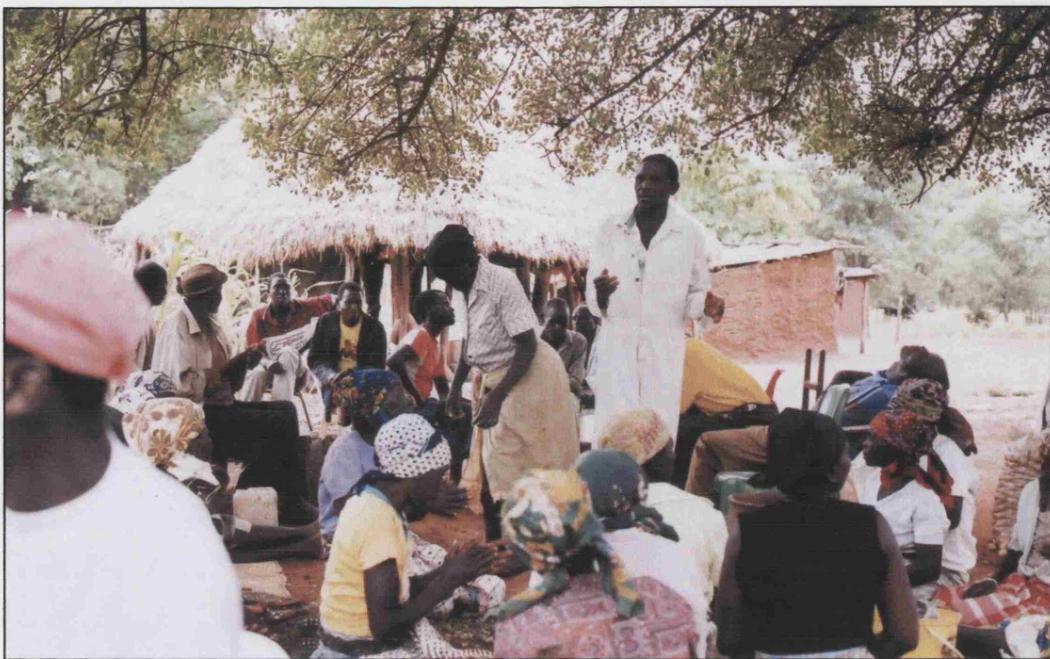


Photo 31: The *chefe da terra*'s *xivula* ceremony

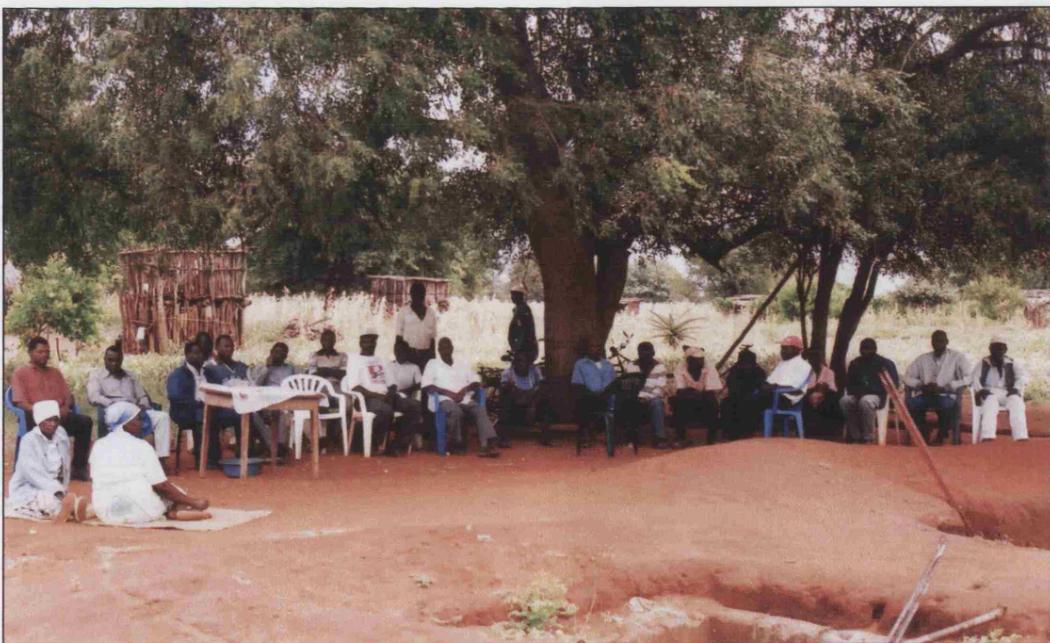


Photo 32: The second *xivula* ceremony organised by Frelimo

ancestral rituals and thereby potentially subscribe to notions of traditional authority. For them one ceremony was not going to erase all the years of abuse and persecution. They were suspicious of the Frelimo leadership's motivation for suddenly embracing everything it had previously scorned. They ignored the event entirely.

At the same time as the Frelimo leadership's clumsy attempt to incorporate traditional values as a political tool, João was proving to be a far shrewder political operator. A series of witchcraft accusations began to dominate village affairs following the death of one woman during a thunderstorm in 2001. During the months following this incident, João was able to show that he was attuned to local values and beliefs and skilfully used this knowledge to demonstrate his capacity for leadership.

Fear and loathing on the campaign trail, 2001-2002

At the end of December 2001 a massive thunderstorm hit the village of Mavodze. Inside my tin-roofed hut it was impossible to sleep with the noise of the heavy rain and violent thunderclaps and so I got up and watched the storm from my doorway. Flashes of lightning repeatedly lit up the night sky, turning the dark clouds a deep pink. The occasional bolt of forked lightning would hit the ground nearby and the air filled with the smell of the singed soil. Eventually, the storm passed and I went back to bed. The next morning I awoke to find the village in a state of noisy confusion. The lightning during the storm of the previous night had killed a woman who had lived in *bairro 3*. She had been sleeping in her hut with the rest of her family when the lightning had hit the roof. There was a loud bang and she had been found dead. None of the other occupants of the hut were harmed and the hut itself looked as though it had not been touched. The other residents of Mavodze found this incident very strange and rather alarming. Nobody could understand why, when the entire hut had been hit by lightning, only one person had been killed and nothing else had been damaged. Witchcraft was suspected.

Witchcraft beliefs and accusations have been a key concern of anthropology, and especially African anthropology, since the infancy of the discipline. A comprehensive

review of this material would be a thesis in its own right (for a useful summary of the key arguments see Moore & Sanders 2001): rather than embark on such a quest, I explore some of the more recently published anthropological work relating to the association between witchcraft and politics. Much of this emphasises that, far from being embroiled in a sense of tradition, witchcraft is concerned with decidedly modern political dilemmas. While I agree that witchcraft cannot be confined to notions of tradition, neither is there anything quintessentially modern about its use in the political arena. Referring to the contemporary state in Cameroon, Rowlands and Warnier (1988) and Geschiere (1988) argue that sorcery is crucial to modern African politics and often lies at the centre of state-building processes. Following Bayart (1986—see chapter 4), they argue that, in a one-party state where it is difficult to express political dissent, sorcery constitutes a popular mode of political action. It is the inherent ambiguity of the concept that allows the occult to be readily incorporated into modern discourses (see also Geschiere 1997:13). Although this work demonstrates that accusations of witchcraft can be both a counter-hegemonic force that can resist authority and a force co-opted by the elites to assert power, there is nothing to suggest that witchcraft must be considered either exclusively modern or exclusively traditional. In order to understand the events that occurred in Mavodze in the run-up to the election, we must, once again, move beyond the traditional/modern dichotomy and consider what happened within the local context.

I found João deep in conversation with my neighbour, Luis. He told me that this was a serious incident that concerned the entire village and he was going to call a meeting. Luis explained that this was the first time that someone had been killed by lightning in Mavodze. Several years ago a similar incident had occurred in Kanyane (a village on the southern bank of the Massingir Reservoir) and it was found to be the result of witchcraft. If this death too had been caused by witchcraft, people could no longer live in safety within the village until the witch had been identified.

Several weeks later João arranged a meeting in the centre of the village to discuss the woman's death. About 30 people attended the meeting and the conclusion was reached that the death must have been as a result of witchcraft. People were unsure who was responsible and João warned against relying on *curandeiros* (diviners or healers, depending on the context) in the village to investigate the matter, as they might be a part

of the problem. It would be sensible, João argued, to consult a more powerful *curandeiro* from another town. He knew of a man in Chokwe who was regarded as being very powerful. João proposed that he should travel to Chokwe and arrange for this *curandeiro* to visit Mavodze and find out who was to blame. The other people attending the meeting agreed to this and it was decided that João should contact the *curandeiro* on his next trip to Chokwe.

During the next month two more incidents occurred that were suspected to be the result of witchcraft. A young boy who lived in *bairro* 2 had complained of a sore leg and then the affected limb had suddenly become red and had swollen up. There was no sign of an external wound and the family suspected that he had been another victim of the witch. Then, in January, Sr. Piosse, the dip-tank attendant, complained of a headache and died the following day. The atmosphere in the village was turning hysterical and allegations of witchcraft were being made over the most banal of matters: Filemone, one of the taxi drivers, attributed a puncture he had incurred on the road to Bingo to witchcraft and complained to João that he had still not consulted the *curandeiro* in Chokwe.

Eventually, João made the trip to Chokwe and brought back the *curandeiro*. The *curandeiro* inspected the site of the lightning strike and heard the other allegations that had been made. He concluded that, while the other incidents could be attributed to malaria and misfortune, the lightning strike was a result of witchcraft. Although I was not at this meeting, Luis told me that the *curandeiro* had explained that a particular bird that fell from the sky during storms caused lightning. This bird could hit a tree and set it alight, or strike a person and kill him.¹¹¹ A witch could use a magical potion to summon such a bird and cause a person to get struck by lightning. In this case the *curandeiro* found that the *chefe da terra*'s wife had accused the dead woman of stealing her maize. The *chefe da terra*'s wife had bought the plants needed to generate the lightning from Sr. Bambani, the village *curandeiro*. She had given these to a woman named Maria who was an outsider from a village on the other side of the Limpopo River. Maria was a

¹¹¹ Junod describes a similar belief and states that among the 'Northern Tribes' (referring to the area where I carried out my fieldwork) magicians could summon this bird and use it to harm other people (1927 [1912] II: 290, 403-405). Interestingly, Niehaus, working nearby but in South Africa, states that lightning strikes were attributed to witches "manipulating objects rather than sending lightning birds" (1993:504).



Photo 33: A village meeting in the central square of Mavodze

friend of the *chefe da terra* and had lived in Mavodze for three years. The Chokwe *curandeiro* discovered that although Sr. Bambani and the *chefe da terra*'s wife had been involved it was ultimately the outsider, Maria, who was the witch responsible for the fatal lightning strike.

This explanation appeared to satisfy the concerned residents of Mavodze. In April João arranged another meeting to decide what should be done with the guilty individuals. Some of the younger men argued that the three should be taken out of the village and be stoned to death. However, the other villagers present said that such punishments could no longer be administered, the police would come from town and create problems. Instead it was agreed that Sr. Bambani's and Maria's personal possessions should be taken outside the village and burned. All three of the guilty individuals would be expelled from Mavodze and forced to live elsewhere.

With those responsible exposed, things became calmer, but several months later I noticed that both the *chefe da terra*'s wife and Sr. Bambani were still living in the village. Luis explained that another meeting had taken place and it had been decided that the *chefe da terra*'s wife and Bambani should be given time to harvest their crops and make alternative living arrangements; they could not be expected to go and sleep in the bush. The other woman, Maria, had left Mavodze and returned to her home village in Mabalane. By August, Bambani and the *chefe da terra*'s wife were still living in the village. João told me that since the main protagonist, Maria, had left the village there had been no further problems. The whole matter had now passed and it was assumed that it was safe to allow the other two, who had only played a minor role in the affair, to remain.

This verdict was of great political benefit to João. The witch-hunter summoned by João implicated the *chefe da terra* in the whole affair, as it was his wife and close associate, the village *curandeiro* Bambani, who had been partially responsible for the death of the girl. In discrediting those from the *chefe da terra*'s household, João had — through stark contrast — bolstered his own credibility as a leader. However, the most important aspect of João's involvement in the witch-hunt was the manner in which the matter was resolved. The eventual outcome was that Maria (an outsider) was held as the major

perpetrator and banished from the village. The guilt of the two insiders — Bambani and the *chefe da terra*'s wife — gradually, in the eyes of the villagers, diminished over time; they were therefore permitted to stay in Mavodze. This negotiation was down to the timing and manner in which João convened the public meetings. He had arranged the banishment of the outsider but eventually, and — crucially — after João's appointment as community leader, the role of the insiders was forgotten. As we shall see below, João's ability skilfully to manage this insider/outsider negotiation is of particular significance to understanding João's political support in the village during the leadership election.

Although João was able to turn the witchcraft allegations to his own political advantage, it is important not to overemphasise the instrumentality of witchcraft. From ethnography gathered in the Lowveld area of South Africa (close to my fieldsite), Isak Niehaus argues that simply concentrating on the instrumentalist dimension ignores witchcraft's existential dimension as a personalised explanation of misfortune (1993). If one understands witchcraft as a valid means of explanation in itself, the act of seeking out those who commit witchcraft becomes a powerful medium of generating political support. People will pay attention to efforts to alleviate a potential threat where they might ignore ceremonies organized to generate political support. With Niehaus's analysis in mind, we can view the witchcraft allegations in Mavodze in a new light. João successfully positioned himself as the witch-hunter in this case. Although he did not do the divination himself, he assumed the position of leader and organised the involvement of the powerful *curandeiro* from outside the district. It was João who had organised the village meetings and had led the discussions on how the situation could be resolved and the threat removed. By directly addressing a clear threat, these events were of far more interest to, and carried more weight for, the villagers than yet another ceremony of state hosted by the *chefe do poste*.

While we have seen how the appeals to tradition in the two *xivula* ceremonies failed as political ploys for both the *chefe da terra* and the Frelimo candidate, the witchcraft allegations provided João with an opportunity to assert his place in the leadership race. Rather than engaging in the village debates over modernity and tradition, in terms of whether the witchcraft was rational or not, João demonstrated his leadership capabilities

by organising a solution to the problems which attributed responsibility to someone outside the village. Through diffusing internal tensions, João bolstered his standing as an alternative leader among the local residents.

Park politics: The leadership contest in a broader context

While many of the differences between the candidates were exposed during the witchcraft allegations and the *xivula* ceremonies, throughout this period there were other pressing issues concerning the residents of Mavodze. At the same time that Decree 15/2000 was being introduced, the development of the Limpopo National Park was beginning to get under way. As we have seen in the previous chapter, initially the park had made relatively little impact on the daily lives of the people living in the Lower Shingwedzi Basin. By the time the new community leader was due to be appointed in mid-2002, the activities of the Project Implementation Unit were creating significant problems for the local residents. The control post and barrier had been erected across the road near the dam; a section of land near Massingir-Velho had been fenced off as a game reserve and animals were beginning to be relocated from the Kruger National Park. Hunting (now termed poaching) had been banned and although the local residents largely ignored this, the park authorities had begun administering harsh punishments to those who were caught. In addition to this, as I have argued in the last chapter, the fact that the park was a transfrontier project had led to increased cooperation between the South African and Mozambican authorities on the matter of border control. The extra logistical capabilities of the border patrols, coupled with an increase in the number of animals on the Mozambican side, was making it immeasurably more difficult for people to cross into South Africa to find work. The Limpopo Park was thus a double blow to the people of Mavodze and the surrounding villages: it both threatened the agricultural basis of their livelihoods in Mozambique and disrupted the labour migrations upon which households were also dependent.

As the last chapter demonstrated, the local residents sought to obstruct the continued development of the park by employing practices that James Scott has termed forms of 'everyday resistance' (1985). While this provided one way of opposing the park, the

residents of Mavodze also sought a political avenue through which to express their discontent. The coincidental implementation of Decree 15/2000 provided them with just this opportunity.

The residents of Mavodze wanted a community leader who would be able to assist them in dealing with this new and alarming threat. There were a number of reasons why, in the circumstances, the *chefe da terra* was unsuitable for this role. Firstly, his involvement in the witchcraft allegations had tarnished his reputation. His wife had been implicated in the death of a woman by witchcraft and people assumed that Antonio also must have been involved in, or, at the very least, had been aware of the witchcraft. As a result, many people no longer trusted him. Secondly, his former role as the *régulo* during the colonial era counted against him. The part he had played in the Portuguese regime had not been forgotten,¹¹² people referred to the taxes he'd extracted, the periods of forced labour (*chibalo*) being forced to grow cotton rather than food over which he had presided, and the punishment beatings administered by his *cabos de terra* (local police employed by the Portuguese to assist the *régulo*). His association with witchcraft and the colonial past thus severely damaged the *chefe da terra*'s chances of regaining political power. In addition many of my informants expressed a third and more pragmatic reason why he would not have made a good leader: he was an old, illiterate man who could not speak Portuguese. Without a basic education and the ability to confront the authorities running the park, people thought the *chefe da terra* was not well equipped to do the job they required. In this sense, at least, ideas of 'modern' leadership were becoming predominant over 'traditional' ones.

There was a different set of reasons for David Nuquer's non-selection. Although David had enough status throughout all four of the villages that comprised the locality of Mavodze (Bingo, Massingir-Velho, Maccavane and Mavodze) to be appointed President of the Locality, his influence in the village of Mavodze alone was not strong enough to generate sufficient political support. David Nuquer's prestige stemmed from

¹¹² Frelimo did not allow this memory to fade. The overthrow of the brutal colonial system, of which the *régulo* had been the village representative, was the Party's crowning achievement. The Frelimo elite reminded people of the evils of the colonial regime and the movement's war of liberation at any public occasion (I even witnessed a party leader discussing the atrocious nature of Portuguese colonial rule in a speech at a child's first birthday party).

his large herd of cattle. He loaned teams of animals to 12 families in Mavodze and the three surrounding villages. The cattle were loaned on an annual basis in return for one week of labour in David's fields. The families that hired his cattle could use the animals for traction and draught power in their own fields and could also, once their own fields were prepared or harvest gathered, loan the team to relatives or friends who, like them, did not own animals. Thus each of the original 12 families that rented David Nuquer's animals would hire them out to two or three other households in their respective villages, and in this way his influence was spread far more widely than to the 12 cattle-hiring households. The problem for David Nuquer in relation to the election of community leader was that his influence and these clientelist ties were dispersed throughout the locality rather than being concentrated in the village of Mavodze where the election was taking place. Added to the diffuse nature of his influence, it was his long association with the now much-resented Frelimo elite that played a definitive role in losing David Nuquer the position of community leader.

When the problems caused by the creation of the Limpopo National Park were first becoming apparent to the residents of Mavodze, they assumed that the problem, like all other problems, was due to Renamo. One rumour was that the opposition must have infiltrated the park management team and were now causing the problems as revenge for the fighting during the war. However, as the activities of the park increased, it became increasingly clear to the residents that it was the Frelimo government that was responsible for the ills. There was a widespread sense of betrayal among the residents of Mavodze. In creating the Park that was threatening people's livelihoods, Frelimo had let their rank-and-file supporters down. David Nuquer had long been a part of the local Frelimo elite and was therefore implicated in this betrayal. In addition to this betrayal, the residents knew that the local leaders who occupied the lower ranks of the party hierarchy would never contradict their seniors or act to promote village interests in the face of centrally-determined policy. As one such yes-man, David Nuquer was considered unable to represent the villagers in their fight against the park.

It was in the light of all this that the residents of Mavodze chose João as their representative. In some way João's appointment could be regarded as the result of elimination: David Nuquer was an obsequious member of the now unpopular local Frelimo elite; the *chefe da terra* was an old man associated with witchcraft allegations

and the colonial regime; relative to the opposition, therefore, João was the only viable option. While this was the case at one level, this analysis ignores the positive attributes the villagers thought João could offer as the new community leader. João was independent of the Frelimo hierarchy. One man told me that João could say what he wanted because he did not have a boss. He could express his opinions without having to worry about stepping on the toes of higher-ranking officials. João had a reputation for being outspoken in village meetings and would frequently express opinions that opposed the existing village leadership with a combination of forceful rhetoric and a not-so-subtle sense of humour.

It was not only his ability to present popular sentiments at village meetings that endeared João to the villagers. He also had the potential to represent them in meetings outside the village. Some of the villagers who had attended workshops or meetings organised by the park authorities had not been able to follow the proceedings. João on the other hand was relatively young, well-educated by local standards, and was literate and fluent in Portuguese. People thought that he would have a better chance of understanding what was happening and, as he was not part of the Frelimo leadership, would report this information back to the villagers. He was known as a man who could 'deal with outsiders'. The threat of the park was coming from outside the village and João had shown that he was able to negotiate with outsiders: drawing them into local issues where necessary, but on his own terms. He had demonstrated this during the witchcraft affair and also during his work trading animals in the Maputo cattle markets.

Interestingly, Gluckman describes a similar instance whereby a village headman was freed of playing the intercalary role between the colonial authorities and the people (1949). While this independence was initially an advantage, in Gluckman's case this eventually turned out to contribute to the headman's failure as he no longer 'had the ear' of those at the top. I was unable to establish whether João suffered the same fate as I left the field too soon. However, the LNP continues to pressure the village residents and there continue to be problems between the park authorities and the local residents. As the community leader, the residents of Mavodze looked to João to protect them from the threat posed by the Limpopo National Park.

Conclusions

By way of concluding this chapter I want to return to Mamdani's analysis with which it began. Mamdani's argument is that the post-colonial state in Africa was essentially constructed on the same principles that underlay its colonial predecessor (1996). He argues that the colonial powers administered their African territories through a bifurcated system of indirect rule, or 'decentralised despotism', for the African majority in rural areas and direct rule for the colonial minority in the urban areas. At independence, although the African governments claimed to adopt systems of governance, they failed to fully dismantle the underlying system of colonial rule and the colonial legacy of a bifurcated state has remained long after the European powers left Africa. In the case of Mozambique, I agree with Bridget O'Laughlin's argument that Mamdani underestimates Frelimo's attempts to overhaul the system and create a unified socialist state (2000). Whatever the flaws in Frelimo's post-independence policies — and there were many — the party, for the most part, succeeded in abolishing the colonial form of indirect rule and replacing it with a single nationwide system of governance.¹¹³ However, what this chapter has shown is that Frelimo did not succeed in abolishing the 'traditional' beliefs and practices that the party understood as having underpinned the colonial system and that it considered to act as an obstacle to the country's development.

Recently, following the end of the civil war, these two concepts have been confused once again. A wide range of interested and influential parties — including major international donors — have assumed that, because the so-called 'traditional' beliefs and practices have been shown to be of continued importance to many Mozambicans, the same must be true for the old political system. As some Mozambicans continue to value 'traditional' beliefs, they must — it is assumed — continue to value the former system of 'traditional authority'. This argument has gained almost universal acceptance and as a result political reforms have been pushed through parliament under the banner of decentralisation. While Mamdani's analysis may not have been wholly accurate in

¹¹³ The system of government and administration that Frelimo introduced after independence may have differed in its application in outlying rural areas in comparison with the urban centres, but it was at least a single system that, in theory, should have been applied in the same way across the country.

Mozambique immediately after independence, it would appear to have increasing resonance today, more than a quarter of a century later. The current system of local governance appears to be constructed on the philosophy of the bifurcated state: there is one system applied to urban settlements and another to the rural areas. Urban politics should be run by civil process, rural politics by customary process.

This chapter has added to the body of literature that demonstrates the fallaciousness of this construct. The election of João Valoi as the community leader in Mavodze reflected the residents' wish to appoint a leader whom they felt would be able to represent their interests in the face of continuing regional changes that threatened their livelihoods. It was also a protest vote against Frelimo. Rather than being conceived simply in terms of modernity and tradition, in the way that shaped the national discussion, Decree 15/2000 in Massingir was concerned with a growing local resistance to Frelimo coupled with a continued refusal to support other political parties. The villagers did not — as many had anticipated — simply select one of the existing Frelimo leadership for the new position, but neither had there been any return to 'tradition' through the recognition of the authority of the former *régulo*. João Valoi was elected because of his awareness of local issues, his experience of dealing with outsiders and his distance from the existing Frelimo-dominated leadership, who had, it was considered, betrayed their former supporters.

The Frelimo government's involvement and support of the Limpopo National Park not only threatened to evict people from their land but also hampered their ability to migrate to South Africa. Although residents of Massingir had been strong supporters of Frelimo, until this point the party had done little to threaten their livelihoods. The considerable changes that had occurred with the installation of a one-party state at independence had, for the most part, been of benefit to local people. Mozambique's shift to a multiparty democracy at the end of the war had, initially, made little difference to either political or everyday life in Massingir. However, the end of the war and the move to multiparty politics in Mozambique were part of wider changes that were occurring in Southern Africa. Over the same period, and not unrelatedly, the apartheid regime in South Africa was being dismantled and a majority government was elected. The distinction between apartheid and frontline states no longer existed; former enemies were becoming friends. Frelimo's involvement in the creation of the Limpopo National Park was a part of this

changing regional situation. No longer wanting to overthrow each other, the Mozambican and South African governments are now working together. Ironically, it is this cross-border cooperation that threatens the livelihoods of those who live in this border area.

7. Conclusions

This thesis has examined state-societal relations in the Mozambique-South Africa borderland. It has explored the social, economic and political processes that have shaped the lives of the villagers of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin. In this conclusion I draw the themes of the thesis together and return to some of the broader questions that were raised in the introduction. What can the case of Mavodze and the surrounding villages teach us about theories of state and society? What does it tell us about one-party states in Africa and their transition to pluralist political systems? In what way have the experiences of the villagers of Massingir added to our understanding of the intersection of tradition and modernity? How has this research contributed to our understanding of the role international borders play in the lives of those living close by? Does it help clarify the debates about borderland cultures and identities?

Rethinking the state in Massingir

This thesis has argued that the Frelimo Party has dominated local political life in Massingir for the last three decades. Although the party was relatively unknown in this area before Mozambican independence, it was able to capitalise on anti-Portuguese sentiments, regional affiliations and other local circumstances, quickly establishing strong grassroots support. In particular, Frelimo boosted its local prestige by assisting in rehousing the local residents that were being forced off their land by the Portuguese regime's dam-building project. Under guidance and with assistance from the local Frelimo representatives, the residents constructed a new communal village overlooking the new reservoir, complete with school, clinic and a borehole for water. The physical layout of the village reflected the hierarchically structured local political system that Frelimo introduced at the same time to replace the colonial system of indirect rule. New leaders were appointed from the local population and were therefore neighbours, kinsmen and people with whom everyone was familiar. By living with the political structures and among the local state officials, the 'state system' — if we return to Abrams' analysis (1988) — was a part of the lives of the village residents. As post-

independence Mozambique was a single-party state, there was no differentiation between the state and the party systems: those who worked for the state were automatically identified as being part of Frelimo. The state/party system was therefore not seen as an abstraction, but as something local, familiar, and indissolubly identified with society. These ties were further solidified during the war against Renamo as it was locally experienced. When Mavodze was attacked, the villagers were armed by Frelimo and fought off subsequent enemy raids. The residents regarded themselves as much of the fighting forces as the Frelimo troops in the vicinity; together they had fought off the Renamo attacks.

Although my informants conceptualised and discussed this era as one of close state-societal relations, this was not accompanied with a nostalgic romanticization of the past. People were well aware of the limitations of the Frelimo party-state and would frequently recall the hardships that they had been forced to endure. For example, one old woman was describing the recent crop failures and the widespread lack of food. She commented that, although the rains were worse and the yields were worse in 2002 than in the great drought of 1982/3, at least there was food in the shops: "In those days, even if you had money you would still starve because there was nothing in our party shops. Imagine that, a man could have pockets full of money but he would still die of hunger." Yet although this woman was complaining about the poorly-stocked cooperative stores that were run by Frelimo, she continued to refer to them as "our party shops". Despite the problems, of which undoubtedly there were many, my informants would always discuss the state-party system with this sense of local ownership.

An internationally brokered peace accord between Frelimo and Renamo brought the war to an end in 1992. Under the terms of this agreement multiparty elections were held in 1994 and the Frelimo single-party state was replaced with a pluralist democracy. This transformation of national politics made little difference to local political life in Massingir. As I have argued in Chapter 4, Renamo was never a viable political force in the region due to the local experiences of the opposition forces during the war. Frelimo remained the only active political party and the one-party state continued to operate in Massingir in all but name. Although the state and party systems remained undifferentiated and there were few other signs of pluralist democracy in Mavodze and the surrounding villages, the changes that were occurring at the national level were

beginning to affect local political life in Massingir in other ways. The change that was frequently commented on was, as one of my informants explained, "the increase in the number of foreigners working with the state after the war".

In fact there had been a gradual increase in the number of international organisations working in Mozambique since it joined the Bretton Woods Institutions in the mid-1980s. The continuing war, poor economic policies and drought had brought the national economy to crisis point and the government sought economic assistance from the IMF in return for undertaking economic reforms under the terms of a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Under pressure from the international donors the Mozambican government cut public spending and gradually reduced state service provision to rural areas such as Massingir. However, with more international organisations operating in the country, NGOs and other international organisations began to assist in providing some of these services through development projects and aid programmes. For the residents of Mavodze, however, this change was not gradual but sudden. During the late 1980s and early 1990s their lives had been disrupted by the war. Some had fled to South Africa and those who had remained were forced to leave the village and take refuge in the surrounding countryside, from where they fought the Renamo guerrillas. Village life, including the provision of healthcare, education and other services, was virtually non-existent. When, at the end of the war, the villagers began to return to the village to construct their homes and livelihoods, they found that foreign organisations were among the groups that offered them assistance. One NGO rebuilt and equipped the school, the health clinic, the teachers' and nurse's accommodation. Another repaired the cattle dip-tank and assisted with the restocking of animals. The borehole was equipped with a solar-powered electric pump. Another distributed food, seeds and agricultural tools.

In theory the partial withdrawal of the state from outlying areas and the handing over of many of its functions to non-state organisations constituted significant transformations in the way the state operated. In practice, however, these changes were not as dramatic. As I have argued in Chapter 4, the local party-state officials were able to control access to the resources provided by the NGOs and claim much of the credit for the work done, giving the impression that the NGOs were a part of the Mozambican state. Frelimo thus continued to claim responsibility for the services provided to the

village, but were only partially successful in doing so. Even with the assistance of the NGOs, living conditions in the rural villages remained poor, especially relative to those of state officials in the provincial towns and Maputo. Many people were unhappy and disillusioned with the government: as one of my informants said, quoted in Chapter 5, “We fought and suffered with Frelimo, but what are *we* getting back?”

This thesis has suggested that this general discontent came to a head with the development of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park. The Mozambican section of this, the Limpopo National Park, was initially received by the residents as ‘just another project’, similar to the previous NGO interventions in the area. For the most part these had been small-scale projects concerned with the provision of services and, as such, made little impact on everyday life. It quickly became clear to the residents that the Park was a very different type of project and, as I have argued in Chapter 5, people began to recognise the development as a threat to their livelihoods. The animals being introduced from South Africa hampered agricultural production, the increasing number of armed guards restricted migration across the border, and there were rumours that people would be moved off their land to make way for tourist developments. While the implementation of plans for the park interfered with the daily economic activities of the local residents, the process by which the park was being developed also represented a further transformation of the way in which the state operated in this area.

This project ushered in a new mode of operation for the Mozambican authorities. Unlike previous state interventions and the activities of NGOs in Massingir, the local Frelimo leadership had little involvement with the Limpopo National Park. This project was on a very different scale from both governmental and non-governmental ventures that had gone before. Those involved in the development of the park had little need to consult with local leaders as they were working with the ministries in Maputo. Vehicles passing through the villages rarely stop and therefore the local state system was left out of the loop. This represented a marked change in the role of the local party-state system. As the convoys of vehicles, ministerial delegations and buses of journalists passed through the villages in clouds of dust, local leaders were left as unaware as the rest of the villagers of what was happening. Unlike before, the local leaders were unable to escort or be seen with these visitors and, therefore, were unable to claim any involvement in, or appropriate any control over, the project.

For the residents this was a significant change in their relationship with the state. Before the development of the park, all activities of the state had centred on the local leadership with whom they were familiar. Although unfamiliar people from elsewhere in Mozambique or even abroad had often carried out the work, they were always understood to be working under the auspices of the local state authorities. With the Limpopo National Park, this was clearly not the case; the local leaders were being ignored and outsiders were coming in and doing as they pleased. The understanding of the state had changed from a system that was focused on the local structures and individuals to a notion that was more abstract. The people who were driving through the villages and developing the National Park were unknown individuals working for unknown institutions. Residents understood that these people were part of the state, but the state was becoming a faceless entity rather than the localised and personalised party-state with which they had previously been familiar.

The development of the Limpopo National Park also represented a change in the role the state played in the lives of the residents of the Mozambique-South Africa borderland. For the most part, the principal role of the state had been to provide services such as healthcare, education and agricultural extension. Following the end of the war, more of these services were carried out by NGOs because the state lacked the capacity to operate in all of the outlying rural areas. Similarly, much of the management of the Limpopo National Park has been contracted to a South African organisation, the Peace Parks Foundation. However, while the functions of government that were being carried out by NGOs were largely concerned with local service provision, those being carried out by other organisations in the Limpopo National Park were of a more coercive nature. The field rangers deployed in the park were effectively policing the region. They were armed and had the power to detain, interrogate and punish local residents. Very often these punishments were in the form of beatings and crippling fines.

The field rangers were employed to protect the park's wildlife but, as this thesis has shown, they were also involved in patrolling the international border. This aspect of their work was of particular concern for the residents of the borderland. In Chapters 2 and 3 I demonstrated the importance of people crossing into South Africa to find work. Rooted in the experiences of generations being recruited into the gold-mining industry,

labour migration is of both economic and social significance for the residents of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin. Although the mining opportunities had became more limited and the border harder to cross as a result of political tensions between South Africa and Mozambique during the apartheid era, the men of Massingir continued to cross the border finding whatever work they could. This thesis has highlighted the irony that although the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park is heralded as symbol of a new era in regional cooperation and the bringing down of regional borders, for the people of Massingir it is proving to be a far bigger obstacle than fences that were there before. It may well be the case that the borders have been destroyed from the point of view of wealthy tourists in four-wheel-drive vehicles and the animals they have come to view, but for the people living in the borderland new and more dangerous barriers are being created.

The development of the Limpopo National Park brought many aspects of the state closer to the people of Massingir. However, it was a very different type of state from that with which they were familiar. The power of the state was no longer vested in the local leaders and institutions, but was controlled by anonymous outsiders. These outsiders were inaccessible to the residents of the borderland and people felt disengaged and betrayed by the party-state that they had once regarded as their own.

It is another irony of this situation that the people of Mavodze were able to express this sense of betrayal through the very mechanism that the Frelimo government had intended as a form of appeasement: a means to placate the discontent of rural people in Massingir and throughout many other areas of the country. Under pressure from international donors and the opposition within Mozambique, the Frelimo government drafted Decree 15/2000 as a means of resolving the long-running debate over the recognition and role of so-called traditional authority in Mozambican society and as a part of broader reforms that were being made across local government in general. As I have argued in Chapter 6, the reified notion of tradition carried little political weight in Massingir and it was always unlikely that the former *régulo* would be selected. But it was certainly assumed that the Frelimo candidate would succeed. As the area was considered a Frelimo stronghold, many — including the Frelimo leadership — assumed that the status quo would prevail and the party-state elite would have little difficulty in

manoeuvring ‘their man’ into the new position. This was not to be the case either. The local party-state establishment had underestimated the extent to which the state’s involvement in the Limpopo National Park had eroded support for the local Frelimo representatives. Rather than appoint one of the existing local leaders to the new position, the villagers selected a relative newcomer, who they hoped would be better equipped and motivated to protect their interests and represent their struggle against the new ‘abstract state’ and the development of the park.

States, borders and society

In considering the Mozambican state and how it operates in the villages of the Mozambique-South Africa borderland, this thesis has followed Timothy Mitchell’s argument that the state and society must not be considered separate entities (1991:95). Mitchell argues that, while there is no clear boundary between state and society, an apparent distinction is produced by the political processes of the modern nation-state. This thesis has substantiated Mitchell’s argument and demonstrated how the Mozambican state in Massingir is not a discrete organisation that is separate from society, but consists of local individuals who have occupied multiple roles within the state hierarchy and society. In looking at the physical layout of the communal villages of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin, this thesis has demonstrated that the state is embedded within village society, and equally village social relations inform the character of the local state. While Mitchell emphasises that political processes produce an apparent distinction between the state and society, this example demonstrates that such processes can also be instrumental in maintaining unity between society and state.

In a recent return to the theoretical exploration of the state, Mitchell (1999) builds on his earlier argument against considering the state and society as separate entities to incorporate Abrams’ (1988) consideration of the state in terms of a ‘state-system’ and a ‘state-idea’. Mitchell argues that we should not “separate the material forms of the state from the ideological, or the real from the illusionary. The state-idea and state-system are better seen as two aspects of the same process” (1999:77). However, if we are to investigate how people interact with the state in their everyday lives, and how this may

change over time, it is helpful to maintain the analytical distinction between the structures of the state and the ideology of state. This thesis has demonstrated that people do not think of the state as a single process, rather they separate its different facets. In this case, the people of Mavodze and the surrounding villages distinguished between a state system, comprising local structures, institutions and individuals with which they were familiar and engaged with on a daily basis, and an idea of the state that, although it affected their lives, was altogether unfamiliar and remote.

This thesis has explored the political processes that have produced this distinction and has considered some of the political consequences associated with it. As the state has become less familiar to the people living in Massingir, they have lost their sense of ownership over it. Having initially considered the Frelimo party/state as 'theirs', as the system becomes further removed from peoples' daily lives and the individuals with whom they are familiar, it becomes perceived as less accountable and even potentially threatening. A second consequence is that, as the state becomes less familiar, its borders become less well-defined and it can encompass a broader range of institutions and organizations. In Massingir an array of NGOs and other groups is carrying out functions that have historically been associated with the state and, as people are not informed otherwise, it is assumed that these organisations are a part of the Mozambican state.

The contracting out of functions that have historically been considered the domain of the state to private or semi-private organisations is not unique to the Mozambican context, but indicative of the modern state in general. Helmut Willke has argued that the new role of the state is to supervise governance by semi-private organisations, local authorities, NGOs and other such organisations (1992, cited in Hansen & Stepputat 2001:16). Similarly, Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2001) suggests that with a general movement towards the privatisation of state functions, perhaps the only effective role the nation-state has left is to secure its physical and political borders. This thesis has questioned if even this remains the case. The development of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park has been widely proclaimed as part of the process of fostering international cooperation, dismantling boundaries and sustaining peace among the southern African states. However, I have argued that the creation of the park has opened the borders to tourists and the animals that they have come to view, but not for the local residents.

This solidifying of the international boundary has, contrary to Trouillot's assertions, not been achieved through the efforts of the Mozambican and South African states alone, but with the assistance of a number of private organisations. These have been partially responsible for the implementation of the park and, more interestingly, its funding. As a conservation project the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park has attracted the attention of various international organisations concerned with wildlife protection and environmental affairs. Such activities are often assumed by many in the west to be relatively benign. I have questioned this assumption and considered the political dimensions that all conservation projects inevitably entail. Far from being benign, conservation — often carried out by private organisations — can be appropriated by the state to assert control over previously marginal areas, in this case the Mozambique-South Africa borderland.

As a consequence of living in the borderland, the lives of the residents of Massingir have been shaped by both the Mozambican and the South African states. It has been the two states in interaction with each other that have produced the social, economic and political processes that have been explored in this thesis. Most recently this interaction has been seen in the development of the transfrontier park, but the thesis has stressed that this been a long-standing feature of life in this region, as demonstrated by the South African and Portuguese colonial states' involvement in male labour migration to the South African goldmines.

While the border has played an important part in the lives of generations of the villagers of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin, I question the notion that these people have developed a 'border identity'. Rather than reduce identity to a single feature, I have shown that people's affiliations arise out of the specific social, economic, and political processes taking place within the historical context of the borderland. The villagers understood their Shangaan ethnic identity to stem from the Zulu invasions of southern Mozambique that occurred in the 19th century. This ethnic identity, as Harries (1994) has argued, was sharpened during their experiences of migrating to the gold mines in South Africa. While most studies concerned with migration and identity tend to concentrate on how identity becomes sharpened through the migrants' experiences whilst away, in this thesis I have demonstrated the need to understand also how this is consolidated at home.

The local political processes that have occurred in the villages of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin and the residents' experiences of the civil war have fostered a strong sense of national identity. So although the migrants from Massingir use official identities — Mozambican and South African — opportunistically, I have argued that while the residents are Shangaan, they insist on being Mozambican Shangaan.

Postscript

I have not been able to return to Massingir and therefore cannot provide an accurate ethnographic account of the developments that have occurred since I left the region in January 2003. Nevertheless, I remain in telephone and email contact with a number of people who have made more recent visits to the area. From information received through them, and other secondary sources, I have been able to gain an impression of the current situation facing the residents of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin.

The development of the Limpopo National Park continues unabated. Over 3000 animals, including over 38 elephants, 50 buffalos, 349 zebras and 250 wildebeests, have been relocated from the Kruger National Park since 2002 (AIM 2004b). The transfer of another 3000 is planned. A further 44 game wardens have been trained and deployed within the park, bringing the total to 73 (PPF 2004a). The reports of beatings and hefty fines continue. Tenders have gone out for a range of tourism developments, including a four-wheel drive trail through the Shingwedzi Basin.

Despite the increased number of wardens and the efforts of the park authorities, poaching continues within the park and, according to one source, appears to be on the increase. Interestingly, there have been several reports of larger animals, including elephants, having been killed. Although I am unable to confirm whether these incidents have been the work of professional poachers or local residents, if any were the work of local people it would represent an escalation from local hunting for food to what was locally recognised as illegal hunting of game and trophy animals. Other reports indicate that active local resistance to the park is continuing and that the political response has been sustained. In Mavodze João Valoi has solidified his position as community leader and maintains his vocal anti-park stance.

However, although the local resistance continues, it appears that the position of the park residents is set to deteriorate further. The Mozambican Government and Peace Parks Foundation have drafted a resettlement policy that aims to begin 'voluntary' resettlement of 6500 residents (the estimated population of the villages in the Shingwedzi Basin) at the beginning of 2005. While the authorities have gone to great

lengths to emphasise that this resettlement is not forced, it is difficult to imagine how people would be able to continue living and farming in the park as the number of animals increases and large areas are set aside for tourist developments.

Having been moved due to the Portuguese colonial regime flooding their valley, and having fought and died protecting their land and property from the South African-backed Renamo rebels, it is bitterly ironic that the villagers of the Lower Shingwedzi Basin face eviction from a European-funded conservation project that aims to promote peace and regional cooperation.

The popular African adage, 'when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers', often is used to illustrate the fact that it is the civilian populations that incur the most suffering during times of conflict between states or powerful groups. This thesis has demonstrated what is less frequently noted: even when elephants walk together, it is still the grass that suffers.

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