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With an Apron in the Caboose: Illegal Migration across the Zimbabwe-South Africa Border

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With an Apron in the Caboose: Illegal Migration across the Zimbabwe-South Africa Border

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An Abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

With an Apron in the Caboose: Illegal Migration across the Zimbabwe-South Africa Border

By Francis Musoni

This dissertation explores the history of illegal migration across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border from the late nineteenth century to the first decade of the twenty-first century. It argues that unlawful cross-border mobility between the two countries emerged and expanded as an unavoidable by-product of "modern" state making processes, which began with European colonization of the Limpopo Valley in the late nineteenth century. Archival and oral research in Zimbabwe and South Africa revealed that official efforts to enforce the Limpopo River as a geopolitical boundary created the phenomenon of illegal migration. From the 1890s to 2010, successive states on either side of the border deployed legal and quasi-legal measures in a bid to control people's movements between the two countries. Chapters in this dissertation show that official efforts to control movements across the Zimbabwe-South border met with limited success. While differences among state officials and employers militated against effective regulation of cross-border mobility, illegal migrants devised sophisticated ways of evading both countries' migration control measures. Contrary to scholars who see illegal migration as a symptom of weak or failed states and those who view it as a manifestation of migrants' creative subversion of authority, this dissertation treats illegal migration as embedded within broader frameworks of state formation, border enforcement and politics of migration control in Southern Africa.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
AWVA	African Workers Voice Association
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CID	Criminal Investigations Department
DA	Democratic Alliance
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Program
EU	European Union
ETD	Emergency Travel Document
FBAWU	Federation of Bulawayo Africa Workers Union
FIBS	Federal Intelligence Service Bureau
FRELIMO	Liberation Front of Mozambique (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*,)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
ID	Identity Document
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRA	Immigrants Regulation Act

MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MSF	Medecins sans Frontieres
NAD	Native Affairs Department
NADA	Native Affairs Department Annual
NASA	National Archives of South Africa
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NDP	National Democratic Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NP	National Party
NRC	Native Recruiting Cooperation
PAC	Pan African Congress
PEA	Portuguese East Africa
RF	Rhodesian Front
RICWU	Reformed Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union
RMS	Railway Motor Services
RNLA	Rand Native Labour Association
RRAEA	Rhodesia Railways African Employees Association
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADF	South African Defense Forces
SAMP	Southern Africa Migration Project
SANDF	South African National Defense Forces
SAPS	South African Police Services

SAR	South African Railways
SRANC	Southern Rhodesia African National Congress
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TEBA	The Employment Bureau of Africa
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UNO	United Nations Organization
WNLA	Witwatersrand Native Labour Association
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People’s Union
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army

INTRODUCTION

In September 1918, an official from South Africa's Native Affairs Department said, "unless we build a Chinese wall guarded by sentries at frequent intervals, I do not see how we are to prevent these natives from coming over."[1] In 1986, almost seven decades later, apartheid South Africa completed the construction of an electric fence and deployed the army along its northern borders with Zimbabwe and Mozambique. If the motive behind the construction of the fence and the militarization of the border was to stop illegal immigration, the South African government dismally failed in that regard. By 2010, when research for this study took place, the Zimbabwe-South Africa border had become a hot bed of crime and violence associated with unlawful movements of people between these two countries. Unlicensed border agents locally known as *maguma-guma*, had removed portions of the border fence, creating several unofficial crossing points.[2] *Maguma-guma* worked alongside transport operators, commercial sex workers, border security officers as well as immigration and customs officials who helped travelers to cross the border illegally.

The prevalence of illegal migration across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border triggered a number of questions that this dissertation explores: When and how did

[1] The former Native Commissioner for Louis Trichardt, E.T. Stubbs made this comment during a conference held in Pietersburg on Tuesday 10 September 1918. The purpose of the conference was to discuss "the best means of giving effect to the instructions of the Union Government that the introduction of Tropical Natives should as far as possible cease, and of over-coming, if possible, the difficulties experienced with casual and clandestine immigrants from Rhodesia." See National Archives of South Africa [NASA] GNLB123 1950/13/D240.

[2] The term *maguma-guma* simply means get-bys. In addition to assisting travelers to cross the border through undesignated points, *maguma-guma* engaged in criminal and violent activities to survive on the border. See International Organization for Migration, *Migrants' Needs and Vulnerabilities in the Limpopo Province, Republic of South Africa: A Report by the IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa* (Pretoria: IOM, 2009).

unlawful movements across this border begin? How did illegal migration expand to the level where it became a major feature of the border's political economy by 2010? Why did migration control measures such as the construction of an electrified fence and deployment of armed security personnel fail to eliminate unlawful movements across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border? What did state-making processes on either side of the border have to do with the prevalence of illegal migration in the region? What role did subaltern agency, in the form of unlawful migrants' ingenuity, play in the rise, expansion and resilience of this phenomenon? What effects did illegal migration have on the socio-cultural landscape of the border region? In order to answer these questions, the study examines the history of illegal migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa from the inception of colonial rule in the late nineteenth century through the first decade of the twenty-first century.

This dissertation illustrates how illegal migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa emerged and expanded as an unintended by-product of "modern" state building processes, which began with European colonization of the African continent. The advent of colonial rule introduced new notions of borders and border enforcement, which destabilized patterns of mobility that existed in the continent. Whereas mental mapping played a key role in marking out political boundaries in pre-colonial times, the colonists created geo-political units with strictly defined boundaries, and deployed legal and quasi-legal instruments to control Africans' movements within and across colonial boundaries.[3]

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[3] For a discussion on pre-colonial notions of borders and frontiers in Africa see Igor Kopytoff, (ed) *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Paul Nugent, "Arbitrary Lines and the People's Minds: A Dissenting View on Colonial Boundaries in West Africa," In *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities*. Edited by Nugent and Asiwaju (New York: Pinter, 1996); Ivor Wilks, "On Mentally Mapping Greater Asante: A Study of Time and Motion," *Journal of African History* 33, no.2 (1992): 175-190.

People who, for one reason or another, did not follow official channels when crossing inter-state boundaries became classified as “clandestine” or “illegal” migrants, a phenomenon that became a site of socio-political contestations in many parts of the African continent.

As the study shows, the imposition and subsequent enforcement of the Limpopo River as a colonial boundary between Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Transvaal (South African Republic) created and promoted illegal migration in the sub-region. By the turn of the nineteenth century, following the launch of the Rand Native Labor Association in 1897, which regulated the recruitment and entry of “foreign natives” in Transvaal, and the Natives Employment Ordinance (1899), which imposed restrictions on the recruitment of Africans for employment outside Southern Rhodesia, authorities on both sides of the Limpopo required travelers to obtain official permission before crossing the border. This marked a major departure from pre-colonial times where people from the Zimbabwean plateau and South Africa freely traversed the Limpopo River to satisfy various demands of life. Over the years, as the South African and Southern Rhodesian states evolved, official restrictions of cross-Limpopo mobility became more pronounced, thereby raising concerns over people who crossed the border without proper documents and permission.

With the introduction of South Africa’s Immigrants Regulation Act of 1913, which prohibited the employment of Africans from areas north of latitude 22° south on South African mines, “clandestine migration” and “illegal recruiting” became dominant topics in intra and inter-state discussions of cross-border mobility in Southern Africa. Until the mid-1960s, when Southern Rhodesian and South African authorities came up

with joint strategies of controlling migration in the region, illegal migration became a major site of tension and negotiation among officials in different state departments, as well as between state officials and employers of African labor in both countries. Unlawful cross-border travelers also devised sophisticated ways of evading both states' migration control measures. The escalation of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles in the 1970s and 1980s led to the tightening of border control measures, including the construction of the border fence in 1986. However, tighter control of the border did not eliminate illegal migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa. Instead, as this dissertation shows, illegal migration increased in intensity and became more sophisticated.

Illegal Migration in Southern African Historiography

Although migration is one of the oldest themes in Southern African historiography, scholars have paid very little attention to the history of illegal cross-border movements in the region. Historical studies of migration in Southern Africa, which focus largely on the migrant labor system, rarely discuss migrants' experiences of travelling from one country to another or from villages to cities, mines and farms within the same country. By and large, historical works focus on developments in areas of migrants' origin as well as in countries or places of employment—ignoring the in-between space and what happens in it.[4] Quite often, scholars do not make a distinction

[4] Peter Alexander, "Oscillating Migrants, 'Detribalized Families' and Militancy: Mozambicans on Witbank Collieries, 1918-1927," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no.3 (2001): 505-525; H.M. Tapela, "Labour Migration in Southern Africa and the Origins of Underdevelopment in Nyasaland, 1891-

between legal or organized migration and illicit or illegal cross-border movements. This is particularly so with studies seeking to understand changes in the political economy of migration in Southern Africa. Some works in this category examine issues such as the role of colonial capital investments in shifting the dynamics of population movements in the region. Many others explore the effects of circular migration on economic and political developments in migrants' areas of origin, migrants' working and living conditions as well as host communities' perceptions of foreigners.[5]

Scholars have also studied ways in which migrants' socio-cultural backgrounds and ties to places of origin affect their experiences of life in host countries. In general, works in this category argue that the nature of social, cultural and religious connections that migrants keep with family members and institutions in their home countries define the processes of identity reconstruction among migrant communities. For example, James Ferguson's study of migrant workers in the Zambian copper-belt shows how migrants valued their rural connections as insurance premiums against harsh effects of a de-industrializing city.[6] In an examination of what he calls "the logics of the village," and how they affected Zimbabwean migrants in early twentieth century South Africa, Clapperton Mavhunga argues that pre-departure rituals, which involved elements of ancestral worship, were essential in reminding migrants of their roots and obligations to go back to their original homes.[7]

1913" *Journal of Southern African Affairs* 4, no.1 (1979): 67-80; Francis Wilson, *Labour in the South African Gold Mines, 1911-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

[5] Among the most recent discussions of circular migration in Southern Africa is Deborah Potts, *Circular Migration in Zimbabwe and Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa* (James Currey: Oxford, 2010).

[6] James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). See also Dunbar Moodie, (with Vivienne Ndatshe), *Going for Gold: Men, Mines and Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[7] Clapperton Mavhunga, "Navigating Boundaries of Urban/Rural Migration in Southern Zimbabwe, 1890s to 1920s" In *An African Agency and European Colonialism: Latitudes of Negotiation*

While the bulk of literature on labor migration in Southern Africa tends to be male-centered or gender-neutral, experiences of women migrants and the role of gender in structuring mobility have also become prominent themes in recent times. Emerging research suggests that many women crossed colonial borders independently or accompanying their husbands who took up employment in different parts of the region as migrant laborers in the twentieth century.[8] Scholars such as Belinda Bozzoli and Iris Berger examine the activities of such women migrants who, because the system did not accommodate them in the mines, farms and industries, ventured into the informal economies of South Africa. As Berger points out, migrant women cultivated networks of solidarity upon which their livelihoods and survival depended.[9] Others, such as Elizabeth Schmidt, study the effects of men's migration on the position of women who remained in the migrants' areas of origin.[10] More recently, Belinda Dodson has compared the experiences of women and men migrants in post apartheid South Africa, pointing out that the country's migration policies discriminate against women. Dodson argues that, "properly managed, female migration could be a mechanism for reducing both spatial and

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and Containment: Essays in Honor of A.S. Kanya-Forstner. Edited by Femi J. Kolapo and Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, (Lanham: University of America Press, 2007).

[8] Teresa Barnes, "Virgin Territory? Travel and Migration by African Women in Twentieth Century Southern Africa" In *Women in Africa Colonial Histories.* Edited by Jean Allman, *et-al,* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002); Camilla M. Cockerton, "Running Away from the Land of the Desert: Women's Migration from Colonial Botswana to South Africa, c.1895-1966," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Queens University: Ontario, 1995).

[9] Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991); Iris Berger, *Threads of Solidarity: Women in South African Industries, 1900-1980* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

[10] Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (London: James Currey, 1992).

gender-based inequalities in the region, empowering women to be agents of development both in their home countries and in South Africa itself."[11]

In spite of advances in migration studies, only a handful of scholars have explored the pre-1990s history of unlawful migration in Southern Africa. Thomas Bulpin's 1954 biography of Cecil Barnard (whom Africans called *Bvekenya* because he swaggered as he walked) is arguably one of the earliest and most influential discussions of illegal migration in the region.[12] While retracing the life of a man who spent almost two decades in the "secluded and sinister wedge of land" where the borders of Southern Rhodesia, Transvaal and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) met, *The Ivory Trail* provides an insight into the activities of unlicensed recruiters who mobilized African labor for the Witwatersrand mines in the early twentieth century.[13] Bulpin's account of blackbirding in the area that state officials and ordinary people in the three territories referred to as Crooks' Corner (because it harbored all sorts of criminals running away from law enforcement agents), reveals two issues that feature prominently in studies of illegal migration in Southern Africa and other areas of the world.

The first observation Bulpin makes is that illegal recruiting and migration through Crooks' Corner thrived because the area was far away from police posts in the "solitude and silence of the bush."[14] As the book points out, it was not just the distance from state centers that made it difficult for state authorities to stop illegal recruiting that took place at Crooks' Corner. That the place was located on a rugged terrain with no road access

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[11] Belinda Dodson, "Women on the Move: Gender and Cross-Border Migration to South Africa from Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe" In *On Borders: Perspectives on International Migration in Southern Africa.* Edited by David A. McDonald (Ontario: SAMP, 2000): 148.

[12] Thomas Victor Bulpin, *The Ivory Trail* (Howard Timmins: Cape Town, 1954).

[13] *Ibid:* 20.

[14] *Ibid.*

inhibited official efforts to control illegal activities there. As if these were not enough challenges to deal with, Bulpin argues that issues of territorial sovereignty limited officials' capacity to stamp out illegal migration through this place also known as "Pafuri" or "Makhuleke."[15] When police officers from one territory pursued them, unlicensed recruiters escaped arrests by simply moving on the other side of a handy beacon planted near the junction of the Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers to mark a point where the three territories met. Bulpin's characterization of Crooks' Corner as inaccessible and out-of-reach of state officials shaped later discussions of illegal migration in the Limpopo Valley.

In a study of labor mobilization strategies and challenges in early twentieth century South Africa, Alan Jeeves observes that state control of labor recruitment and immigration through areas such as Crooks' Corner was generally weak. He further points out that, despite banning the recruitment and employment of Africans from areas north of latitude 22° south in 1913, the South African government lacked capacity to control movements across the country's northern border.[16] Martin Murray, whose study of blackbirding in the Makhuleke area heavily relied on *The Ivory Trail* as well as Jeeves's work, argues that in the first few decades of the twentieth century the Zimbabwe-South Africa border "presented no obstacle to anyone with even the slightest determination to

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[15] The place that was known as Crooks' Corner is the triangular space at the junction of the Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers, where the borders of Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa intersect. The area is also known as "Pafuri" or "Makhuleke," the latter being the name of a Shangaan chief in whose jurisdiction the area fell. In 1910, Alec Thompson and William Pye built a store at Pafuri, which later became the "capital" of Crooks' Corner. In the 1930s, Crooks' Corner and a large part of chief Makhuleke's area became part of Kruger National Park. The establishment of the Park did not only lead to forced displacement of many of the Makhuleke people, but it also changed the dynamics of migration through this area.

[16] Alan H. Jeeves, "Over-Reach: The South African Gold Mines and the Struggle for the Labour of Zambesia" *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 17, no.3 (1983): 393-412.

cross it."[17] Mavhunga's recent study of mobility and technological interventions in Gonarezhou National Park reiterates earlier works' sentiments about states' failure to control illegal migration through the Makhuleke area.[18] In *The Mobile Workshop,* Mavhunga argues that the prevalence of tsetse flies and mosquitoes in the Limpopo Valley inhibited states' efforts to deploy regular patrols of the border zone in the early twentieth century. He also claims that the three territories' failure to invest in road construction hampered officials' desire to control the movements of people into and through Crooks' Corner. Because of these limitations, Mavhunga concludes that, "the state was completely powerless" and incapable of controlling the activities of blackbirders who aided illegal migrants from Southern Rhodesia and PEA to enter the Transvaal.[19]

This scenario echoes other scholars' argument that illegal migration thrives in Africa because of the permeability of the continent's borders. One example of such scholars is Ieuan Griffiths, who contends that, "the political boundaries of Africa are essentially permeable, by which is meant that for most people of the continent, over almost the whole length of boundaries, there is no hindrance to cross-border movement."[20] He goes further pointing out that in some parts of the continent boundaries are virtually unguarded or guarded by personnel of only one country, either at the border or far away from the actual frontier. Griffiths also put forward the argument that some African boundaries are too long for poorly resourced institutions of border control such

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[17] Martin J. Murray, "'Blackbirding' at 'Crooks' Corner': Illicit Labour Recruiting in Northeastern Transvaal, 1910-1940" *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, no.3 (1995): 380.

[18] Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga "The Mobile Workshop: Mobility, Technology and Human-Animal Interaction in Gonarezhou (National Park), 1850- Present," (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 2008).

[19] *Ibid*: 188.

[20] Ieuan Griffiths, "Permeable Boundaries in Africa" In *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities.* Edited by Paul Nugent, and Anthony Asiwaju (New York: Printer, 1996): 68.

as the police and customs officers to sufficiently monitor them. In some cases, as he observes, boundaries which appear on paper are either unmarked on the ground or defined by invisible boundary markers (beacons), small rivers and other natural features that can be easily crossed.[21] This argument resonates with literature that views the prevalence of illegal migration in other areas of the world as principally a result of states' failure to effectively control borders.[22]

The second point that *The Ivory Trail* makes is that illegal migration thrived in Southern Africa in the early twentieth century because of the blackbirders' ability to evade official systems of migration control. Bulpin argues that Bvekenya and other unlicensed recruiters had a better understanding of the border terrain and bush paths that connected Crooks' Corner to labor supply areas in Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa (P.E.A) than state officials. Regarding this point, Bvekenya recalled that one of the blackbirders he met in his early days at Crooks' Corner told him to use the beacon creatively when in trouble with law enforcement agents. He remembered being told that, "whoever comes for you, you can always be on the other side in someone else's territory; and if they all come at once, you can always sit on the beacon top and let them fight over who is to pinch you."[23] Over and above that, as Bulpin notes, blackbirders worked in collusion with African chiefs in the two supplier territories to evade colonial officials'

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Pia M. Orrenius, "Illegal Immigration and Enforcement Along the US-Mexico Border: An Overview" *Economic and Financial Review* First Quarter, (2001): 1-11. See also, Gordon H. Hanson, "Illegal Migration from Mexico to the United States" *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper* 12141, (March 2006).

[23] Bulpin, *The Ivory Trail*: 29. As Bvekenya narrated to his biographer, unlicensed recruiters obtained African workers from Southern Rhodesia and other areas that South African authorities designated unsafe for work in the mines. Recruiters bribed Mozambican chiefs who would then accept the recruits as of their "blood and tribe." The recruits would then have to master the chief's language and other mannerisms before their recruiters took them to legal recruiting zones as if they were from approved recruiting zones in PEA. At times, black birders smuggled African migrant workers past the police and colonial officials in PEA, Southern Rhodesia and Transvaal.

restrictions on labor recruitment and emigration to the Transvaal. This implies that illegal migration thrived on networks of illegality, involving recruiters, border residents and work seekers.

As with the first of Bulpin's two observations, his analysis of recruiters and migrants' agency found resonance with later works on illegal migration in Southern Africa. Without making reference to Crooks' Corner or *The Ivory Trail,* Charles van Onselen's study of migrants' experiences and responses to forced labor, low wages and poor conditions in Southern Rhodesia's mining industry put emphasis on illegal migrants' creativity.[24] *Chibaro* details how migrant workers, mostly those from Nyasaland (Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) worked around Southern Rhodesia's pass laws to escape to better paying jobs in South Africa. As the book argues, migrants responded to Southern Rhodesian authorities' ban on passes to South Africa by going to Bechuanaland first and then proceeded to Johannesburg. They utilized complicated intelligence networks in order to avoid apprehension by Southern Rhodesian authorities. In so doing, migrants from Southern Rhodesia and other areas north of latitude 22° south also managed to circumvent South Africa's ban on their entry and employment on the Witwatersrand mines.

In a study of forced relocation of the Makhuleke people in the 1950s and 60s, Patrick Harries points out some of the ways in which migrants who passed-by Crooks' Corner dodged official travel restriction measures. In addition to working with unlicensed recruiters, illegal migrants connived with local South Africans who provided them with

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[24] Charles van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900 to 1933* (London: Pluto Press 1976).

tax receipts, which served as identity documents for employment purposes.[25] Harries makes similar observations in *Work, Culture and Identity,* which focuses on the social history of Mozambican migrants who worked in South Africa from the 1860s to 1910. He argues that some Mozambican migrants "retained their freedom to select their employers, to choose their occupation on the mine, and set the length of their contracts making their way to the gold fields independently of WNLA."[26] In this case, Harries, as is the case with Van Onselen, views illegal migration as a form of peasant resistance against exploitation by the colonial state in Mozambique and mining companies in South Africa. This echoes James Scott's ideas about everyday forms of peasant resistance as weapons of the weak.[27]

The image of an innovative illegal migrant who cultivates networks with unlicensed recruiters and border residents to outwit state machinery of migration control resonates with scholarship on smuggling in other areas of Africa. As Sally Peberdy observes, many scholars see smuggling and other forms of informal cross-border activities as "standing outside regulatory frameworks and beside the formal sector."[28] A good example is David Newbury's analysis of informal trading activities across the Zaire-Rwanda border. Newbury argues that the prevalence of smuggling (locally referred

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[25] Patrick Harries, "A Forgotten Corner of the Transvaal: Reconstructing the History of a Relocated Community through Oral Testimony and Song" In *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives.* Edited by Belinda Bozzoli, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).

[26] Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c1860-1910* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994): 181.

[27] James Scott, "Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance" *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 13, no.2 (1986): 5-35; James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

[28] Sally A. Peberdy, "Border Crossings: Small Entrepreneurs and Cross-border Trade Between South Africa and Mozambique," *Tijdschnft voor Economische en Social Geografie* 91, no.4 (2000): 361-378. See also, Jens A. Andersson, "Informal Moves, Informal Markets: International Migrants and Traders from Mzimba District, Malawi" *African Affairs* 105, no.420 (2006): 375-397; Janet MacGaffey, "How to Survive and Become Rich amidst Devastation: The Second Economy in Zaire," *African Affairs* 82, no.328 (1983): 351-366; Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* (New York: Berg, 1999).

to as *magendo*), is "a product of the active participation and creation of the people, and testifies once again to their ability to identify their interests and to act energetically to accommodate them, at considerable risk and against great odds."[29] He further claims that *magendo* is a manifestation of peasants' attempts to "seize control of their own lives and their willingness to struggle to establish their own destiny."[30] Anthony Asiwaju, whose research focuses on West Africa, argues that, "partitioned Africans have nevertheless tended in their normal activities to ignore the boundaries as dividing lines and to carry on social relations across them more or less as in the days before partition."[31] Although Asiwaju does not provide details of how African migrants disregarded colonial boundaries in their daily activities, he concurs with scholars who view illegal migration as an expression of resistance.

David Coplan's study of illegal migration across the boundary of Lesotho and South Africa provides further insights into the history of this phenomenon in Southern Africa.[32] Coplan argues that at the peak of South Africa's mineral and industrial revolution (1870s to 1930s) the boundary played a crucial role in the informal economy of illegality, which tied colonial Basutoland and the eastern Free State. In examining illegal cross-border activities that took place on the Lesotho-South Africa border, Coplan writes, "repeated attempts at pass laws and their enforcement all failed as the under-manned British administration was not able to cope with Basotho defiance, and local Free

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[29] David Newbury "From 'Frontier' to 'Boundary': Some Historical Roots of Peasant Strategies of Survival in Zaire" In *The Crisis in Zaire: Myths and Realities*. Edited by Nzongola-Ntalaja (ed), (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1986): 96.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Anthony I. Asiwaju, "The Conceptual Framework," In *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries 1884-1984*. Edited by A. I. Asiwaju, (London: Christopher Hurst, 1984): 3.

[32] David B. Coplan, "A River Runs Through it: The Meaning of the Lesotho-Free State Border," *African Affairs*, 100, no.398 (2001): 81-116.

State town officials did not wish to."[33] Coplan further points out that "pass regulations and other official controls themselves became a source of profit and an impetus to crime, as small bribes were paid to circumvent them…."[34] While Coplan's study echoes the two points that Bulpin identifies as responsible for the prevalence of illegal migration through Crooks' Corner, he also argues that official corruption and contradictions between national and provincial leaders in South Africa fueled illegality at the border with Lesotho. His is a refreshing way of thinking about why official efforts to stamp out illegal migration in Southern Africa met with limited success.

As the foregoing discussion shows, most historical studies of illegal migration in Southern Africa focus on the early years of colonial rule—a period of turbulent transition in the region. On their part, anthropologists, sociologists and geographers, who dominate current debates about illegal migration in Southern Africa, tend to focus on the post-1994 era. This creates a disjuncture between the two sets of literature. The only exception is Peberdy's study of the evolvement of South Africa's immigration between 1910 and 2008. While acknowledging that scholars have not done much to study the history of illegal migration to South Africa, Peberdy barely discusses this phenomenon in her book. Instead, she speculates that "secret side deals" between South African authorities and their counterparts in Southern Rhodesia and PEA fueled illegal migration in the region.[35] Her book also states that prior to the 1960s South African authorities were not concerned with the inflow of illegal migrants, but does not elaborate why this was so.

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[33] *Ibid*., 90
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] Sally Peberdy, *Selecting Immigrants: National Identity and South Africa's Immigration Policies, 1910-2008* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009).

The disconnection between studies of illegal migration in colonial and post-colonial Southern Africa probably explains why John Oucho would argue that, "during much of the colonial period the national boundaries [in Southern Africa] were not as rigidly observed as they became after independence, which implies that illegal migration was then an irrelevant concept."[36] Oucho is not alone in thinking that illegal migration emerged with the end of colonial and apartheid rule in Southern Africa. In 2000, Jonathan Crush made similar observations, writing, "for much of the twentieth century, clandestine migration referred not to the 'illegal' crossing of borders per se but to the process of going to South Africa without documentation."[37] That Oucho and Crush, two leading scholars of migration in Southern Africa, suggest illegal migration is a post-colonial or post-apartheid phenomenon in the region testifies to the need for more historical explorations of this issue.

Studies of illegal migration in post-apartheid Southern Africa are more policy-oriented than academic in nature. Scholars have been pre-occupied with explaining why illegal migration increased after the end of apartheid rule in South Africa. So far, research on this question has offered two positions. The first one is that the end of apartheid rule and the repeal of racist immigration laws such as the 1991 Aliens Control Act encouraged a free flow of migrants from other African countries to South Africa. The argument here is that post-apartheid South Africa lacks capacity to effectively enforce immigration laws and to police its borders.[38] Secondly, as Hussein Solomon's work shows, some scholars

[36] John O. Oucho, "Cross-border Migration and Regional Initiatives in Managing Migration in Southern Africa," In *Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants*. Edited by Pieter Kok, *et-al,* (Pretoria: Human Science Research Council, 2006): 47.

[37] Jonathan Crush, "Migrations Past: An Historical Overview of Cross-Border Movement in Southern Africa" In *On Borders:* 17.

[38] Jonathan Klaaren and Jay Ramji, "Inside Illegality: Migration Policing in South Africa after Apartheid" *Africa Today* 48, no.3 (2001): 35-47; Anthony Minaar and Mike Hough, *Who Goes There?:*

argue that conditions of insecurity and poverty prevailing in other countries of the region in the 1990s significantly contributed to the rise in illegal migration to South Africa.[39] There is no doubt that the 1990s escalation of civil war in Mozambique and the collapse of Zimbabwe's economy led to an upsurge of emigration to South Africa.[40] What remains unclear in prevailing debates is why efforts to control illegal migration seem to have completely failed to stamp out this practice.

The question of numbers has also dominated recent research on illegal migration in Southern Africa.[41] Politicians, immigrant-rights activists and migration scholars, especially those affiliated with think-tanks such as the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) and the Southern Africa Migration Project (SAMP), are engaged in seemingly un-ending debates regarding the numbers of illegal migrants in South Africa. The difficulties associated with tracing movements of illegal migrants in and out of South Africa make it hard for different researchers to agree on the methods they use to collect data and calculate the numbers of illegal migrants in the country. Research has also dealt with questions of host communities' attitude towards illegal migrants. Studies show that the media's portrayal of migrants as criminals and job-snatchers fuel South Africans'

Perspectives on Clandestine Migration and Illegal Aliens in Southern Africa (Pretoria: HSRC, 1996); Jean Pierre, et-al *Towards Tolerance, Law, and Dignity: Addressing Violence against Foreign Nationals in South Africa. (*Arcadia: IOM, 2009).

[39] Hussein Solomon, *Challenges to Global Security: Geopolitics and Power in an Age of Transition* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008); Hussein Solomon, *Of Myths and Migration: Illegal Immigration into South Africa,* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2003).

[40] David A. McDonald and Jonathan Crush, (eds) *Destinations Unknown: Perspectives on the Brain Drain* (Pretoria: Africa Institute and SAMP, 2002); Rudo Gaidzanwa, *Voting with Their Feet: Migrant Zimbabwean Nurses and Doctors in the Era of Structural Adjustment* (Uppsala: Nordiska Institute, 1999); David A. McDonald, *et-al, "*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner: Migration from Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe to South Africa" *International Migration Review* 34, no.3, (2000): 813-841.

[41] Loren Landau, "Drowning in Numbers: Interrogating New Patterns of Zimbabwean Migration to South Africa" In R. Leslie, ed., *Migration from Zimbabwe: Numbers, Needs and Policy Options* (Johannesburg: Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2008), pp. 7-15. See also Jonathan Crush, "The Discourse and Dimensions of Irregularity in Post-apartheid South Africa" *International Migration* 37, no.1 (1999): 125-151.

negative perceptions of African migrants, whom they generally refer to as *Makwerekwere*.[42] Many works on illegal migrants' experiences of exclusion emerged after the xenophobic attacks of 2008, which killed more than sixty people and displaced hundreds others in South Africa.[43] Because they intend to influence policy formulation processes, the bulk of studies of migration in post-1994 South Africa emphasize the victimhood of illegal migrants.

Recasting Debate on Illegal Migration

In exploring the history of illegal migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa over a longue durée, this dissertation proffers a more nuanced framework within which to understand why, in spite of investments in border security and migration control measures, illegal migration remains a challenge on the Zimbabwe-South Africa border. While archival and oral research in Zimbabwe and South Africa strongly suggests that from the 1890s to 2010, successive states on either side of the Limpopo River failed to eliminate unlawful cross-border mobility in the region, there is little evidence to support the idea that the states lacked capacity to control borders. If illegal migration thrived in the early twentieth century due to limited patrols of the border zone, why did it not stop after the construction of an electrified fence and the deployment of armed soldiers along the border? Whereas most scholars see the states' lack of capacity to control borders as

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[42] Francis B. Nyamnjoh, *Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa*, (Dakar: CODESRIA Books, 2006); Belinda Dodson and Catherine Oelofse, "Shades of Xenophobia: In-Migrants and Immigrants in Mizamoyethu, Cape Town" *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 34, no. 1 (2000): 124-148.

[43] See for example Jonathan Crush, and Daniel Tevera, (eds) *Zimbabwe's Exodus: Crisis, Migration, Survival* (Cape Town: SAMP, 2010); R. Leslie, (ed) *Migration from Zimbabwe: Numbers, Needs and Policy Options* (Johannesburg: CDE, 2008); Human Rights Watch, *Neighbors in Need: Zimbabweans Seeking Refuge in South Africa* (New York, 2008).

the main reason for the prevalence of illegal migration, this dissertation shows that illegal migration emerged and expanded as states on either side of the Zimbabwe-South Africa border improved their presence and visibility in the border zone.

Research in other areas of the world, particularly literature on the United States-Mexico border, shows that tightening border control measures usually encourages migrants to use unofficial channels to cross borders.[44] Joseph Nevins's study of Operation Gatekeeper, a strategy of political boundary enforcement, which the Clinton Administration launched in 1994, is one example.[45] As Nevins argues, the implementation of Operation Gatekeeper transformed the US-Mexico border from being a zone of transnational interaction to being a semi-militarized boundary, but did not eliminate illegal migration between the two countries. By 1994, the USA had installed floodlights on sections of the border in addition to deploying helicopters that hovered over the border area, monitoring people's movements. In spite of this, and other efforts that authorities put in place since then, illegal migration across the US-Mexico border remains a site of intense contestation. As Nevis argues, the border has become a permanent site of construction where the building and tearing down of walls and fences take place all the time.

A similar scenario unfolded on the Zimbabwe-South Africa border where laws such as the Immigrants Regulation Act (I.R.A) of 1913, which prohibited the employment of Africans from areas north of latitude 22° south on South African mines,

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[44] David W. Haines, and Karen E. Rosenblum, (eds) *Illegal Immigration in America: A Reference Handbook.* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999); See also Nick Megoran, Gael Raballand, and Jerome Bouyjon, "Performance, Representation and the Economics of Border Control in Uzbekistan" *Geopolitics* 10, no.4 (2005): 712-740.

[45] Joseph Nevis, *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the 'Illegal Alien' and the Making of the US-Mexico Boundary* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

helped very little towards the control of illegal migration. The implementation of I.R.A and other migration control legislations encouraged unlawful cross-border mobility to increase in scope and intensity. Similarly, developments such as increased surveillance of the border area following the construction of the Beitbridge border-post linking Southern Rhodesia and South Africa in 1931, and the erection of the border fence in 1986, might have improved border enforcement strategies, but did not eradicate illegal migration in the region. This scenario created a paradox in that instruments of migration control, which state officials on either side of the border deployed, actually encouraged and promoted illegal migration.

In the same vein, blaming or crediting travelers, recruiters and border inhabitants for the resilience of this phenomenon does not do justice to the debate either. While it makes sense to view illegal migration as a manifestation of subaltern agency, thinking about this phenomenon as a form of activism against authoritarian systems of governance might be a misreading of the politics of migration control. That perspective distorts the reality on the Zimbabwe-South Africa border, and many other border zones where state officials often allow illegal migrants to pass through without presenting official documents. That certain cross-border activities can be illegal does not mean they are always illicit. In spite of passing laws that illegalize certain kinds of cross-border movements and activities, state officials sometimes see these phenomena as permissible, and even legitimate in some contexts.[46] As Paul Nugent notes about smuggling across the

[46] Janet Roitman, "The Ethics of Illegality in the Chad Basin" In *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony,* edited by Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2006); Janet Roitman, "A Successful Life in the Illegal Realm: Smugglers and Road Bandits in the Chad Basin" In *Readings on Modernity in Africa*. Edited by P. Geschiere, B. Meyer, P. Pels, (London: International African Institute, 2008).

Ghana-Togo border, it is problematic to interpret every form of illegal cross-border activity as resistance to the existence of state authority in border zones.[47]

Nugent's idea builds on Michel Foucault's notion of "tolerated illegality," whereby states sometimes choose not to apply or observe certain legal instruments for political or economic expedience.[48] While discussing the situation in France under the Ancien Regime, Foucault contends that tolerated illegality "sometimes took on an absolutely statutory form—as with the privileges accorded certain individuals and groups—which made it not so much an illegality as a regular exemption," further asserting that sometimes "ordinances could be published and constantly renewed without ever being implemented… or quite simply the actual impossibility of imposing the law and apprehending offenders."[49] When that happens, it does not necessarily mean that concerned states are not aware of the prevalence of particular illegal activities, or that states lack the capacity to control such practices. Although her book does not seriously engage with the issue of illegal migration on the Zimbabwe-Zambia border, Joann McGregor makes a similar observation, arguing that the existence of "illegal but licit" activities shows not the failure of the state, but its re-crafting.[50]

In analyzing several factors that inhibited official efforts and willingness to enforce migration control measures contained in the statutes in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa from the 1890s and 2010, this dissertation goes beyond Foucault's conceptualization of "tolerated illegality." The study contends that successive

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[47] Paul Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier: The Lie of the Borderlands Since 1914* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002).

[48] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) Translated from the French version by Alan Sheridan.

[49] *Ibid:* 82.

[50] Joann McGregor, *Crossing the Zambezi: The Politics of Landscape on a Central African Frontier* (James Currey: Suffolk, 2009).

states on either side of the Limpopo River did not willingly tolerate illegal migration. Instead, tensions among officials in different state departments, as well as between state officials, employers and mobile populations in both countries significantly shaped states' approaches to illegal migration in the region. In this respect, the study does not treat illegal migration as simply a symptom of weak or failed states. It also does not view this phenomenon as against the state or in resistance to it, but as embedded within broader frameworks of state formation, border enforcement and migration control in Southern Africa. In fact, illegal migration is an unavoidable feature of modern state systems, which derive their existence from being bounded within particular territorial parameters. Without the threat of illegal migration, border enforcement and migration control measures would be meaningless.

This dissertation further argues that illegal migration significantly contributed to the socio-spatial transformation of the Zimbabwe-South Africa border zone. While people traveling through official crossing points, with properly issued travel documents had minimal interaction with inhabitants of the border area, those avoiding official avenues engaged more with border communities. On one hand, interactions between illegal migrants and border inhabitants created opportunities for business exchanges, inter-marriages and other mutually benefecial relationships. On the other hand, such interactions led to ethnic stereotyping and violence, including assaults, rape and murder. All this helped to transform the border's socio-cultural landscape. By 2010, many inhabitants of Beitbridge district had adopted a culture of building small huts (which they referred to as z*vimba zvemupfuko*) to appease the spirits of migrants their fathers

allegedly killed.[51] The practice of building z*vimba zvemupfuko* and the rituals associated with it constitute an integral part of a culture of violence and public healing among border communities.

In making this observation, the dissertation echoes Tim Cresswell's study of mobility and the making of space in the western world. In *On the Move*, Cresswell views the airport lounge not only as a place of transit, but also as an "in between zone" where "motion, meaning and power come together."[52] As he argues, because mobility is an embodied experience laden with power "the mobile people are never simply people—they are dancers and pedestrians, drivers and athletes, refugees and citizens, tourists and business people, men and women."[53] Cresswell goes further to argue that the airport is a space of the kinetic elite as well as occasional flyers, the homeless, taxi drivers, drug-dealers, janitors, customs officials, etc. It is a space where itinerant bodies converge to produce history.

Cresswell's framing of the airport and mobility in and through it is helpful in thinking about the Zimbabwe-South Africa border as a zone in which unlawful travelers interacted with border inhabitants, state officials, and other people offering different kinds of services. Whereas other scholars see borders as marginal spaces, this study treats the Zimbabwe-South Africa border as a zone of interaction where the local, national and international forces converged to produce history. It also treats border inhabitants as enterprising actors who sought to obtain maximum returns from their engagements and interactions with passers-by and state representatives in the border zone. This dissertation

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[51] *Zvimba zvemupfuko* means little huts for avenging spirits.

[52] Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 223.

[53] *Ibid*: 4.

therefore contends that understanding the socio-spatial transformations of borderlands could be one of the best avenues of exploring the unfinished business of nation-state building in Southern Africa and the African continent in general.

Dissertation Outline

The first chapter of this dissertation focuses on two decades between the colonization of the Zimbabwean plateau in 1890 and the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. It examines how the imposition of a colonial boundary between present-day Zimbabwe and South Africa affected pre-existing patterns of cross-Limpopo mobility. The chapter shows that for generations prior to European conquest, inhabitants of the Limpopo Valley moved back and forth across the river free of any control by more powerful others. There were strong economic, political and socio-cultural links among the Venda, Shangaan and other ethno-linguistic groups astride the Limpopo River. The chapter argues that the advent of colonial restrictions of cross-Limpopo mobility created the phenomenon of illegal migration as many people continued to travel across the border in total disregard of official control measures. As the chapter illustrates, the early twentieth century also witnessed the emergence of unlicensed border agents who assisted people to cross the Zimbabwe-South Africa border illegally.

The second chapter examines the impact that South Africa's Immigrants Regulation Act of 1913 had on the nature and patterns of illegal cross-Limpopo migrations up to the late 1920s. The Immigrants Regulation Act, which emerged only three years after the formation of the Union of South Africa, banned the entry and

employment of Africans from areas north of latitude 22° south. The chapter shows how tensions between mining companies and the state in South Africa militated against effective implementation of the 1913 Act. Despite giving the impression that they had the situation under control, South African authorities failed to enforce the ban on Africans from Southern Rhodesia and other areas north of the Limpopo River. Although Southern Rhodesian authorities welcomed the ban by imposing more stringent conditions for people intending to migrate to South Africa, their efforts were ineffective without South Africa's cooperation. People who could not obtain official permission to leave Southern Rhodesia sought alternative routes of crossing the border. In this respect, as the chapter argues, the 1913 Act actually fueled the growth of illegal migration between these two countries. By the late 1920s, illegal migration had become not just a site of tension between the state and employers in South Africa, but also a significant mediator of diplomatic relations across the Limpopo River.

In Chapter Three, the dissertation moves on to examine how competition for labor inhibited efforts to regulate the movement of people across the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa border from the 1930s to the 1950s. The chapter begins with a discussion of South Africa's suspension of the ban on Africans from north of latitude 22 degrees south through an amendment of the Immigrants Regulation Act, and then moves on to explore Southern Rhodesia's response. Despite having failed to strike a migration control "deal" with South African authorities in previous years, Southern Rhodesian authorities did not give up efforts to try to stop emigration south of the Limpopo River. As the chapter shows, Southern Rhodesian authorities took the construction of the bridge between the two countries in 1929 as an opportunity to improve migration control measures,

especially surveillance of the border area. Over and above that, Southern Rhodesia attempted to bring South Africa, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland into a regionally coordinated system of cross-Limpopo migration control. Bowing to pressure from farmers and mine owners whose labor requirements increased in response to the boost in industrialization in the 1930s and 40s, South African authorities resisted attempts to come up with a regional approach to illegal migration. Instead, they put in place measures to regularize the stay and employment of northern migrants who entered the country illegally.

As the dissertation shows in Chapter Four, South African authorities changed their position in the 1960s when they took a leading role in controlling movements of people across the Limpopo River. The shift in South Africa's immigration control policy came against the backdrop of broader changes in the region's political economy. When Zambia and other countries began to accommodate and offer military support to anti-apartheid activists, South African authorities viewed migrants from north of the Limpopo with suspicion. As the chapter argues, South African authorities began treating "northern migrants" not as a mere reservoir of cheap labor, but as a security threat. In 1974, with Southern Rhodesia under siege from African liberation fighters who also received support from Zambia and other countries, the two neighbors came up with a formal agreement to control cross-Limpopo mobility. By 1979, South African authorities had deployed armed security guards and planted sisals on sections of the country's boundary with Rhodesia. While cooperation between these two countries changed the dynamics of migration control in the region, the 1970s war forced many people to leave Rhodesia for South Africa as refugees. Although the militarization of the border made it more difficult

for people to cross the Limpopo River at undesignated points as they had done in the past, illegal migration continued.

The Fifth chapter focuses on the dynamics of illegal migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa from the 1980s to 2010. Following Zimbabwe's attainment of independence in 1980, the relationship between the two countries shifted, leading to further changes in migration control measures. The 1974 Agreement came to an end as the Zimbabwean government joined the ranks of countries that assisted anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa. In 1986, South Africa erected an electric fence along its borders with Mozambique and Zimbabwe in an attempt to counter infiltration by anti-apartheid activists, and to stop the flow of illegal (refugee) migrants running away from the civil war in Mozambique. The construction of the fence did not just transform the border landscape, but it further shifted the dynamics of unlawful cross-border mobility in the Limpopo Valley.

As the chapter argues, South African authorities' attempts to tighten the border encouraged illegal migrants to deploy more sophisticated strategies of crossing it. Illegal migrants resorted to cutting holes through the fence as well as bribing police officers, soldiers, and other state officials at the border post and along the borderline. Such strategies became more prevalent in the late 1990s, when an economic and a political crisis in Zimbabwe increased the flow of migrants from north of the Limpopo River into South Africa. Although the end of apartheid in 1994 allowed South African and Zimbabwean authorities to work together in controlling cross-Limpopo mobility, illegal migration remained resilient. Unscrupulous cross-border transport operators, unlicensed

border agents and corrupt border officials worked in networks that facilitated illegal migration across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border.

In Chapter Six, the dissertation shifts attention toward the socio-cultural dynamics of illegal migration. From the 1890s to 2010, the Zimbabwe-South Africa border was not simply a transit area for people traveling between these two countries. Many people who crossed the border at undesignated points sought accommodation, food and other kinds of assistance from border communities. As the chapter illustrates, decades of illegal migrants' interaction with inhabitants of the Limpopo valley left indelible marks in the border zone. While on one hand such interactions provided opportunities for mutually beneficial exchanges, on the other hand migrant-host interactions resulted in violence. In this respect, the Zimbabwe-South Africa border evolved as a zone of ethnic accommodation and conflict.[54]

Sources

Research for this study, which began in July 2009 and ended in June 2010, deployed a combination of historical and ethnographic methods to understand how illegal migration across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border emerged and expanded from the 1890s to 2010. The bulk of the pre-1960s data came from the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) in Harare and the National Archives of South Africa (NASA) in Pretoria. Research at the NAZ focused predominantly on the Native Affairs Department (NAD) files and the British South Africa Police (BSAP) Department files. From the late

[54] O. J. Martinez, "The Dynamics of Border Interaction" In *Global Boundaries: World Boundaries,* volume 1, edited by Clive H. Schofield, (London: Routledge, 1994).

1890s to the late 1950s, these two departments generated a huge corpus of data relating to the movement of Africans within and outside Southern Rhodesia. Correspondences between the two departments, as well as between officials of the NAD and the Administrator's office, the Colonial Secretary's office, Rhodesian Farmers' Associations and the Rhodesian Chamber of Mines revealed a lot about the history of migration from Southern Rhodesia to South Africa.

In addition to correspondences among various departments in Southern Rhodesia, files at the NAZ also contained materials relating to South Africa's Immigrants Regulation Act of 1913. In an attempt to reduce loss of labor through emigration to South Africa, officials in Southern Rhodesia's NAD exchanged many letters and held a number of meetings with their counterparts south of the border. The NASA, as is the case with the NAZ kept duplicate copies of most of the documents relating to engagements between officials from the two countries. Thus, at the NASA the most relevant materials came from the Government Native Labour Bureau, particularly the office of the Director of Native Labor, who played a significant role as a link between government and employers in South Africa. In response to the introduction of the 1913 ban on "northern migrants," the Transvaal Chamber of Mines and many Farmers' Associations petitioned the Director of Labor in Johannesburg for special permissions to employ the "prohibited" workers. Correspondences emanating from such engagements constituted a major source of data used in this study.

I gathered the bulk of the ethnographic material that this dissertation relies on as an affiliate of the International Organization for Migration's office in Beitbridge Town. Because of the prevailing anti-foreigners sentiments in South Africa at the time, I

confined my stay and interviews in Beitbridge district on the Zimbabwean side of the border, only crossing into South Africa on observation trips. During the four months that I spent in the border district, I was able to move around and cover every ward of Beitbridge district when I joined the IOM staff on their "Health and Cultural Linkages" and "Safe Migration Awareness" campaigns in the area. While moving around with the IOM team had its own limitations, the arrangement made it possible for me to reach many places that I would not have reached on my own. Also, being affiliated with IOM, an organization that has operated in the border region since 1996, helped me to obtain research "clearance" with local government officials in Beitbridge.

While in Beitbridge, I collected data mainly through oral interviews, which revolved around the interviewees' life histories and recollection of oral traditions (passed-on histories) of cross-Limpopo movements. Save for a few instances where I conducted group interviews (not really Focused group discussions), most of my interviews were one-on-one, with people I met at several of the IOM events I attended between April and July 2010. I also interviewed Zimbabwean deportees and voluntary returnees from South Africa who sought various kinds of assistance at the IOM Beitbridge Reception Center. I also held informal conversations with people I met in various settings. For instance, during the time of the FIFA World Cup Soccer Tournament in South Africa, the Beitbridge District Club became a popular drinking spot for residents and travelers who gathered at this place to watch evening matches. Most conversations at the club strayed from the soccer matches to matters of "bread and butter," which revolved around the border economy and its politics. Since most

inhabitants of Beitbridge district are multi-lingual, I conducted the interviews and informal conversations mainly in Shona (which is my first language) and English.

Personal Observation constituted another important method of collecting data for this study. Through participating in the IOM outreach programs I did not only manage to meet with potential interviewees, but I also gained a very rich understanding of the communities of Beitbridge district as well as the knowledge of the border landscape. With the support and guidance of staff at the IOM Musina office, I also toured the borderline on the South African side where I saw several holes that self-styled "border agents" allegedly cut through the three tier security fence to facilitate illegal entry into South Africa. A visit to the Musina Refugee Reception Center, a place where "undocumented" migrants (mostly Zimbabweans) in Limpopo province apply for asylum permits and other kinds of documentation to "legalize" their stay in South Africa, revealed a lot more about the complicated nature of illegal migration across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border.

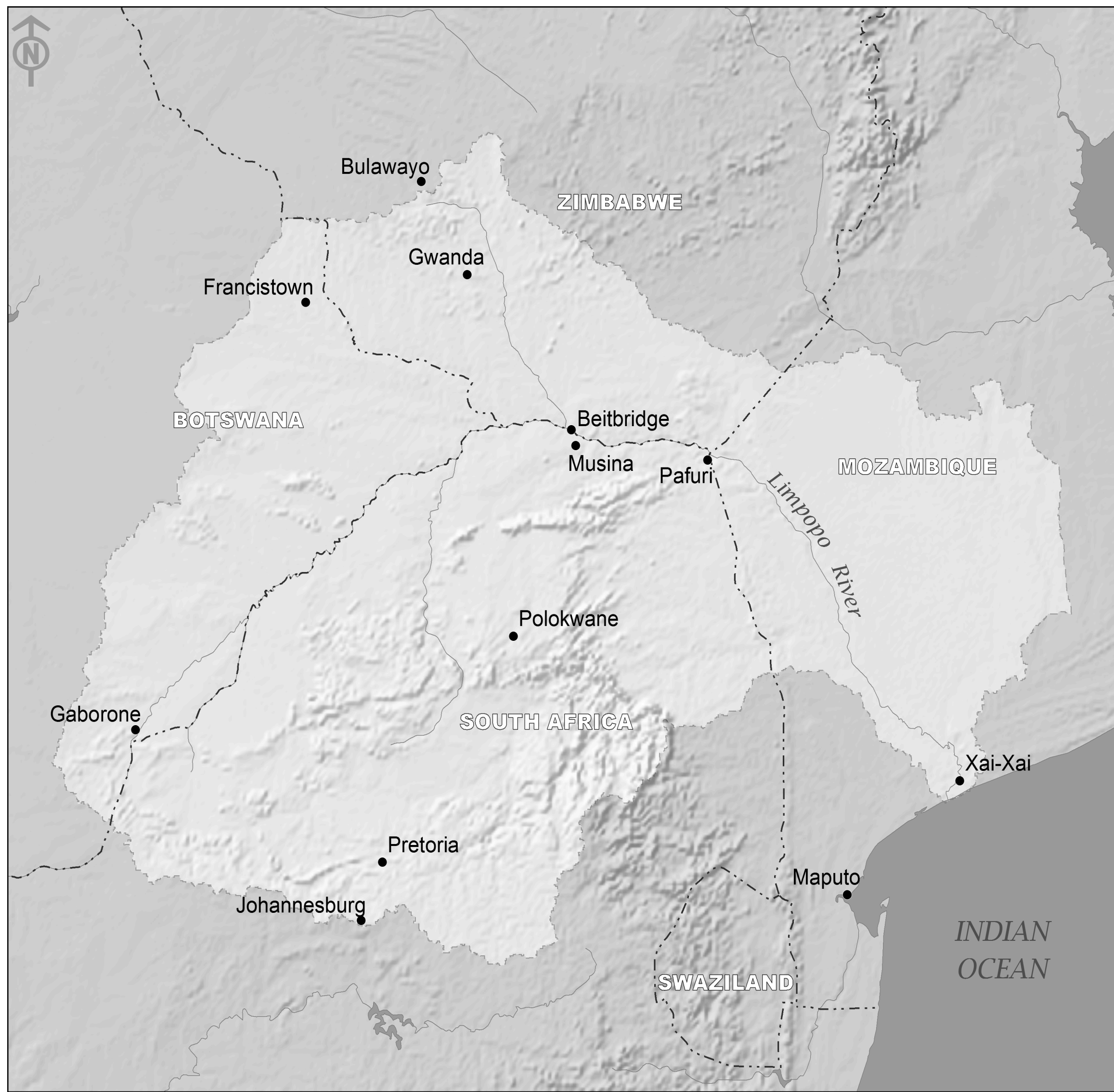

Fig 1. The Limpopo Valley, showing the position of the Zimbabwe-South Africa boundary. Map prepared by Jeff Levy

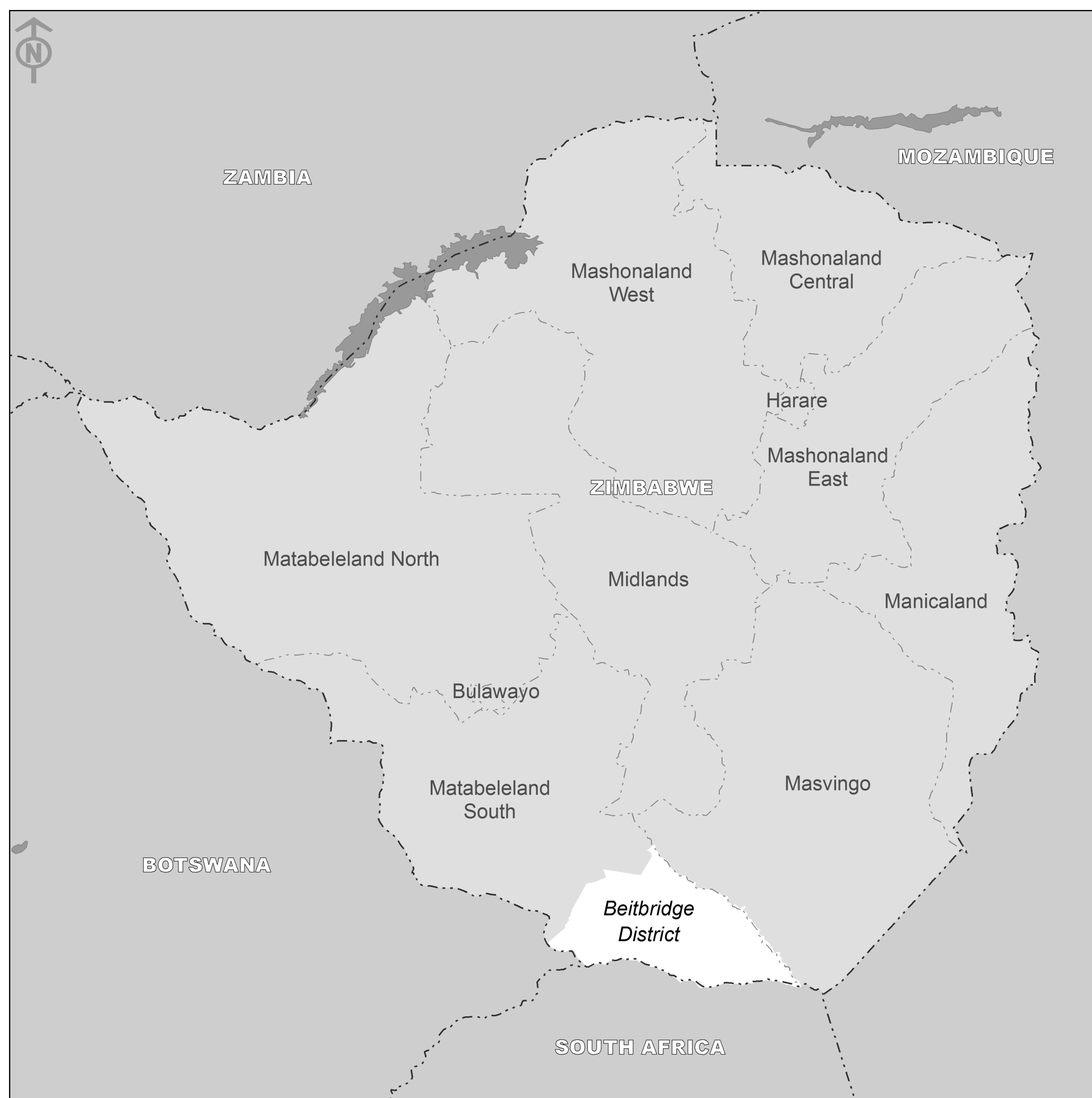

Fig 2. Map of Zimbabwe, showing the location of Beitbridge District. Courtesy of Jeff Levy

Fig 3. Map of Beitbridge District. Courtesy of Taurai Bwerinofa

CHAPTER ONE

Colonial Conquest and the Creation of Illegal Migrants

European conquest and subsequent colonization of Africa ushered in several developments, which had far-reaching effects on population movements in the continent. Among its major legacies, colonial conquest led to the emergence of European-style state systems in Africa. As Mbembe argues, in pre-colonial Africa "political entities were not delimited by boundaries in the classical sense of the term, but rather by an imbrication of multiple spaces constantly joined, disjoined, and recombined through wars, conquests, and the mobility of goods and persons."[1] Colonial rule changed the status quo in Africa by introducing the concept of boundaries as fixed entities. Such a notion of boundaries became an important tool for nation-state building in the continent. As competing European powers sought to define and protect their colonies, the control of cross-border movements became one of the priorities for colonial policy development and implementation.

This chapter focuses on the first two decades of colonial rule in the Limpopo Valley, which witnessed the births of three phenomena that are critical in understanding the history that this dissertation examines. First was the reincarnation of the Limpopo River as a colonial boundary between Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. Along with the emergence of the colonial boundary came restrictions on cross-Limpopo mobility. This was the second major development that took place between the British occupation of

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[1] Achille Mbembe, "At the Edge of the World: Boundaries, Territoriality, and Sovereignty in Africa," *Public Culture,* 12, no.1 (2000): 263.

Zimbabwe in 1890 and the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. These two led to the third development—the rise of illegal migration, which constitutes the primary focus of the dissertation. Had it not been for the imposition of the colonial border and subsequent attempts to control cross-border mobility, there would be no illegal migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa.

The Birth of a Colonial Boundary

While most of Africa's colonial boundaries emerged from bilateral agreements between European powers competing for territories in the continent, the Zimbabwe-South Africa boundary came out of a slightly different kind of history. The adoption of the Limpopo River as a colonial boundary was a by-product of struggles between an imperial power and a white settler community, which emerged from the Dutch occupation of the Cape in 1652. The British annexation of the Cape from Afrikaners in 1795 put in motion almost two centuries of British-Afrikaner tension, which ultimately led to the conquest of the Zimbabwean plateau in the 1890s. By 1885, when the Berlin Conference endorsed and set rules for European partition of Africa, the British and Afrikaners had divided much of South Africa among themselves. In addition to the Cape Colony, the British had acquired control of Natal and the larger part of the country by force and/or negotiations. On their part, Afrikaners controlled the Orange Free State in the area between the Orange and the Vaal Rivers, and the South African Republic (Transvaal), which stretched from the Vaal River to the Limpopo. The 1886 "discovery" of gold deposits barely forty miles

from Pretoria, the capital of the South African Republic, witnessed more conflicts as the British attempted to take over the Transvaal from Afrikaners.

The British-Afrikaner conflicts over the control of Transvaal resulted in the conquest of African groups south of the Limpopo River, which had marked the northern frontier of the South African Republic since its emergence in 1852. By the late 1880s, Afrikaners had secured alliances with some Venda chiefs such as Mphaphuli, Tshivhase, Rambuda and Nelwamondo, who had refused to work with the British. Afrikaners went ahead to deploy a military commando under Joubert and Trichardt, which moved into the Venda heartland and camped at Tshitandani in October 1898. Afrikaner forces attacked Venda groups that had allied with the British, forcing some chiefs such as Mphephu to flee to the north of the Limpopo River with his followers. This marked the loss of Venda sovereignty in Transvaal. Following the defeat of Afrikaners in the South African war of 1899 to 1902, the British divided the Venda territory into three administrative districts of Louis Trichardt, Spelonken and Sibasa. The colonists also forced some Venda people out of the fertile lands, which they set aside for exclusive white settler agriculture.[2]

The Limpopo River became a colonial boundary following the British conquest of the Zimbabwean plateau. Around the time of the discovery of gold in Transvaal, rumors of the existence of more gold reefs in the areas north of the Limpopo River began to circulate. This prompted both the British and Afrikaners to consider ways of extending their influence over to the Zimbabwean plateau. It was in this context that Cecil John Rhodes engineered British colonization of the area between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers, in order to stop Afrikaner expansion. Having made a fortune from investments in

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[2] Hugh A. Stayt, *The Bavenda,* (London: Frank Cass, 1968). See also T. V. Bulpin, *Lost Trails of the Transvaal* (Cape Town: Books of Africa, 1965).

diamond mining, Rhodes joined the Cape Parliament in 1881 and immediately set to block the expansion of Afrikaner influence in the region. As a Member of Parliament, Rhodes "consistently advocated the right of the Cape Colony to expand in the north carrying with it the British flag and the Pax Britannica."[3] Before he became Prime Minister of the Cape in 1890, he successfully obtained concessions with the Tswana rulers in what later became Bechuanaland (now Botswana) as well as with the leaders of the Ndebele state on the Zimbabwean plateau. Rhodes's friend, Charles Rudd also convinced the Ndebele king Lobengula to sign a treaty in 1888, giving the British permission to prospect for minerals and, allegedly to do what they deemed necessary in the territory between the Limpopo and the Zambezi Rivers.[4]

In line with the Berlin Act of 1885, it was important for a colonial power to define its spheres of influence before actual occupation of any part of the African continent. With the help of friends and partners in his mining company, the De Beers Consolidated Mines, Rhodes established the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in 1889. In the same year that he formed the company, Rhodes obtained a charter to occupy the Zimbabwean plateau on behalf of Britain. The Royal Charter, which the Queen signed on 29th October 1889, was important in that it defined, for the first time, the boundaries of the territory that the BSAC conquered a few months later. The charter outlined the BSAC territory as lying to the north of Bechuanaland, north and west of the South African

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[3] D.W. Kruger, "The British Imperial Factor in South Africa from 1870 to 1910," In *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960, vol 1, The History and Politics of Colonialism 1870-1914.* Edited by L. H. Gann, and P. Duignan, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969): 333.

[4] For details on the Rudd Concession and other treaties signed between Lobengula and different groups of Europeans who visited Matabeleland, see Reginald Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa: Rhodesia* (Paris: UNESCO, 1975).

Republic (the Transvaal), and to the west of the Portuguese dominions.[5] Thereafter, Rhodes organized a military and police force of about 700 men who invaded the Zimbabwean plateau and hoisted the British flag at a place they named Fort Salisbury on 12 September 1890.[6]

Although Afrikaner leaders signed treaties with the Ndebele in the late 1880s, an indication that Transvaal intended to extend its influence north of the Limpopo, they did not formally contest the designation of the Limpopo River as the boundary between their territory and BSAC's colony. Following the BSAC's defeat of the Ndebele forces in 1894, the British government issued the Matabele Order-in-Council, further defining the boundaries of the BSAC territory as "limited by the boundaries of the Portuguese East Coast territories and the South African Republic to a point off the mouth of the River Shashi; by the River Shashi itself, and the territories of Khama of the Bamangwato, upto the Zambesi and by that river as far as the Portuguese boundary on the West Coast."[7] With the Limpopo River as its marker on the ground, the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa boundary became one of about forty-five percent of colonial Africa's borders, which followed existing geographical features, rather than straight lines based on mathematical calculations.[8] From 1890 onwards, the Limpopo River and movements across it played a major role in processes of nation-state building on both sides of the border.

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[5] Lewis Michell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Cecil John Rhodes,* vol 1 (1910).

[6] Salisbury later developed to become the capital of colonial Zimbabwe. The place changed its name to Harare at the attainment of independence in 1980. Julian R. Cobbing, "The Unknown. Fate of the Rudd Concession Rifles," *Rhodesian History,* 4 (1973).

[7] NAZ A3/20/1 Matabele Order-in- Council, 18 July 1894.

[8] Griffiths, "Permeable Boundaries in Africa"

Research in other areas of the continent shows that colonial boundaries divided communities which thought of themselves as united, while merging different unrelated groups into single political systems. In some cases, African leaders lost their followers who found themselves on different sides of the border. Asiwaju's study of the partition of Western Yorubaland shows that rulers of pre-colonial kingdoms of Sabe, Ketu and Ifonyin found themselves on the French side while most of their followers became part of the British territory.[9] Among groundnut cultivators in the former Senegambia region, colonial boundaries destabilized pre-existing land tenure systems by separating people from their lands. As Swindell notes, some groundnut cultivators found themselves on the British territory while their lands became part of the French colony on the other side of the border.[10] A similar scenario took place in the Limpopo Valley where colonial conquest symbolically and practically split the Venda, Shangaan, Sotho and other ethno-linguistic groups into two separate states. The Southern Rhodesia-South Africa border also destabilized pre-existing connections between communities astride the Limpopo River.

For centuries prior to imposition of the Limpopo as an international boundary, inhabitants of present-day Zimbabwe and South Africa maintained economic, socio-cultural and political linkages that crisscrossed the river. An assortment of minerals and wildlife resources facilitated the development of trade networks across the Limpopo River. Cross-Limpopo trade networks constituted an important source of livelihood in this semi-arid area where rain seasons tend to be short and variable, while dry winter

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[9] Anthony I. Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland Under European Rule 1889-1945,* (London: Longman, 1976).

[10] Ken Swindell, "Serawoolies, Tillibunkas and Strange Farmers: The Development of Migrant Groundnut Farming along the Gambia River 1848-95," *Journal of African History,* 21, no.1 (1980): 93-104.

periods are generally long.[11] Archaeological and historical studies of Southern Africa indicate that as early as the ninth century, trade networks had linked the Limpopo Valley with a more elaborate seaborne trade involving Arabs and Portuguese. Approaching the region from the Indian Ocean coast, Arabs and Portuguese brought in cloths, beads and china, while the local people supplied gold, ivory, copper, iron, tin and other commodities.[12] By the mid-eighteenth century a group of professional traders (*vashambadzi*) had emerged among the people of the Limpopo Valley. As an interview with L. Sibanda revealed, the Venda people, used to purchase grains from other groups on either side of the river, using dried meat of wild animals.[13]

Beyond trade networks, people crossed the Limpopo River to visit relatives and to participate in various cultural and religious ceremonies. There were strong cultural links among the Venda people on both sides of the Limpopo River. Venda traditions and origins myths indicate that these people shared a belief in the Mwari cult, which they approached through the spirits of common ancestors.[14] Those to the south of the Limpopo used to send messengers to Marungudze Hills, north of the river, to enquire about rains.

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[11] NAZ S2929/6/1 Report of the Delineation of Tribal Communities in Beitbridge District of Rhodesia, 1966. See also, Robson Mutandi, "Locally-Evolved Knowledge in Livestock and Range Management Systems in Southern Zimbabwe's Drylands: A Study of Pastoral Communities in Beitbridge District," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Waterloo, 1997).

[12] T.N. Huffman, *Snakes and Crocodiles: Power and Symbolism in Ancient Zimbabwe* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University, 1996).

[13] L. Sibanda, interview with author, Chabili Village, Beitbridge, 1 June 2010.

[14] Harald von Sicard, "The Origin of Some of the Tribes in the Belingwe Reserve" *NADA*, (1952): 43-64; N.J. van Warmelo, *Contributions Towards Venda History, Religion and Tribal Ritual* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, Department of Native Affairs, 1932); N.J. van Warmelo, *The Copper Miners of Musina and the Early History of the Zoutpansberg* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, Department of Native Affairs, 1940); Edward Lahiff, *An Apartheid Oasis? Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods in Venda,* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); Gail Sinton Schoettler, "The Sotho, Shona and Venda: a Study in Cultural Continuity," *African Historical Studies,* 4, no.1 (1971): 1-18; D. N. Beach, *A Zimbabwean Past* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1994); N.M.N. Ralushai, "Further Traditions Concerning Luvhimbi and the Mbedzi," *Rhodesian History,* 9 (1978): 1-12.

The Marungudze "rainmakers" approached the Venda gods on behalf of relatives from south of the Limpopo.[15] They also crossed the Limpopo in either direction to consult well-known medicine men (*dzin'anga/inyanga*). In an interview with the author, T. Ndou pointed out that the Venda inter-married across the Limpopo, and participated in initiation schools for boys and girls organized among relatives on either side of the River. "Long back we were one people. The border divided us," Ndou said.[16] With such a rich corpus of cross-Limpopo linkages, it was not easy for the Venda and other groups in the valley to accept and respect migration control measures that the colonists imposed.

Before colonial conquest, the growth of commercial agriculture in Natal and the beginning of large-scale mining of diamonds and gold in South Africa slightly shifted the nature of cross-Limpopo mobility. From 1860s onwards, most people crossed the Limpopo from the Zimbabwean plateau and other areas in present-day Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Botswana, Angola, Tanzania, etc., in search of employment in South Africa.[17] Whereas for centuries previously, trade exchanges and the need to keep socio-cultural ties with kith and kin facilitated movements across the Limpopo River, by the 1890s, labor migration had emerged as the dominant form of cross-Limpopo mobility. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the migrant labor system played a critical role as the focus of migration control politics in Southern Africa. As mine owners, farmers and other employers in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia competed for labor the region witnessed several attempts to control population movements across the Limpopo

[15] Ralushai, "Further Traditions Concerning Luvhimbi and the Mbedzi"

[16] T. Ndou, interview with author, Beitbridge Town, 17 May 2010. These cultural and historical linkages explain the existence of places on either side of the boundary, which carry the same names. For instance, there is Makhado city and Makhado communal area, respectively on the South African and Zimbabwean sides of the border. Also, the only High School in Beitbridge town north of the border is called Vhembe, which is the name of the entire district on the South African side of the Limpopo River.

[17] For more on this see Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity*.

River.

Early Colonial Restriction of Cross-Limpopo Mobility

Prior to colonial conquest, no individual or institution had the authority to impose restrictions on movements between the Zimbabwean plateau and South Africa. The Limpopo's flowing patterns and travelers' knowledge and readiness to deal with natural impediments, determined when and how people moved back and forth across the River. As D. Siyasongwe put it "people in this area knew the time to tamper with the river. If there were emergencies, they knew places they could cross a flooded Limpopo—their traditional crossing points."[18] In the absence of modern forms of transport, the prevalence of wild animals in the Limpopo Valley also played an important role in regulating cross-Limpopo mobility. To this, Amon Mlambo said, "if you were going to the south you had first of all to sit down and discover among yourself how determined you were….You had to do so because the way was really tough and had many dangers such as lions, elephants and so forth," before asking rhetorically, "If you came across lions at a watering point and that being the only point where you can find water to cook with, what can you do? How can you chase a lion?"[19] While the geography of the Limpopo Valley continued to be an important factor after European conquest, the colonists' interventions significantly shifted the dynamics of cross-Limpopo mobility.

With the emergence of a colonial state north of the Limpopo River, the control of cross-Limpopo mobility came to occupy center stage in political and economic

[18] D. Siyasongwe, interview with author, Malabe Village, Beitbridge, 31 May 2010.

[19] NAZ AOH/46, Amon Makufa Mlambo, interview with Dawson Munjeri, Rhodesdale, 13 December 1978.

engagements between BSAC administration and Transvaal authorities. While previously South African mines and farm owners competed among themselves for regional labor supplies, the investment of colonial capital into the mining and agricultural sectors in Southern Rhodesia threatened the status quo. Although it soon emerged that gold fields on the Zimbabwean plateau were not as rich as Rhodes and his friends had anticipated, the number of Europeans who settled in the colony increased steadily in the early years of the 1890s. Most European settlers ventured into mining and agriculture, thereby raising the demand for African labor in Southern Rhodesia. The BSAC administration responded by adopting a multi-pronged strategy with long-term effects on the movement of Africans within and outside Southern Rhodesia.

In 1894, the BSAC administration established a Native Affairs Department (N.A.D) to take charge of the colony's "native policy". As part of a broader strategy of emasculating, controlling and forcing Africans into a pool of cheap labor, the N.A.D began relocating Africans from arable lands, which the colonial administration set aside for exclusive white settler farms and urban development. Before the end of the nineteenth century, the colonists had moved tens of thousands of Africans into "Native Reserves" located in areas designated unsuitable for Europeans.[20] The BSAC administration had also imposed several kinds of taxes on Africans. For instance, in 1894, the administration stepped up the collection of hut tax, which they had introduced in 1893 without the approval of the British colonial office in London. Oftentimes, BSAC tax collectors seized African people's cattle and goats on allegations of failure to pay required taxes. As I an Phimister notes, the collection of hut tax "was arbitrary and irregular, appearing more

[20] To a large extent, Native Reserves were labor reserves. See Robin Palmer*, Land and Racial domination in Rhodesia* (London: Heinemann, 1977).

like the levy of a tribute than the collection of a civil tax, as marauding bands of Native Department levies despoiled villages and districts of their crops and livestock."[21] In addition to looting Africans' livestock under the guise of tax collection, colonial officials also introduced a series of legislations and statutory instruments in an attempt to restrict the movement of Africans within and out of Southern Rhodesia.

In 1899, Southern Rhodesian authorities introduced the Natives Employment Ordinance, which discouraged recruiting of Africans for work outside the colony. The Ordinance made it a punishable offence for anyone to induce Africans to leave the colony for employment purposes. It also empowered the N.A.D officials, especially those in charge of Native Reserves/districts (Native Commissioners) to stop recruiting for South Africa whenever they saw that happening.[22] In 1901, barely two years later, the Native Registration Ordinance came into being. Keeping records and monitoring the movements of Africans became an essential part of "Native administration" policies. Thus, among other restrictions, this instrument made it a requirement for "every indigenous male native over the age of 14 years" to be registered and to produce a Registration Certificate when called upon to do so by the authorities.[23]

In line with the 1901 Registration Ordinance, African males had to obtain "permits of removal" from colonial officials in their districts each time they left their "home" areas for other places for any reason. With this ordinance, the colonial administration also required Africans, who took up employment in towns or any part of the colony, to obtain a Certificate of Service (or Town Pass). The Town Pass became a

[21] Ian Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe 1890-1948: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle* (London: Longman, 1988): 16.

[22] NAZ N3/2/4 Operation of Pass Laws.

[23] See Chief Native Commissioner's letter to the Secretary, Department of Administration, 15 June 1920 and other correspondences in National Archives of Zimbabwe [NAZ] N3/17/5 Pass Laws, 1909-1923.

pre-requisite for Africans to enter, work and/or temporarily reside in European areas.[24] In an attempt improve the Pass system, Southern Rhodesian authorities introduced the Native Pass Ordinance in 1902, which required employers to keep passes of their African workers until the end of the employment contract. At the expiry of employment contracts, former employers had to endorse the pass by signing on it before returning it to its holder. The 1902 Ordinance also made it mandatory for Africans to carry signed-off passes every time they moved from one employer to another. Failure to strictly observe these regulations attracted heavy fines on the part of the employers and jail terms for concerned Africans.[25]

Before the first decade of the twentieth century came to an end, Southern Rhodesian authorities commenced the deployment of police patrols in the border zone. However, owing to financial and transport constrains, border patrols, which involved staff from the N.A.D could only be an occasional rather than a regular occurrence. In a bid to reduce the rate of emigration, the BSAC administration also instructed railway staff to refuse tickets to Africans intending to travel to South Africa without passes.[26] In coming up with such policies, Southern Rhodesian authorities did not just seek to make tax collection easier to administer, or to ensure African males offered themselves for labor as and when they were required to. More importantly, controlling the movement of Africans within and out of the colony became one way of enforcing the colonial border.

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[24] A 1903 Amendment of Southern Rhodesia's Native Registration Ordinance required employers to keep passes of their native employees until the expiry of the contract when the employer would sign the pass and return it to its holder. Africans were therefore supposed to carry signed passes every time they moved from one employer to another. Failure to strictly observe these regulations attracted heavy fines on the part of the employers and jail terms for the concerned Africans. See NAZ N3/22/4 vol.1, Southern Rhodesia Government Notice 1693 of 1918.

[25] NAZ N3/22/4 vol.1, Southern Rhodesia Government Notice 1693 of 1918.

[26] NAZ N3/2/4 Operation of Pass Laws. See also NAZ N3/22/4 vol.1, Chief Native Commissioner to the Secretary, Department of the Administrator, 23 April 1919.

Through its native policy, the BSAC administration inscribed new meanings onto the Limpopo River and movements across it.

Along with forced taxation and the pass system, Southern Rhodesian authorities devised ways of obtaining labor from other colonies to augment local supplies. The late nineteenth century arrangements to bring in indentured laborers from India had not achieved desired results. Attempts to engage Somalis, Arabs and Shamis from Djibouti via Beira, had also failed.[27] It was in this context that Southern Rhodesian authorities decided to recruit labor from neighboring territories. With the establishment of the Rhodesia Native Labor Bureau in 1903, the recruitment of migrant workers from Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and P.E.A began in earnest. Throughout much of the first half of the twentieth century, debates about Southern Rhodesia's pass laws revolved around finding the best ways of making sure that migrant workers from Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and P.E.A did not proceed to South Africa. In that respect, cross-Limpopo movements and efforts to control them were not just inter-state, but also regional issues.

While the BSAC administration attempted to control Africans' movements within and out of Southern Rhodesia, the Transvaal government did not do much to control cross-Limpopo mobility before the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Instead, Transvaal authorities, like their colleagues in other parts of South Africa, were preoccupied with controlling the influx of migrants from India. A concurrent rise in population (due to improved medical and sanitary facilities) and a major decline in India's handicraft industry in the nineteenth century had led to high levels of unemployment and emigration from the Asian sub-continent. Since the 1860s, South

[27] Van Onselen, *Chibaro.*

Africa had engaged groups of Indians as indentured laborers in the Natal plantations and other parts of the country. Over the years, Indian migrants ventured into various kinds of businesses where they competed with the white community in South Africa. Competition for business opportunities stirred anti-Indian sentiments in Transvaal, leading to the passage of the 1906 Immigration Ordinance, whose target was to curtail Indian influx.[28] The white community felt that Indians "undersold Europeans in business, hoarded money and sent it to India, spent nothing in the country, made no contribution to nation-building, paid very little tax, [and] lived next to nothing."[29] Because of that, white South Africans greeted Indian immigration "with fear, hostility and suspicion."[30] Contrary to this scenario, Transvaal authorities were not eager to restrict the entry of Africans from north of the Limpopo River because they provided cheap labor for South Africa's mining industry.

In the absence of state intervention, Transvaal mining companies came up with measures to regularize recruitment of "foreign workers." In 1897, the Chamber of Mines of the South African Republic set up the Rand Native Labour Association. This organization, which changed its name to Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) in 1900, opened offices in Southern Rhodesia, PEA and northern Transvaal. The WNLA went ahead and put in place a system of licensing labor recruiters as part of its efforts to regulate the movement of African workers back and forth across the Limpopo River. In doing so, the WNLA did not intend to stop cross-Limpopo mobility,

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[28] Hasu H. Patel, *Indians in Uganda and Rhodesia: Some Comparative Perspectives on a Minority in Africa* (Denver: Center on International Race Relations, 1973).

[29] F. Dotson, and L. Dotson, *The Indian Minority of Zambia, Rhodesia and Malawi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

[30] A. M. H. Kalsheker, "The 1908 Asiatics Ordinance in Perspective," Henderson Seminar Paper No.27, (University of Rhodesia, History Department, 1974): 4.

but to prevent individual mines from competing for labor. The WNLA also envisioned itself as the only legitimate body that could facilitate the employment of foreign workers in South Africa's mining sector.[31] However, as the following section of this chapter shows, the WNLA failed in its bid to monopolize labor recruitment in Southern Africa. Its staff faced stiff competition from independent labor recruiters who operated in the Limpopo Valley with the support of several companies, which were members of the Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines.

The beginning of the twentieth century also witnessed attempts by employers in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa to come up with joint programs to control cross-Limpopo mobility. In 1900, the Southern Rhodesia Chamber of Mines and their counterparts in Transvaal came up with a labor deal, which required WNLA staff to stop recruiting labor in Southern Rhodesia. In return, the Southern Rhodesian mining companies pledged to also stop recruiting from Portuguese East Africa, leaving their South African counterparts with exclusive recruiting rights in that part of the region.[32] However, it did not take long before it became clear that neither of them took the deal seriously. Southern Rhodesian companies continued to recruit from PEA, while the WNLA engaged migrant workers from the Zimbabwean plateau. Attempts to control cross-Limpopo mobility in the early years of colonial rule met with very limited success.

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[31] R. Mansell Prothero, "Foreign Migrant Labour for South Africa," In *International Migration Review,* 8, no.3 (1974): 383-394. This organization has changed names a couple of times since its formation. When it was first formed on 7 December 1887 it was named the Chamber of Mines of Johannesburg. On 5 October 1889 it was re-launched as the Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines before it became known as the Chamber of Mines of the South African Republic between 1897 and 1901. From 1902 to 1952 it was known as the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, then it became the Transvaal and Orange Free State Chamber of Mines from 1953 to 1967. In 1968 it adopted its current name- the Chamber of Mines of South Africa. See www.bullion.org.za/About/History.htm. Accessed on 11 October 2010

[32] Van Onselen, *Chibaro*

The Origins of Illegal Migration

Illegal migration across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border emanated from early colonial attempts to control cross-Limpopo mobility. Sections of the African community in Southern Rhodesia responded to the BSAC administration's taxation policies by simply migrating to the Transvaal and other parts of South Africa. This was common in the border districts of Plumtree, Tsholotsho, Gwanda and Kezi, whose inhabitants had long-standing socio-cultural ties with people across the Limpopo River. Since the 1860s, people from the border districts of Southern Rhodesia had relied on South African mines for employment. Working in South Africa was, according to A. Ncube, "a life-line" for border communities.[33] Whereas some people hoped to work in the Transvaal and raise money to pay taxes in Southern Rhodesia, others embarked on migration to escape from forced taxation. Resentment against forced labor in Southern Rhodesia also pushed Africans to move from the Zimbabwean plateau to South Africa on temporary or permanent basis. By 1895, demand for labor, though still relatively small, was already outdistancing the number of Africans willing to work in the emerging mines in Southern Rhodesia.

Because Africans had choices of selling crops or livestock to raise money to pay tax, the BSAC administration often had to force people to work in order to satisfy the colony's labor needs. In this respect, the administration assigned the Native Commissioners the duty to ensure Africans in their respective districts offered themselves for work as and when they were required to. For most colonial officials, this meant

[33] A. Ncube, interview with author, Chabili Village, Beitbridge, 1 June 2010.

applying different kinds of pressure, including whipping Africans. Bragging about his use of coercion in dealing with Africans in 1895, the Native Commissioner for Hartley district wrote that; "I am forcing the natives of this district to work sorely against their will." [34] Apparently, as H. C. Thompson noted in 1898, although the administration discouraged it, flogging was a common form of pressure used to get reluctant Africans to sign up for work. Thompson wrote that "I was told that if a boy will not work, or tries to run away, the usual thing is to take him to the native commissioner, and have him given twenty-five, and I found that the word 'twenty five' said in English to any of the boys was sufficient to make them grin in a sickly way—they quite understood what it meant."[35] What this shows is that colonists deployed flogging not only to induce Africans to go out and work, but to make sure they worked harder and observed their employment contracts. In fact, by the turn of the century, African workers were complaining bitterly against forced labor and ill-treatment by mine compound guards, the police and officials of the Native Affairs Department.

In a move that forced more people to leave the colony, the BSAC administration doubled the rates of hut tax around the same time that employers slashed wages by about a third between 1906 and 1907. Furthermore, the Southern Rhodesian mining industry cut direct expenditure related to the provision of accommodation, medical facilities and food for workers. As one mine inspector pointed out in 1907, the conditions under which African workers lived in most mine compounds were so "gloomy and comfortless." Emphasizing his disapproval of the situation, the mine inspector said, "a damp floor is

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[34] NAZ N1/2/2 Native Commissioner Hartley to Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury 30 November 1895.

[35] H. C. Thompson, *Rhodesia and its Government* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1898): 82. Speaking on the same issue, one of Thompson's informants said, if "a boy engages to serve me for a certain time, and I give him food, and [then] he bolts before his time is up, naturally I can have him flogged."

not the healthiest resting place for a man who has done a good day's work… but it is the only bed the majority get as a rule… A few sleep on rough structures erected by themselves."[36] It was conditions such as these that compelled Africans to leave Southern Rhodesia for the Transvaal in search of work. For many of them, migration to South Africa was, in Jeffrey Herbst's words, "an exit option."[37] However, whereas in Herbst's analysis what he calls "protest migration" signified an "exit from a political community," emigration from early colonial Zimbabwe to South Africa was an exit from the social ills that came with colonialism. They were running away from ill-treatment by farmers and mine owners in Southern Rhodesia. Although conditions of work were not always better south of the Limpopo, South African employers had earned a reputation of paying much better wages than those in Southern Rhodesia.

In 1909, having realized that cross-Limpopo mobility continued in spite of travel restrictions in place, Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner asked the N.A.D personnel to suggest ways of improving the colony's pass laws. Responses from several Native Commissioners indicate that the prevailing system of "native registration" and pass laws made it difficult for officials to trace the movements of Africans who deserted their work places to go to South Africa. It also emerged that deserters, who were mostly migrants from Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and P.E.A, often disguised their identities by destroying registration certificates and passes before obtaining new ones under different names. Suggesting a way of tightening control of Africans' mobility, one Native Commissioner proposed that, "some system of finger prints must be enforced if it is

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[36] NAZ N3/6/1/20 Compound Inspector, Selukwe Division, Report of the Year ended 31 December 1907.

[37] Jeffrey Herbst, "Migration, the Politics of Protest and State Consolidation in Africa," *African Affairs* 89, no.355 (1990): 183-203.

desired to really possess an effective Pass Law."[38] The Native Commissioner for Umtali district argued that the set-up in some parts of the colony made it difficult for Africans to obtain registration certificates and passes before they travelled out of their districts. To this, he said, "the natives living in Inyanga district are under chief Umtasa and are of the same tribe as those in Umtali district, and yet to visit one another they must travel 40 miles to Inyanga to take out a pass," adding, "this means that a native living on the Nytande River would, by the time he reached his home from Umtali have travelled some 120 miles, whereas under ordinary circumstances it should have been a journey of 40 miles only."[39]

The prevalence of unlicensed recruiting of labor also compromised official attempts to control cross-border mobility. In spite of efforts to centralize labor recruiting by having labor agents licensed and/or registered with the WNLA, some recruiters working for, or in collusion with South Africa-based employers assisted people to move across the boundary. Operating outside the WNLA parameters, independent recruiters deployed a variety of strategies to engage African workers in Southern Rhodesia. Recruiters' most common strategy was to establish makeshift camps in the border zone and deploy African touts along the routes which migrant workers from the north followed when crossing the Limpopo River. As Martin Murray puts it, independent recruiters "used all sorts of tricks and ploys to ensnare unwary Africans and to smuggle this precious human cargo across the Limpopo."[40] After crossing the river, they sold migrants to employers or to licensed recruiting agents who worked in syndicates with other labor

[38] NAZ A3/18/31/6 Posselt to Chief Native Commissioner, 2 January 1909.

[39] NAZ A3/18/31/6 Native Commissioner Umtali to Secretary, Department of Administrator, 11 February 1910.

[40] Murray, "'Blackbirding' at 'Crooks' Corner'…": 374

recruiting organizations and contractors in the Transvaal. By so doing, a network of touts, recruiters and employers developed, resulting in migrants being passed on from agents to employers "under circumstances that resembled slave auctions."[41] Over the years, networks that promoted illegal migration from Southern Rhodesia to South Africa became so sophisticated that officials failed to control their activities.

Independent labor recruiters also deployed touts along routes that migrant workers followed to get to the Transvaal. Although a railway line and a wagon track connecting Cape Town and Salisbury had emerged in the late 1890s, the transport network between Southern Rhodesia and South Africa only improved after the construction of the Alfred Beit Bridge across the Limpopo River in 1929. Before then, people traveled on foot from various departure points including Nyasaland, PEA and Northern Rhodesia, via Southern Rhodesia into South Africa. As Siyasongwe pointed out, "migrant workers tended to travel in groups of about five to thirty people, following well-known bush paths."[42] While travelling through the bush might have helped migrants to avoid apprehension by the police and N.A.D officials who occasionally patrolled the border and searched trains, it exposed them to touts who knew most of the bush tracks. Touts therefore intercepted migrants and offered to assist them with food, clothing, transportation and employment in South Africa.

The activities of labor recruiters extended beyond the border region. As Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner pointed out in 1916, "for considerable time past," labor recruiters had deployed runners far from the border, in areas such as Chibi, Ndanga,

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[41] *Ibid.*
[42] Siyasongwe, interview

Bikita and Melsetter.[43] While they often used cash advances, clothes and food to lure people to leave their villages, touts also bribed shop owners and village leaders who would assist them to obtain potential recruits. In some cases, such as in Melsetter, recruiters issued fake identity documents to their recruits before transporting them across the PEA boundary and passed them on to WNLA agents as if they were "Portuguese natives."[44] In so doing, independent recruiters managed to dodge both Southern Rhodesia's migration control system and the WNLA attempts to monopolize the recruitment of migrant workers for South Africa's mining industry.

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the area around the intersection of the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa, Southern Rhodesia-PEA and South Africa-PEA boundaries had become a major crossing point for migrant workers. Owing to its remoteness and location in a rugged terrain at the intersection of three territories, it was very difficult for officials of any of the three colonies to control the movement of people in this area occupied by the Makuleke people. One particular section, known as Pafuri, became a major site of unlicensed recruiting in the Makuleke area. Many first time travelers from Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and PEA went to Pafuri where they hooked up with unlicensed labor recruiters who assisted them to cross the Limpopo River and connected them to potential employers in Transvaal.

Consequently, Pafuri became home to groups of labor recruiters who often used guns and other violent means to sign up migrant workers. In 1910, two European

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[43] NAZ N3/22/4 Illicit Recruiting of Native Labour—Rhodesia, Transvaal, Portuguese Territory: A Draft Despatch by Chief Native Commissioner for Submission to the South African High Commissioner, 7 February 1916.

[44] NAZ N3/22/4 Illicit Recruiting of Native Labour—Rhodesia, Transvaal, Portuguese Territory: A Draft Despatch by Chief Native Commissioner for Submission to the South African High Commissioner, 7 February 1916. See also, Mavhunga, "Navigating Boundaries of Urban/Rural Migration in Southern Zimbabwe".

adventurers, Alec Thompson and William Pye built a store "atop a low, 500-feet high ridge, which formed a sort of topographical backbone to the wild wedge of land between the [Limpopo and Pafuri] rivers."[45] This attracted more people to Pafuri—recruiters and migrants alike.

Long-distance work-seekers who arrived in the border zone in starving conditions found the store at Pafuri as a viable stop-over, and in so doing, got themselves into the hands of recruiters gathered there. Pye and Thompson, like the rest of the Europeans in Pafuri, also functioned as labor recruiters and transporters of migrants to various parts of the Transvaal. Thus, in addition to selling food, clothes, malaria drugs (mostly quinine) and whisky, the store functioned as a clearinghouse or auction floor for African labor destined for the Transvaal mines.[46] At Pafuri, migrant workers ate, rested and obtained clothes before being "traded" and transported to different areas of South Africa. Due to the prevalence of violence and lawlessness associated with labor recruiting at Pafuri, the Makuleke area earned itself a bad reputation in official circles as a criminals' paradise otherwise known as "Crooks' Corner." As Murray puts it, most of the men who camped in the Crooks' Corner were "unscrupulous fortune-hunters specialising in smuggling a particular kind of contraband: African labour."[47] These "labor pirates" cashed in on trafficking migrants who sought assistance with crossing into the Transvaal.

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[45] Bulpin, *The Ivory Trail*,: 14.
[46] Murray, "'Blackbirding' at 'Crooks' Corner'…"
[47] *Ibid*., 374.

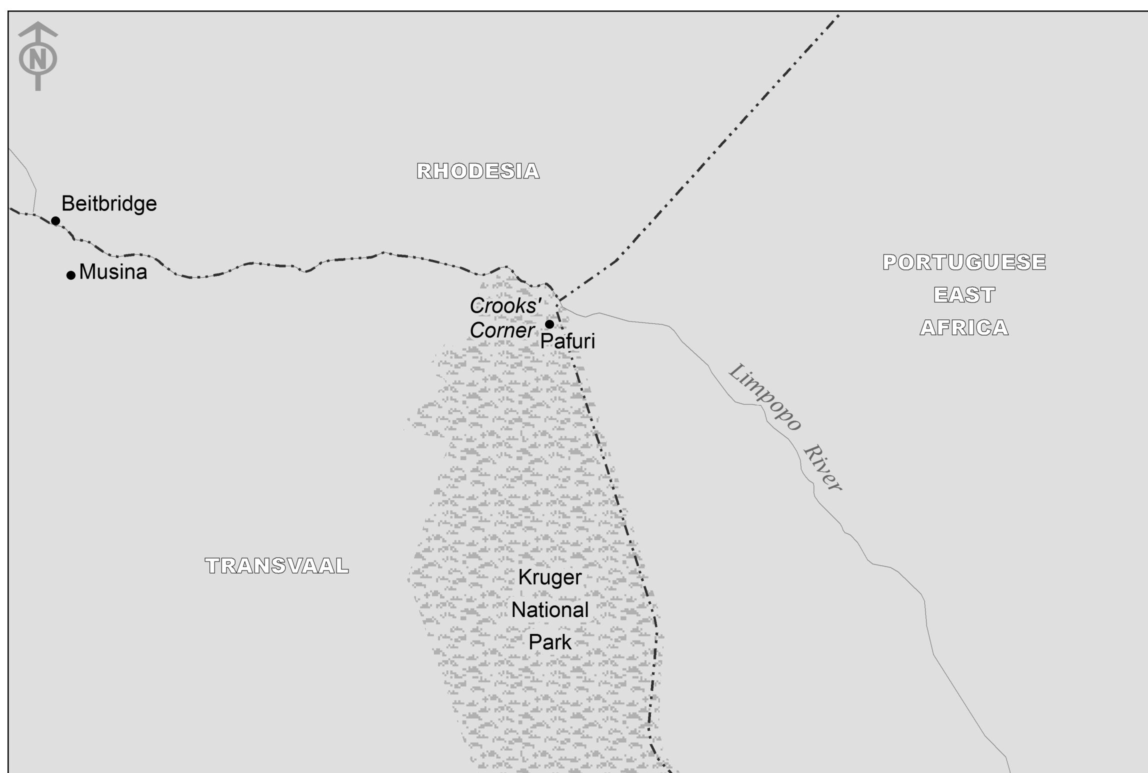

Fig 4. Crooks' Corner at the intersection of the borders of Southern Rhodesia, Portuguese East Africa and Transvaal. Map prepared by Jeff Levy.

Due to lack of organizational capacity, the WNLA failed to raise adequate supplies of labor for the Transvaal gold mines. This left mining companies with no option, but to compete for labor, resulting in some of them engaging private labor agents or "buying" labor from independent labor recruiters. In this way, several mining companies supported the activities of unlicensed recruiters, while pretending to be loyal to WNLA. Other licensed labor agents such as J.W. McKenzie, A.M. Mostert, H. Seelig, Stuart Erskine (who worked for the Barnato Group of Mines) and a man named Fischer who had depots in Louis Trichardt and Sibasa also established transit camps at Pafuri where they stationed runners they paid on commission based on the number of recruits

received.[48] The involvement of licensed labor agents in the activities at Pafuri made the situation in this part of the border more complex and difficult to control.

In 1915, an official from South Africa's N.A.D lamented that "attempts to deal with the problems at Makuleka have not yielded positive results for the last 13 years," adding, "it has been difficult to properly regulate the Agents and their Runners plying their business at such a distance from any centre of Administrative or Police control."[49] The police station nearest to the Crooks' Corner was at Sibasa in northern Transvaal, more than a hundred miles away. By the standards of the first decade of the twentieth century, it would take about two days to travel from Pafuri to Sibasa. In addition to that, the regular police force at Sibasa consisted of only three European officers and fourteen African constables. Because they had other duties to attend to, the police could only execute occasional patrols of the borderline. Criminal activities therefore went on unabated at Pafuri and other places along the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa border.

As if shortage of police officers was not a big enough problem, the physical nature of the "Pafuri triangle," further complicated the situation. It was not easy to get to this area, which was "so infested with the dreaded tsetse fly and malarial mosquito that livestock were at great risk of disease and men drank huge quantities of quinine to ward off fever."[50] Lack of adequate medical facilities for humans and horses, which provided draught power for wagons, made state authorities unable to regulate activities of unlicensed labor recruiters at Pafuri and other areas along the 400 miles long border. In this respect, Bulpin pointed out that "the journey to this spot was as arduous as it was

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[48] NAZ N3/22/4 Acting Sub-Native Commissioner Sibasa to Native Commissioner Zoutpansberg, 7 February 1918.

[49] NAZ N3/22/4 Native Commissioner Zoutpansberg to Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg, 26 October 1915.

[50] Murray, "'Blackbirding' at 'Crooks' Corner'…": 381.

perilous, passing through a land tormented by the devils of heat and thirst where constant danger lurked around every corner, and only the most adventure—some or foolish attempted it."[51]

Amidst these challenges, official attempts to enforce the colonial boundary by controlling cross-Limpopo migrations backfired. Rather than complying with colonial orders, many inhabitants of the Limpopo Valley, and people from other parts of the region, traveled to and from South Africa without official permission. In this respect, the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa border witnessed the birth of the phenomenon of unlawful migration. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, unlicensed labor recruiters, who facilitated the movement of illegal migrants from the Zimbabwean plateau and other areas north of the Limpopo River, had established themselves at Crooks' Corner and other areas along the border. As we shall see in the next chapter, the activities of unlicensed labor recruiters in the Limpopo Valley became more entrenched when the Union of South Africa banned the recruitment and employment of Africans from north of the Limpopo River at a time when demand for mine and farm labor rose. As state authorities on either side the colonial boundary became more interested in controlling cross-Limpopo mobility, illegal migrants developed more sophisticated networks and strategies to evade the system.

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[51] Bulpin, *The Ivory Trail,*: 31

CHAPTER TWO

Migration Law and the Promotion of Illegality

On 8 May 1913, South Africa's Minister for Native Affairs informed the House of Assembly that Government had decided to ban the entry of Africans from areas north of latitude 22° south.[1] This announcement followed the introduction, in the same year, of the Immigrants Regulation Act (I.R.A), which imposed restrictions on people entering South Africa. The legislation ushered in a new phase in the history of cross-Limpopo migration control. Whereas previously mining companies led efforts to regulate the entry of foreign workers into South Africa, the implementation of I.R.A entailed more direct involvement of South African state institutions. Among other requirements, I.R.A, stipulated that any person wishing to enter South Africa had to take a medical examination and/or other tests that the Minister of Immigration deemed necessary. It also gave immigration officials authority to declare a person who failed any of the required examinations a Prohibited Immigrant.[2] In a separate statement, the Minister of Native Affairs explained that South African officials could classify foreigners as prohibited immigrants "if they [we]re unable to read and write any European language to the

[1] NASA GNLB 123 1950/13/D240 Extract from Speech by Minister of Native Affairs, 8 May 1913. Since the whole of Southern Rhodesia, except for just about two percent of the colony, fell to the north of latitude 22° south, the Act made the Zimbabwean plateau pretty much out of reach of legal recruitment for South African employment.

[2] NASA BNS442 146/74 The Immigration Regulation Act (No.22) 1913. Section 4.1 of the Immigrants Regulation Act described some of the conditions under which a person could be declared a prohibited immigrant as follows: any person or class of persons deemed by the Minister on economic grounds or on account of standards or habit of life to be unsuited to the requirements of the Union or any particular Province thereof; any person who was unable by reason of deficient education, to read and write any European language to the satisfaction of immigration officers; any person who was deemed likely to become a public charge by reasons of infirmity of mind or body, or because he did not possess sufficient means to support himself and dependents he was going to take with him into the Union.

satisfaction of an immigration officer," adding that "once declared a prohibited immigrant a tropical native must either leave the Union or obtain the Minister's temporary permit" as I.R.A required.[3]

The implementation of I.R.A had an unintended effect in that it fueled the growth of illegal migration between Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. The ban led many people to seek assistance from unlicensed recruiters in a bid to find alternative routes of crossing the border. I.R.A also became a site of tension between state authorities and South African employers who had depended on foreign supplies of labor since the 1860s. From 1913 until the suspension of the ban in the early 1930s, several mine and farm owners petitioned the Union government seeking permission to employ workers from north of latitude 22 degrees south—essentially, north of the Limpopo River. Having struggled to stop cross-Limpopo migration since the 1890s, Southern Rhodesian authorities welcomed I.R.A as an opportunity to impose more stringent measures against illegal migration. They amended the colony's pass system and encouraged their counterparts in South Africa to strictly enforce the ban. In many respects, I.R.A became, not just a site of contestations in South Africa, but also a significant mediator of inter-state politics in the region.

[3] NASA GNLB123 1950/13/D240 Recruiting of Natives Domiciled North of Latitude 22° south (n.d.,).

Fig 5. Map of Southern Africa showing the position of latitude 22° south**.** Courtesy of Jeff Levy

The Origins of Immigrants Regulation Act

I.R.A was one of the legal instruments that emanated from the amalgamation of British colonies of Natal and the Cape with Afrikaner polities of Orange Free State and Transvaal into the Union of South Africa in 1910. The formation of a united state of South Africa ushered in a process of synchronizing the political, administrative and legal structures of the four provinces. Inevitably, immigration control, which each colony had

dealt with independently, became one of the priority areas for the South African legislature. Despite the continuation of British-Afrikaner tensions, the two groups shared a common vision of making post-1910 South Africa a white man's country. In the same year that they passed the consolidated immigration law, South African legislators also introduced the Land Act, which laid the foundation for race-based territorial segregation that became the backbone of the apartheid ideology, which the country embraced following the victory of the Afrikaner-dominated National Party in the 1948 general election.[4] Having obtained a dominion status within the British Empire, South African authorities sought to entrench and protect white supremacy by marginalizing all other groups in the country.

Although I.R.A became the reference point for the control of movements across the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa border from 1913 to the early 1950s, Union authorities did not formulate this law specifically to deal with immigrants from north of the Limpopo River. Instead, debates surrounding the making of I.R.A, which took almost three years, focused on Indians and other immigrants of Asian origin. Owing to the predominance of anti-Indian sentiments among South Africa's white community, the Union authorities' objective was to come up with a law that restricted, as much as possible, the entry, settlement and movements of Indians in South Africa. However, South Africa's status as a dominion state of the British Empire prevented the Union Parliament from passing an explicitly anti-Indian legislation. South African authorities

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[4] Through the Land Act, South African authorities reserved only 13% of the country for Africans constituting about 70% of the entire population. See Bernard Magubane, "Introduction: The Political Context" In *The Road to Democracy in South Africa,* vol.1, 1960-1970. Edited by South African Democracy Education Trust, (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004); Laurine Platzky and Cherryl Walker, *The Surplus People: Forced Removals in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985).

new the British Parliament would not approve any law that targeted Indians who constituted a section of the British Empire. Theoretically, Indians, as British subjects (not really citizens) had the right to live and work in any part of the British overseas Empire, including South Africa.

Earlier in 1908, an attempt to come up with a similar law hit a brick wall in Southern Rhodesia. The BSAC administration had proposed what they called "Asiatic Ordinance," which sought to "restrict the immigration of Asiatics into this territory, and to provide for the registration of such Asiatics as are already resident therein."[5] The Rhodesian bill required every Asian above sixteen years of age, including guardians of minors to have finger prints recorded and to possess, at all times, a Registration Certificate issued by the Registrar of Asiatics. According to the bill, failure to comply with these requirements would lead to arrest, imprisonment or expulsion from the colony. Although Southern Rhodesia's Legislative Council passed the Ordinance on 22 June 1908, the Colonial Secretary vetoed it following an empire-wide campaign against what was overtly an anti-Indian law.[6] In a bid to avoid making the a similar mistake, the South African Parliament came up with a more broadly defined law, which applied not only to Indians, but all foreigners seeking to enter and work in the Union.

While it is understandable that anti-Indian sentiments led to the formulation of I.R.A, it is not clear why South African authorities deployed this law in restricting the immigration and employment of Africans from Southern Rhodesia and other areas north of latitude 22 degrees south. Randall Packard, who studied how I.R.A contributed towards the construction of a category of a "tropical native" whom South African

[5] NAZ S482/468/39/2 Emigration and Immigration, 1937 to 1939.
[6] Kalsheker, "The 1908 Asiatics Ordinance in Perspective"

authorities believed was culturally and biologically different from local workers, argues that high mortality rates among foreign workers inspired the use of this legislation to ban the entry of such workers.[7] In line with Packard's observation, records at the National Archives of Zimbabwe and the National Archives of South Africa indicate that pneumonia, influenza and meningitis were the major causes of death among migrant workers on South African mines. In 1911, barely a year after the formation of the Union, the Minister of Native Affairs threatened to ban the recruitment of foreign workers if mine owners did not improve working and living conditions in the compounds. In response to the Minister's warning, the Transvaal Chamber of Mines engaged medical research teams to develop a pneumonia vaccine they administered on all foreign workers upon taking up employment in the mines. Research on pneumonia might have produced significant data about this disease and how it could be prevented on South African mines, but it certainly did not stop the Union government from declaring Africans from north of latitude 22 degrees south as prohibited immigrants.

While addressing the Union Parliament on May 8 1913, the Minister of Native Affairs said, "the mortality [of foreign workers] was of a character that should it continue at that rate it would be little less than murder. Under these circumstances the recruiting of natives from tropical countries for work in the Union would not be allowed."[8] South African officials' use of health reasons to justify the banning of workers from territories north of the Limpopo triggered resentment from mining companies and other employers

[7] Randall M. Packard, "The Invention of the 'Tropical Worker': Medical Research and the Quest for Central African Labor on the South African Gold Mines, 1903-36," *Journal of African History*, 34 (1993): 271-292.

[8] NASA GNLB123 1950/13/D240 Extract from Speech by Minister of Native Affairs, 8 May 1913.

of African labor. In a bid to pre-empt mining companies' discontent, the Minister of Native Affairs gave another speech in Parliament stating that, "the WNLA was not stronger than the government, and if the government of the country decided that it was to be stopped, it must be stopped…"[9] This marked the beginning of intense negotiations and contestations that led to the lifting of the ban on African workers in 1933. Each time mining companies faced labor shortages they fought hard to convince the government that they had developed vaccines that made it safer for people from areas designated as "tropics" to work in the Rand.

There is evidence to suggest that the mortality rate of migrant workers was not the only reason for the ban of Africans from Southern Rhodesia and other areas north of the Limpopo River. A letter that South Africa's Secretary for Native Affairs wrote to the Imperial Secretary in 1914 states that the intention of I.R.A was "to eliminate the factor of the Labour Agent's profit in connection with the recruitment of tropical labourers, and thus to secure the cessation of illicit recruiting."[10] South African Director of Native Labor echoed the same sentiments when he stated that, "the policy of the Union Government as understood by me since 1913 and as understood by executive officers of the Native Affairs Department has been to eliminate the profit which could be made by the people who engaged in the recruitment of Tropical Natives. By the elimination of the incentive," he continued, "it was hoped to do away with the illicit practices that took place on our borders and which had for their object the introduction of Tropical Natives in order that certain people might make money out of them…. The policy of the Union Government

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] NAZ N3/22/4 vol.1 Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria to the Imperial Secretary, 24 June 1914.

has not been to prohibit the immigration of Tropical Natives but to prohibit their recruitment."[11]

Such statements, coming from officials who were privy to discussions that led to the formulation of I.R.A, show that by 1913, unlicensed recruiting had become a cause for concern to South African officials. In 1915, Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner wrote that, "it cannot be said that the mortality among Southern Rhodesian Natives employed on the Rand is abnormal, in fact they would appear to enjoy fairly good health."[12] The ban was certainly not just about saving the lives of migrant workers from north of latitude 22 degrees south. It was also a manifestation of the South African authorities' desire to maintain order at the country's northern borders. However, the manner in which South Africa's first major immigration regulation came into being reflects the tensions and contestations that surrounded policy formulation and implementation in that country in the early twentieth century. To a large extent, the conflicts and negotiations that accompanied the introduction of I.R.A resulted from the fractured nature of the South African state. In addition to deep-seated tensions between the British and Afrikaners, policy-makers and interest groups such as mining companies were often at loggerheads.

[11] NASA GNLB123 1950/13/D240 Notes of a Conference held at Pietersburg on Tuesday 10 September, 1918 for the Purpose of Discussing the Best Means of Giving Effect to the Instructions of the Union Government that the Introduction of Tropical Natives should as far as Possible Cease, and of Over-coming, if Possible, the Difficulties Experienced with Casual and Clandestine Immigrants from Rhodesia. This Conference was attended by senior members of the South African Native Affairs Department and Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner. See also NAZ N3/22/4 vol.1 Employment of Southern Rhodesia Natives in the Union of South Africa (1914-1923).

[12] NAZ N3/22/4 Chief Native Commissioner Salisbury to the Secretary Department of the Administrator, 11 May 1915.

Lax Enforcement of Immigrants Regulation Act

A few years after the adoption of the Immigrants Regulation Act, South African officials began to arrest and prosecute "prohibited immigrants" from the Union. For instance, in 1917, there were between 1000 and 1500 migrants from Southern Rhodesia at Sibasa and Louis Trichardt in the Transvaal waiting deportation. Commenting on about the arrest of migrants who had left his district illegally, the Native Commissioner for Chibi wrote that the victims "were held because they were from north of latitude 22 degrees south."[13] The Director of Native Labor in Johannesburg sent out a circular to the Native Commissioners for Zoutpansberg, Louis Trichardt and Pietersburg in northern Transvaal, encouraging them to enforce the restrictions contained in I.R.A. He wrote that "every effort should be made to prevent the recruitment of Natives from North of 22° south latitude…. Labour Agents are not entitled to recruit Natives from Tropical Areas and such Natives should not be attested," adding that, "If any such natives are inadvertently attested their contracts should be cancelled in accordance with the provision of the Regulation above quoted. I should be glad if you would advise all Labour Agents operating in your district in these terms and inform me that you have done so."[14]

Despite facing serious challenges in their attempts to implement the ban, South African authorities publicly strove to give an impression that they had the situation under control. At one point, a senior official from South Africa's N.A.D reassured his Southern Rhodesian counterparts that "under Section 4(a) of Act 22 of 1913 Natives from North of

[13] NAZ N3/22/4 vol 2, Native Commissioner Chibi to Superintendent of Natives, Fort Victoria, 1 June 1917.

[14] *Ibid*., Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg to Native Commissioners Zoutpansburg, Louis Trichardt and Pietersburg, 22 April 1918.

latitude 22° south have been declared a class of persons whose admission to the Union is undesirable."[15] In a move that attracted praises from sections of the Southern Rhodesian community, the Union government deported about thirty-two migrants to Southern Rhodesia in 1921.[16] Mine owners and farmers in Southern Rhodesia praised South Africa for the deportation of 1921 because they had spent years of lobbying for a tighter enforcement of I.R.A. Although more deportations took place after 1921, a lot of people from Southern Rhodesia crossed the border and took up employment in South Africa with the approval of Union authorities. To a large extent, South African authorities did not "walk the talk" as far as the implementation of I.R.A, particularly the ban on northern migrants was concerned.

There was confusion surrounding the interpretation of I.R.A and specific details of the ban remained unclear to many people in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. To begin with, it was not clear whether the Act prohibited general entry and employment of migrants from northern territories or just recruitment by unlicensed labor agents. In an attempt to address this question South Africa's Director of Native Labor said, "the policy of the Union Government has not been to prohibit the immigration of Tropical Natives, but to prohibit their recruitment," continuing that, "everything was being done to discourage Rhodesian Natives from entering the Union."[17] Adding to the confusion, the same official sent out a circular to N.A.D. officials in northern Transvaal, stating that, "the recruitment of natives domiciled in North and South Rhodesia by Labour Agents

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[15] NAZ S138/203 Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, to Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury, 25 November 1921.

[16]NAZ S1226 Illegal Recruiting of Native Labour, 1925-1951. See also NAZ S480/83 Statement by HON. H.U. Moffat, Minister of Mines and Public Works Regarding Emigration of Rhodesian Natives into the Union, 16 November 1925.

[17] Harries, "A Forgotten Corner of the Transvaal…": 101.

[was] definitely prohibited," before adding, "but it will be observed that this prohibition has not been extended to holders of employers' recruiting licenses, so that the employment of such labour as *voluntarily filters through is permissive* on approved local mines but cannot be extended to the Witwatersrand Gold Mines."[18]

Official statements such as these fueled confusion among law enforcement authorities in the border region, thereby creating loopholes that labor recruiters and migrant workers manipulated. While it sounds reasonable that South African officials wanted to use I.R.A to eliminate unlicensed labor recruiters, attempting to differentiate recruiting by labor agents from recruiting by employers was doomed to fail because the two groups worked hand in hand. More often than not, employers engaged unlicensed labor recruiters and touts to recruit foreign workers for them. Also, it was difficult to distinguish between workers brought in by recruiters and those who went to South Africa on their own. When they took recruits for attestation with the N.A.D authorities, employers often argued that they recruited them in the Transvaal, and not from north of the Limpopo River.[19] It was only in those rare occasions when officials questioned migrant workers they arrested that they got to know how foreigners got to various destinations in South Africa. In most cases, such interviews would reveal collusions between employers and unlicensed recruiters.[20]

Also, it was not clear if the ban on the employment of migrants from northern territories applied throughout the Union of South Africa, or simply in the Witwatersrand

[18] NASA GNLB 120 1950/13/240 Acting Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg to NCs and Sub-NCs for Louis Trichardt, Pietersburg, Sibasa, etc., 6 January, 1919. Emphasis mine.

[19] NAZ S1226 Illegal Recruiting of Native Labour, 1925-1951.

[20] NASA GNLB 120 1950/13/240 An Affidavit Statement Made by Native Sukwayo of Chipinge (Melsetter District), 27 June 1918.

mines. When it emerged in 1916 that the Natal Coal Mines had employed large numbers of migrants from north of the Limpopo River, Southern Rhodesian authorities raised the issue with the South African N.A.D. In his response, the Director of Native Labor in Johannesburg pointed out that the laws, which governed the employment of foreign workers in the Transvaal were not in force in Natal and other provinces of the Union.[21] However, when the Rhodesian Chief Native Commissioner asked the same question in 1918, the same South African official responded by saying "this Regulation applies to the whole of the Union."[22] The contradictory statements issued by the South African Director of Native Labour, among other authorities, confused state officials with the duty to control the movement of people in the border zone. To this end, the Sub-Native Commissioner for Louis Trichardt complained that, "various instructions on the subject [of tropical natives] have from time to time been issued with the result that the position has become rather confusing both to myself and to those authorized to employ such natives…"[23] This led officials to rely more on personal discretion than on clearly laid down procedures, causing inconsistencies which compromised the effective application of the law.

Pressure from interest groups such as the South African Chamber of Mines and several farmers' unions, significantly affected the implementation of I.R.A. The rising demand for farm labor in post-1910 South Africa posed a major challenge for authorities in their effort to control the movement of people across the Limpopo River. Whereas the

[21] NAZ N3/22/4 vol 2 The Director of Native Labour in Johannesburg was quoted in a report by the Superintendent of Natives Fort Victoria after his visit to the Transvaal, 17 September 1917.

[22] NASA GNLB123 1950/13/D240 Notes of a Conference held at Pietersburg on Tuesday 10 September, 1918.

[23] *Ibid*., Sub-Native Commissioner, Louis Trichardt to Native Commissioner Zoutpansburg, 1 December 1920.

mining industry continued to employ large numbers of foreign workers, it was the growth of capital investments in the farming sector, which led to a major increase in demand for migrant labor. The second decade of the twentieth century witnessed an increase in state involvement and support of commercial agricultural production to raise food for the increasing population of South Africa. This came in form of marketing opportunities and loan facilities that the union government gave to farmers. In this context, Bethal district, where the Transvaal government had settled some Lithuanian Jewish farmers at the end of the 1899-1902 South African war became famous for its wealthy maize farmers. Bethal farmers, like producers of citrus and vegetables in northeastern Transvaal, relied on migrant workers, whom they considered less expensive and more dependable than locals.[24] Faced with the situation where labor supplies were already erratic, farmers fought against the banning of migrant workers from north of the Limpopo in two ways.

In the first place, Transvaal farmers engaged the government through petitions, seeking permission to continue employing foreign Africans. Between 1914 and 1919, individual farmers, such as Esrael Lazarus who had become one of Bethal's wealthiest residents, wrote several letters to the Director of Native Labour in Johannesburg asking for permission to employ workers from Southern Rhodesia. In October 1919, a group of farmers teamed up with labor agents, contractors and ordinary white residents and sent a petition to the South African Minister of Native Affairs. The petition read, "the conditions governing Labour Agents' and Employers' recruiting licenses at present in force do not give satisfaction and are regarded as unfair and unjust, and the manner in

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[24] Martin J. Murray, "Factories in the Fields: Capitalis Farming in the Bethal District, c.1910-1950" In *White Farmers, Black Labor: The State and Agrarian Change in Southern Africa, 1910-50*. Edited. Alan H. Jeeves and Jonathan Crush (Portsmouth: N.H. Heinemann, 1997).

which they are carried out in practice is illogical… Before these restrictions were imposed," it continued, "such natives at the end of their period of labour were permitted to return to their homes by whatever route they liked and how they liked. The result was that they chose the route by which they entered the country."[25] The petitioners ended by saying, "we urgently submit that freedom of contract should be restored, and that the restrictive conditions should be cancelled and abolished."[26]

On a number of occasions, South African authorities turned down employers' applications for permissions to engage Africans from north of the Limpopo River, citing perceived health risks that accompanied the employment of migrant workers from Southern Rhodesia and other areas north of latitude 22 degrees south. For instance, in 1921, the South African Director of Native Labor argued that unless workers from the north were "provided with proper clothing, … at least two blankets, a jersey and a pair of trousers or other equivalent clothing," they would not be employed in "the high veld of the Transvaal during the winter months."[27] Also, citing I.R.A as the major constraint, the Supreme Court of South Africa dismissed an application by Stuart Erskine, a Labor Recruiting Agent who wanted the Sub-Native Commissioner for Pietersburg to attest the natives he had recruited from Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa in 1918.[28] In the case of Transvaal petitioners cited above, South Africa's N.A.D officials wrote back to them insisting that the recruitment of migrants from northern territories was against I.R.A.

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[25] NASA GNLB123 1950/13/D240, Petition for Removal of Restrictions in Conditions Governing Labour Agents' and Employers' Recruiting Licenses.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid*., Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg to Messrs Medalie Bros, 18 August 1921.

[28] NAZ N3/22/4 vol.1 The Supreme Court of South Africa (Transvaal Division) In the Matter of Stuart Erskine (Applicant) versus Henry Aston Key in his Capacity as the Sub-Native Commissioner at Pietersburg (Respondent) on 22 November 1918.

Along with submitting petitions to colonial officials, Transvaal farmers formed recruiting associations with the objective of mobilizing cheap migrant labor for their expanding industry. In an environment where competition for labor had intensified, farmers' associations, such as the Transvaal Farmers' Labour Agency, reportedly engaged in illegal recruiting north of the Limpopo. Individual farmers, such as Lazarus also engaged the services of independent recruiters operating in the border area, especially in the Makuleke area. Lazarus engaged some labor touts and gave them food and cash, which they used to lure migrants they intercepted at various crossing points in the border area. In addition to deploying runners in the Limpopo Valley, some of Lazarus's agents targeted slum areas in Johannesburg, looking for work-seeking migrants.[29] Activities such as these continued because South African authorities failed to provide adequate labor supplies for their expanding economy.

Scholars argue that from the 1920s onwards, local supplies of labor significantly improved due to the implementation of the Land Act of 1913, which caused hardships for black people in South Africa's rural districts such as the Transkei.[30] While this might be true, the majority of South African workers took up jobs in the manufacturing sector, where wages and conditions were much better than in the other two labor-intensive sectors. Despite the increase in state support of the agricultural sector after the formation of the Union, most farms offered sub-standard housing and other amenities. The mortality rates in the mining sector remained quite high, thereby scaring many local job seekers. Demand for labor in the mining sector increased in 1928 when an inter-governmental

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[29] Murray, "Factories in the Fields: Capitalist Farming in the Bethal District…"

[30] See Clifton Crais, *The Politics of Evil: Magic, State Power, and the Political Imagination in South Africa,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Packard, "The Invention of the 'Tropical Worker'…"

agreement between South Africa and Mozambique was reviewed through what came to be known as the Mozambique Convention. Although the Mozambique Convention kept Southern Mozambique open to WNLA recruiters, it reduced the number of Mozambicans that South Africa could employ in any given year from 100,000 to less than 80,000.[31] In 1933, the South African government responded to demands for labor in the mining sector by granting the Transvaal Chamber of Mines permission to recruit not more than 2,000 workers from areas north of the Limpopo.[32] Authorities also allowed farmers in northern Transvaal to employ foreign workers who filtered into the province.[33] Although the government granted permission on an experimental basis, the lifting of the ban effectively opened the way for South African employers to employ job seekers from Southern Rhodesia and other areas north of the Limpopo with impunity.

Southern Rhodesia's Response to the Introduction of I.R.A

Southern Rhodesian authorities took advantage of South Africa's 1913 Immigrant Regulation Act to impose more stringent conditions for Africans intending to migrate south of the Limpopo. In the same year that the Union banned migrants from the north, Southern Rhodesia reformed its Pass laws giving pass officers authority to refuse, for any reason they deemed sufficient, to issue passes to Africans intending to leave their home

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[31] NASA NTS 225 280/2117 Mozambique Convention. See also Jonathan Crush, Alan Jeeves, and David Yudelman, *South Africa's Labor Empire: A History of Black Migrancy to the Gold Mines* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

[32] NAZ S1226 Chief Native Commissioner to Commissioner of Police, 17 March 1934. See also Bill Parton, *Labour Export Policy in the Development of Southern Africa,* (London: Macmillan Press, 1995); Crush, Jeeves, and Yudelman, *South Africa's Labor Empire: A History of Black Migrancy to the Gold Mines*.

[33] Alan H. Jeeves, and J. Crush, "Introduction" In *White Farmers, Black Labor: The State and Agrarian Change in Southern Africa, 1910-50*.

districts. Through the Native Pass Consolidation Ordinance of 1913, Southern Rhodesian authorities made it a criminal offence for Africans to make false statements to N.A.D officials with the intention of obtaining Registration Certificates or passes to travel from one part of the colony to another. Regarding migration out of the colony the same ordinance categorically stated that, "No native shall, save with this Ordinance excepted, leave the Territory unless he is in possession of a pass duly granted for that purpose."[34] Unlike in previous years when Southern Rhodesian authorities used the pass system to simply control Africans' movements, the 1913 amendments made it an offence for people to leave the colony without permission. In so doing, Southern Rhodesia's pass system essentially criminalized Africans who did not comply with official procedures.[35]

In line with the colony's new policy position, Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner sent out a circular to all Superintendents of Natives pleading, "will you please point out to all officials in your divisions that the employment in labour districts in the Union of native inhabitants of areas North of latitude 22° south is prohibited, and as practically the whole of Southern Rhodesia lies within the prohibited area, the issue of [passes to go to South Africa] must cease."[36] In a different circular, the Chief Native Commissioner pointed out that no passes were to be issued to "natives proceeding to the Union unless special permission has been obtained from the Chief Immigration Officer, Pretoria, for such native or natives to enter the Union."[37] Although it was theoretically possible for an individual with a special permit from Pretoria to obtain a travel pass to go

[34] NAZ A3/18/31/6 Southern Rhodesia Ordinance No.15 of 1913: Native Pass Consolidation Ordinance.

[35] For a detailed discussion of how the colonists used the law to criminalize and control Africans' movement see: Kristin Mann and Richard Roberts, "Introduction: Law in Colonial African Africa," In *Law in Colonial Africa.* Edited by Kristin Mann and Richard Roberts (London: James Currey, 1991).

[36] NAZ N3/22/4 vol.1 CNC Salisbury to Superintendents of Natives, 16 September 1918.

[37] NAZ 1226 CNC, Salisbury to all Superintendents of Natives, 2 December 1922.

to South Africa, Southern Rhodesian officials did not approve many such requests. Southern Rhodesian authorities also refused to grant return passes to migrant workers who visited their homes while on leave from South Africa. This compelled South African employers to petition state authorities on both sides of the border to allow their workers to return.[38]

In refusing to grant passes for South Africa, Southern Rhodesian authorities pointed out that I.R.A prohibited Africans from north of latitude 22 degrees south from entering and working in the Union. Government officials in Southern Rhodesia also cited migrant workers' health risks as the main reason they denied applications for passes to go to South Africa. For instance in 1925, Southern Rhodesia's Minister of Mines and Public Works wrote that, "the Northern Native was not able to stand the colder climate of the South..."[39] As we discussed above, Southern Rhodesian authorities probably did not believe that migrants from their territory were particularly at risk in South Africa. However, pressure from employers, mostly mine owners compelled them to deny passes to Africans intending to go to South Africa. At one point a member of the Rhodesian Chamber of Mines wrote the Secretary for Mines and Works stating categorically that, "I will be glad if you would consider the advisability of curtailing the number of passes

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[38] In one particular case a Mrs Dunkley wrote the Secretary for Native Affairs in Johannesburg, complaining Southern Rhodesian authorities' refusal to grant permission for her domestic worker to travel back to South Africa. Part of her letter read: "I have been in communication with the Native Commissioner's office Plumtree re the return of my houseboy to Johannesburg. The boy left me to return to his home to plant mealies, etc., and has now written to me to inform me that he has finished and wishes to return to me as arranged. The Native Commissioner at Plumtree tells me that he is unable to authorise the return of my houseboy until I have obtained permission and a travelling pass for him from you. Will you kindly allow him to return to me and issue the necessary pass?" See: NASA GNLB417 81/42 Mrs. M. S. Dunkley, Johannesburg to the Secretary for Native Affairs, Johannesburg 16 February 1932.

[39] NAZ S480/83 Statement by HON. H.U. Moffat, Minister of Mines and Public Works Regarding Emigration of Rhodesian Natives into the Union, 16 November 1925.

issued to natives… and so retain the labour within the territory."[40] There is no doubt that by the second decade of the twentieth century, mine owners had emerged as one of the most powerful constituencies in Southern Rhodesia as was the case in South Africa. It was not easy for state officials to ignore their concerns.

Having observed gross inconsistencies in how South African authorities implemented I.R.A to control cross-border movements of Africans, Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner (H.J. Taylor) met with officials from South Africa's N.A.D in Pietersburg on 10 September 1918. Minutes of that conference reveal major differences between Southern Rhodesian and South African authorities' perceptions of illegal migration in the region. Whereas Taylor spoke strongly about the need to cooperate in fighting illegal migration, South African authorities argued that it was not their responsibility to stop Africans from leaving their territories for better paying jobs in the region. In this respect, the Native Commissioner for Louis Trichardt argued that absolute prohibition of migrants from Southern Rhodesia was "outside the region of practical politics."[41] South African Director of Native Labor then proposed a resolution affirming that it was not possible to stop illegal migration. The resolution read:

> While we recognise that the Union and Southern Rhodesian Governments have accepted the policy of prohibiting the entry into the Union of Natives from north of latitude 22° S, we are of the opinion that it is not practicable to give effect to this policy in respect of natives from Southern Rhodesia who voluntarily enter the Transvaal through its northern borders; nor do we consider it practicable to effectively deal with the repatriation of such natives who enter the Union.[42]

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[40] NAZ S138/203 F. D. Roscoe, Antelope Gold Mine, to the Secretary of Mines and Works, 14 July 1925.

[41] NASA GNLB123 1950/13/D240 Notes of a Conference held at Pietersburg on Tuesday 10 September, 1918.

[42] *Ibid.*

The meeting adopted the resolution, but not before Taylor's request for cooperation in dealing with unlicensed recruiters in the Makuleke area sparked another round of heated exchanges.

While Southern Rhodesian authorities desired for the two territories to come up with joint police operations in the border zone, especially in the Makuleke area, South African officials pointed out that there was nothing their government could do about illegal recruitment which took place north of the colonial boundary. As the Native Commissioner for Louis Trichardt put it, one more time, South African officials understood that it was "a matter of wide concern to Rhodesia to conserve its native labour for its own benefit," but they expected their northern neighbor to realize "how impossible it is to prevent this voluntary infiltration of natives from Southern Rhodesia."[43] South African Director of Native Labor further pointed out that when Union authorities recognized that migrants filtered through the border, they allowed them to obtain employment under conditions that the government regarded as sustainable and not prejudicial to their health.[44]

In spite of being custodians of I.R.A and authors of the ban on migrants from north of latitude 22 degrees south, South African authorities were reluctant to put real barriers on illegal movements across the border. Instead, as we saw above, they gave a green light for the employment of some migrants who entered Transvaal without permission from Southern Rhodesian authorities. In the words of one Southern Rhodesian official, the attitude of South African authorities was something like, "keep your Natives on your side: we do not want them, but do not expect us to put a ring of police posts

[43] *Ibid.*
[44] *Ibid.*

along the border."[45] In as much as South African authorities realized the responsibility they had to enforce the ban, local demand for migrant labor made it difficult for them to completely stop the inflow of people from north of the Limpopo River. It was economically unsound and, perhaps politically suicidal for South African authorities to seal their border with Southern Rhodesia. The 1918 Conference was a precursor to more intense engagements between Southern Rhodesian and South African authorities, which took place from the 1930s to the early 1960s.

There were other challenges that limited Southern Rhodesian authorities' efforts to take advantage of I.R.A in restricting movements across the Limpopo. Southern Rhodesian authorities could only cite I.R.A to deny African migrants passes to travel to South Africa, but they could not invoke the same law to prosecute offenders in a court of law. In a communiqué targeting mine owners and farmers who complained that the government was not doing enough to stop Africans from leaving the colony, the Minister of Mines and Public Works categorically stated the dilemma facing Southern Rhodesian authorities. He wrote said, "we cannot ourselves debar our natives or natives from the north from crossing the Limpopo River," continuing that "we are helpless to prevent natives from crossing the Limpopo and I presume legislation on these lines would not be desirable."[46] No matter how much they might have wanted to enforce the ban, it was legally very difficult for Southern Rhodesian authorities to prosecute offenders. Illegal migrants would not commit the offence of leaving the colony without a pass until they crossed the border. At that point, without the cooperation of South African authorities, it

[45] NAZ S138/203 Assistant Chief Native Commissioner to the Secretary to the Premier, Salisbury, 7 September 1925.

[46] NAZ S480/83 Statement by HON. H. U. Moffat (Minister of Mines and Public Works) Regarding Emigration of Rhodesian Natives into the Union, 16 November 1925.

became very difficult to lay charges against migrants who crossed the border in contravention of Rhodesian pass laws.

Realizing that it was difficult to rely on South Africa's cooperation in controlling movements across the Limpopo River, Southern Rhodesian mine owners and farmers urged their government to establish permanent police posts in the colony's southern districts. Due to a number of constraining factors, this did not happen. Because they were short of trained police officers to effectively deal with this, the police department could only promise to dispatch occasional patrols to look for illegal migrants and labor recruiters along the 400 miles long border line.[47] A senior official of the Native Affairs Department would later acknowledge that "the suggestion that emigrations to the Union might be stopped by placing police along the border has already, if I remember rightly been considered, and deemed to be impracticable owing to the fact that crossings can be effected almost anywhere during the greater part of the year."[48] To a large extent, state authorities' failure to address the factors that compelled Africans to leave Southern Rhodesia and those that pulled them towards South Africa, fueled illegal migration in the region.

Unresolved Grievances

For more than a decade after the formation of the Union, sections of the white community on both sides of the Limpopo River campaigned for Southern Rhodesia to

[47] NAZ N3/22/4 vol.1, Police Commissioner British South Africa Police, to Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury, 7 May 1918.

[48] NAZ S138/203 Acting Superintendent of Natives Bulawayo, to Chief Native Commissioner, 17 June 1926.

become the fifth province of South Africa. With the BSAC's charter approaching its expiry in 1925 (after a ten year extension), many people doubted if the white settler community on the Zimbabwean plateau had what it would take to run the colony without the company's active involvement. Debates over whether or not Southern Rhodesia would become part of the Union came to an end after the "Rhodesian" white community voted against merging with the Union in a 1922 referendum. Fearing domination by Afrikaners south of the Limpopo River, the British dominated settler community chose "Responsible Government," which the British Parliament approved in 1923.[49] In choosing political autonomy rather than amalgamation with South Africa, Southern Rhodesian authorities missed an opportunity to eliminate illegal migration across the Limpopo River. Abolishing the border would have completely changed the meaning of cross-Limpopo mobility.

Meanwhile, factors that compelled Africans to leave their homes and employment opportunities in Southern Rhodesia in the first two decades of colonial rule continued, or rather intensified after the introduction of I.R.A. Southern Rhodesian authorities and employers focused too much on trying to seal the border. They obviously did not do have the capacity to address the socio-cultural factors behind cross-Limpopo movements, but they could do something about forced taxation, low wages and poor working conditions prevailing on the Zimbabwean plateau.[50] It might have been an exaggeration of reality to

[49] Responsible Government meant that Southern Rhodesia would become a dominion state of the British Empire, in the same way as the Union of South Africa was.

[50] Despite official efforts to control cross-Limpopo mobility, the Venda, Shangani, Sotho and other groups astride the colonial boundary strove to keep social ties with their relatives on either side of the border. As Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner pointed out in 1921, a good proportion of Africans who proceeded to the Union in the early twentieth century did so for the purpose of visiting friends and relatives. See NAZ S480/83, H.J. Taylor (Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury) to the Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 4 November 1921.

argue, as one Southern Rhodesian official did, that "the only remedy of a permanent nature [wa]s to make conditions of employment more attractive."[51] However, evidence suggests that poor conditions of employment played a significant role in pushing Africans to go to South Africa. Mine and farm owners, who constituted the majority of employers in early colonial Zimbabwe, continued to pay lower wages than those offered by many employers in South Africa.

Despite employers' insistence that Africans left the colony because of the BSAC administration's failure to enforce Pass Laws and police the border area, N.A.D officials agreed that low wages drove workers out of Southern Rhodesia. In 1915, Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner pointed out that the paltry 5/- to 10/- per month which most Africans earned from local employers did not help them to fulfill their obligations, including paying government stipulated taxes.[52] Reiterating the same point in 1916, the chairman of the Rhodesian Native Labour Board wrote, "the native cannot fulfill his obligations satisfactorily, and if there is a better market for his labour further south or further north, he will go there in increasing numbers."[53] In 1926, the Superintendent of Natives in Fort Victoria observed that, "the lure of high wages in South Africa was so strong that our natives continue to go there in the face of difficulties," adding, "I was told of cases in which natives had persisted in going on, notwithstanding

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[51] NAZ S138/203 Assistant Chief Native Commissioner to Secretary to the Premier, 7 September 1925. The Minister of Native Affairs made a similar observation when he wrote: "it would appear to be an economic question, fine and simple. The attraction of higher wages." See also Minister of Native Affairs to Secretary to Premier, 8 September 1925, in the same file.

[52] NAZ N3/22/4, CNC to the Secretary, Department of the Administrator, 29 April 1915.

[53] NAZ N3/22/4, The Rhodesia Native Labour Board to the Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury, 26 January 1916.

being imprisoned two or three times."[54] The Native Commissioner for Zaka District expressed the same concerns by saying "our natives receive better wages [in the Transvaal] than they can demand in Southern Rhodesia."[55] In fact, colonial documents at the National Archives of Zimbabwe show that many officials in Southern Rhodesia knew that the economics of survival forced Africans to look for employment in South Africa.

A former migrant who worked in Kimberly from 1913 to 1959 supported the view that South African employers paid more than those in Southern Rhodesia by saying, "I can say there was good money there. In here we were paid fifteen shillings or one pound five shillings per month, but down there I was earning five pounds a month. Sometimes seven pounds, and even eight pounds."[56] In addition to low wages, ill-treatment of workers continued in most mines and farms in Southern Rhodesia. Recounting his experience as an employee of a white employer in Southern Rhodesia's second largest city of Bulawayo, Amon Mlambo said, "for a time I was there working for my employer then I informed him that I wanted to resign. He said I should give him the notice to resign. I gave him one month's notice. At the end of that month I told him I wanted to go, and he said you are not going."[57] As Mlambo pointed out his employer told him that if he wanted to go to home he could go, but the employer would not sign off his pass as required by law.

Mlambo continued thus, "I told him there is little money here so I gave him another month's notice.... In the second month I told him, I want to go…. He said you

[54] NAZ S480/83, Superintendent of Natives, Fort Victoria, to Acting Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury, 30 August 1926.
[55] *Ibid.*, Native Commissioner Zaka to the Superintendent of Natives, Fort Victoria, 19 April 1926.
[56] NAZ AOH/46, Mlambo, interview with Munjeri
[57] *Ibid.*

cannot go, whereupon he called the police. Meanwhile I had already packed my clothing. He told them, my servant has packed up his clothing he wants to desert."[58] The police arrested Mlambo, but only briefly because after he had a chance to tell them the entire story, indicating that he had given his employer two months notice, the police dropped charges against him. As Mlambo put it, his employer told the police that even with charges dropped, "he can go but I am not going to sign him off…. I do not want to see him go."[59] It was after this experience that Mlambo left for South Africa. As his testimony illustrates, in addition to paying low wages to African workers, Southern Rhodesian employers did not want to let them go when they chose to.

Contrary to what they experienced in Southern Rhodesia, migrant workers continued to receive information about "attractive" working environments in South Africa from friends and relatives who had left. As Maria-Theresa Tarutira observed, South African mine owners had a reputation for giving their employees time for leisure and they also had hot water for bathing, tons of food, and free cinema.[60] On this aspect, Louis Samuel Glover, a former Recruiting Agent for the De Beers Company pointed out that in addition to higher wages, South African companies such as De Beers' offered "good hospitals and good treatment," adding that, "supervisors who struck natives were dismissed instantly."[61] Although working conditions in some parts of South Africa may not have been better than those in Southern Rhodesia, returning migrants' accounts

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[58] *Ibid.*

[59] *Ibid.*

[60] Maria-Theresa Tarutira, "The Tripartite Migrant Labour Agreements, 1936 to 1950," (B.A. Honours Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 1986).

[61] NAZ, ORAL GL/1 Louis Samuel Glover interviewed by D. Hartridge, Salisbury, 4 February 1969.

played an important role in encouraging Africans in Southern Rhodesia to look beyond the Limpopo for better wages and working conditions.

Migrants returning from South Africa commanded a lot of respect in their communities because of the commodities they brought back with them. In this respect, Mlambo said, "the kind of clothes you brought from the south were very different from the ones the local workers brought. Even the blankets that you had, the shirts, the coats, the suits, all these were of super value. The clothes in the south came from Palace [Paris?] and these were the latest fashions," adding, "it was from Palace that trends were formulated. Not from London, but from Palace. Some material was so good that even if you took out matches and tried to light that material, it would not burn out but would simply crumble. Then if you pulled it straight, it was again all right. The locally available materials would burn."[62] According to Mlambo, the manner in which the African people in Southern Rhodesia received returning migrants enticed many more to go to South Africa. On this aspect, Mlambo said, "people said, how can I go to work at such a close place where I can even take my wife along. Let me go down there. People derided those who worked in here. They encouraged such people to go afar and see places. No-one even noticed you if you worked in the country."[63] In an environment where local employers paid near to nothing, Africans considered migration to South Africa as the only viable way of acquiring a better lifestyle and higher social standing in their communities.

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[62] NAZ AOH/46, Mlambo, interviewed with Munjeri

[63] *Ibid.* For further discussions on how the migrant labor system related to issues of masculinity and honor in colonial Africa see John Iliffe, *Honour in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); David B. Coplan, *In the Time of Cannibals: The Word Music of South Africa's Basotho Migrants,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); T. Dunbar Moodie, (with Vivienne Ndatshe), *Going for Gold: Men, Mines and Migration,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

In times of droughts and famine the colonial government extended grain loans to Africans expecting them to pay back the loans when the situation improved. However, instead of waiting for good harvests, some people chose to go and work in South Africa to reimburse the government. In this respect, the Chief Native Commissioner noted, "in February and March 1917 natives of Ndanga and Chibi proceeded to the Union in search of employment in large numbers to earn money to pay back debts to the government for grain advanced them when they faced famine."[64] Indeed, a large number of people in the Victoria Circle left for Transvaal in March of 1917 when the government started collections for grain debts. What is interesting about this case, as the Superintendent of Natives observed, is that in addition to those who went to work in South Africa so they could pay their debts, others crossed the Limpopo in order to avoid paying back the debts.[65] Also, some people refused government support opting to seek work in South Africa in order to support their families in times of famines.

An interview with T. Muleya revealed that before the emergence of the Beitbridge urban location in the early 1930s, there were no food stores among border communities in Southern Rhodesia. Save for mine-based stores, which served workers in particular premises, the nearest place one could get food stores on the Southern Rhodesian side was Gwanda, more than fifty miles from the Limpopo River. In times of famines, the South African town of Messina (Musina), which emerged following the expansion of commercial activities around the Messina Copper Mine in 1904, became a major

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[64] NAZ S246/716, Chief Native Commissioner to the Secretary, Department of the Administrator, 11 October 1917; NAZ N3/22/4 vol 3, Superintendent of Natives, Fort Victoria to Chief Native Commissioner Salisbury, 6 June 1917.

[65] NAZ N3/22/4 vol 3, Superintendent of Natives, Fort Victoria to CNC Salisbury, 17 September 1917.

destination for food seekers from north of the Limpopo River. The location of Messina, just around ten miles south of the Limpopo made it more convenient for border inhabitants to go there instead of going to Gwanda or other centers in Southern Rhodesia.[66]

The distance between Southern Rhodesia's southern districts and employment centers in the Transvaal also played an important role in influencing Africans' decisions about where to seek employment. In 1926, the Native Commissioner for Zaka pointed out that "the distance to the North Transvaal from the natives' homes compares favourably with the distance to the larger labour centres in Southern Rhodesia such as Gwelo, Gatooma, Bulawayo, Salisbury, etc.," adding, "I may mention that were any attempt made by the local Government to prevent natives from these parts from proceeding to the Transvaal to work as hitherto, it would be strongly resented by them and would adversely affect Native Tax collection."[67] Highlighting the same point, the Chief Native Commissioner wrote that: "the main supply of labour for the Messina Copper Mine is drawn from this territory, by reason of it being nearer to our natives occupying the Southern portions of the Ndanga, Chibi and Gwanda Districts."[68]

Despite the fact that Southern Rhodesia's exclusively white electorate voted against amalgamation with the Union of South Africa, the economies of the two territories depended pretty much on the same sources of labor supply. In addition to Africans in the southern districts of Southern Rhodesia, employers in the two territories

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[66] T. Muleya, interview with author, Luthumba Business Center, Beitbridge, 17 May 2010.

[67] NAZ S480/83, Native Commissioner Zaka to the Superintendent of Natives, Fort Victoria, 19 April 1926.

[68] NAZ N3/22/4 Vol 3, Chief Native Commissioner to Secretary Department of Administrator, 10 January 1917.

continued to compete for migrant workers from PEA, Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. As one Southern Rhodesian official pointed out in 1917, "the British colonies and protectorates of Africa cannot be regarded as water-tight compartments as far as their native labor supply is concerned. No matter what restrictions may be imposed to prevent the emigration of natives to attractive labour markets in other territories," he continued, "natives desirous of obtaining work in those markets will go there."[69] Because South African mines were much richer than Southern Rhodesia's, employers in the former tended to pay more than those in the latter. In general terms, South African employers provided better supplies of food as well as better clothing, accommodation, medical care as well as better facilities for leisure than their counterparts in Southern Rhodesia.[70]

I.R.A and the Upsurge of Illegal Migration

Although records of population movements between Southern Rhodesia and South Africa in the early twentieth century are sketchy, official estimates indicate that the number of Zimbabweans working in South Africa increased in the years following the introduction of the Immigrants Regulation Act. According to South African Census reports there were about 2,526 African workers of Southern Rhodesian origin in South Africa by 1911.[71] This figure rose to between 3,000 and 4,000 in 1917, before leaping up

[69] NAZ S138/40 Secretary of Rhodesian Native Labour Board to Chief Native Commissioner, 26 January 1917.

[70] See J.K. McNamara, "Black Workers Conflicts on South African Gold Mines, 1973-1982," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1985).

[71] For a summary of the South African Census data for 1911-1985, see Jonathan Crush, "Migrations Past: An Historical Overview of Cross-border Movement in Southern Africa," In *On Borders: Perspectives on International Migration in Southern Africa.* Edited by David A. McDonald, (Ontario: SAMP, 2000).

to about 5,000 by 1925.[72] As one Rhodesian Minister noted in 1925, despite the ban and deportations that had been witnessed, there was "a fairly steady stream of natives from north of the Limpopo River proceeding to the Transvaal."[73] The number of Zimbabweans in South Africa continued to rise in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. It might be difficult to ascertain the statistics of those who crossed the border illegally versus those who complied with official procedures, but it would appear, from available evidence, that the majority went unlawfully. Also, it is highly likely that official estimates did not account for many people who crossed the border illegally.

When Southern Rhodesian authorities made it more difficult for Africans to obtain travel passes for South Africa after 1913, potential migrants resorted to seeking passes for the mining areas in the southern parts of the colony where they would work briefly before sneaking across the Limpopo River. Because of this, Southern Rhodesia's N.A.D witnessed a major increase in the number of applications for passes to go to places such as Gwanda, Bulilima-Mangwe, Plumtree, Matobo and Belingwe. In those areas, job seekers targeted mines such as West Nicholson and Jessie (in Gwanda) as well as Legion and Antelope (in Matobo), where migrants would work while waiting for opportunities to connect to South Africa. In response to the rising demand for travel passes to the border districts, Southern Rhodesian authorities stopped issuing passes to those areas they characterized as jumping off grounds for illegal migrants. However, as Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner observed, refusal of passes and other restrictions

[72] For estimates of Zimbabweans in South Africa between 1917 and 1925 see NAZ N3/22/4 Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury to Secretary, Department of the Administrator, Salisbury 11 October 1917; S138/203 Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury to Secretary Rhodesia Chamber of Mines [not dated: circa 1925].

[73] NAZ S480/83 Statement by Hon. H.U. Moffat (Minister of Mines and Public Works) Regarding Emigration of Rhodesian Natives into the Union, 16 November 1925.

on cross-Limpopo mobility had “the result that Natives intending to go to the Transvaal were diverted to use illegal means of crossing the Limpopo River.”[74] Migrants devised ways of travelling from Southern Rhodesia to South Africa without having to apply for travel documents.

Knowing very well that the administration had instructed railway officials to not issue tickets to travelers without valid passes, many migrants walked the entire journey from different departure points to the Transvaal, where it was much easier to get transportation to various destinations in South Africa. In this respect, migrants often followed what Southern Rhodesian police officers characterized as “devious paths” which avoided N.A.D. stations and European settlements where the police were usually stationed. Often times, migrants’ routes passed through networks of villages and stopping places where travelers would rest and/or replenish supplies. Experienced travelers who knew the routes and the location of resting places usually led the way. As one former migrant recounted, “the routes were well known by the pioneer migrants who had been there before…. We went with someone who had been there before. He is the one who told you, ‘the place is like that and that.’”[75] In so doing, migrants did not simply succeed in dodging the official systems of migration control, but they also developed important social networks upon which generations of illegal migrants depended.

As was the case before the introduction of I.R.A, travelers from Southern Rhodesia to South Africa did not rely solely upon their ingenuity to dodge migration control measures. Labor recruiters (both licensed and unlicensed) continued to play a

[74] NAZ S138/203 Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury to the Secretary to the Premier, 2 November 1925.

[75] NAZ AOH/46, Mlambo, interview with Munjeri. See also NAZ S1226 BSAP, Mtetengwe to Superintendent CID, Bulawayo, 4 January 1926.

critical role to get unauthorized travelers across the colonial boundary. In a clear disregard of the ban on migrants from north of the Limpopo, South African recruiters continued to operate in many areas of Southern Rhodesia, where they obtained labor through various means. As one migrant testified following his arrest in South Africa, labor recruiters operated in complicated networks. On 22 December 1914, Tom Matimbura wrote, "I come from Ndanga district…. About 8 months ago I left home in search of work. My intention was to go to Randfontein (Mhlangane). I left my father's kraal with 9 others and I met some of my father's people on the way…." He continued as follows, "We proceeded and when about 2 ½ days walk from Tuli we were encountered by a native runner named Mpaluli who stated that he was collecting natives for a certain European Masipekili who resided at Tuli. He told us to go with him and that employment would be provided for us by Masipekili."[76] This shows that the deployment of touts in African villages, which started after the first attempts to regularize cross-Limpopo movements continued.

As Matimbura continued with his testimony, he pointed out that when they arrived at Tuli they met another group of migrants from the same area in Ndanga district. "In all we numbered about 40. Masipekili told us to go on to his place at Bandolierskop where we would receive food and be entrained for Pietersburg," Matimbura said, before continuing, "We proceeded from Bandolierskop and arrived sometime during the night in Pietersburg and were taken to a compound of a certain European named David whom we

[76] NAZ N3/22/4 Statement of Native Tom Matimbura Regarding Illicit Recruiting in the Ndanga District, 22 December 1914. See also "Illicit Recruiting of Native Labour- Rhodesia, Transvaal, Portuguese Territory: A Draft Dispatch by the Chief Native Commissioner for Submission to the South African High Commissioner, 7 February 1916 (same file).

were told to go to by Masipekili. The next day we were detained in the compound."[77] As this statement shows, labor recruiters, who in most cases were white people, deployed African runners so that officials would not easily suspect that anything illegal was taking place. In so doing, South Africa-based labor recruiters managed to avoid apprehension by the police in Southern Rhodesia.

Although Matimbura and his colleagues met their recruiters in the Tuli area on the western side of the Zimbabwe-South Africa border, the Makuleke area in the far eastern corner of the border, remained a major site of unauthorized recruiting. By 1916, eighteen labor recruiters operated from Pafuri, where, for years prior to the introduction of I.R.A, Southern Rhodesian officials struggled to maintain order. Among the eighteen, official attention focused on two men—Bernard Diegel (whom locals referred to as Bvekenya) and Roux. These men had earned a bad reputation for the violent means they utilized in recruiting workers. As Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner observed, Bernard and Roux "terrorized natives in the surrounding districts by flogging them and threatening to shoot them, [so much that] the natives [we]re afraid to stay in their kraals on account of these men."[78] For some time Benard, whom some Southern Rhodesian officials described as "a notorious scoundrel," was an official agent of the Native Recruiting Corporation (N.R.C), an organization that emerged in 1912, with the support of the Transvaal authorities."[79]

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[77] *Ibid.*

[78] *Ibid.*

[79] One South African official wrote that Bernard collected "gangs of boys, more often than not, with a rifle leveled at their heads." The same officials pointed out that Bernard also way-laid and robbed other agents' runners using methods that were "similar to those adopted by the Australian bushrangers except that instead of specie, Bernard's object is the acquisition of gangs of natives."

By 1918, representatives of the major recruiting agents operating in the Makuleke area had held a number of meetings attempting to self-regulate their "illegal" activities, but none of them respected the agreements they came up with. One of the recruiters' meetings, which the Sub-Native Commissioner for Sibasa attended, came up with a seemingly progressive list of agreements. For example, recruiters agreed that they needed to eliminate violence and competition by paying salaries instead of commissions to their agents stationed at Makuleke. They also agreed that there should not be recruiting within Southern Rhodesia's borders—apparently in line with the 1913 prohibition on such kinds of activities in areas north of latitude 22 degrees south.[80] Predictably, these remained what they were—paper agreements. None of the parties was willing to give up the business they gained from recruiting and "trading" in prohibited immigrants in this area. The Transvaal authorities blamed the N.R.C for worsening the situation at Makuleke. By accepting recruits from Bernard and by paying substantial amounts in capitation fees, the N.R.C encouraged illegal activities, which the organization publicly condemned and pretended to remedy by participating in meetings with other recruiters. As one N.A.D official pointed out at the beginning of 1918, other recruiters operating in the Makuleke area, viewed hiring "men of Bernard's unscrupulous character," as a move which had the potential to worsen the state of affairs in the border region.[81]

By the mid-1920s, migrants had opened another route of getting into South Africa from Southern Rhodesia. Realizing that they could not get passes for the border districts, which would allow them to sneak into South Africa, migrants shifted attention to

[80] NAZ N3/22/4 Native Commissioner Zoutpansberg, to Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg, 26 October 1915.

[81] *Ibid.* Acting Sub-Native Commissioner, Sibasa to Native Commissioner, Zoutpansberg, 7 February 1918.

Botswana, then known as the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Because for a long time Bechuanaland was not a popular destination for migrants from Southern Rhodesia, officials did not restrict Africans' migration to that part of the region. Migrants obtained passes for Francistown and then proceeded to cross the border into the Transvaal. In some cases, people from Southern Rhodesia worked in Francistown for as long as it took them to get onto tax registers in that colony. They would then present their tax receipts and bought train tickets for South Africa, as if they were originally from Bechuanaland. Other migrants bribed community leaders in the Tati Concession area of Bechuanaland Protectorate who would testify that the concerned migrants were indeed from Tati.[82] Once confirmed officially as from Tati, they would then proceed to register and pay local taxes so they could obtain receipts to use as proof of identity when travelling to South Africa. By claiming Bechuanaland citizenship, which allowed them to enter and work in South Africa, migrants deployed the same tactics that helped some of them to connect with WNLA agents in PEA in the early years of migration control in the region.[83]

As the 1920s decade came to an end, illegal migration on the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa border was evidently on the rise. To a large extent, South African authorities' attempts to regulate cross-Limpopo mobility using I.R.A had flopped. If the objective was to eliminate illegal activities associated with unlicensed recruiting of foreigners in the border area, South Africa's ban on migrants from north of the Limpopo River actually fueled such activities. It was somewhat illogical for state officials on either

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[82] NAZ S138/203 Resident Commissioner, Mafeking to Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury, 17 February 1927.

[83] Such migration strategies undoubtedly complicate the history of colonial and post-colonial citizenship in Southern Africa, which is beyond the scope of the current study.

side of the border to expect illegal migration to stop without addressing factors that pushed people out of Southern Rhodesia and those that attracted them to South Africa.

CHAPTER THREE

Illegal Migration and Regional Politics of Labor

By the beginning of the 1930s, state authorities in Southern Rhodesia had tried many strategies of stopping illegal migration to South Africa without success. The colony's pass laws might have helped in other respects, but not so much as a technology of controlling cross-border movements. Minutes of the 1918 Pietersburg meeting between Southern Rhodesian and South African officials show that the former could not rely on the latter in fighting illegal migration. Despite banning migrants from Southern Rhodesia and other areas north of the Limpopo River, South African authorities' failure to raise adequate labor supplies for employers in their country negatively affected efforts to control illegal migration. South African authorities could not effectively enforce the ban, hence mine owners and farmers employed migrant workers from Southern Rhodesia without fearing official sanctions. To a large extent, Southern Rhodesian authorities also failed to ensure that local employers improve wages and working conditions to match those prevailing south of the Limpopo River. In fact, basic economic principles dictated that migrant workers preferred more richly endowed mining enterprises of the Witwatersrand than those in Southern Rhodesia, which could not pay competitive wages.

In spite of all this, Southern Rhodesian authorities did not give up the fight against illegal migration. While the 1930s economic depression temporarily reduced the demand for labor in the colony, Southern Rhodesian authorities continued to seek ways of stopping Africans from migrating to South Africa. Taking advantage of the border-

post, which emerged after the construction of the Beit Bridge in 1929, Southern Rhodesia's police department increased surveillance of the border zone. However, as was the case in previous years, migrants responded to improved methods of migration control by adopting more sophisticated strategies of crossing the border illegally. In a major change of approach, Southern Rhodesian authorities engaged other British colonies in the region, with the objective of putting pressure on South Africa to cooperate in fighting illegal migration. Since local supplies of labor in South Africa could not meet demand, which rose due to economic boom the country experienced in the 1930s and 40s, the union government fought all attempts to obstruct the movement of people in the region. Consequently, illegal migration became a major focus of diplomatic engagements in Southern Africa from the 1930s until the early 1950s, when changes in the region's political economy compelled South African authorities to take a leading role in controlling movements of people across the Limpopo River.

Opening the Floodgates

While economic considerations compelled South African employers to petition the government about engaging migrants from north of the Limpopo River, authorities' concern about Jewish immigration in the 1920s and 30s probably diverted attention from the country's border with Southern Rhodesia. In 1930, South Africa slightly amended I.R.A by introducing the Immigration Quota Act. Although the Quota Act did not single out any particular group, authorities deployed it to restrict the entry of Jewish immigrants, mainly from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and other countries of Eastern

Europe. For a number of years, the South African legislature had battled rising anti-Semitism sentiments among the white population south of the Limpopo River. In 1937, South African authorities passed the Aliens Act, which extended the restriction to Jewish immigrants from Germany whose numbers had increased due to the rise of fascism. By and large, the Aliens Act, as was the case with the Quota Act, maintained that potential immigrants had to be of "good character" and ready to assimilate in the Union in a reasonable period of time. At that time, South African authorities did not consider African workers from neighboring countries as potential immigrants, but temporary migrants hence the two laws did not directly apply to cross-Limpopo migration.

A combination of economic considerations and shifts in immigration policies in the 1930s led South African authorities to remove measures restricting the flow of migrants from Southern Rhodesia and other areas north of the Limpopo River. After a series of negotiations between the Transvaal Chamber of Mines and the governments of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the WNLA got permission to establish recruiting depots in those countries. In return, the mining companies agreed not to engage migrants who independently traveled to South Africa.[1] This arrangements, which allowed the WNLA to recruit up to 3,500 workers from Northern Rhodesia and 8,400 from Nyasaland in any given year, did not include Southern Rhodesia. Also, the agreements did not directly involve the South African government, making it difficult for Southern Rhodesian authorities to hold the Transvaal Chamber of Mines accountable for workers who voluntarily "filtered" into South Africa.

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[1] Paton, *Labour Export Policy in the Development of Southern Africa,*

Instead of arresting and/or deporting migrants from north of the Limpopo, South African authorities served them with prohibition notices under the Immigration Regulation Act of 1913, and proceeded to issue work and residence permits which could be renewed indefinitely after every six months. With such permits, "prohibited immigrants" worked and lived in South Africa for as long as they wanted. Only those who committed crimes of different kinds were liable to deportation.[2] South African employers such as the Messina Copper Mines also engaged thousands of migrants from Southern Rhodesia knowing that they did not have official permits to be in South Africa. As the *Rand Daily Mail* noted, South African employers preferred foreigners than locals because the former stayed longer with one employer and were believed to be better workers.[3] Because they signed longer contracts, foreign workers tended to be more experienced and better skilled than locals who frequently changed jobs. Foreigners also accepted to work in less popular mines and farms where conditions were often "harsher and more dangerous."[4]

Under these circumstances, people who crossed the border through unofficial channels were able to regularize their statuses by obtaining temporary work permits in Messina or other N.A.D. offices in South Africa. Further compromising Southern Rhodesian authorities' fight against unauthorized migration, the Union of South Africa's Government Notice No. 1170 of 1936 canceled the prohibition of recruiting within 20 miles of the Limpopo River, which had been in force since 1913. Although the same

[2] NAZ S1226 Immigration Officer, Beitbridge to Chief Immigration Officer, Bulawayo, 22 February 1935; see also Detective Sergeant Stephenson's letter to Chief Superintendent CID Bulawayo, 9 September 1936 (same file).

[3] "Banned Natives Enter Union: Immigration Laws Not Enforced: Thousands Cross Northern Border" In *Rand Daily,* 5 April 1934.

[4] Crush, Jeeves, and Yudelman, *South Africa's Labor Empire: A History of Black Migrancy to the Gold Mines*, 10.

notice spelt out clearly that authorities required all recruiters operating in the border zone to carry licenses, the government did nothing to enforce that requirement.[5] Unlicensed, but obviously licit recruiting therefore thrived in the border zone. By the late 1930s, most recruiting agents had established camps and depots in northern Transvaal, often sending touts to recruit north of the colonial boundary.

In response to several reports of illegal recruiting of labor in the southern districts of the colony, Southern Rhodesia's police department carried out investigations, which revealed that there were four South African recruiters operating in the border zone in the 1930s. The first was Colonel D. Swarts, who had a contract of supplying about 5,000 African workers per annum to the Zebedelia and Leteba Estates in the Transvaal. The others included Sacks, Labuschagne and Durr who supplied farmers, Citrus Estates and mines in the Transvaal Province.[6] In addition to these four, a man called Impey had established a recruiting station on a farm known as "C to C Dairy," about three miles from the border. Although specific details about this man are hard to come by, Southern Rhodesia's police department believed that he represented the Transvaal Chamber of Mines.[7] In other documents, Impey is reported to have been an employee of William Gemmill who was the General Manager of the Chamber of Mines from the 1920s to the 1940s. Such recruiters often engaged African runners whom they paid between two and five shillings per person. In turn the recruiters charged between £1 and £2 per head, making this more like slave trading. In another case, Colonel Stubbs teamed up with

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[5] NAZ S1226 Chief Superintendent, BSAP Bulawayo to Staff Officer, BSAP 11 October 1937.

[6] NAZ S1226 Detective Sergeant Barfoot, Beitbridge to Chief Immigration Officer, Bulawayo 12 April 1937.

[7] *Ibid.* CID Bulawayo to Chief Superintendent CID 29 November 1935; See also Detective Sergeant Stephenson to Chief Superintendent CID Bulawayo, 9 September 1936.

Major Leifeldt, respectively an ex-magistrate and an ex-Native Commissioner in South Africa, to conduct a recruiting drive targeting migrants rejected by the WNLA at Pafuri. The two took up migrant workers who did not pass the WNLA's medical tests and "sold" them to farmers in the Transvaal Province. [8]

As was the case in earlier years of the twentieth century, South African employers also deployed touts who intercepted migrants in Southern Rhodesia before they reached the border. In one of the more than a dozen cases that the police in Southern Rhodesia reported on, the owner of a farm near the confluence of the Pai and Limpopo Rivers (on the Transvaal side) engaged three touts who advised and directed migrants on routes to follow from Gwanda to his farm. In addition to Gwanda, the touts targeted places such as Bulawayo, Plumtree and West Nicholson where they intercepted migrants disembarking from trains plying the Bulawayo-Mafeking route. Some people in Southern Rhodesia, especially "ex-police boys or ex-detective natives" who knew both the country and the migration control systems quite well took up jobs as touts for South African recruiters.[9] In 1938, the *Bantu Mirror* published a series of articles describing in English, Sindebele and Chishona, the attractive conditions and advantages, which migrant workers supposedly enjoyed on the Witwatersrand mines. As one police officer pointed out, Southern Rhodesian authorities believed that the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, through the Native Recruiting Cooperation, backed this media campaign to lure Africans to abandon their jobs in Southern Rhodesia and go to South Africa.[10]

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[8] *Ibid.* Chief Superintendent BSAP Bulawayo to Staff Officer, BSAP 11 October 1937; Assistant Commissioner, CID Bulawayo to Senior Immigration Officer Beitbridge, 3 December 1941.

[9] *Ibid.* P. Hurdles, Circular to the Gwanda Small Workers Association, February 1935; Native Commissioner Gwanda to Chief Native Commissioner, 24 June 1937.

[10] *Ibid.* Chief Superintendent CID Bulawayo, to the Staff Officer, BSAP 4 January 1938.

Quite clearly, South African authorities, mindful of protecting their country's interests, adopted a double-edged policy in dealing with cross-Limpopo mobility. While on one hand they appeared to be against unauthorized immigrants from Southern Rhodesia, on the other hand South African authorities paid a blind eye to employers who engaged illegal migrants. Despite South African officials' pledges to repatriate northern migrants who crossed the border without following laid down procedures, illegal migrants often got official permits to live and work in South Africa. In a bid to prevent losing labor to South Africa through illegal emigration, Southern Rhodesian authorities deployed various strategies of policing the border zone.

Increased Surveillance of the Border Zone

Southern Rhodesian authorities' initial response to South Africa's suspension of the ban on migrants from north of latitude 22 degrees south was to increase police surveillance of the border zone. In doing so, they took advantage of the border-post, which emerged after the construction of the Beit Bridge across the Limpopo River in 1929. For almost forty years after the creation of the colonial boundary in 1890, official attempts to control people's movements across the Limpopo River met with very limited success. In the absence of a border-post, migrants (both legal and illegal) crossed the border at various points, making it difficult to monitor activities in the border zone. In the early 1920s, Southern Rhodesian authorities attempted to control cross-border traffic by deploying a European corporal who functioned as a Customs and Immigration Officer and an African trooper carrying out duties of a regular police officer at Liebig's Drift,

which had become a popular crossing point.[11] Because there were many other places at which people crossed the Limpopo River, deploying two police officers at Liebig's did not achieve desired results.

Although attempts to merge Southern Rhodesia with the Union of South Africa failed, authorities on both sides of the border supported the construction of the bridge. With the Beit Railways Trust financing the actual construction work, the two states provided the steel, stones and other materials used in building the bridge.[12] South Africa also extended its Railway line from Messina across the bridge into Southern Rhodesia. At the official opening of the Beit bridge, on 31 August 1929, government officials and members of the Southern Rhodesian and South African Parliaments as well as representatives of major corporate bodies in the two colonies gathered in celebration.[13] The Governor-General of South Africa (Lord Athlone), officiated at the ceremony where Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister (H.U. Moffat) revealed his administration's decision to give Alfred Beit's name "to the railway station and the Rhodesian side of the Limpopo River, which will be called Beitbridge."[14]

In anticipation of an "orderly" movement of traffic across the border, Southern Rhodesian authorities erected border gates on the bridge, in order, as H.U. Moffat put it, to "provide a suitable barrier to facilitate the examination of persons entering [and

[11] NAZ S1692 Assistant Magistrate Mtetengwe to the Secretary Law Department, 22 July 1926.

[12] The Beit Railway Trust was established in honor of Alfred Beit who was one of the directors of the British South Africa Company, which spearheaded the occupation of the Zimbabwean plateau and administered Southern Rhodesia from 1890 to 1923.

[13] "Opening of the Limpopo Bridge" In *The African World*, vol 108, 7 September 1929. A similar gathering of colonial officials occurred in 1938, at the opening of a bridge in Zululand. See Max Gluckman, *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958).

[14] NAZ S482/203/39/1 Copy of the Premier's Speech on the Occasion of the Opening of the Beit Bridge on 31 August 1929. In 1935, authorities proclaimed the area along the Limpopo River, from the Shashe-Limpopo confluence down to Chikwarakwara, as the administrative district of Beitbridge.

leaving] Southern Rhodesia."[15] They also arranged for their Customs Officer to act on behalf of the Union Government during the day because the latter only kept night security staff at the bridge. Southern Rhodesian authorities tried to prevent Africans from using the bridge and border-post in an unlawful manner. In that regard the authorities insisted that all Africans entering the Union of South Africa should first present their Registration Certificates and travel permits for inspection at Beitbridge Police Station.[16] Whereas European travelers simply had to deal with the Customs officials and border guards when they passed through the Beitbridge border-post, Africans had to go through the police before they presented themselves at the border gates. Customs officials also had instructions to charge duty on all taxable goods, which Africans brought with them from South Africa.

Southern Rhodesian police increased surveillance of the border zone in line with renewed efforts to curb unauthorized emigration to South Africa after the construction of the border-post. Operating mainly from their new base in Beitbridge town, the B.S.A.P deployed a multi-pronged strategy to fight illegal cross-border mobility. The police department deployed patrols along the border, particularly in places that had become popular crossing points for unauthorized migrants. Police patrols particularly targeted Africans suspected of deserting their work places in the southern parts of the colony. By 1939, the B.S.A.P were conducting regular patrols in Gwanda and West Nicholson—two places where Africans heading for South Africa would normally get off the trains. As Detective Sergeant Elliot of the Bulawayo Criminal Investigations Department (C.I.D)

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[15] *Ibid.* The Premier (Salisbury) to the Minister of External Affairs (Pretoria), 26 January 1931.

[16] NAZ S1226 H.W. Clemow, Chief Superintendant CID to the Staff Officer BSAP, 24 November 1937.

pointed out, the police often stopped and searched groups of mobile Africans frequently arresting those they found without travel passes.[17]

In addition to regular patrols, the B.S.A.P created what they called Special Border Patrols. These composed of African detectives and informers in the border area as well as in the Rhodesia Railway Services trains plying the Bulawayo-West Nicholson and the Bulawayo-Mafeking route. Members of the Special Border Patrols did not wear uniforms, making it difficult for people to identify them. The police department also deployed under-cover police detectives (mostly Africans) in Beitbridge town's "Native Compound," which had become a hiding spot for illegal migrants.[18] The major task of police detectives was to study the routes and networks, which illegal migrants used to evade the colony's migration control measures. Some of the police details posed as ordinary travelers in need of assistance with crossing the colonial boundary without following official channels. In the process, they studied and reported on the illegal activities involving migrants and other actors in the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa border zone.[19]

Following his deployment to investigate allegations of illegal recruiting and transportation of migrants by drivers of the South African Railway Services one informer, known as Blantyre, produced a report that reveals how the police department gathered information. He revealed that he approached fellow Africans in Bulawayo

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[17] *Ibid.* Detective Sgt Elliot, CID Bulawayo, to Chief Superintendant, CID Bulawayo, 30 November 1939.

[18] *Ibid.* Tpr L.L.A. Seward, BSAP, West Nicholson to Chief Superintendant CID, Bulawayo 2 December 1935

[19] See report by one such "secret police": NAZ S1226 Statement by Austin Makawa Regarding Illegal Emigration of Natives 21 March 1939. See also (in the same file), Chief Superintendent CID's letter to Assistant Superintendent CID, in which he sanctioned the deployment of a plain cloth Native Constable in trains to investigate about illegal movements of Africans from Southern Rhodesia to South Africa, 26 May 1939.

pretending he wanted assistance with going to South Africa without having to obtain necessary documents. Blantyre's report goes as follows: "Upon asking a native friend 'how can I go to the Union?' I was told, 'You have to go and see the cook boys of the guard and driver of the train… When you see the cook boys you are introduced by them to the guard or driver, and guard then tells you what time to report," adding, "You then report to the guard at the time given and the guard then puts you inside the caboose where you have to remain all the time and act as a cook boy… The money you pay varies from 30/s to £3."[20] In that report, Blantyre claimed he was told that the best train to travel on was the goods train, which left Bulawayo at midnight. According to the report, his friend advised that the other way to go to the Union was to take a train ticket for a siding near Plumtree, get off there and walk over the border with Bechuanaland and get on the next train.[21]

From information they obtained in this way, the police department managed to arrest several illegal migrants and their accomplices, but did not eliminate the practice. Realizing that they were not going to win the fight against illegal migration to South Africa without support of other players in the region, Southern Rhodesian officials sought multilateral deals, initially with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland before formally engaging their neighbor south of the Limpopo River. Their strategy was to simultaneously reduce South Africa's access to African labor in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland and to limit the emigration of Zimbabweans to South Africa.

[20] *Ibid.* Statement by Native Informant Blantyre to the CID Bulawayo, 23 March 1944.
[21] *Ibid.*

A Tripartite Coalition against Illegal Migration

Amidst increasing illegal recruiting and emigration of African workers to South Africa, Southern Rhodesian authorities stepped up diplomatic efforts to find a solution to the problem. Realizing that the 1918 Pietersburg Conference and other earlier attempts to persuade South Africa to restrict the entry of Zimbabweans did not achieve desired results, Southern Rhodesia roped in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia into the fight against illegal migration. Although the three colonies enjoyed different statuses as labor units in an integrated regional economy, they shared "an interest in controlling, restricting, and profiteering from labour export to South Africa."[22] Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, whose labor demands were not as high as those of Southern Rhodesia, particularly wanted an arrangement, which ensured they obtained taxes from their people who went to South Africa. After a series of discussions, representatives of the three colonies signed a Tripartite Labor Agreement in August 1936. The key element of the agreement was that Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia would direct surplus labor to Southern Rhodesia and not to South Africa. In turn, Southern Rhodesia pledged to ensure that its employers engaged only those people who possessed passports issued by officials in their home countries.[23]

In seeking a closer union of the three British colonies north of the Limpopo River, Southern Rhodesian authorities wanted to ensure their country had the control of the region's labor supplies ahead of South Africa. The Tripartite Agreement would therefore guarantee Southern Rhodesia's position as the first port of call for surplus labor from the

[22] Crush, Jeeves, and Yudelman, *South Africa's Labor Empire:* 48.
[23] Tarutira, "The Tripartite Migrant Labour Agreements, 1936-1950".

other two colonies. Contrary to the objectives of the Tripartite Agreement, a review meeting between representatives of the three governments in December 1937 observed that, "clandestine emigration of native labour to South Africa has reached alarming proportions."[24] Although the meeting attributed the rise of illegal migration south of the Limpopo to South African authorities' reluctance to police the border, a number of factors militated against successful implementation of the Tripartite Agreement between Southern Rhodesia and its partners. In the first place, African workers from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland did not take Southern Rhodesia as the final destination. Instead, they considered the territory between the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers, as a mere stopover en-route to South Africa.

In the same way that local Africans strove to escape low wages and poor working conditions in Southern Rhodesian mines and farms, migrants from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were not satisfied with living and working in Southern Rhodesia. Most migrants had received information about perceived higher wages and better working conditions that prevailed in the Transvaal and other provinces of South Africa. WNLA also intensified efforts to lure people from the three northern territories to seek employment in South Africa. From the time they obtained official permission to recruit from north of latitude 22 degrees south, the WNLA had embarked on an aggressive media campaign to attract northern migrants to the Transvaal mines. The WNLA published advertisements in local languages in Newspapers in the three British colonies highlighting the higher wages and good treatment that migrant workers would enjoy if

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[24] NAZ S1561/4 Minutes of Proceedings of a Meeting of the Standing Committee held in Salisbury, 3-4 December 1937.

they went to South Africa.[25] Apart from WNLA advertisements, migrants returning from the Transvaal spread the news about the money, food, free cinema and nice clothes that South Africa had to offer. Because of that, African workers from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland went to Southern Rhodesia prepared to proceed across the Limpopo River at the slightest available opportunity.[26]

The prevalence of illegal recruiting, Sothern Rhodesia's lack of capacity to effectively police the colonial boundary as well as South Africa's reluctance to regulate entry of migrants from north of the Limpopo, worked against the Tripartite Coalition. As one police officer observed in 1938, some migrants from Northern Rhodesia took less than one week in Southern Rhodesia. They simply checked in with the local N.A.D officials in order to obtain work permits, which allowed them to travel to any part of the colony in search of employment. Once in possession of such permits, most of them went straight to Gwanda, Beitbridge or any of the southern districts where they enlisted with several recruiters who helped them to cross the border into the Transvaal. Some of them destroyed work permits when they got to Beitbridge where they presented their Northern Rhodesian or Nyasaland passports as if they traveled on their own from their home territories. Southern Rhodesian authorities did not have the power to obstruct their movement since they were in possession of legal travel documents of their home countries. Although section 1 of Southern Rhodesia's Native Pass Amendment Ordinance

[25] NAZ S1561/5 Migrant Labour: Recruitment of Natives in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, 1938-1939.

[26] NAZ S1226 B. E. Bulstrode, Cpl. B.S.A.P, Beitbridge, to Chief Superintendent B.S.AP, 11 October, 1938.

5 of 1914 encouraged foreigners passing through the colony to obtain passes, failure to do so did not lead to arrest.[27]

That the governments of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland signed separate agreements with the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, which allowed the WNLA recruiting permissions in those two territories also weakened the 1936 Tripartite Agreement. By 1938, the WNLA had established "a string of [recruiting] stations in Malawi from the top to the bottom of the country."[28] This was in addition to the outposts that the WNLA put up in Northern Rhodesia, Bechuanaland, South West Africa (Namibia), and as far north as Tanganyika (Tanzania). Although by that time the Transvaal Chamber of Mines had not obtained permission to establish recruiting stations in Southern Rhodesia, putting WNLA camps in the border zone on the South African and Bechuanaland sides was enough to lure people from that colony to enlist with the mining industry's agents. People who wanted to work in the South African mines had only to cross the colonial borders and present themselves at various WNLA camps. To improve its recruiting machinery, the Transvaal Chamber of Mines also developed a regional air and road transport network linking WNLA's various outposts. Northern Bechuanaland became a strategic base of this regional network specifically meant to tap into the previously out-of-reach territories.[29]

Due to lack of capacity, Southern Rhodesia and its northern partners could not effectively enforce the 1936 Tripartite Agreement. As such, many a migrant from Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia who obtained passports and assistance with transport

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[27] *Ibid.*

[28] V. L. Allen, *The History of Black Mineworkers in South Africa, vol.1: The Techniques of Resistance, 1871-1948* (West Yorkshire: The Moore Press, 1992): 232.

[29] Paton, *Labour Export Policy in the Development of Southern Africa.*

to get into Southern Rhodesia eventually found their way into South Africa. In this way, both Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, which hoped to benefit from labor export fees and taxes, as well as Southern Rhodesia, which subsidized the importation of migrants from the north, lost out to South Africa, which was not officially included in the agreement. By 1938, Southern Rhodesian officials estimated that about 34,000 Africans were leaving the colony for South Africa without following official channels.[30] Despite the three British colonies' effort to control illegal migration under the auspices of the Tripartite Agreement, the practice continued with the assistance of both the Transvaal Chamber of Mines and the South African administration. Southern Rhodesian authorities' efforts to encourage their South African counterparts to stop, or at least discourage the inflow of unauthorized migrants from north of the Limpopo had failed.

The Resilience of Illegal Migration

In 1944, Southern Rhodesia's Border Patrol Unit produced a map showing the major routes, which illegal migrants followed from various parts of the Zimbabwean plateau to South Africa. As the map below shows, migrants either crossed at the border-post or through several unlawful crossing points on the eastern and western sides of the bridge.

[30] *Ibid.*

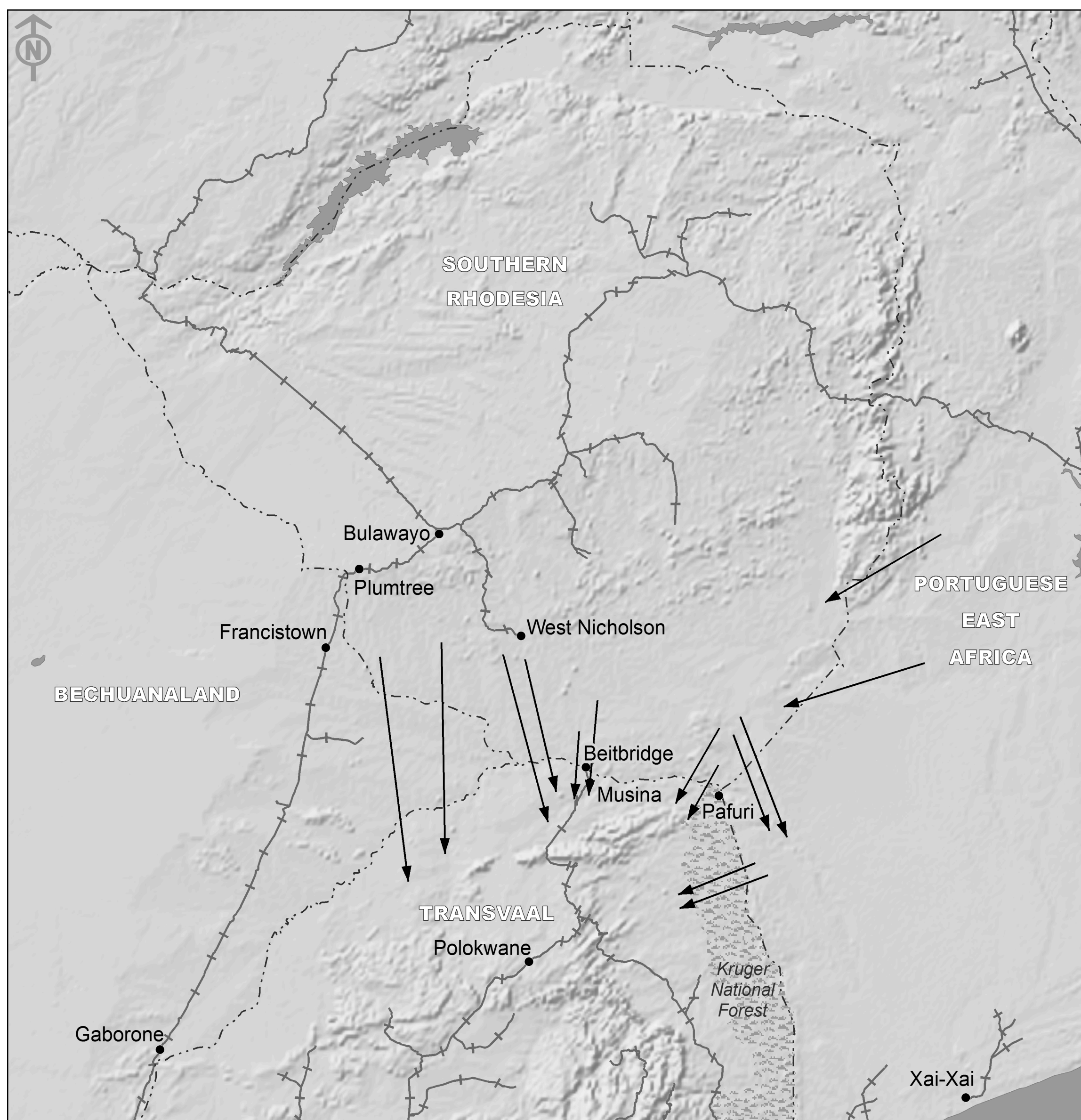

Fig 6. Illegal migrants' routes, mid-1940s. Map prepared by Jeff Levy

While explaining how people traveled from Rukange village (east of Beitbridge town) to South Africa after the construction of the bridge and the erection of the border-post, L. Mbedzi said, "nobody really cared about the bridge. People just walked to the river and crossed. They knew the places to avoid for fear of crocodiles and other wild

animals."[31] This suggests that the construction of the border-post did not have much influence on cross-Limpopo mobility patterns. Indeed, many residents of Beitbridge district, especially those far from town, claim that they found it more convenient to continue crossing the Limpopo at various unofficial points they had used before the construction of the bridge. Lack of public transport made it illogical for people to walk for long distances to the bridge where they had an added burden of facing the police and immigration officials. Migrants generally preferred to have nothing to do with the border-post. As such, most of them continued to use alternative routes, which had emerged over the years since the late nineteenth century.

Correspondences between the B.S.A.P and other departments in Southern Rhodesia indicate that, despite the construction of the bridge migrants could cross the Limpopo River almost anywhere during the larger part of the year. There was very little incentive, if any, for unlawful travelers to pass through the border-post. In November 1935, one police officer wrote that "at this point of the year the Limpopo River is very dry and can be crossed anywhere."[32] Two years later, another police officer repeated the same point, saying "between 200 and 300 natives cross the border monthly in the vicinity of Main Drift, on the Limpopo River about 15 miles east of Beitbridge," adding that some crossed the border "between Beitbridge and Tuli and between the confluence of the Bubye and Limpopo Rivers and Main drift, and, as is well known, many others proceed via Pafuri."[33] Later, in 1942, Sergeant Harries wrote that "these natives travel by divers' routes and do not keep to roads or paths and when encountered by a patrol only one or

[31] L. Mbedzi, interview with author, Rukange Village, Beitbridge 29 May 2010.

[32] NAZ S1226 Detective Sergeant C. Stephenson, Beitbridge Immigration Department to Chief Immigration Officer, Bulawayo, 29 November 1935.

[33] *Ibid.* Chief Superintendent CID Bulawayo, to the Staff Officer BSAP, 11 October, 1937.

two are arrested, the others make good their escape and cross the border. The route taken is continually changed and in this vast expanse of country gives the emigrant every chance of getting through."[34]

The Bechuanaland route, which emerged in the 1920s, continued to be a viable option for migrants avoiding the Beitbridge border-post. Many migrants who chose this route traveled on foot across the Shashe River to Bonowe (Bobonong), an African village in Bechuanaland, where there was a store for them to replenish their food supplies. From there, they proceeded to Johannesburg.[35] Others received assistance from individuals such as Mahomed Ismael Lehar, an Indian businessman, who the police arrested in 1939 for transporting unauthorized migrants between Bulawayo and the Bechuanaland border.[36] The Bechuanaland Police Department later confirmed that there was "a regular route via the Bobonong area leading to the Transvaal Border which natives from Southern Rhodesia [we]re in the habit of taking."[37] Unlike on the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa boundary where a border-post had emerged, there was virtually no control at the boundary between Southern Rhodesia and Bechuanaland, making it easy for people to cross.

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[34] *Ibid.* Sergeant Harries BSAP Kezi to the Assistant Commissioner BSAP, Bulawayo, 10 July 1942.

[35] *Ibid.* Chief Superintendent CID to the Commissioner BSAP, 24 October 1939.

[36] *Ibid.* A Summary of a Court Trial: Rex vs Mahomed Ismael Lehar- Bulawayo Town C.R.276.4.39. The police arrested Lehar on 6 April 1939 after discovering a lorry carrying 23 African passengers at his house in Bulawayo. According to the summary of Lehar's court trial, the 23 Africans made statements to the effect that the accused was taking them to Francistown where they would work or proceed to Johannesburg. As none of the concerned travelers possessed passes to leave the territory, the court charged Lehar of contravening Southern Rhodesia's Native Labor Regulations Amendment Act of 1938.

[37] *Ibid.* Officer Commanding Palapye, Bechuanaland Protectorate Police, to Chief Superintendent CID, BSAP, Bulawayo, 7 November 1939.

A similar pattern continued along the eastern side of Beitbridge where, as we saw in the preceding chapters, migrants from Southern Rhodesia crossed into Portuguese East Africa, changed names and presented themselves to the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (W.N.L.A.) recruiters as Portuguese natives. A report by an African Detective working in the Chipinga area in 1944, provided more details of the routes, which unauthorized travelers along Southern Rhodesia's eastern districts followed to get to South Africa. People approaching South Africa from the eastern side of Beitbridge town often passed-by Mahambayedwa Store at the junction of Sabi and Lundi Rivers. From Mahambayedwa they proceeded to Pafuri Camp in the Makuleke area where several recruiters had established themselves since the late nineteenth century. In some cases, migrants passed through Hippo Mine into Zaka district before crossing the Lundi River into Nuanetsi district, where they joined other paths from Marumbeni and Sabi. From Nuanetsi they would then pass through Tshikombedzi into Messina.[38] As with the Bechuanaland route, migrants from different parts of the colony took advantage of the fact that authorities did no restrict passes to go to Chipinga. However, as one former migrant recounted, it was a tall order trying to access South Africa from the eastern part of Southern Rhodesia. That route was not just too long, but there were too many competing recruiters in the eastern frontier, from Chipinga down to Pafuri.[39]

Whereas some migrants crossed the Limpopo through unofficial points to the east and west of the border-post, others chose to bite the bullet, as it were, by crossing at the bridge without following official procedures. Within two years of the opening of the

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[38] *Ibid.* Report by Native Detective Mosi Regarding Clandestine Migration of Natives to the Union, 13 December 1944.

[39] *Ibid.* "Clandestine Migration of Natives to the Union: Spraggon Route- Report by Native Biyasi, 4 December 1944.

bridge, officials at the border-post began receiving large numbers of people seeking permission to enter South Africa without the necessary travel documents. Although officials in Beitbridge would always refuse entry to people without passes and warn them against proceeding, many of them would not go back. Instead, they waited and crossed the bridge "under the cover of darkness."[40] In November 1935, the Rhodesian police reported that the numbers of Africans crossing at the Beitbridge border-post without proper documentation had "increased considerably."[41] In 1937, the Native Commissioner for Gwanda also reported that about ten vehicles, which moved people daily between Beitbridge and Messina were usually full at night.[42]

As the Chief Superintendent of Police in Bulawayo noted, despite the police guarding the bridge and border gates twenty-four hours a day, it was possible for illegal migrants to slip through. He observed that direct contact with the Union guards at the bridge could be avoided because the guards "consist[ed] of members of the Emergency Services Pioneer Corps, men above military age who have had no police training. They protect[ed] the Bridge against sabotage but do not normally interfere with traffic or pedestrians."[43] In one incident, a police officer on duty at the border-post on 13 January 1939 reported that he saw a group of about five Africans trying to cross the bridge at 5.00pm. As the police officer noted, one member of the group was an African he knew to be an employee at Beitbridge Hotel. When the police officer intercepted them, they told him that they had just come to have a look at the bridge. The hotel employee informed

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[40] *Ibid.* M.H. Jordan, Immigration Officer, Beitbridge, to Chief Immigration Officer, Bulawayo, 16 July 1931.

[41] *Ibid.* CID Bulawayo to Chief Superintendent BSAP, 29 November 1935.

[42] *Ibid.* Native Commissioner Gwanda to Chief Native Commissioner, 24 June 1937.

[43] *Ibid.* Chief Superintendent of Police, Bulawayo to the Staff Officer to the Inspector General BSAP, 25 April 1941.

the police officer he “was just accompanying these natives for a walk to the Union Customs across the Bridge.”[44]

That police report is important in that it shows how some people got away with illegal activities at the border-post. It is likely that the police officer naively believed that since the visitors were in the company of somebody he knew as a resident and worker in Beitbridge, they were genuine tourists admiring the architectural make up of the Alfred Beit Bridge at 5.00pm. However, the hotel employee’s account of the same incident sheds more light on what actually happened on this particular day. He reported thus, “on Friday 13/1/39 in the Native Compound at Beitbridge I met a brother native of the same tribe as myself from Nyasaland. I do not know his name or anything about him, he was with three other natives, two alien natives and one indigenous, I could tell by their talk,” proceeding, “all these four arrived at Beitbridge that day on native Kamba’s Road Services Lorry and they were staying at Kamba’s hut in the compound. I met them at about 4pm and the four of us went for a stroll across the Beitbridge to the Union Customs about 5pm.”[45] The four reportedly told the hotel employee “they were going to cross into the Transvaal that night.”[46]

The group met with a police officer who stopped them and asked to see their Registration Certificates and passes when they were crossing into the Transvaal. As the hotel employee reported, the police officer “then detained the indigenous native I was with and took him to the Police Camp with him. The other three natives then returned to Kamba’s hut in the compound, I walked back there with them. They stated that they were

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[44] *Ibid.* BSAP Investigation Diary on Alleged Illegal Recruiting of Natives, January 1939.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid.*

going to wait there for their friend who had just been detained as they were all going to cross into the Transvaal that night…. I left these three natives about 5.30pm at Kamba's hut in the compound and I have not seen them since."[47] As this incident shows, illegal migrants sometimes worked in liaison with border inhabitants such as the hotel employee and Kamba who probably had information about the security system at the border-post. Having a place such as Kamba's house in Beitbridge was also an important part of the equation. It provided travelers with a place to rest and hide from border officials while waiting to cross the border when it was most convenient to do so—under the cover of darkness.

Sometimes travelers forced themselves through the border-post. For instance, the B.S.A.P's monthly intelligence summaries reported of a violent incident, which took place on 19 March 1943. The police report indicates that a group of migrants from Southern Rhodesia approached the police on night duty at the northern end of the Beitbridge. In total disregard of the police order for them to stop, the migrants ran across the bridge, prompting the officer to fire some shots in the air. The report further points out that when the guard on the southern end, "having been warned by the rifle shots and by whistle, endeavoured to stop the natives; he was attacked and although blows from knobkerries were aimed at him, managed to ward most of them off by means of his rifle," adding, "the majority of the natives succeeded in getting through to the Transvaal. One native was trapped on the bridge between guards. He rushed the European guard on the north end, but after a struggle was over-powered."[48] Through such acts of violence,

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[47] *Ibid.*

[48] *Ibid.* BSAP Monthly Intelligence Summary: Bulawayo District, March 1943.

migrants took the situation into their own hands to ensure they crossed the Limpopo River at the border-post despite possessing no required documents.

In some cases, travelers passed through the border-post after presenting residence permits and employment documents they fraudulently obtained from friends and relatives already working in South Africa. As the B.S.A.P's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) noted in 1937, there were several cases where natives returning from South Africa were "found in unlawful possession of others' Registration Certificates."[49] While some travelers might have used other people's identity documents to travel to South Africa, others had such documents mailed to them so that they could obtain "work permits" in South Africa, on behalf of people back in Southern Rhodesia. They would then hand over both the work permits and stamped Registration Certificates to a prospective migrant when they returned home for holidays or at the end of their contracts in South Africa. Being in possession of documents, which showed that one was already employed and/or living in South Africa was a major starting point in obtaining permission to leave Southern Rhodesia. A prospective emigrant would then present these documents to the N.A.D officials to get a permit to leave Southern Rhodesia. Alternatively, one would by-pass the N.A.D, present the South African papers to the Railway officials to obtain a train ticket, which would facilitate a hassle-free crossing of the border. Southern Rhodesia's policy pronouncements, which stated that authorities would only give passes to people with special permits from South Africa might have encouraged this behavior.

Letters, which some people in Southern Rhodesia wrote to migrants in South Africa, provide more details on how these networks of illegality worked. In June 1942,

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[49] *Ibid.* H. W. Clemow, Chief Superintendent, CID to the Staff Officer, BSAP, 24 November 1937.

the B.S.A.P intercepted some letters, which African workers at the Premier Portland Cement (in Bulawayo), wrote to relatives and friends in South Africa. In a letter to Chimota Manda of P.P. Rust Mine in Rustenburg, one writer pleaded thus, "send me money as soon as possible please father, when you send money… send me also a leave pass; you can take all particulars of mine from my old tax receipt of £1.0.0 tax. When receiving my letter please send the above mentioned pass very urgent."[50] Another letter read, "I need no money from you but I only want your leave pass thus all. Send it to me as soon as possible please…. When you get it please go to the Compound Manager's Office and stamp it and put inside envelope. I have failed to take train because of having no pass."[51]

Emphasizing the urgency with which these "deals" had to be executed, a third letter writer stated, "I am writing the second letter but story is still just the same. Please try to help me very quick; send your leave pass that which you had given to Loisi Nkwazi; then when you send a pass send also a passport and the pass of this month which you are walking with there, so I can go with it at the office," proceeding, "I am enclosing herewith my train ticket for Mafeking, who did bought it for me is another man from Nyasaland who had his pass from Nyasaland and leave pass. He is there in U.S.A [Union of South Africa] that's why I am sending my train ticket so that you see yourself."[52] The writer continued by pleading, "look here brother, when you send me pass send also my

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[50] *Ibid.* These letters were included in several correspondences between the Civil Security Officer Southern Rhodesia and the Provincial Native Commissioner, Bulawayo, 12 June 1942.

[51] *Ibid.* From Wazelu Mbove to Senter Mbove, 1942.

[52] *Ibid.* From Isaac Mkolongo Mhuka to Bible Nkwazi.

train ticket. I have send this to make you quick posting the passes, please make haste when the time still, it may be finished please."[53]

Responding to the demand for travelling documents, some enterprising Africans actually sold fake and fraudulently obtained passes to people who wanted to leave Southern Rhodesia for South Africa. On 4 February 1942, the Bulawayo Magistrates' Court convicted Mutawale after he pleaded guilty of selling passes to three migrants from Nyasaland. In pronouncing its judgment, the court said Mutawale, a messenger in the N.A.D "committed the crime of fraud by wrongfully and unlawfully, falsely and fraudulently giving out or pretending to Josamu Mwale, a Nyasaland native who wished to proceed from Bulawayo … to the Union of South Africa, that he could supply the said Josamu Mwale with a pass which would enable him to leave the colony."[54] During the trial proceedings, the court heard that Mutawale received a total of 30 shillings from Josamu Mwale, Mohela Banda and Nambalawani Mbewa and gave out passes he knew would not enable them to enter South Africa. The court sentenced Mutawale to eighteen weeks Imprisonment with Hard Labor. In a similar case, the Bulawayo Magistrates' Court found Noel Janitarie guilty of selling three sets of passes to Rhodesian natives to enable them to live and work in Johannesburg. The Magistrate, L. Thorp fined Janitarie £10 or two months imprisonment with hard labor.[55] The selling of passes was not confined to Bulawayo, which was the major departure point for railways destined for South Africa. The same practice took place south of the border where, in 1951, the

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] *Ibid.* Rex vs Mutawale alias Alick Native Affairs Department Messenger: Trial in the Court of Magistrate for the District of Bulawayo, 17 March 1942.

[55] "Fined for Selling Passes." In *Bulawayo Chronicle,* 14 January 1944.

Johannesburg police arrested a migrant from Southern Rhodesia, on allegations that "he was supplying passes to Rhodesian natives at £8 per pass."[56]

In addition to those who bought fake passes and used other people's Registration Certificates to obtain travel documents to cross the Limpopo at the border-post, some male travelers resorted to buying tickets reserved for women. Apparently, when Southern Rhodesian authorities realized the fraudulent activities surrounding the acquisition of passes to leave the colony, they instructed Railway ticketing officials to scrutinize male passes presented when travelers purchased train tickets to South Africa. Since female buyers were not subject to the same level of scrutiny, some male travelers tasked their female acquaintances to buy the tickets, which would be marked on the reverse side. To avoid arrest for using tickets reserved for women, such migrants would disembark when the trains stopped at the Plumtree siding where the police would examine all passengers' tickets.[57] From Plumtree, migrants would walk into Bechuanaland and then proceed to South Africa when the situation allowed them to.

The construction of Beit Bridge added another dimension to illegal movements across the Limpopo River in that it allowed motorized vehicles to cross the border much more easily than before. Drivers of private vehicles covertly and overtly participated in the networks that helped illegal migrants to move from Southern Rhodesia to South Africa. In November 1935, J. Bazeley of the Matabeleland Agricultural Union reported that there were vehicles, which periodically left Bulawayo for Beitbridge loaded with

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[56] NAZ S1226 Chief Inspector District Commandant, Johannesburg to the Officer Commanding CID, BSAP, Southern Rhodesia, 26 February 1951.

[57] *Ibid.* Detective Sergeant CID Bulawayo to Detective Inspector in Charge CID Bulawayo, 18 March 1944. See also a letter from the South African Railway Guards at Mafeking to System Manager, Kimberley, 10 November 1944, in the same file.

migrants. When they got near the border-post, the drivers would drop off their passengers to allow them to cross through the bush and then pick them up and hand them over to contractors on the other side of the bridge.[58] In December the same year, the Chief Superintendent of Police in Bulawayo pointed out that unauthorized travelers were boarding motor lorries from Bulawayo to Legion Mine, from which they would then proceed "through the veldt in a South Easterly direction, crossing the Shashi and Limpopo Rivers, and make for Bandolier Kop, south of Louis Trichardt," adding that "large numbers of natives have used this route."[59]

Drivers of Railway Motor Services (R.M.S.) vehicles carrying different kinds of goods between West Nicholson and Beitbridge also carried unauthorized travelers to the border area. In addition to the R.M.S vehicles, a European resident of Beitbridge town, used his lorry to transport migrants from Kezi to Beitbridge, while another man called Johnson transported people from Filabusi to the border town. To avoid arrest by the police in Beitbridge, transport providers dropped passengers a mile or so north of the border-post to allow them to proceed through the veldt and evade the authorities at the border-post.[60] In addition to those plying the Bulawayo-Beitbridge route, other vehicles operated in the eastern side of the border, from Chipinga District to the junction of the Sabi and Lundi Rivers where they linked up with cars going to South Africa. At times the police would arrest both the drivers and travelers, but the authorities admitted that illegal cross-border mobility could not be "completely- or anywhere near completely- stopped,"

[58] "Labour Smuggled Over the Border" *Bulawayo Chronicle*, 29 November 1935.

[59] NAZ S1226 Chief Superintendent CID Bulawayo, to the Staff Officer BSAP, 10 December 1935.

[60] *Ibid.* Trooper L.L.A. Seward, BSAP West Nicholson to the Chief Superintendent CID, Bulawayo, 2 December 1935.

because the "emigrants regard[ed] police interference as a nuisance but no means an insurmountable obstacle."[61]

In some cases, illegal migrants utilized more sophisticated networks to get to South Africa. For example, police investigations in 1935 and in 1939 revealed that migrants who arrived at Gwanda on the train from Bulawayo obtained chits from the Station Master and proceeded to the Jessie Mine Store under the guidance of an African who knew the place very well. When they got to the Jessie Mine Store, a European storekeeper, Jacob Sacks, gave free food to those who presented their chits. Turner (a European resident of Beitbridge) then used his car to transport emigrants from the Jessie Mine Store to the border town where they crossed through various bush paths. In another report, the police stated that an African woman called Nonia (also known as Mary Gamble) used her car to carry migrants from West Nicholson to Beitbridge. Upon crossing the border, Nonia's daughter would transport them to different employers in the Messina area.[62]

In addition to travelers who obtained train tickets fraudulently, others traveled on trains without tickets. This was common with goods trains where travelers would sometimes jump onto open wagons while the trains were in motion. They would then jump off the wagons when the police stopped the trains for routine checks or when they got near or over the border so they could proceed to certain places in South Africa. This undoubtedly risky practice cost some lives. For instance, on 15 July 1944, a group of

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[61] *Ibid.* H. G. Seward, Chief Superintendent, Divisional Criminal Investigation Officer, Salisbury to the Inspector General, BSAP Bulawayo 2 December 1944.

[62] *Ibid.* Trooper L.L.A. Seward, BSAP West Nicholson to Chief Superintendent CID Bulawayo, 2 December 1935; See also Detective Sergeant Elliot CID Bulawayo to Chief Superintendent CID Bulawayo, 30 November 1939; Statement by Austin Makawa Regarding Illegal Emigration of Natives, 21 March 1939.

migrants jumped off a South Africa-bound train at Coldridge Siding, leading to the death of Paul Makoni. The B.S.A.P investigations, which followed the death of Makoni, revealed that un-ticketed travelers from Bulawayo often avoided the police at the Plumtree station by leaving the train at Coldridge and proceeding to the border on foot. However, on the day in question, the concerned train did not stop at Coldridge, prompting Makoni and, a number of other migrants, to jump off while it was in motion. Searches conducted on his body showed that Makoni did not possess a train ticket.[63]

Some train drivers, especially those working for the South African Railways (S.A.R) plying the Bulawayo to Mafeking route, actually facilitated this illicit practice. As the Southern Rhodesian Chief Immigration Officer observed in 1941, the train drivers hid their passengers in "a goods truck, the caboose or the guards van, or even the engine, according to the necessities of the situation."[64] Sometimes train drivers would disguise their illegal passengers as servants of the train crew. A traveler would get on board in Bulawayo just before the train departed and then travel, ostensibly as a personal employee of one of the running staff, only to part ways with his "employer" as soon as the train reached Mafeking. Police investigations into this practice revealed that in some cases train drivers would give aprons to their passengers and disguise them as caboose servants to partake on these journeys. On some trains, the engine drivers instructed relief guards to sit on the caboose platforms when the train stopped at police search points. The

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[63] *Ibid.* Captain Harrison, Divisional Criminal Investigation Officer, CID Bulawayo to Sub-Inspector in Charge, BSAP Plumtree, 31 July 1944. This practice was quite common in Beitbridge at the time I conducted my field-work in the border region in 2010. Unauthorized travelers often jumped onto open wagons of goods trains when the trains approached the border-post and tended to slow down their speed. Once on the train, they would cover themselves with whatever that may be carried on the wagons until the train crossed the border when they would jump off at the next convenient place.

[64] *Ibid.* Major H. W. Clemow, Chief Immigration Officer, Bulawayo to the Commissioner for Immigration and Asiatic Affairs, Pretoria, 12 November 1941.

guards would then chase away the African Constables who usually performed the searches telling them that they could not search the caboose without a warrant. In other cases, the train guards asked travelers to purchase tickets for Plumtree, where the passenger would disembark and re-join the train immediately after the police finished their routine inspections.[65]

In Defense of Illegal Migration

Convinced that nothing short of a regional approach would stop unauthorized migration to South Africa, Southern Rhodesian authorities, initiated another round of talks with the Union authorities. In negotiating with the South African government on behalf of the Tripartite Coalition, Southern Rhodesian authorities hoped that the four states would develop a joint mechanism of controlling labor migration in the region, and possibly bring an end to illegal migration. After a series of negotiations in which South African authorities and representatives of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines used threats to extract concessions from Southern Rhodesian authorities, a four-some agreement was reached in 1939. Realizing that they were losing labor to South Africa through unaccountable means, Southern Rhodesian officials agreed to the Transvaal Chamber of Mines' request to establish a regional headquarters for WNLA in Salisbury. Through the same agreement, Southern Rhodesian authorities recognized the WNLA's right to establish depots, camps, outposts and roads in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. In turn, South African authorities re-assured their counterparts that the WNLA would only

[65] *Ibid.* Detective Sergeant K. D. Leaver, CID Bulawayo to Assistant Commissioner CID Bulawayo, 29 March 1944.

engage people with permits issued for that purpose by officials in the other three colonies.[66]

When it emerged that unauthorized migrants continued to flow from the northern territories into South Africa, representatives of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland met in March 1940 to review the terms of the 1939 Agreement with South Africa. Operating under the banner of the Inter-territorial Council of Central Africa, the three states agreed to meet with the South African administration to remind them of their country's obligation to control the influx of unauthorized migrants from north of the Limpopo River. In a move, which showed that South Africa was not willing to cooperate with the other states, South African authorities turned down the request for a proposed meeting.[67] They maintained that it was Southern Rhodesia's responsibility to discourage illegal crossing of the colonial boundary. The Pretoria administration's snub of the proposed conference in 1940 must have come as a hard blow to Southern Rhodesia whose demands for labor were on the increase. In addition to the expansion of agricultural production, the British government invested large amounts of capital in Southern Rhodesia at the height of the World War II, particularly in the manufacturing sector. To meet the rising demand for labor, Southern Rhodesian authorities initiated further engagements with their counterparts in South Africa, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

In 1943, representatives of the four territories held what came to be known as the African Manpower Conference in a bid to find a lasting solution to the problem of illegal

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[66] Crush, Jeeves, and Yudelman, *South Africa's Labor Empire: A History of Black Migrancy to the Gold Mines*.

[67] *Ibid.*

migration from north of the Limpopo River to South Africa. The 1943 Conference came up with four major resolutions. The first was that the northern states were going to tighten their railway transport systems to make sure that itinerant Africans respected Pass Laws, especially in Southern Rhodesia. Secondly, the four governments agreed that if Southern Rhodesian authorities stopped issuing passes for South Africa that would make it difficult for northern migrants to travel across the Limpopo boundary. It was also agreed that the prosecution of illegal recruiters who operated mostly in the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa border zone would help to reduce cases of unauthorized migration in the sub-region. Finally, the Conference resolved that Southern Rhodesia should charge duty on all taxable goods brought into the colony by Africans returning from South Africa, both locals and those en route to Northern Rhodesia and/or Nyasaland.[68] Despite the fact that all the resolutions were not particularly new, South Africa remained uncommitted to cooperating with Southern Rhodesia on the management of their common border. Because of that, the 1943 agreement, as was the case with the previous ones, did not achieve intended objectives.

With Southern Rhodesian authorities piling pressure on government representatives of the other three territories, another round of talks took place in 1947. At that time, labor demands in Southern Rhodesia had reached an all-time high due to the economic boom triggered by the World War II investments into both agriculture and manufacturing. Also, authorities in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were increasingly concerned about the criminal activities associated with illegal recruiting in the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa border zone. Due to South Africa's unwillingness to commit to an

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[68] Paton, *Labour Export Policy in the Development of Southern Africa.*

arrangement that would make it difficult for illegal migrants to cross the Limpopo, two conferences held in 1947 failed to produce any meaningful agreement among the four colonies. When another conference was called for in December 1947, the South African representatives pointed out that the Pretoria administration would only agree to detaining illegal migrants from north of the Limpopo River, on condition that the 1936 Tripartite Agreement's provision for Southern Rhodesia's preferential access to migrant workers from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland be revoked.[69]

The other three colonies, especially Southern Rhodesia, preferred a situation where each of the governments undertook to ensure that no migrant would find work without possessing the necessary papers from his country of origin. The Inter-territorial Council of Central Africa met and came up with five major proposals regarding illegal migration in the region. The first was that if South African employers engaged illegal migrants their employment should be for limited periods of time. Secondly, they proposed that South African authorities should conduct regular inspections of places of employment and prosecute both employers and employees who breached the provisions relating to possession of migration permits. The third concern was that South African employers should take necessary steps to improve the conditions of service of legal migrants, especially in regard to housing, food, hours and conditions of work. In the fourth place, the Council submitted that no deductions should be made from the pay of legal migrants for the cost of their transportation to the place of employment. Finally, they requested South African authorities to repatriate all legal migrants who completed three consecutive contracts of 180 days each within twenty-seven months, to the

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[69] *Ibid.*

Southern Rhodesian border.[70] Had South African authorities agreed to these measures that would have removed incentives for illegal migration in the region. More importantly, Southern Rhodesia would have come out as the major beneficiary of the labor deal.

However, South Africa, which benefitted immensely from the flow of unlawful migrants from north of the Limpopo, did not agree with the Inter-territorial Council of Central Africa' proposals. This compelled Southern Rhodesia and its northern neigbhors to accept a watered down Memorandum of Understanding between the governments of the four countries hoping that a more favorable arrangement would be worked out in the future. As the minutes of the 2-3 December 1947 meeting state, the representatives of the northern territories "realised the difficulties of the Union Government in the matter, and fully appreciated that Government's willingness to arrive at a satisfactory solution to the common problem."[71] South African officials managed to convince their counterparts from the other territories that it was practically and politically impossible to come up with a solution to the problem of illegal migration in the region. Ultimately, the four governments agreed that instead of seeking to stop completely the flow of unauthorized migration to South Africa, they could put in place measures to regulate labor movements in the sub-region.

At the end of the December 1947 meeting, Southern Rhodesia officials agreed to the "concept of increasing control through non-obstructive legalization of cross-border flows," an idea that South African authorities proposed.[72] In so doing, Southern

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[70] NAZ S1226 Central African Council: Minutes of a Meeting Between Representatives of the Governments of the Union of South Africa and the Governments of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, held in Salisbury on the 2nd and 3rd December 1947.

[71] *Ibid.*

[72] Paton, *Labour Export Policy in the Development of Southern Africa.*

Rhodesian authorities reasoned that the agreement, though it might be less effective than they wanted it to be, should at least deter illegal emigration to South Africa. They might have naively thought that they were getting one half of the loaf, which was better than nothing at all. Unfortunately for them, the agreement did nothing to stop the flow of unauthorized migration to South Africa where workers continued to access work permits in obvious disregard of the 1947 Memorandum of Understanding. Although the northern territories came up with another set of proposals in April 1948, the election and change of government in South Africa hampered prospects for meaningful consideration of a regional migration management strategy. Until 1950, the Malan government of the National Party declined calls for meetings to discuss the issue of illegal migration on the Southern Rhodesia-South Africa border.

On 7 October 1950, representatives of Southern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia got together, again, and drafted another proposal for a regional labor deal. Realizing that it was not practical to stop labor emigration to South Africa, the three states toned down their demands. Among other things, they sought a deal under which each government would issue identity certificates valid for two years to adult male Africans applying to go to work in South Africa. They also wanted to establish, in South Africa, an organization to inspect the working conditions of their people and to represent their governments' interests. They expected South Africa "to discontinue the issue of permits to clandestine migrants and to take steps to prevent the employment of northern natives without permits," as well as "to arrange for safe travel of northern natives in possession of identity certificates both into and out of the Union through central transit

depots sited on or near the Union border."[73] They also expected South Africa to organize a "satisfactory" system of registration for migrants from Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland from the time of their entry into the Union, and to repatriate migrants after two years of residence and working south of the Limpopo. Determined to make the agreement work, representatives of the three countries proposed to set up inter-governmental Advisory Council to oversee the operation of the agreement. The proposed council would consist of equal members representing the northern territories and the Union of South Africa, and was to be headed by an independent chairman.[74] If adopted, such an agreement would have allowed each state to control the number of permits issued and to benefit from labor export through a deferred pay system which they also proposed.

However, as with previous attempts to reach an agreement, this arrangement did not materialize owing to South African authorities' unwillingness to give away the advantage, which their country enjoyed in the region. When delegates from the four states met, South African authorities maintained that they were not willing to see any agreement that would impede the "free" movement of labor in the region. They rejected the northern territories' proposal that South Africa should not accept workers coming from north of the Limpopo unless they possessed exit permits. The South African delegate, which composed of the country's High Commissioner, Director of Native Labor, Secretary of Native Affairs, the Commissioner of Immigration and representatives of the Chamber of Mines and the South African Agricultural Union, argued that

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[73] NAZ F146/12 Central African Proposals for a Migrant Labour Agreement with South Africa, 7 October 1950

[74] *Ibid.*

accepting such a proposal gave power to Southern Rhodesia "to limit as it liked the number of natives permitted to enter the Union."[75]

South African authorities believed that the proposal would make it difficult to access not only migrants from Southern Rhodesia, but also those from Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesian who, in most cases had to pass through Southern Rhodesia to enter the Union. In an attempt to protect the comparative advantage their country enjoyed as the most favored destination for migrant workers in the region, South African officials preferred a scenario where economic laws of supply and demand prevailed. They wanted the African people of the region to enjoy the freedom of choosing where to work, so they expected representatives of the other three countries to uphold that position. In line with this, the Secretary of South Africa's External Affairs Department told the governments of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland that they should not expect Pretoria to turn back migrant workers who walked hundreds of miles to get into South Africa.[76]

In further engagements between Southern Rhodesian and South African authorities from 1950 to 1952, the latter continued to resist attempts to enforce restrictive measures on cross-Limpopo migration. South African authorities persistently avoided any agreement that maintained travel restrictions on African workers in the entire region. From the early 1930s when they lifted the ban on migrants from north of the Limpopo River, successive governments of South Africa fought for African workers' freedom of movement in the region. In their struggle to retain the lion's share in terms of accessing regional labor supplies, South African authorities projected the WNLA as a champion of

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[75] NASA NTS 2246/603/280 Northern Governments' Delegation to Pretoria on Clandestine Emigration of Natives to the Union.

[76] Crush, Jeeves, and Yudelman, *South Africa's Labor Empire: A History of Black Migrancy to the Gold Mines*.

the free labor concept. In line with that, the Transvaal Chamber of Mines sent representatives to London to lobby the Colonial and Dominion offices to support South Africa's bid to have unrestricted access to African labor in the three British colonies of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Realizing that the imperial office was reluctant to grant such a free reign to W.N.L.A, the Johannesburg mining companies stepped up the fight by lobbying the International Labor Organization (I.L.O) in Geneva to allow the concept of free labor to prevail in Southern Africa.[77] I.L.O, as was the case with the British Colonial Office, did not support South Africa's request. As the next chapter illustrates, South Africa's position on labor migration shifted in the 1960s when the region's political economy changed drastically. From then until the first decade of the twenty-first century, South African authorities to took a leading role in fighting illegal migration from the Zimbabwean plateau and other areas north of the Limpopo River.

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[77] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FOUR

Migration Control as Defense Strategy

After years of being ambivalent about unlawful immigration, the 1960s witnessed a dramatic shift in South Africa's handling of migration from neighboring countries. Whereas previously, South African authorities sometimes paid a blind eye towards movements across the Limpopo River, by the mid-1970s, they had taken the lead in fighting illegal immigration from Rhodesia. To South African authorities, immigration from north of the Limpopo had ceased to be a mere reservoir of cheap labor. "Northern migrants," as authorities called them, had become a security threat to the apartheid regime, which devised several ways of blocking their entry into the country. By 1979, South African authorities had deployed armed security guards and planted sisals on sections of the country's boundary with Rhodesia, making it more difficult for people to cross the Limpopo River at undesignated points as they had done in the past. Indeed, the border and movements across it had assumed new meanings to state authorities on either side, but more so for the apartheid administration in South Africa.

Developments that took place on both sides of the border in the 1950s and 60s necessitated the shift in South Africa's approach to illegal migration across the Limpopo. In 1953, Southern Rhodesia merged with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland to form the Central African Federation. The emergence of the Federation, which relaxed the control of Africans' movement between the three British colonies to the north of the Limpopo River, gave Southern Rhodesia more leverage in terms of access to regional labor. During

the ten-year lifespan of the Federation, from 1953 to 1963, Southern Rhodesia enjoyed a labor surplus that led to the rise in unemployment among Africans in the colony. Consequently, state authorities and employers in Southern Rhodesia paid less attention to the movement of people across the Limpopo River. When the Federation collapsed in 1963, the number of "northern migrants" living and working in South Africa had significantly increased. The number of migrant workers from Southern Rhodesia alone had increased from 25,000 in 1950 to more than 75,000.[1]

In South Africa, the 1948 electoral victory of the National Party (N.P) ushered in wide-ranging socio-political engineering revolving around the consolidation of white supremacy. Although previous administrations used racial segregation and exploitation of non-white groups to stay in power, the N.P government went steps further by adopting apartheid as the official ideology of governance. In line with its policy of separate development the apartheid government deployed, among other laws, the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the 1951 Elimination of Squatting Act to forcibly relocate millions of Africans from "white" areas to "native reserves".[2] Forced removals and other programs that the apartheid administration introduced in the 1950s and 60s significantly contributed to South Africa's change of attitude towards migrants from north of the Limpopo River. The loss of productive lands destabilized black South Africans' sources livelihood, thereby pushing a lot of people to take up employment in sectors that they previously avoided. Although foreigners still constituted the majority of workers in South

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[1] Paton, *Labour Export Policy in the Development of Southern Africa.*

[2] Bill Freund, "Forced Resettlement and the Political economy of South Africa" In *Review of African political Economy,* 29, (1984): 49-63.

African mines and farms, the 1960s witnessed a surge in the number of locals who took up employment in those sectors.

If, as we discussed in preceding chapters, competition for labor prevented South African and Southern Rhodesian authorities from working together to stop illegal migration prior to the 1960s, changes in labor supply dynamics became an incentive for both countries to reconsider their approaches to cross-Limpopo migrations. Ultimately, they switched roles. After spending more than half a century lobbying their South African counterparts to block unauthorized travelers from north of the Limpopo, Southern Rhodesian authorities took a back seat in the fight against illegal migration. With the numbers of local Africans who took up employment in mines and farms on a more permanent basis increasing in the 1960s, South African authorities reviewed their policy on foreign migrant workers. It was in this context that the government appointed the Froneman Committee to examine the state of foreign labor in South Africa.[3] Although the Froneman Committee recommended for the expulsion of all foreign workers, the government decided against implementing the recommendation in full, fearing opposition from mine owners. However, South African authorities' perception of unregulated immigration from north of the Limpopo River had significantly changed.

Independence Struggles and Changing Dynamics of Border Control

Along with changes in the labor supply dynamics, both South Africa and Southern Rhodesia witnessed an intensification of African nationalist activities, which

[3] Ken Owen, *Foreign Africans: Summary of the Report of the Froneman Committee* (Johannesburg, 1965).

introduced new dimensions of cross-border movements in the 1960s. In a bid to preempt political opposition to its policies and to suppress anti-apartheid activities, the N.P government introduced the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950. Through this Act, the apartheid regime labeled African political activists "communist" in order to justify the use of force against them. In 1960, South African authorities invoked the Suppression of Communism Act to ban political organizations such as the Communist Party of South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC). The ban of these organizations, at the time when the struggle for independence had picked momentum in other areas of the continent, resulted in many people leaving the country to undergo military training in places such as China, Soviet Union, Algeria, Ethiopia, etc. The fear of infiltration by returning insurgency forces led South African authorities to take a pro-active approach in regulating movements of African people from neighboring countries.

To a large extent, the launch of the South African Republic in 1961 boosted government efforts to regulate movements of foreign migrants. Being paranoid about African nationalism and perceived terrorist threats, the Republic established migration control points along South Africa's borders with Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland after the attainment of independence in these countries. South African authorities also put in place measures to encourage employers to hire local Africans to reduce the numbers of foreign workers in the country. In 1967, the South African Parliament introduced the Terrorism Act, which authorities used to detain anti-apartheid activists for up-to ninety days without trial. By then, the staunchly anti-communist Republic leadership had conveniently identified unregulated inflow of Africans as the state's top security concern.

Foreign migrants had become a new kind of black peril, which apartheid regime referred to as “swart gevaar.”[4] In this respect, fears of infiltration by communists greatly influenced South Africa’s border control policies in the 1960s and 70s. The apartheid state became increasingly concerned with the immigration of black people more than that of any other racial group.

Around the same time that South Africa changed its position on illegal immigration, the political landscape in Southern Rhodesia was under-going a major transformation. Racial segregation, poor working conditions, forced removals and other forms of exploitation transformed Africans’ trade union activism to militant anti-colonial struggles. Organizations such as the Rhodesia Railways African Employees Association (RRAEA), the Federation of Bulawayo Africa Workers Union (FBAWU), the African Workers Voice Association (AWVA) and the Reformed Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union (RICWU), which played a leading role in the 1948 African workers’ “general strike,” gave way to those that focused on broader issues of governance. In 1957, Southern Rhodesia’s African National Congress merged with the City Youth League, which had emerged in 1955, to form the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC). Although the SRANC’s activities were concentrated in urban areas where a growing number of educated Africans joined its ranks and files, its formation marked the beginning of another phase in Africans’ struggle for independence in Southern Rhodesia.

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[4] For a further discussion of this concept see Jonathan Crush, “Migrations Past: An Historical Overview of Cross-border Movements in Southern Africa.” In *On Borders: Perspectives on International Migration in Southern Africa.* Edited by David A. McDonald, (Ontario: SAMP, 2000).

When Southern Rhodesian authorities deployed the Unlawful Organizations Act to ban the SRANC in 1959, Africans responded by forming the National Democratic Party (NDP) in January 1960.[5] The NDP took the anti-colonial struggle a step further by organizing a series of protests throughout the entire colony, demanding majority rule based on universal adult suffrage. When the colonists banned the NDP in December 1961, African nationalist immediately formed the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). Two years later, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) came into existence. The colonists' attempts to suffocate Africans' political activities by banning these organizations only helped to make Africans more determined to regain independence through military means. ZAPU and ZANU established military wings, the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) respectively, which planned and executed a full-scale war against white minority rule on the Zimbabwean plateau.

As was the case with the ANC and other African nationalist organizations in South Africa, ZAPU and ZANU sent out people to the Soviet Union, China, Algeria and other countries for military training.[6] This introduced a new group of cross-border travelers in Southern Africa. For generations, the region had known migrants as traders, workers or people visiting relatives across borders. The movement of people from one part of the region to another for the purpose of under-going military training was a completely new phenomenon. Such movements provoked a different kind of response from state authorities who characterized leaders of African liberation struggles as

[5] Maurice Nyagumbo, *With the People: An Autobiography from the Zimbabwe Struggle* (London: Allison and Busby, 1980).
[6] *Ibid.*

terrorists. In this context, security concerns became a key component of border enforcement and migration control strategies in the region.

Whereas previously, Southern Rhodesia's border control efforts focused on its boundary with South Africa, in the 1960s control of movements across the Zambezi River became more important to state authorities in that colony. The colonists also paid close attention to movements between the Southern Rhodesia and Botswana, and those across the Caprivi Strip, which barely featured in earlier efforts to control cross-border movements from the Zimbabwean plateau. They feared the inevitable cooperation between African liberation movements in Southern Rhodesia and those in other countries of the region, especially Northern Rhodesia. A letter that Southern Rhodesia's Secretary for Defense wrote to the colony's Prime Minister in 1963 shows the extent to which colonial officials feared infiltration by insurgency forces. "In view of the probabilities of traffic in arms and ammunition and explosives, and the illegal movement of persons for purposes of sabotage and subversion, we consider there should be some machinery for the better control of Southern Rhodesia's borders," wrote the Defense Secretary.[7] In the same letter, the Defense Secretary pointed out the need for close international cooperation between Southern Rhodesia and its neighbors.

Southern Rhodesia's Defense Joint Planning Staff carried out a study, which recommended that various departments involved in border security should work together to find ways of improving security in the colony's border zones. In June 1963, the Secretary of Defense, the Chief of General Staff, Chief of air Staff, Director of the Federal Intelligence Service Bureau (FIBS), Director of Civil Aviation and

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[7] NAZ F120/IMM/23/4 Secretary of Defense to the Prime Minister and External Affairs, 29 April 1963.

representatives from Ministries of Home Affairs and External Affairs met and suggested many ways of improving the colony's border control measures.[8] At that meeting, the Secretary for Defense spoke passionately about "the necessity for collecting all intelligence and information possible on border control, and the establishment of machinery for using the intelligence."[9] The same meeting noted that there were more than ten separate bodies (including the BSAP, Department of Immigration, Civil Aviation department, Customs department, Ministries of Home Affairs and External Affairs, etc) concerned with border control in the colony. Participants therefore recommended a mechanism to coordinate activities of various bodies in order to provide valuable intelligence and materials to support Southern Rhodesia's border control efforts. The meeting suggested the formation of a "Central Executive Body," which would take charge of the overall responsibility for border control with the objective of reducing illegal cross-border movements. Minutes of the meeting also show that participants recommended for the army to augment efforts of the BSAP in controlling cross-border mobility.

The Director of Civil Aviation raised concerns about the existence of private airfields in some parts of the colony, pointing out that such a situation compromised border control efforts. Given that Southern Rhodesia's radar coverage was quite limited, the Chief of Air Staff recommended that departments involved in border control should report all aircraft movements to a central intelligence body. He added that it was important for border control personnel to be supplied with the Federal aircraft registration

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[8] *Ibid.* Minutes of a Meeting held in the Federal Cabinet Room on 20th June 1963 to Discuss the Control of Southern Rhodesia's Borders.

[9] *Ibid.*

numbers so they would know if unauthorized aircrafts encroached into the colony's borders. The Ministry of Home Affairs officials made appeals for the training and deployment of more immigration control staff to man the colony's border posts. In a bid to reduce chances of armed assaults in the colony, the meeting recommended Southern Rhodesia to introduce a law requiring all persons bringing in firearms in the colony to register and obtain special permits. While participants noted that Southern Rhodesia's relations with the Portuguese colonial administration in Mozambique and the apartheid government of South Africa were cordial, they raised concerns about the imminent collapse of the Federation.[10] They feared that the end of Federation would make it hard for Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia to work together in controlling movements across the Zambezi River.

Unlike in the past when Southern Rhodesian authorities' concerns about Africans' mobility focused on emigration to South Africa, by 1963 they had also put in place measures to examine black people entering the colony. As minutes of the June 1963 meeting show, the colonists recommended tightening control of movements across the Zambezi River. In this respect, participants suggested the construction of a road running adjacent the river as well as "an all-weather airfield" in the Feira area.[11] The meeting also recommended for the establishment of border control posts at Kazungula, Tunduma, Victoria Falls, Binga, Kariba, Chirundu and Feira, along the colony's boundary with Northern Rhodesia. Southern Rhodesia's Army Patrol Reports for June 1963 also show a heavy concentration of military deployment on the colony's borders with Bechuanaland and Northern Rhodesia. The strategy was to keep regular and reliable surveillance of

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[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*

areas such as the confluence of the Zambezi and Kafue rivers at which people crossed the colony's northern borders.[12]

Within a year of the collapse of the Central African Federation, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland obtained independence as Zambia and Malawi, respectively. Soon after taking over power in Zambia, the Kenneth Kaunda administration began to actively support African liberation movements fighting against white settler administrations in Southern Rhodesia, South Africa and Mozambique. In so doing, the Zambian leader worked closely with other African leaders such as Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, who opened their territories as training grounds for liberation movements fighting colonialism and apartheid in the continent. Whereas this shift in the region's political economy provided more opportunities for African nationalist movements to openly support each other, it also strengthened cooperation between apartheid South Africa, Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa. A common desire to preserve white supremacy in Southern Africa drew minority rulers of these territories closer to each other, especially after Southern Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain in 1965. Border security became the main focus of cooperation between these three countries.

Barely a year after the first military encounter between the Rhodesian army and ZANLA forces took place in April 1966, ZAPU and ANC leaders, based in Zambia, devised a plan for joint military offensive in Rhodesia. Despite having successfully trained large numbers of cadres in exile the ANC military wing—Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) had found it difficult to smuggle fighters and weapons back into South Africa.

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[12] *Ibid.* "Operation Vista: Summary of Army Patrol Reports" June 1963.

Attempts to penetrate the country via Botswana failed because that country's African leadership was reluctant to support forces fighting their more powerful neighbor.[13] Infiltrating South Africa from Zambia via Mozambique had also proved to be an impossible task owing to the distance involved, and the cooperation between the apartheid administration and colonists in Mozambique. This left the MK with no option, but to try to get into South Africa via Rhodesia. It was in this context that in July 1967, the MK and ZIPRA strategists hatched a plan for a joint military operation in the Rhodesia-South Africa border zone. According to the plan, the MK/ZIPRA force was supposed to cross the Zambezi River into Rhodesia and travel southward along the border with Botswana until it reached the Rhodesia-South Africa border. At that point, the group would split, allowing the MK troops to cross the Limpopo River into northern South Africa.[14]

The MK/ZIPRA alliance did not achieve intended objectives due to poor planning on the part of the strategists as well as the alertness of Rhodesian army, which was already keeping regular patrols of the colony's border with Zambia. Although MK/ZIPRA troops crossed the Zambezi River into Rhodesia without encountering major difficulties, they exposed themselves to the Rhodesian army when they approached villagers in the Wankie (Hwange) area in search of food. When fighting broke out between the MK/ZIPRA forces and the Rhodesian army, the Vorster administration of South Africa dispatched a contingent of about 1,200 police and para-military forces to assist the Rhodesian army. The apartheid government also deployed about 20 military

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[13] Rendani M. Ralinala, et-al, "The Wankie and Spolilo Campaigns" In South African Democracy Education Trust, (eds) *The Road to Democracy in South Africa,* vol.1, 1960-1970 (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004).

[14] *Ibid.*

helicopters to augment small groups of border police that South Africa had kept in the Limpopo Valley since 1961.[15] South African administration supported the Rhodesian government not as a mere gesture of helping an ally under siege from perceived communist elements in the region, but as a strategy to prevent the war from spilling into its borders. As the Vorster regime announced, the military involvement in Rhodesia was meant to block "terrorists who originally came from South Africa and were on their way back to commit terrorism in South Africa."[16]

From 1967 onwards, the South African government stepped up surveillance of the border zone. In this context, the apartheid regime managed to repel further attempts by the PAC troops to enter the northern Transvaal through Mozambique in 1968. In what came to be known as the "Sibasa Operation", South Africa deployed a contingent of more than 5,000 soldiers and airmen, which swept through the entire stretch of the border zone from Botswana to Mozambique.[17] By 1969, South Africa had established five special "anti-terrorist" camps and had deployed 800 white and 300 non-white policemen to maintain regular patrols of the country's borders. South Africa's Defense Minister, P.W. Botha also sent senior army officers to meet with chiefs and other village leaders among African communities in the Limpopo border area to enlighten them about the war situation and what the government expected them to do.[18] As we shall discuss in detail later in this chapter, the presence of military personnel in the border zone changed the dynamics of cross-Limpopo mobility.

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[15] Timothy M. Bairstow, "Border Interdiction in Counterinsurgency: A Look at Algeria, Rhodesia and Iraq," (Masters Thesis, University of California, San Diego, 1995).

[16] Bernard Magubane, "Introduction to the 1970s: The Social and Political Context" In SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa vol.2, 1970-1980* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2007): 9.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid.*

In addition to deploying armed forces to patrol the border zone, the South African government traded openly and financially supported the sanction-strapped Rhodesian administration. Following the Smith administration's unilateral declaration of independence, the British government had cut off trading ties with the erstwhile regime. Britain also removed Rhodesia from the sterling zone and commonwealth preference system in addition to denying her "former" colony access to London's capital markets. Although the British government managed to convince the UN to internationalize sanctions against Rhodesia, South Africa refused to respect such a stance. Instead, the apartheid state offered investment finance, markets for Rhodesian products and clandestinely facilitated export and import exchanges between Rhodesia and other countries. By and large, South Africa became the lifeline for its northern neighbor.[19]

In the early 1970s, Rhodesian authorities embarked on forced resettlements of border communities in an attempt to improve interdiction of cross-border movements of insurgency forces and weapons. This strategy, which Rhodesian authorities deployed where and when they suspected that infiltration was taking place, involved the movement of whole communities from their homesteads into concentrated compounds officially referred to as "protected villages."[20] The way this worked was that officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs would identify an area—be it part of an existing village settlement or simply an open field, erect a barbed wire fence around it and force surrounding villagers into the fenced area. They would then erect another enclosure at the

[19] Joseph Mtisi, Munyaradzi Nyakudya and Teresa Barnes, "Social and Economic Developments during the UDI Period" In *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-colonial Period to 2008*. Edited by Brian Raftopoulos, and Alois S. Mlambo, (Harare: Weaver Press, 2009).

[20] The term was really a misnomer given that the compounds exposed Africans to diseases and other kinds of problems. Because of the prison-like conditions in some of the concentrated camps, Africans called them "makipi" which literally means keeps. Some of such camps were also subject to raiding by insurgent forces.

center of the compound, where a small group of Rhodesian soldiers was stationed in order to protect the residents against insurgency forces. Armed security guards patrolled the outer fence "to prevent the inmates physically from either overt acts of subversion, support of the insurgents or simply disobedience."[21] The idea behind "protected villages" was to prevent interaction between insurgency forces and the people who were providers of food, clothes, intelligence, recruits and moral support to the liberation war fighters.

After erecting the first batch of "protected villages" in the Centenary and Mt Darwin districts in May 1973, Rhodesian officials deployed the same strategy along the entire stretch of the colony's border with Mozambique in 1976. This followed the end of Portuguese rule and the coming into power of Samora Machel's FRELIMO government, which opened the borders of Mozambique to African liberation movements in Rhodesia and South Africa. After establishing military bases in Mozambique, ZANLA forces began infiltrating Rhodesia's eastern and southern districts early in 1976. The spread of ZANLA activities in the southern parts of the country led to several clashes with Rhodesian forces in Beitbridge and other areas in the Rhodesia-South Africa border zone. As they did in the Mt Darwin area, Rhodesian authorities created protected villages in the southern border districts of Chiredzi, Beitbridge and Matobo.

Scholars argue that protected villages did not achieve intended objectives as a counter-insurgency strategy during Zimbabwe's struggle for independence. As Cilliers notes, for population concentration and resettlement to be effective as military strategies, living conditions inside camps should be improved so that inmates will see the benefits of

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[21] J.K. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia* (London: Croom Helm, 1985): 80.

being in rather than outside the fences.[22] This was not the case in Rhodesia. Contrary to the authorities' claims that they provided running water, electricity, access to schools and health facilities as well as adequate pieces of land for crop cultivation, conditions in protected villages were deplorable to say the least. As L. Dube, said, "it was difficult living in the keep. We were closed off. We really wanted to go out, but it was hard. We lived like people in prisons- surviving on food and water rations."[23] Rhodesian authorities' failure to provide adequate supplies of clean water and proper sanitation facilities caused outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, which killed people in some of the protected villages.

Research in Beitbridge also revealed that people lost large amounts of property due to the manner in which authorities moved them into concentration camps. Rhodesian authorities often moved peopled without prior notice, insisting that they carried all their belongings from old homes in a single day. Security forces that supervised the resettlements would burn down huts and everything left behind as soon as the occupants removed whatever they could take with them. In some cases, they burnt people's huts as a way of forcing them to move into camps. As A. Ncube pointed out, an entire village in the Chabili section of Beitbridge had their houses burnt in 1977, because they responded slowly to the order to move into a camp that authorities set up in the area.[24] Most children did not attend school for the entire duration of their families' stay in protected villages because authorities did not set up schools in most camps. Walking daily to schools located some distances outside the fences was just too risky for many children.

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[22] *Ibid.*

[23] L. Dube, interview with author, Chikwarakwara Business Center, Beitbridge, 29 June 2010.

[24] A. Ncube, interview with author, Chabili Village, Beitbridge, 1 June 2010.

Rhodesian officials' efforts to stop all forms of contact between resettled communities and insurgency forces also met with limited success. Inmates devised ways of reaching out to insurgency forces and continuing to supply them with food, clothes and information about the movement of Rhodesian soldiers. In a study that focuses on women's experiences of the war of liberation in Zimbabwe, Irene Staunton discusses some of the strategies that people in concentration camps deployed in order to continue supporting the war. Sometimes women would pack mealie-meal into small packets, tie them up tight, put the little packets between their thighs before putting on two pairs of pants. Another strategy people used was to wrap meat in a clean plastic bag and then cover the bag with dirty plastic bags to make something like a football for little boys. They would then ask children to kick the "ball" outside, as if they were just playing. Women would also wrap dried meat around their bras, making it difficult for security guards at the camps' entrances to suspect anything.[25] That way, peasants managed to continue with their roles of feeding nationalist forces in spite of Rhodesian authorities' efforts to prevent that.

The setting up of concentration camps changed the dynamics of mobility in the border zones. People could only go out of camp fences during stipulated times, usually between six o'clock in the morning and four o'clock in the afternoon. Every time inmates moved in or out of the camp they had to report to guards at the gate, who examined whatever they carried with them. An interview with a group of women in Makombe village revealed that in addition to burning people's houses, Rhodesian security forces destroyed most of the boreholes that the colonial government drilled in parts of

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[25] Sosana Marange, in *Mothers of the Revolution: The War Experiences of Thirty Zimbabwean Women*. Edited by Irene Staunton, (London: James Currey, 1990): 7.

Beitbridge district in the 1950s.[26] The idea was to minimize movements of people outside camps. By 1978, there were more than fifteen camps in Beitbridge district alone. Given that the Rhodesian government deployed teams of armed security guards who "protected" and supervised various activities in concentration camps, the border zone became home to large numbers of military personnel.

Curfew-like conditions that prevailed in Beitbridge made it risky for residents of the district and cross-border travelers to move around the border zone as they had done in the past. The situation became particularly difficult for residents during cholera outbreaks that hit some of the concentration camps. The atmosphere of insecurity made it difficult for people to access medical facilities outside the camps. As M. Mbedzi recalled, around Christmas time in 1978, a cholera outbreak hit the Shabwe Camp, also known as Keep No.1, killing at least 5 children and two adults.[27] Disease outbreaks in Beitbridge camps were hard to control because at that time the whole district had only one clinic in the urban location. Under normal circumstances, inhabitants of Bietbridge would travel to South Africa for medical attention, including those who experienced difficulties delivering babies in their home-based facilities.

Because of increased presence of armed forces in the border region, it became difficult for people to cross the Limpopo River at places other than the Beitbridge border-post. As S. Muleya said, "crossing anywhere and everywhere got reduced during the war of liberation."[28] To further complicate matters, three different armies converged in Beitbridge district in the 1970s. In addition to Rhodesian security forces, ZANLA and

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[26] Makombe Group, interview with author, Makombe Village, Beitbridge 25 May 2010.
[27] M. Mbedzi, interview with author, Rukange Village, Beitbridge, 26 May 2010.
[28] S. Muleya, interview with author, Beitbridge Town, 20 May 2010.

ZIPRA troops also operated in the border area. Although both ZANLA and ZIPRA forces fought a common enemy—the Rhodesian soldiers, they sometimes fought each other.[29] This confused ordinary people who could not understand differences between the African nationalist-backed troops. According to T. Ndou, this situation compromised relations between liberation movements and peasants in Beitbridge, resulting in several unexplained deaths.[30]

In such an environment, movement within and out of the border zone could easily lend people in trouble with any of the armed groups operating in the area. Commenting on the same issue, M. Mbedzi said, "if you decided to go to South Africa, you had to have exact details of the names, ID number and residential address of the person you were visiting. If you met soldiers along the way, the first thing they suspected was that you were an agent for the comrades, yet the comrades would suspect you of being a sell-out intending to report their whereabouts to the soldiers," adding, "In order to avoid being suspected you had to answer all their questions without stammering. It would help you to have names and ID numbers written down."[31] It became difficult to move from one part of the district to another, let alone crossing from Rhodesia to South Africa.

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[29] Ethnicity, more than anything else, led to clashes between ZIPRA and ZANLA forces. While ZAPU and its military wing, Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) were made up of mostly Ndebele speakers from Matabeleland and Midlands, ZANU and its military wing, the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA) were composed of mostly Shona speakers from the rest of the country.

[30] T. Ndou, interview with author, Vhembe High School, Beitbridge, 17 May 2010.

[31] M. G. Moyo, interview with author, Limpopo Village, Beitbridge, 15 June 2010. In Zimbabwe's liberation war discourse terms "comrades" and "soldiers" are ordinarily used to refer to African nationalist-backed troops and Rhodesian security forces respectively.

The Rhodesia-South Africa Labor Agreement

After years of competing for labor, changes in the region's political economy compelled Rhodesia and South Africa to formulate joint strategies of managing the flow of labor between the two countries. In 1966, Southern Rhodesian authorities and their South African counterparts made arrangements for the regularization of between 50,000 and 70,000 Zimbabweans living and working in South Africa without proper documentation.[32] As part of the arrangement, the two countries agreed that no African would be allowed to cross the border without carrying official identity and travel documents issued by state authorities on either side of the border. In actual fact, South Africa made a commitment to stamp out activities of unlicensed labor recruiters in northern Transvaal, and to ensure that employers engaged only migrants with proper documentation. The Pretoria administration also pledged to deport migrant workers from north of the Limpopo River who exceeded eighteen months without returning to their countries of origin. As part of this arrangement, Rhodesia opened a diplomatic mission in Pretoria in 1970.[33] Although the Rhodesian diplomat dealt with many issues affecting the relationship between the two states, the management of labor flows was the main mission of the post.

In December 1974, Rhodesia and South Africa moved further to conclude a Labor Agreement, which formalized and institutionalized the arrangements made in 1966. Through this agreement, the first labor deal the two neighbors signed after decades of disagreement over the control of regional labor supplies, the WNLA got permission to

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[32]Bill Paton, *Labour Export Policy in the Development of Southern Africa.*
[33] *Ibid.*

recruit up to 50,000 African workers from Rhodesia in any given year.[34] The WNLA moved swiftly to establish a recruiting center at Masasa, on the outskirts of Rhodesia's capital of Salisbury in January 1975. By the end of the first year of signing the agreement, WNLA had recruited more than 17,000 African workers who were entrained or flown to the Transvaal after obtaining official travel permits and passing through stipulated medical examinations.[35] The *joina* system, as it came to be known among African people in Rhodesia, became popular with black high school graduates who struggled to obtain employment in Rhodesia.[36] Indeed, by the mid-1970s, unemployment among blacks in Rhodesia had reached 15%, a level that had not been witnessed before.[37] Although unrestricted movement of African workers during the short-lived Federation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland contributed to the problem, by 1974 the Rhodesian economy was on an unprecedented recession due to economic sanctions that the UN had imposed.

Convinced that shortage of jobs contributed to Africans' support for on-going wars of liberation, Rhodesian authorities signed the labor agreement hoping that it would provide some safety-valve for disgruntled African youths in the colony's urban areas. On the other side of the border, attempts by exiled liberation movements to smuggle fighters and weapons back into South Africa made authorities in that country to be suspicious of uncontrolled movements of migrant workers from Rhodesia and Mozambique. South African officials also feared that people associated with African nationalist organizations

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[34] *Ibid.*

[35] J.K. McNamara, "Black Workers' Conflicts on South African Gold Mines, 1973-1982," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1985).

[36] The word "joina" is a vernacular version of "join." It was used in this context to stress the importance of the contract that one had to enter into before departing for South Africa

[37] Bill Paton, *Labour Export Policy in the Development of Southern Africa.*

fighting for independence in Rhodesia would influence the local population if allowed to move freely into the country. Media reports of migrant workers found in possession of ZAPU and/or ZANU pamphlets in South Africa, and others who claimed to be freedom fighters increased South African authorities' fears of infiltration.[38] Because of this, South African authorities deported many people they suspected to have been working closely with the liberation movements in Rhodesia.

Policy shifts in newly independent states in Sub-Saharan Africa also played a part in compelling South African authorities to sign the 1974 Labor Agreement with their counterparts in Rhodesia. Soon after assuming control of the state in 1961, the Julius Nyerere administration recalled about 14,000 of Tanzanians from South Africa. By the beginning of the 1970s decade, Tanzania had withdrawn the bulk of its migrant workers from South Africa. Zambian officials did the same by recalling 6,000 initially in 1965, before closing off all WNLA recruiting offices in their country by 1968.[39] By 1973, Malawi, with almost 120,000 of its people working in South Africa (about 31% of total mine labor force), had become the largest single supplier of legal "alien" workers for the South African mines. The situation changed completely after a WNLA aircraft crashed in April 1974, killing 75 Malawian migrants on board. Soon after the accident, Malawian leaders suspended WNLA operations in their country.[40] Although local supplies of labor were on the rise in South Africa, these developments might have played a role in South African authorities' decision to sign a formal agreement with their counterparts in Rhodesia.

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[38] J.K. McNamara, "Black Workers' Conflicts on South African Gold Mines, 1973-1982".

[39] Crush, Jeeves, and Yudelman, *South Africa's Labor Empire: A History of Black Migrancy to the Gold Mines*.

[40] Allen, *The History of Black Mineworkers in South Africa: vol 2*.

The South Africa-Rhodesia Labor Agreement changed the situation at the Beitbridge border post. South African border officials became stricter in their enforcement of the requirements for identity documents and travel permits. A resident of Beitbridge district, whose family lived in South Africa, while he attended school in Rhodesia during the 1970s, remembered how the labor agreement and the war changed border enforcement methods in the region. “There was a sudden change of things here in 1976,” said S. Muleya, adding, “certain documents were suddenly required to cross the border. I only found that out when I was going back to South Africa from my boarding school in Rhodesia. My father, who worked for the South African Immigration Department, had to intervene for me to be allowed to cross the border.”[41] Muleya pointed out that from 1976 onwards, border officials required residents of Beitbridge who used donkey carts on shopping trips to Messina and other areas in South Africa to obtain gate passes, which stipulated where they were going and when they were expected to be back in Rhodesia. Such measures were inspired by South Africa’s fear of infiltration by trained soldiers associated with the MK and other organizations fighting the apartheid government.

Muleya’s sentiments resonate with many other people’s experiences of crossing the Zimbabwe-South Africa border in the 1970s. As D. Mapfumo observed, it was in the 1970s that most people of Beitbridge began to apply for Rhodesian identity documents in order to obtain travel passes for South Africa. Unlike in the past when travelers literally ignored the bridge, preferring to use their “traditional” bush paths to cross the border, the presence of armed security guards in the border zone compelled many people to go

[41] S. Muleya, interview.

through the border-post.[42] Although it is hard to come up with statistical estimates of Zimbabweans who crossed the border through unofficial points in the 1970s, one can imagine that the numbers significantly went down. The war made it unsafe for people to travel, while the enforcement of the 1974 Labor Agreement limited the number of those that WNLA could recruit in any given year.

In a bid to beef up security and enhance the control of unauthorized cross-border mobility, in 1979, the South African Defense Forces (SADF) commissioned the planting of sisals on portions of South Africa's boundaries with Mozambique and Rhodesia.[43] Before the planting of sisals, the fence for Kruger National Park, together with farm fences that some borderline farmers erected to prevent the movement of animals in and outside their farms, acted as de-facto border fences. Although South African government worked closely with some white farmers in the border zones, whom they supplied with arms, authorities could not control where farmers placed farm gates, when they opened them as well as who entered through those gates.[44] As M. Mbedzi pointed out, "the sisals were planted a short distance from the barbed wire, making it difficult for people to crawl under farm fences."[45] As we shall discuss in the following chapter, the planting of sisals was a precursor to the construction of an electrified fence along the Limpopo River in the early 1980s.

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[42] D. Mapfumo, interview with author, Limpopo Vilage, Beitbridge, 15 June 2010.

[43] Roelof J. Kloppers, "Border Crossings: Life in the Mozambique/South Africa Borderland Since 1975," (D.Phil Dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2005).

[44] An informal conversation with a South African professor living and working in Atlanta, Georgia indicated that in the late 1970s, the apartheid administration provided white farmers with AK47 weapons with specific instructions to shoot suspicious trespassers on their farms.

[45] M. Mbedzi, interview.

War and the Continuity of Illegal migration

The presence of armed security personnel and the general sense of insecurity that prevailed in Rhodesia in the 1970s, made it difficult, but not impossible for people to move from one part of the country to another. While a lot of people in war-ravaged villages spent months sleeping in bushes or mountains, some sought refuge in the country's urban centers, which did not witness much fighting between Rhodesian soldiers and African liberation forces. Joyce Chadya's study of internal displacements during the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe shows that groups of women and children flee war-torn villages and settled in Salisbury. Owing to lack of housing, compounded with racial segregation in Salisbury, war "refugees" from Rhodesia's rural areas established informal settlements near the city's bus terminus known as Mbare Musika.[46] A similar scenario played out in Bietbridge where scores of people running from the war in several parts of the country settled in the border town. As T. Muleya pointed out, many people who settled in the urban location of Beitbridge between 1977 and 1981 had no business in the border town, other than seeking refuge from the war. Most of them had their houses and various kinds of property destroyed by Rhodesian soldiers, ZANLA troops or ZIPRA forces on allegations of supporting one group of fighters or the other.[47]

Because there was no municipal body to look into the plight of new comers in such a small urban location, people built pole and dagga houses on the outskirts of the African township in Beitbridge. This gave rise to a "squatter" settlement, which came to

[46] Joyce M. Chadya, "The Untold Story: War, Flight and the Internal Displacement of Rural Women to Harare During the Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle, 1974 to 1980," (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Minnesota, 2005).

[47] T. Muleya, interview.

be known as Tangwena.[48] The emergence of the Tangwena settlement marked the beginning of informal housing in Beitbridge. As one resident of Beitbridge town pointed out, "nothing was planned or regulated by the Rhodesian government [in the Tangwena section]. Inhabitants of the squatter camp did not have running water or toilets in their houses. They used the bush or makeshift toilets to relieve themselves."[49] Whereas authorities in Zimbabwe's bigger cities cleared war-time informal settlements at the end of the war, Beitbridge's informal settlement expanded before authorities destroyed it in the late 1990s.

While some people sought refuge in Beitbridge, others decided to leave the country, going to South Africa. In light of the challenges associated with travelling within and out of Beitbridge during the war, this was a huge risk, which villagers took after considering many options. In some cases, this meant abandoning livestock and other household property. M. Chauke's experience of fleeing to South, as a little girl in 1977, goes a long way to illustrate some of the hardships that people who crossed the border during the war endured. Despite the fact that the Rhodesian government established a "protected village" in the vicinity of Chauke's family homestead in the Chikwarakwara area, her father and three other men moved their families outside the fence to a local mountain. As Chauke recalled, her father feared that moving into the camp would constrain their freedom and expose his children to various kinds of abuse by camp guards. The four families spent almost two weeks in the mountains where they survived

[48] Tangwena is a name of a chief who fought against forced relocation in Rhodesia's Eastern Highlands from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. The manner in which the Smith regime destroyed the Tangwena people's houses attracted wide media coverage. From then onwards, the name Tangwena has been associated with unauthorized settlements in Zimbabwe, which in themselves are a symbol of resistance against state power. For more information on chief Tangwena and his people see: Donald S. Moore, *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place, and Power in Zimbabwe* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2005).

[49] D. Gada, interview with author, Beitbridge Town, 15 May 2010.

mainly on wild fruits and meat of wild animals. They did not go back to the camp because they feared Rhodesian security forces would kill them. The fact that they had moved out of the "protected village" was enough to cause serious trouble with Rhodesian officials.

When they received word that Rhodesian security forces burnt down their houses and granaries, and that the authorities had vowed to capture Chauke's father and the other men in the group, they decided to go to South Africa. The four families literally ran away with nothing except a few clothes, some blankets, a number of pots and some mealie-meal to prepare food along the way. "We started walking at night and when the sun came up we rested in the bush near the Limpopo," Chauke said, continuing, "We did not walk during the day because we feared both the Rhodesian and South African security forces. We were quite many- more than twenty. Just as it was getting dark, we started walking to the river. When we got to the Limpopo, we camped for a while because the border security guards on the other side were still awake."[50] As she narrated the story thirty-three years later, one could still feel the pain in her voice. For several generations prior to the war, people from Chauke's village were only worried about wild animals as they travelled back and forth across the Limpopo River. Fear of soldiers, who patrolled the border zone in the 1970s, changed the meaning of cross-Limpopo mobility.

As Chauke continued with the story of her family's escape to South Africa, she pointed out that the group crossed the border around mid-night, at which time they guessed the security guards were asleep. They proceeded with their journey until dawn when they camped again to avoid travelling during the day when border patrols were

[50] M. Chauke, interview with author, Chikwarakwara Business Center, Beitbridge, 29 June 2010.

likely to be on active duty. It was after sunset when the group moved to the road and camped at a bus terminus until the next morning. "We then took a bus to Mlamleli where our relatives lived. We only came back here in 1980 when we heard that the war was over," she said.[51] While other people went to South Africa to look for employment under the *joina* system, Chauke's group did so to save their lives. To a certain extent, the war turned illegal migrants into refugees. However, South African authorities did not give Zimbabweans the protection they deserved as refugees. The apartheid government did not officially recognize the United Nations' 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol, which outline states' obligations towards refugees.

As Chauke's family did, Zimbabweans who sought refuge in South Africa during the war of liberation had to self-settle themselves among relatives across the border. Although the colonial boundary and travel restrictions that colonial authorities imposed made it difficult for relatives on either side of the border to continue interacting in the same ways they had done before colonial conquest, trans-Limpopo linkages did not die out completely. Along with migrants who sought employment in South Africa, the inhabitants of the Limpopo Valley strove to maintain their socio-cultural connections across the border. For instance, a police investigation into the death of a South African man in Southern Rhodesia revealed that as late as 1948, the Venda people on both sides of the Limpopo River still kept constant interactions. The report indicated that the deceased, an herbalist from Transvaal, had treated a Zimbabwean woman of barrenness on condition that he would get a cow when the concerned woman bore a child. When she conceived and delivered a child she sent word to Transvaal for the herbalist to visit her

[51] *Ibid.*

and get his cow. While in Southern Rhodesia the herbalist visited a couple of his relatives before hooking up with "an old prostitute with whom he had dealings before."[52] He allegedly fell sick and died while on his way back to the Transvaal. The continuation of cross-Limpopo interaction made it possible for refugees to settle in South Africa without the apartheid administration's assistance.

While Chauke's family moved back to Zimbabwe in 1980, some people who left the country during the war never returned. Many people were killed by different groups of fighters who operated in the border area, while others lost their lives to crocodiles and other wild animals as they tried to cross the Limpopo River during the war. Some of those who successfully made it across the border obtained South African identity documents and established permanent homes among their relatives south of the Limpopo River.

[52] NAZ S2009, An Enquiry into the Cause of the death of a male Mvenda of Northern Transvaal who died in Southern Rhodesia on 30 December 1948.

CHAPTER FIVE

Crossing the Boundary Fence

The end of white minority rule in Zimbabwe led to the termination of the 1974 labor agreement, which had helped Rhodesian authorities and their counterparts in South Africa to join hands in fighting illegal migration across the Limpopo River. In 1981, the Zimbabwean government banned WNLA's successor, the Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA) from recruiting in the country. It is unlikely that the closure of TEBA offices in Zimbabwe had a major impact on South Africa, where unemployment among black people was on the rise. However, the cutting of diplomatic ties between the two neighboring countries changed the nature of migration control strategies on the Zimbabwe-South Africa border. Following the footsteps of other African leaders who openly supported liberation movements in Southern Africa, Robert Mugabe's government declared its support for anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa. This forced South African authorities to seek ways of improving the security of their country's border with Zimbabwe.

The upsurge of the civil war in Mozambique, which started soon after the end of Portuguese colonial rule in 1975, gave additional motivation for South African authorities to scale up the control of immigration from the country's northern neighbors. The civil war, which concentrated along Mozambique's southeastern and southern borders, pushed many people to seek refuge in Zimbabwe and South Africa. While the Zimbabwean government set up refugee camps to accommodate Mozambicans fleeing the war, tens of

thousands of Shangaan-speaking refugees settled among fellow Shangaan-speakers in South Africa's former homeland of Gazankulu.[1] Unregulated flows of people from Mozambique, a country that hosted and rendered various kinds of support to anti-apartheid activists, added pressure on South Africa. In an attempt to stop illegal migration from Zimbabwe and Mozambique, the Pretoria administration constructed an electric fence on sections of its northern borders. The electric fence did not only change border control strategies, but it also transformed the nature of illegal migration between South Africa and her neighbors north of the Limpopo River.

South African authorities' attempts to tighten the border only helped to make illegal migration more sophisticated. Illegal migrants deployed a wide-range of strategies to cross the border—including vandalizing the fence and bribing the police, army and other officials controlling movements across the Limpopo River. Such strategies became more prevalent in the late 1990s, when an economic and a political crisis in Zimbabwe increased the flow of migrants from north of the Limpopo River into South Africa. Although post-apartheid South African authorities and their counterparts in post-colonial Zimbabwe worked together in many respects, they struggled to find common ground in managing cross-border movements. By 2010, when research for this study took place, corrupt border officials featured prominently in networks that facilitated illegal migration on the Zimbabwe-South Africa border. State functionaries did not just tolerate, but they encouraged and promoted unlawful cross-border mobility as well as other illegal practices such as smuggling.

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[1] For a detailed discussion of South Africa's handling of Mozambican refugees see Tara Polzer, "Adapting to Changing Legal Frameworks: Mozambican Refugees in South Africa." *International Journal of Refugee Law* 19, no.1 (2007): 22-50.

The Border Fence

In 1984, the SADF sponsored the construction of a NOREX electric fence along South Africa's borders with Zimbabwe and Mozambique.[2] By 1986, the border fence covered more than 200 kilometers (about 125 miles) along the border with Zimbabwe, from Eendvogelpan farm, near the border with Botswana, to Kruger National Park. It then stretched for another 60 kilometers (about 37 miles) from Kruger National Park, along the South Africa-Mozambique border, to a place known as Jeppe's Reef near Swaziland.[3] The security barrier, which replaced sisals planted in 1979, composed of two tiers of mesh fence flanking "a pyramid of coiled razor-wires that shields a series of electrified wires."[4] At every 10 kilometers along the fence, the SADF constructed brick and mortar buildings with room to accommodate about 10 border guards. The guard rooms, also known as Echo Stations, housed computers which monitored and reported, with details of precise location, any contacts or attempts to tamper with the border fence.[5]

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[2] Leon Englebrecht, "SANDF Winding Up Internal Operations" *Defence Web*, 27 February, 2009 http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&catid=55:SANDF&id=1199 Accessed on 31 May 2011.

[3] Sean O'toole and Paul Botes, "Porous Border is Smugglers' Paradise" In *Mail and Guardian Online,* http://mg.co.za/article/2011-04-04-porous-border-is-smugglers-paradise Accessed on 31 May 2011

[4] Sean O'toole and Paul Botes, "Porous Border is Smugglers' Paradise" In *Mail and Guardian Online,* http://mg.co.za/article/2011-04-04-porous-border-is-smugglers-paradise Accessed on 31 May 2011. See also "Electric Fence" In *Africa Research Bulletin, Political Series,* 22, no.1 (1985): 7600.

[5] "South Africa: Troops Reinforcing a Porous and Dangerous Border" *IRIN News* http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=89262 Accessed on 31 May 2011.

Fig. 7 Part of the three-tier fence on the South African side of the border with Zimbabwe. The middle row is the one that once was electrified. [Photo by Author, 2010]

In March 1985, before the completion of its construction, the 20,000 volts fence claimed its first victim, a Zimbabwean peasant electrocuted "as he tried to clip the fence with wire-cutters, apparently to sneak into South Africa."[6] By 1990, anti-apartheid media houses, NGOs, and human rights activists in Southern Africa were calling for the de-electrification of the fence arguing that it had killed hundreds of people fleeing war-torn Mozambique. Although available statistics can, and have been contested, South African

[6] "Electric Fence" In *Africa Research Bulletin, Political Series,* 7600.

officials put the number of people who died as they tried to cross the border fences between 1986 and 1989 at eighty-nine. Independent researchers estimated that in the first three years, the fence killed more than 200 people, far exceeding those who died while trying to cross the Berlin Wall in its twenty-three years of existence.[7] Because of this, some people dubbed the fence "South Africa's fence of death," while others referred to it as "the devil's fence."[8]

Along with the fence, South African authorities put in place other measures to strengthen the barrier between their country and those to the north of the Limpopo River. For instance, on 24 April 1985 the apartheid regime launched a campaign to encourage white farmers to occupy vacant lands in the area from the Botswana border to Kruger National Park. As part of the arrangement, South African authorities marked out a five-mile strip of territory along the border and declared it a "designated area," where old and new white farmers would get financial support to stay or settle. Farmers who accepted financial aid under this program, but failed to comply with the requirements to stay in the designated area, faced fines of up to R5,000 (about £2,100) or five years imprisonment.[9] In order to persuade white farmers to settle in the designated area, which had become quite dangerous due to insurgency activities, South African authorities offered AK-47 assault rifles to borderline farmers. An anonymous informant pointed out that the apartheid regime allowed white farmers to shoot and kill any trespassers they suspected to be linked with insurgency activities.[10]

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[7] Griffiths, "Permeable Boundaries in Africa."
[8] Hugh McCullum, "South Africa's fence of death" In *Horizon,* Harare, 19 August 1992.
[9] "Designated Area" In *Africa Research Bulletin, Political Series,* 22, no.1 (1985).
[10] Anonymous, conversation with author, Atlanta, 10 December 2010.

As part of the grand plan to tighten border security, the South African government recruited and deployed groups of white youths on occasional patrols of the border zone during school holidays.[11] The deployment of High school students on military internship along the Zimbabwe-South Africa border scared away many potential illegal migrants. As J. Maramani pointed out, the inexperienced border guards "shot at border-crossers willy-nilly."[12] Maramani argued that unlike the mature soldiers who would arrest unlawful travelers and take them to police cells, the young soldiers simply shot at anyone seen attempting to cross the border through undesignated points. Through programs such as these, the South African state did not simply view illegal cross-border travelers as criminals, but also as potential terrorists. As was the case in the 1950s and 60s, labeling someone a terrorist or communist was enough justification for apartheid leaders to use violent means of silencing them.

In 1991, the South African Parliament introduced the Aliens Control Act which consolidated five pieces of legislation, including the 1913 Immigrants Regulation Act, into "a single omnibus law governing the terms and conditions of entry of noncitizens into the country."[13] The Aliens Control Act empowered the police to search, arrest and detain suspected illegal migrants without warrant. As Anthony Minnaar and Mike Hough point out, the Act also excluded any possibility for judicial review of cases involving perceived illegal migrants by stipulating that, "no court of law shall have any jurisdiction to review, quash, reverse, interdict or otherwise interfere with any act, order or warrant of the Minister, and immigration officer or master of a ship performed or issued under this

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[11] McCullum, "South Africa's fence of death."

[12] J. Maramani, interview with author, Limpopo Village, Beitbridge, 15 June 2010.

[13] Jonathan Crush and David A. McDonald, "Introduction to Special Issue: Evaluating South African Immigration Policy After Apartheid" In *Africa Today,* 48, no.3 (2001): 1.

Act and which relates to the restriction and detention, or removal from the Republic, of a person who is being dealt with as a prohibited person."[14] The 1991 immigration law was important, not simply because it imposed tougher penalties for illegal migrants. Through it, South Africa introduced stringent requirements for immigration from countries in Southern Africa.

Although pressure from local and international activists forced the SADF to set the fence at non-lethal mode in 1993, one year before the end of apartheid rule, the reinvention of the South African state did not lead to the relaxation of border control efforts.[15] The end of anti-apartheid struggles and the incorporation of South Africa into regional networks such as SADC might have taken away the fear of insurgency forces, but authorities remained skeptical with immigration from the region. For reasons quite different from apartheid rulers, Nelson Mandela's ANC government kept SADF personnel on the country's northern borders. Save for minor amendments in 1995 and 1996, which introduced visas for regional migrants, the 1991 Aliens Control Act remained in place until 2004. Post-apartheid leaders' efforts to re-brand South Africa's national identity, focusing mainly on the country's black population, sowed anti-African immigrant sentiments. Rising unemployment and general conditions of poverty among black people, as well as media reports of immigrants swamping Africa's biggest economy fueled xenophobia that South Africa struggled with in the first ten years of the twenty-first century.

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[14] Anthony Minnaar, and Mike Hough, *Who Goes there? Perspectives on Clandestine Migration and Illegal Aliens in Southern Africa* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1996): 23.

[15] Peberdy, *Selecting Immigrants*. Having been set to non-lethal mode, the border fence could still administer an electric shock.

Special Employment Zone and Special Permits

Despite the end of white minority rule in Zimbabwe and South Africa, the flow of migration between these two countries remained tilted towards South Africa. A combination of economic, political and social factors helps to explain the continuation of southward mobility across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border during the 1990s and early 2000s. South Africa's economy remained much larger than her neighbor's. In fact, while South Africa's economy witnessed moderate growth, Zimbabwe's was on a downward trend during much of the period this chapter focuses on. In 1989, South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stood at about US$124.9 billion, while that for Zimbabwe was around US$8.3 billion. By 1999, Zimbabwe's GDP had dropped to US$6.8 billion, while South Africa's had increased to US$133.2 billion. The gap between these countries continued to widen so much that by 2009 South Africa's GDP had jumped to US$285.4 billion, while that for Zimbabwe fell to US$5.6 billion.[16]

While South Africa's rich mineral resources might have helped the country to maintain a sound economic growth after the end of apartheid, Zimbabwe's misfortunes emanated from policy choices that the country's leadership adopted in the 1990s. Despite having received significantly high sums of international capital investments in the immediate post-colonial period, the 1980s witnessed a slow and erratic economic development in Zimbabwe. In a bid to spruce up its economy, the Zimbabwean government adopted the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-sponsored Economic

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[16] See World Bank Development Data "South Africa at a Glance" http://devdata.worldbank.org/AAG/zaf_aag.pdf; World Bank Development Data "Zimbabwe at a Glance" http://devdata.worldbank.org/AAG/zwe_aag.pdf Accessed on 16 December 2010.

Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) in 1990. As part of the structural adjustment program, Zimbabwean authorities undertook to reduce public expenditure by "removing subsidies on basic foodstuffs, reducing budgetary allocations, even to essential services such as education and health care, and downsizing the public service."[17] To a large extent, ESAP failed to achieve its intended objectives. Instead of encouraging economic growth and reduction in poverty levels among the people of Zimbabwe, ESAP led to company closures, currency devaluation and massive job losses. Within two years of ESAP, Zimbabwe's unemployment rate rose from about 10% to more than 20%, while the value of real earnings fell from about US$1,600.00 to a paltry US$100.[18]

The decline of Zimbabwe's employment rate under the auspices of ESAP had a major impact on movements across the country's border with South Africa. Because the cancellation of TEBA's recruiting license in 1981 made it difficult for mine owners to recruit from north of the Limpopo, jobless Zimbabweans flocked to South African farms in the border zone. In the same way that mine owners made it difficult for the Union government to effectively implement the Immigrants Regulation Act in the 1920s, pressure from farmers compromised the implementation of the Aliens Control Act of 1991. In 1996, the Pretoria administration declared the commercial farming area along the country's border with Zimbabwe a "special employment Zone." Within that zone,

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[17] Lovemore Zinyama, "Who, what, when and why: Cross-border Movement from Zimbabwe to South Africa" In *On Borders: Perspectives on International Migration in Southern Africa*,: 72.

[18] According to Zimbabwe's Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare, the number of people retrenched increased from about 1,200 in 1991 to about 14,000 in 1993. See Central Statistical Office, *Labour Statistics,* (Harare: Government of Zimbabwe, 2004).

Zimbabwean migrants, regardless of how and where they crossed the border, could take up employment with farmers registered under the Transvaal Agricultural Union.[19]

The 1991 Aliens Control Act and its amendments of 1995 and 1996 required migrants from Zimbabwe and other countries to obtain visas and work permits before entering and working in South Africa. In line with this piece of legislation, Zimbabweans willing to work in the special employment zone had to apply for a special authorization known as B1-17 permit. As part of the arrangement, South African authorities opened two small gates along the border. One of these gates, which could only allow pedestrian traffic to pass through, was located in the Dite area, about 25 kilometers east of the Beitbridge border-post. About 40 kilometers west of the Alfred Beit Bridge, at a place called Weipe, South African authorities opened a second gate, which officials and travelers referred to as Gate 17. It was at these gates, which border officials opened on selected days and times of the week, that Zimbabwean work seekers would apply and obtain admission into the special employment zone. South African officials did not allow holders of B1-17 permits to go beyond the designated area, a strip of 50 kilometers (about 31 miles) from the border fence.[20]

As part of the new labor deal between post-colonial Zimbabwe and post-apartheid South Africa, Zimbabwean authorities designated the border district of Beitbridge as the primary beneficiary of this arrangement. In that respect, only residents of Beitbridge district would obtain permits on the Zimbabwean side of the border, which allowed them entry through the "special" border-posts at Dite and Weipe. As Lovemore Zinyama

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[19] David Lincoln and Claude Mararike, "Southward Migrants in the Far North: Zimbabwean Farmworkers in Northern Province" In *Borderline Farming: Foreign Migrants in South African Commercial Agriculture*. Edited by Jonathan Crush, (Cape Town: SAMP, 2000).

[20] *Ibid.*

observed, many people of Beitbridge district took advantage of the 21 days' permits, which they could obtain without producing passports, to visit relatives across the border.[21] Given that the presence of armed security guards and the border fence affected people's movements across the Limpopo River, the special permit arrangement was a major relief to Beitbridge residents whose livelihood depended on South Africa. Along with seeking employment, the Venda, Shangaan and Sotho speaking inhabitants of Beitbridge needed to keep connections with relatives across the border. In cases of droughts that frequently hit the semi-arid district, Beitbridge residents obtained food from grocery stores in South Africa.

Border inhabitants referred to the special arrangement that Zimbabwean and South African authorities came up with as "Zero Twos," in reference to the first two digits on Beitbridge residents' national identity document numbers.[22] As MaSibanda, an elderly woman from the Panda Mine area (near Dite) recounted, the Zero Twos arrangement helped people of her village, not only to maintain ties with relatives, but also to move freely across the border for shopping purposes. She claimed that most people from her village did not need special permits to obtain work in South African farms because they had worked there for long periods prior to the arrangement. However, they needed the special permits to visit relatives and shopping areas outside the commercial farming area.[23] That people could obtain special permits and use them to travel outside

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[21] Zinyama, "Who, what, when and why: Cross-border Movement from Zimbabwe to South Africa."

[22] The office of the Registrar General in Zimbabwe uses a system whereby the first two or three digits on an individuals' national identity document tally with the number allocated to the district of one's birth. According to that system the number for Beitbridge district is 02, while that for Buhera district where the author of this dissertation comes from is 07.

[23] This information comes from an informal conversation with a Shebeen owner in Beitbridge on 15 May 2010. Because she requested to remain anonymous, I will call her MaSibanda.

the special employment zone was a loophole, which facilitated the continuation of illegal migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa.

Informal Traders and Asylum Seekers

The closure of companies as a result of ESAP-related policies did not only lead to rising unemployment rates in Zimbabwe. From the mid-1990s to the formation of the Government of National Unity in 2009, Zimbabwe witnessed a steep decline in the production and availability of basic commodities. The shortage of commodities that most households needed for daily consumption changed the demographics of migration flows between Zimbabwe and South Africa. During much of the twentieth century, men had dominated Zimbabwean migration to South Africa. Although women, especially those residing in the border zone, crossed the colonial boundary for purpose of work, visiting relatives or buying food supplies, their presence in the mining and farming sectors which employed the majority of Zimbabwean migrants was almost insignificant.[24] As E. Matibe pointed out, "before ESAP in Zimbabwe, it was mostly men who worked in South Africa. Women were left behind as heads of households, taking care of children, cattle, sheep, goats and fields."[25] This situation changed drastically in the 1990s when economic hardships compelled Zimbabwean women to look beyond the country's borders to fend for their families.

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[24] Although some works suggest that African women played important roles as migrant workers in South Africa, Zimbabwe and other parts of the continent during the colonial period, my research at the National Archives of Zimbabwe (in Harare) and the Nationals Archives of South Africa in Pretoria did not yield much evidence in support of that line of thought.

[25] E. Matibe, interview with author, Chabili Village, Beitbridge, 1 June 2010.

From the mid-1990s onwards, women dominated informal trading activities, which became a major component of cross-border migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa. They became major informal suppliers of household equipment such as refrigerators, television sets, kitchenware as well as motor vehicle parts, which had become too expensive to get from the formal market in Zimbabwe. To raise money to buy items for resale, Zimbabwean women sold different types of handcraft, especially crotchet-ware, that were in demand in South Africa.[26] The resurgence of informal trading connections across the Limpopo River, which had been overshadowed by labor migration during much of the twentieth century, significantly shifted the dynamics of illegal migration in the region. As this chapter discusses in detail below, smuggling became a salient feature of illegality in the Zimbabwe-South Africa border zone.

The mid-1990s also witnessed increased migration of skilled workers and professionals from Zimbabwe to South Africa. This was a major departure from the colonial period when Zimbabwean migrant workers in South Africa composed largely of uneducated and unskilled rural folks. A study that Elaine Fultz and Bodhi Pieris conducted on behalf of the International Labor Organization (ILO), revealed that by 1997 there were approximately 60,000 Zimbabwean professionals working in South Africa. These ranged from teachers, university professors, doctors, nurses, engineers, to accountants and lawyers.[27] More Zimbabwean professionals and skilled workers left the country in the first decade of the twenty-first century when the country's economy further

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[26] Zinyama, "Who, what, when and why: Cross-border Movement from Zimbabwe to South Africa."

[27] Elaine Fultz and Bodhi Pieris, "The Social Protection of Migrant Workers in South Africa" *ILO/SAMAT Policy Paper* N0.3. (Geneva: International Labor Organization, 1997). See http://www.ilo.org/public/french/region/afpro/pretoria/papers/1997/polpap3/intro.htm for an online version of the paper.

deteriorated. Along with company closures, Zimbabweans experienced an unprecedented inflation levels, acute shortages of fuel as well a major decline in health care, education and other social security services. As one participant in an interview with a group of migrants returning from South Africa put it, the situation in post-2000 Zimbabwe deteriorated to "dog eat dog levels."[28]

Political impasse between President Mugabe's government and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which emerged in 1999, led to a general breakdown of systems of democratic governance and accountability in the country. As a consequence, many of the people who left Zimbabwe for South Africa in the post-2000 period allegedly did so to save their lives from political persecution. Faced with an increasingly hostile electorate, which aligned itself with the MDC, the ZANU-PF government adopted repressive measures to cling onto power.[29] Political events such as the June 2000 general election, the March 2002 Presidential election, the March 2005 general election and the March 2008 Presidential and Parliamentary election, became very difficult moments for opposition activists and perceived supporters of the MDC. Many people therefore crossed the Zimbabwe-South Africa boundary fearing political reprisals.[30] In addition to those who left for South Africa during election times, some people crossed the border in 2005, after the Zimbabwe government's destruction of informal housing and business structures in the country's urban areas. Zimbabwe's urban

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[28] Returning Migrants' Group, interview with author, IOM offices, Beitbridge, 17 May 2010. The seventeen people I interviewed were part of a much larger group of voluntary returnees who sought transportation and other logistical assistance from IOM in order to move from South Africa to their respective homes in Zimbabwe. Most, if not all of these people were living in South Africa illegally.

[29] Human Rights Watch, *'Bullets for Each of You': State-sponsored Violence since Zimbabwe's March 29 Elections* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2008).

[30] T. Muleya, interview. See also Human Rights Watch, *Neighbors in Need: Zimbabweans Seeking Refuge in South Africa* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2008).

clean-up program, officially code-named "Operation Restore Order" or "Operation Murambatsvina," forced thousands of people to leave the country for South Africa.[31] Although South Africa introduced a Refugee Act in 1998, authorities' response to Zimbabweans seeking protection as refugees in the twenty-first century straddled between ambivalence, denial and confusion.

Encouraging Illegal Migration

Scholars of migration in Southern Africa often identify conditions of insecurity, such as those discussed above, as *the* causes of illegal migration in the sub-continent.[32] While it may be plausible to argue that way, it is important to distinguish factors that push people out of their countries from those that force or encourage travelers to cross international boundaries without following official procedures. Although the declining economy and the dwindling democratic space compelled Zimbabweans to seek refuge in South Africa, other factors contributed to the making of illegal migrants from the late 1990s to early 2000s. To begin with, stringent visa conditions that South Africa maintained from the mid-1990s to May 2009 made it difficult for Zimbabweans to cross

[31] Although the government insisted that the operation was a mere urban clean-up exercise targeting illegal structures and activities, the victims dubbed "murambatsvina" a man-made "Tsunami" after the heavy floods, which swept across parts of the Asia-pacific region destroying many lives and property a few months before the Harare authorities embarked on this project. For more details about this clean-up project see A. K. Tibaijuka, "Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to Assess the Scope and Impact Of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe," (July 2005); S. Bracking, "Development Denied: Autocratic Militarism in Post-Election Zimbabwe," *Review of African Political Economy,* 104, no.105, (2005): 341-357; D. Potts, "Restoring Order'? Operation Murambatsvina and the Urban Crisis in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 2 (2002): 273-291.

[32] Solomon, *Of Myths and Migration*., Nyamnjoh, *Insiders and Outsiders.,* Minnaar, and Hough, *Who Goes there?*

the border legally.[33] Around the same time that South African authorities designated the "special employment zone," in which Zimbabweans did not need visas or passports to access employment opportunities, the post-apartheid administration imposed more stringent requirements for those who wanted to visit places outside the special permit area.

In October 1996, the South African High Commission in Harare announced new minimum requirements for Zimbabweans intending to travel south of the Limpopo. The Pretoria administration required Zimbabwean travelers to produce letters of invitation from business associates, friends or relatives legally resident in South Africa. The invitation letter had to include identity and contact information of the South Africa-based business or person inviting a Zimbabwean, such as national identity numbers and physical addresses. In attempt to reduce cases of people who overstayed, South African authorities required invitation letters to show the lengths of the intended visits. Those visiting the country without invitations had to show proof of confirmed and paid hotel accommodation before they could obtain visas. Zimbabwean travelers were also required to show that they were able to sustain themselves while in South Africa by providing bank statements or traveller's checks.[34] While many prospective travelers could obtain invitation letters from relatives and friends living and working in South Africa, they struggled to produce acceptable bank statements. Another condition that made if difficult for many Zimbabweans to get visas was that South African authorities required letters from prospective travelers' employers, confirming that they would return to their jobs

[33] In May 2009, the South African government removed the visa and introduced a 90-day permit system for Zimbabweans entering the country on short-term visits.

[34] Zinyama, "Who, what, when and why: Cross-border Movement from Zimbabwe to South Africa."

upon completing their business. Although South African authorities indicated that unemployed travelers could obtain visas upon presenting proof of marriage in Zimbabwe or an affidavit from a spouse, these conditions scared people away from the visa offices.

While visa requirements for South Africa were similar to those of other countries such as the United States of America, the Pretoria administration was asking too much from poverty-stricken Zimbabweans. Many Zimbabweans struggling to make ends meet found other requirements such as visa application fees and the production of visa photographs and photocopies of various forms and documents hard to satisfy. What worsened the situation was that Zimbabwe had only two places for potential travelers to get visas for South Africa –Harare and Bulawayo.[35] This meant that inhabitants of Beitbridge district and other areas close to the border with South Africa had to travel long distances to Harare or Bulawayo before coming back to the border. Also, the South African government acknowledged the crisis north of the Limpopo, but maintained that there was no war in Zimbabwe. Because of that position, South African border authorities often denied asylum application forms to Zimbabweans who presented themselves at the border-post.[36] Commenting on this issue, Human Rights Watch noted that "asylum procedures create[d] significant obstacles for Zimbabweans at every stage of the application process particularly in terms of gaining initial access to the system."[37] This encouraged some people to use alternative routes to cross the border.

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[35] David McDonald, *et-al* "Guess Who's Coming for Dinner: Migration from Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe to South Africa," *International Migration Review,* 34, no.3 (2000): 813-841.

[36] Forced Migration Studies Programme, "Report on Human Smuggling across the South Africa/Zimbabwe Border," *Migration Research and Monitoring Project Report* (March 2009).

[37] Human Rights Watch, *Neighbors in Need: Zimbabweans Seeking for Refuge in South Africa* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2008) p.10

An interview I had with a group of Zimbabweans voluntarily returning from South Africa in May 2010, shed some light on some of the major problems with post-2000 Zimbabwe's migration management policies. One woman said, "most of us do not want to be border-jumpers. We do that because of the situation at the passport offices in this country. The passport fees are too high for us, especially when you are not working. I would rather jump the border and use that money for other things in South Africa."[38] Apart from high passport fees, another member of the group pointed out that short birth certificates (A5 size), which authorities issued to Zimbabweans in the 1970s and early 80s were no longer accepted as official documents. To obtain a passport in twenty-first century Zimbabwe, an individual had to provide a valid birth certificate. Although the government encouraged holders of A5 size birth certificates to apply for longer ones (A4 size) anywhere in the country the process presented various challenges to prospective travelers. As the group interview revealed, it took some time and money to obtain the longer birth certificate.

Another important observation that came out of the same group interview was that there were corrupt officials at Zimbabwe's passport offices, who deployed all sorts of tactics to extract bribes from people applying for travel documents. A woman who claimed she traveled back and forth across the border more than forty times between February 2007 and May 2010 said, "I gave up on getting a passport a long time ago. After applying for a passport in 2005, I spent six months visiting the passport office checking for my passport," continuing, "Every time I went there I was told that the

[38] Returning Migrants' Group, interview. As of May 2010, the minimum fee for passport application in Zimbabwe was US$143.00. Considering that the majority of civil servants earned US$100 per month, passport fees were unreachable for most people. This fee was revised downward to US$50 towards the end of 2010.

passport was not ready. However, other people who applied after me were able to get theirs in short periods of time—some in a single a month."[39] As she said, staff at the passport offices delayed processing her application because they wanted a bribe from her. She said, "I just forgot it. Nowadays, when I want to travel I just pick up my handbag and board the bus. I do not get bothered about all these things. I have been arrested and deported many times, but I keep going back to South Africa."[40]

Talking about tactics that passport officers allegedly deployed to induce people to pay bribes, a male participant at the group interview said he visited one passport office in Gweru, where he obtained the necessary forms to file his application. After completing the forms he joined a queue waiting for the passport officers to go over the application before filing it. He said, "when the passport officer came to collect our forms, he told me and many other people that we did not complete the forms correctly and instructed us to correct the errors on our forms," adding, "I went over my application a couple of times but did not see anything that needed to be corrected, so I went and asked the officer to tell me what I needed to correct. Instead of helping with my forms, the officer shouted at me saying I was not the only person waiting to be served."[41] As he recounted, he went behind the building and pretended to be writing on the forms before rejoining the queue. "When the officer got to me for the second time, he took my form without saying anything. I knew the idea was to frustrate me so I could bribe him," he said.[42]

Another female participant in the group interview recounted how she tried for three days, but failed to, at least, submit her application for passport at Makombe

[39] Returning Migrants' Group, interview.
[40] *Ibid*.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] *Ibid*.

Building in Harare in 2008. Having arrived at the passport office at four o'clock in the morning, she was surprised to find that there was already a long queue of people waiting to be served. When the passport office opened at half past eight, one officer started giving out small papers with numbers written on them. The officer stopped giving out numbers just three people from where the woman stood, before announcing that the people who had received the numbers were the only ones who were going to be served that day. This meant she had to remain in the queue until the following day. She said, "I realized that if I left the queue I was going to lose my position and that was going to make it difficult for me to be served the next day."[43] Despite obtaining the number the following day she could not turn in her application. She spent half the day on another queue, waiting for officers to hand out application forms. After completing the forms she joined another queue hoping to submit them the same day, but the office closed before she could turn in her completed forms. She said, "I had to come back at 4.am the following day – joining another queue. When I finally reached the service desk where they took fingerprints, I was told that my pictures were not of the correct type needed. That broke my back and I gave up."[44]

While participants in the group interview read delays in processing passports as an indication that passport officers wanted bribes from applicants, it is likely that the crisis-ridden country was failing to cope with demands for identity and travel documents. There were just too many people wanting to leave the country in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In October 2008, Zimbabwe's Registrar General attracted wide-ranging criticism after failing to process a passport for Morgan Tsvangirai, the President

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[43] *Ibid*.
[44] *Ibid*.

of the MDC, who was set to join the country's Government of National Unity as Prime Minister. Responding to criticism, President Mugabe's spokesperson argued that the country did not have money to import the materials required to produce passports.[45] It is possible that the delay in processing Tsvangirai's passport was a political ploy to frustrate him and his supporters. However, in spite of the squabbles between Zimbabwe's two major political parties, the country evidently struggled to cope with the demand for passports.

Residents of Beitbridge district were in a worse off situation than people in other areas of the country. Despite the fact that the inhabitants of Beitbridge depended on South Africa for most things they needed on a daily basis, the district did not have passport offices. This state of affairs might have not mattered much during the time that the Zimbabwean government accorded border inhabitants preferential treatment under the special permit arrangement with South Africa. However, after the scrapping of the "Zero Twos" policy in 2006, people of Beitbridge had limited options. Depending on which part of the district a person came from, the nearest place one would go to apply for a passport was Gwanda Town, more than 150 kilometers (about 93 miles) from the border town. While there was reliable public transport plying the Beitbridge-Gwanda route on daily basis, it was rare for people to obtain forms and file their application on the same day they arrived at the Gwanda Passport Offices. Due to long queues and other delays associated with an over-burdened system, people sometimes needed two or more nights in Gwanda to complete the passport application process.[46]

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[45] "No Passport, No Talks, Says Tsvangirai" In *Mail and Guardian Online* http://mg.co.za/article/2008-10-20-no-passport-talks-says-tsvangirai Accessed on 13 June, 2011.

[46] L. Mbedzi, interview with author, Zezane Business Center, Beitbridge, 19 May 2010.

Those coming from places such as Chikwarakwara would need much more time to get to Gwanda and come back home. Although the gravel road linking Chikwarakwara to Beitbridge Town was in a sound condition in comparison with roads in other parts of Zimbabwe, there was no public transport plying that route. In such circumstances, people needed about two days walking for almost 100 kilometers between Chikwarakwara and Beitbridge town, before connecting to Gwanda. Given that it sometimes took more than two days for a person to travel from Chikwarakwara to Gwanda Town, people from this area, which is less than two kilometers from the Limpopo River, simply did not bother to go through the process of applying for travel documents. Only those people who needed passports for purposes other than traveling to South Africa took the trouble. Emergency situations, such as those associated with political violence during election times, did not afford people opportunities to obtain passports and/or visas to go to South Africa legally. Although Zimbabwe had a facility for people in emergency situations to apply for what was known as the Emergency Travel Document (ETD), political activists running away from persecution would not even consider that as an option. Because state institutions, such as the police and the army, became the main perpetrators of political violence, people fleeing the country preferred to avoid contact with state functionaries at all levels until they crossed the border.

Networks of Illegality

In 1996, Ieuan Griffiths wrote that, "the ruthlessness and cost of trying to create impermeable frontiers is beyond the capability of most states, and where they even

partially succeed, clandestine cross-border movements are redirected away from frontal assaults to more subtle means of evasion and entry."[47] Developments that took place in the Zimbabwe-South Africa border zone from the mid-1990s to 2010 resonate with Griffiths's argument. Despite post-apartheid South Africa's decision to keep the SADF in charge of border security, several travelers from Zimbabwe crossed the border illegally. As was the case during the colonial period, unlawful travelers crossed the border either at the Beitbridge border-post or through undesignated points along the border. Regardless of where they chose to cross at, travelers deployed a variety of strategies to evade armed security guards and other state officials in the border zone.

Rachel, a character in D. E. Mutasa's novel, *Nyambo DzeJoni*, which examines Zimbabweans' experiences of traveling, living and working in South Africa, talks about how she crossed the border without a passport in 1985. She said:

> Ndakainda ndisina pasipoti. Ndakasvika panaGorogodhera ndikati handina pasipoti ndikapfuura uye ndikadzoka napo pabhodha ipapo. Hapana kana akambondimisa kana kuvhunza. (*I went without a passport. I arrived at the Limpopo River [at the border] and said I don't have a passport and I passed through and came back right through the border. No-one stopped or asked me)*.[48]

When Tom, the main character in the novel, asked: "Ko, vemapasipoti vaivepi?" (*Where were the passport officials?)*, Rachel responded, "Varipo mhani. Vangandidhini? Izvozvi handichawendi nokuti hakuchina hama." (*They were right there. What could they do to me? These days I do not go [through the border] because there are no more relatives [of*

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[47] Griffiths, "Permeable Boundaries in Africa."
[48] D. E. Mutasa, *Nyambo DzeJoni* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 2000): 25.

mine] there).[49] Realizing that Rachel did not say exactly how she managed to cross the border without a passport, Tom offered to explain what might have happened:

> Sokuona kwandinoita Rachel akakwanisa kutaura navari pabhodha. Izvi ndinodaro nokuti tina VaMhere vakakanganwa pasipoti yavo apo pavakamhanyira kumusha baba vavo vachirwara zvikuru. Vakataura nezvedambudziko ravo iri ndokubva vapfuura pabhodha vasina pasipoti. Pasipoti yavo yakatozotevera nomudzimai wavo ivo vatova kumusha. (*The way I see it is that Rachel was able to talk with border officials. I say this because we have Mr. Mhere who forgot his passport when he rushed home when his father got seriously ill. He was able to explain his predicament and he passed through the border without a passport. His wife later brought the passport when he was already home).*[50]

Through this conversation between characters in his novel, Mutasa shows that people without official travel documents sometimes managed to talk their way through the border-post. While, Rachel might have benefitted from a relative who worked at the border-post, many unlawful travelers bribed state officials who allowed them to cross the border.

From the early twentieth century, illegal migrants utilized sophisticated networks to cross the Zimbabwe-South Africa. The involvement of corrupt state officials in networks of illegality became more rampant between the late 1990s and early 2010, when the flow of illegal migrants from Zimbabwe rose significantly. When the South African government imposed more stringent conditions for obtaining visas in 1996, many Zimbabweans manipulated the special permit facility to cross the border. Despite the fact that the "Zero Twos" facility was meant to benefit residents of Beitbridge who intended to work on farms in the border zone, people from other districts of Zimbabwe bribed officials at the two small gates (Weipe and Dite) and obtained special permits. In some cases, people from "up-country" bribed officials at the Beitbridge Registry offices who

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[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid:* 25-26.

issued them identity documents purporting that they were originally from the border district. Once in possession of the Zero Two IDs such people would obtain special permits and proceed to Johannesburg or other areas of South Africa.[51]

In other cases, travelers engaged in what they referred to as *pay as you go*, in order to pass through the main border-post at Beitbridge. As the interview with the group of returning migrants revealed, "pay as you go" involved a very simple, but risky strategy in which individuals paid their way through several stops from the Zimbabwean side to the South African end of the Beitbridge border-post. One did not need to make prior arrangements or to be referred by anyone to engage in this strategy. What was important was for the traveler to know the right time to get to the border, (usually at night) and to have the right amount of cash in smaller bills of R10 or R20. The traveler would then walk, with confidence, across the bridge. If any of the border officials stopped and asked the traveler for a passport, the strategy was to hand over cash to the official. Given that both states placed the police, veterinary officers and other officials at various points in the border-post, this was a very risky strategy, which landed many people in jail. However, many others deployed the strategy successfully.[52]

Case Records at the Beitbridge Magistrates' Court indicate that in addition to people who tried to bribe border officials, the police arrested many who attempted to use other people's passports to cross the border. One of the case summaries revealed that on 6 February 2006, Abigail Ndlovu, who was going to South Africa, presented a South African passport belonging to Happiness Ndlovu as hers. Although a Passport Control officer stamped the passport authorizing Ndlovu to proceed, a more attentive police

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[51] T. Muleya, interview.
[52] Returning Migrants' Group, interview.

officer at the vehicle inspection point noticed the anomaly resulting in the traveler's arrest.[53] In another case recorded on 17 March 2010, the police arrested Lisa Dube of Lupane district when she tried to use Patricia Mazikana's passport to cross the border to South Africa. According to the case register, Dube got the passport from Damane Mzingeli, a motorist who had provided her a ride from Tsholotsho to Beitbridge. An Immigration Officer who inspected the passport when Dube presented it for stamping noticed that the photograph in the passport did not match the holder's face, and called the police who arrested Dube.[54] Despite the fact that the police arrested several travelers who used other people's passports, research in Beitbridge revealed that many more travelers successfully deployed the same strategy.

Some "undocumented" travelers made use of complicated networks involving self-styled border agents who helped people to cross through the border-post without passports. During my field research in Beitbridge, I had an opportunity to learn about how some of these networks operated. On 26 April 2010, I joined a team of IOM Information Disseminators on a "Health Awareness Campaign" among truck drivers waiting for clearance by border officials in Beitbridge. When we got to the trucks' queue, I noticed about fifteen young women gathered in small groups of three or so under tree shades. While some were selling beer, soft drinks, water, boiled eggs, fruits, etc., others evidently did not have anything to sell. As the IOM team went through their lessons—talking about HIV/AIDS and other types of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), demonstrating how condoms are opened and worn, as well as distributing free condoms, three youthful men got off a truck which had just joined the queue. They headed straight

[53] State vs Abigail Ndlovu, Beitbridge Magistrates' Court, 6 February 2006.
[54] State vs Lisa Dube, Beitbridge Magistrates' Court, 17 March, 2010.

to where some two women stood and, after a brief conversation the five of them walked away in the direction of an informal settlement near the passport control point at the border post.

Realizing that I was wrong in thinking that this group was possibly heading for a commercial sex transaction, a common thing in this small border town, one of the IOM staff explained that in addition to selling beer, fruits and sex, these women operated as informal "travel agents." They worked in networks involving border police, immigration officials, truck drivers and other transport providers to assist travelers to cross the border illegally. The women received "clients" from truck drivers and other motorists and took them to certain Zimbabwean border officials who provided travelers with "border passes" which they presented if asked to show passports at various points through the border-post.[55] Through such networks, which gained popularity at the turn of the twenty-first century, travelers without passports and/or visas managed to cross at the Zimbabwe-South border.

Maguma-guma and Holes on the Fence

Earlier in this chapter we noted that one Zimbabwean died as he tried to cut a portion of the electrified fence in 1985. Over the years, especially after South African authorities set the fence to non-lethal mode in 1993, reports of people who jumped over or crawled under the border fence increased. Despite the challenges they faced in trying

[55] As I learnt from further research on this issue, the "border passes" were nothing other than inscriptions meant to introduce travelers to border officials who, in most cases, were aware of such practices.

to secure South Africa's long borders, the South African National Defense Forces (SANDF), which succeeded the SADF, reportedly apprehended about 47,031 people who tried to cross into the country through undesignated points between 1994 and 1995. Zimbabweans constituted about 28%, while Mozambicans accounted for 65% of the total number of "border jumpers" arrested in that period. The remaining 7% came from other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, including those from the war-torn region of East-Central Africa, especially Burundi, Rwanda and former Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo).[56]

As M. Mbedzi pointed out, the most common strategy, which unlawful travelers used to cross the boundary fence in the late 1990s, was to dig holes under the fence and crawl into South Africa.[57] In order to avoid detection by members of the SANDF and the South African Police Services (SAPS) who patrolled the border, people dug the holes at night when patrol teams were either sleeping or away from duty. Travelers also used dry grass and tree leaves to cover the holes, making it difficult for border patrol teams to discover such illegal crossing points. In other cases, border jumpers threw materials such as blankets over the fence to avoid direct contact with the electrified wires, which could still administer an electric shock. Doing so also required good timing to avoid arrest.[58] Playing hide and seek with border patrol teams required extensive knowledge of the border landscape as well as the times when guards were most likely to be at work or off duty.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, gangs of unemployed young men had established themselves as informal agents for people crossing the Zimbabwe-South

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[56] Jonathan Crush, "The Discourse and Dimensions of Irregularity in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *International Migration* 37, no.1 (1999): 125-151.

[57] M. Mbedzi, interview.

[58] *Ibid.*

Africa border at undesignated points. The young men, whom border communities and officials in both countries referred to as *maguma-guma*, targeted places such as Chikwarakwara, Dite and Panda Mine on the eastern side of the border-post, as well as Makhakhabule, Tuli, Nottingham Estate and Shashe on the western side of Beitbridge Town. These are places at which illegal migrants have crossed for generations since the beginning of official migration controls in the late nineteenth century. Informal conversations with patrons at Beitbridge Country Club on 22 May 2010 revealed that informal border agents used various kinds of objects to cut portions of the border fence and charged travelers to pass through the holes they created. Some of the holes they made were big enough to qualify for gates. In some parts of the border, *maguma-guma* removed the fence completely (see figure 8 below).

Fig 8: An undesignated crossing point showing a portion of the vandalized fence. [Courtesy of T. Muleya]

In order to avoid arrests, *maguma-guma* took time to study and master the routine of South African border patrol units. In addition to crossing with their clients between ten o'clock at night and five in the morning, they also did not use a single "gate" for more than two days in row.[59] As in the case of women who helped undocumented travelers to cross though the border-post, some *maguma-guma* worked in collusion with corrupt officers in the SANDF and SAPS, whom they bribed to avoid arrest.[60] That officials charged with the responsibility to control cross-border movements actually assisted

[59] Informal conversation with patrons at Beitbridge Country Club, 15 May 2010.

[60] Forced Migration Studies Programme, "Report on Human Smuggling across the South Africa/Zimbabwe Border."

people involved in illegal activities made it more difficult for states on either side of the border to stop illegal migration. Collusion between illegal migrants and unlicensed border agents on one hand, and state officials on the other hand, defied the logic behind South Africa's construction of the security fence and the deployment of armed security guards along the border. This also contradicts scholars who argue that the prevalence of illegal migration, smuggling and other forms of informal activities in Africa's border region is a sign of people's successful resistance to state power.

Research in Beitbridge also revealed that some *maguma-guma* worked for, or in conjunction with business people in the border towns of Beitbridge and Musina. During an informal conversation with the author, patrons at MaSibanda's Shebeen talked extensively about the involvement of one local businessman in networks that facilitated illegal migration in the region.[61] They pointed out that MuJobeki, who moved to Beitbridge Town in the late 1990s as a public transport operator, amassed some wealth by assisting unlawful travelers to cross the Zimbabwe-South Africa border through undesignated points.[62] MuJobeki employed touts whom he sent out to places in and around the border town of Beitbridge looking for people in need of assistance with crossing the border without passports or visas for South Africa. The touts would bring their clients to MuJobeki's house in Beitbridge's Dulibadzimu Township and kept them under guard until the numbers were large enough to fill MuJobeki's truck. At that point MuJobeki's "boys" would lead their clients throgh well known, but undesignated crossing points. After crossing the Limpopo River and the border fence, the touts

[61] Informal Conversation with patrons at MaSibanda's Shebeen, Beitbridge Town, 15 May 2010.
[62] MuJobeki is a pseudonym used to protect the actual identity of this particular individual, whom the author did not have an opportunity to interview.

transported travelers to MuJobeki's other house in Musina on the South African side of the border.

Travelers without alternative accommodation in Musina had a choice of staying at MuJobeki's house paying for every night until they obtained some work or proceeded to other areas of South Africa. As my informants put it, MuJobeki became popular because he paid his runners handsomely for every person they brought to him. Also, the people he helped to cross the Limpopo often traveled safely without fearing arrests by border guards. MuJobeki allegedly worked with teams of border guards who informed him about patrol schedules. To a larger extent, the story of MuJobeki is resonant with the activities of unlicensed recruiters who assisted illegal migrants in the first half of the twentieth century, which we discussed in Chapters Two and Three. The conversation revealed that by 2010, after more than a decade of involvement in this business, MuJobeki had acquired a fleet of trucks, a number of houses in Beitbridge and Musina as well other properties in Zimbabwe and South Africa.[63]

Another group of self-imposed border agents, who emerged in the Zimbabwe-South Africa border zone in the first decade of the twenty-first century, composed of transport operators commonly referred to as *malaitsha.*[64] Despite having no official licenses to transport people or goods, the *malaitsha* played a major role in the Zimbabwe-South Africa border economy. They operated at two levels. Firstly, they scouted for Zimbabweans who bought large quantities of goods mostly in Musina and Johannesburg and loaded the goods and shoppers in different vehicles, which followed different routes

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[63] Informal Conversation with patrons at MaSibanda's Shebeen.

[64] Laitsha is a verb, which refers to the act of loading stuff into a donkey cart or vehicle. In this case, malaitsha refers to people who performed the task. They were carriers of goods across the border.

to get to Beitbridge. When they got to the border-post, they bribed the police as well as Customs and Immigration officials to smuggle the goods through the border. After crossing the border they loaded the goods onto buses heading to different parts of the country. At another level—on their return trips to South Africa, the *malaitsha* loaded undocumented travelers whom they smuggled across the border either by paying border officials at various check points from the Zimbabwean to the South African side or by dropping border-jumpers at undesignated crossing points and picking them up on the other side of the Limpopo River.

As of July 2010, there was, at Dulibadzimu Bus Rank in Beitbridge Town, an open space where the *malaitsha* parked and loaded/off-loaded their vehicles without fearing arrest by the local police or Municipal officials. While the *malaitsha* often made prior arrangements with travelers in need of assistance to cross the border, they also approached anybody going to South Africa. A group interview with villagers in Zezane revealed that sometimes the *malaitsha* visited communal areas looking for clients. They asked for payment in form of cattle, goats, sheep or anything their clients could afford.[65] Some *malaitsha* simply waited for travelers arriving in Beitbridge on local buses from different parts of the country. They would sweet-talk such people promising to help them cross the border easily and safely. Travelers who accepted assistance would have their luggage loaded in parked vehicles while they were taken to some "holding camps," usually a house in Dulibadzimu or an open space on the outskirts of the border town. Sometimes *malaitsha* used some rural homesteads could for that purpose. Travelers would remain at the holding camps for as long as it would take for the *malaitsha* to get

[65] Zezane Group, interview.

the numbers they wanted before crossing the border. In this respect, it often took a number of days, even weeks before people reached South Africa.

As the next chapter discusses in detail, *malaitsha*, *maguma-guma*, and other unlicensed border agents often abused cross-border travelers. One Beitbridge resident narrated a story of her niece who fell victim to two men who offered to smuggle her across the border from Zimbabwe sometime in December 2009. After successfully crossing the border, the driver parked the car at a fuel station in Musina, and both men got out to buy drinks. As they proceeded with their journey towards Johannesburg, one of the men handed a bottled drink to the woman who accepted without suspecting anything. After taking a couple of sips the woman lost consciousness. She only recovered in a hospital in Polokwane (formerly Pietersburg), whereupon she learnt that one motorist found her lying unconscious on a roadside and called the police. Although the woman could not recall what happened after she took the drink, she realized that she no longer had a tampon she wore when she left her house the previous day.[66] The two men probably drugged and sexually abused the woman before dumping her. This story, which shows some of the worst experiences that unlawful travelers went through in the early years of the twenty-first century, was just one of many that residents of the Zimbabwe-South Africa border zone told.

On 30 April 2010, the Beitbridge Magistrates' Court tried a case of two women the police had arrested on allegations of trying to use other peoples' passports to cross the border. Although the Magistrate withheld his judgment at the end of trial, he warned both women (and the public in attendance) from trying to cross the border at undesignated

[66] Returning Migrants' Group, interview.

points. He pointed out that court officials felt overwhelmed with complains from victims of assault, theft, rape and other crimes perpetrated by *maguma-guma* or *malaitsha*. The Magistrate revealed that in one of the cases the court dealt with, more than ten men gang-raped a woman as she tried to cross the border through an undesignated point. The Magistrate's was not a lone voice in highlighting the dangers of crossing the Zimbabwe-South Africa border at undesignated points. In June of the same year, one of Zimbabwe's leading newspapers carried a feature story focusing on sexual abuse of women who try to cross the border illegally. The story claims that more than thirty-five Zimbabwean women were receiving treatment at the Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) clinic in Musina for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) they contracted after *maguma-guma* abused them.[67] While illegal migration was a source of wealth for others, it had become a source of pain for some.

A conversation with the women set free by the Beitbridge Magistrate on 30 April 2010, exposed how two prison guards who brought them to court that morning took advantage of the accused women and stole a cell phone from them. The prison guards asked the women to pay US$50 each because they had allegedly privately pleaded with the Magistrate to not send the accused to jail. As it turned out that neither of the women had cash, one of them surrendered her cell phone handset as payment for the alleged help the guards rendered.[68] In circumstances such as this it becomes difficult to tell whether or not the prison guards did plead with the Magistrate. If they did, the probability is quite high that the Magistrate was part of the group of officials who extracted bribes from

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[67] Phyllis Kachere, "Raped by Omaguma-guma: Heavy Price to Pay for Zimbabwean Women Crossing Border Illegally" *The Sunday Mail,* Harare, 6-12 June 2010.

[68] Conversation with Tapiwa and Tendai, (Not their real names) Beitbridge Magistrates' Court, 30 April 2010.

people seeking to cross the border illegally. That further complicated the position of the state and its relationship with illegal migrants in the border zone. By 2010, despite the presence of armed security guards, immigration officers and other categories of state representatives on both sides of the Limpopo River, illegality and lawlessness dominated activities in the Zimbabwe-South Africa border.

CHAPTER SIX

Illegal Migration, Violence and Public Healing

From the late nineteenth century through the first decade of the twenty-first century, illegal migration across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border evolved not only as a by-product of elite politics, but also as a site of social production. The preceding five chapters of this dissertation examined the interplay between illegal migration and processes of state formation in Zimbabwe and South Africa. By and large, the chapters showed how unlawful cross-border mobility between these two countries emerged and expanded as part and parcel of "modern" state making processes, which began in the 1890s. This chapter shifts attention to the socio-cultural dynamics of illegal migration. It explores how the practice of crossing the border at undesignated points created opportunities for different kinds of interaction between illegal migrants and border communities.

As the following discussion shows, migrant-host interactions in the border zone involved mutually beneficial exchanges of services and gifts. While on their way to South Africa, many migrants sought accommodation, food, clothing and other kinds of assistance from inhabitants of the border zone. Although border residents offered such services free of charge, migrants would give them gifts on their return trips. In some cases, migrants took up employment and permanently settled in the border area—creating conditions for hybrid identities to emerge in the border zone. The border area also witnessed ethnic stereotyping and violent encounters between migrants and their hosts,

leading to loss of property and lives. As this chapter argues, illegal migration concurrently facilitated the growth of informal economic activities as well as a culture of violence and public healing in Beitbridge district.

Illegal Migration as a Socio-spatial Phenomenon

For the larger part of the twentieth century, travelers avoiding official systems of migration control either used the train and other forms of motorized transportation only for parts of their journeys or avoided them completely. In most cases, illegal migrants walked or cycled to and from South Africa—spending anything from a few hours to several weeks depending on point of departure. Migrants' journeys through the border left trails on the physical environment they traversed. In 1925, the General Manager for the BSAC wrote a letter to Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner, complaining about the behavior of migrants who passed-by the company's property in the border area. He claimed that, "travelling natives are a source of danger to the company's Nuanetsi Ranch. They use and break the pump on the wells and this year two uncompleted boreholes have been found filled in with stones and sticks necessitating the sinking of new boreholes, as it was impossible to remove the obstructions," proceeding, "these natives also leave their fires uncovered and in several instances this year they have been the cause of veld fires."[1]

While it is hard to imagine why migrants destroyed water sources upon which they depended in an area as dry as Beitrbidge, there is no doubt that their passage through

[1] NAZ S480/83 General Manager BSAC, to Chief Native Commissioner, 4 September 1925.

the district left trails of different kinds. As they traveled through the border district, illegal migrants followed particular paths that helped them to avoid police stations and other places where they were likely to meet state officials. This means that travelers had to develop mental maps, which they passed on from one generation to the other. Places of interest, such as the BSAC's property, villages where migrants camped and refilled supplies, water sources, forests, police stations and others were important markers on such maps. As Amon Mlambo revealed in an interview with Dawson Munjeri, migrants gave names to some of the places they passed through. For instance, they gave labels such as *Posokufa*, which means near death, to areas with little or no sources of water or food. On this, Mlambo said, "it is the place where you find people destroying their suitcases on the way to Johannesburg. They remove their clothing and then tie them together in a bundle and abandon the steal trunks. They crush the steal boxes with stones," asking rhetorically, "how can one carry a heavy trunk when one is hungry?"[2]

An interview with a group of people in Zezane village revealed that the passage of migrants through Beitbridge also contributed significantly towards the border residents' mapping practices. For instance, the local people named a popular migrants' path "Sosibheri" because they believed that groups of migrants who used it came from Salisbury, now Harare.[3] About fifteen kilometers north of Beitbridge Town, there is a village called Malala. Within that village, there is a business center and a primary school with the same name. As N. Muleya pointed out the name Malala reminds people of Beitbridge about their interaction with migrants en-route to South Africa. Sometimes in the 1940s and 1950s, illegal migrants used to camp in that area before crossing the

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[2] NAZ OAH/46 Mlambo, interview.
[3] Zezane Group, interview.

border. Over the years, as Muleya further explained, the local people began referring to this area as Malala, which translates to "where they [migrants] sleep."[4]

Social Entrepreneurship

Oral interviews with many residents of Beitbridge revealed that migrants' need for accommodation was the main point of connection with border communities. For instance, during a group interview in Zezane Village, one woman said, "we helped people from different areas, some from Chipinge, Mt Darwin and even from Malawi.... At night they would ask for somewhere to sleep and we allowed them to sleep outside because we did not have enough rooms to accommodate all of them."[5] This statement, which suggests that border inhabitants offered free accommodation to passers-by, resonates with what one former labor recruiter said about the assistance that border residents rendered to travelers on the way to South Africa. "As a rule Africans are hospitable to one another, in a way its insurance: Some day they might be on the road themselves and will need help from strangers," said Louis Glover. [6] However, there is evidence to suggest that border inhabitants did benefit from accommodating migrants in their homesteads.

An interview in with T. Muleya, who claims that from the 1930s to the 50s, his father's homestead in Makhabana village became popular as a resting place for migrants, shed more light on how migrants and residents of Beitbridge intercated. Muleya began by saying "there was nothing like you help somebody expecting anything in return. We

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[4] N. Muleya, interview with author, Malala Business Center, Beitbridge, 22 June 2010.
[5] Zezane Group, interview.
[6] NAZ ORAL GL/1 Louis Samuel Glover, interview with D. Hartridge, Salisbury, 4 February 1969.

Venda people do not do that. If you get to my field right now and say I am hungry, I will say get melons and eat, or I will say to my wife cook for visitors and she will cook for you. There is no charge for that."[7] He then proceeded to say, "but some migrants would not forget people who treated them kindly. When they got to South Africa, they sent us gifts of different kinds."[8] Muleya also pointed out that some of the migrants who sought accommodation at his father's homestead while going to South Africa, stopped-by the same place on their return trips. The exchange of gifts created opportunities for migrants to present gifts to their hosts thereby taking their relationships to different levels.

The practice of accommodating illegal migrants was not just a phenomenon of the rural communities in Beitbridge district. The same happened in the urban section of the border district. For instance, in January 1939 the British South Africa Police's Investigation Diary on Alleged Illegal Recruiting of Natives revealed that African residents of Beitbridge's "Native Compound" gave accommodation to relatives and friends intending on crossing the border illegally. The police reported that they caught a suspected tout named Togo from Mutoko, trying to cross the bridge with four Africans he had recruited. Further investigations showed that Togo and the other four travelers from Bulawayo "camped at Kamba's hut waiting to cross the border at night."[9] After the other four successfully crossed to the Transvaal, Togo reportedly spent four more nights (January 13 to 17th 1939) at Kamba's hut in the Beitbridge Native Compound, before he returned to Bulawayo.

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[7] T. Muleya, interview
[8] *Ibid*.
[9] NAZ S1226 BSAP Investigation Diary on "Alleged Illegal Recruiting of Natives," January 1939.

Although migrants carried food items on their long journeys to South Africa, it was not uncommon for travelers to run out of supplies and seek help along the way. In such cases, migrants would seek employment in the villages, not in the mines or farms where the risks of arrest by state authorities were higher. Sometimes migrants arrived at the border to find the Limpopo River in flood and therefore not crossable. As in the case of those who ran out of supplies, such migrants would seek temporary employment in the border zone while waiting for the river to subside. The border people, most of whom were cattle ranchers, employed migrants as herd-boys and paid them with food, shoes, clothes or blankets, which travelers needed on the way and in South Africa. Rarely would Beitbridge residents pay cash to the migrants. In fact, some people would offer to pay migrants with cows or goats, but that would mean a migrant had to stay and work for several months, thereby creating opportunities for more intimate interactions between the two groups.

Some more enterprising border inhabitants treated migrants as a source of income. In 1926, an official of Southern Rhodesia's Native Affairs Department observed that, "Rhodesian natives living on the border routes also make a lucrative living out of the traffic. They feed gangs of natives who are short of food and have no money, on their way to the Union, and get work done in their lands etc in return," adding, "on the return journey the labourers usually have money or goods, and pay exorbitant prices for food."[10] In an interview with Dawson Munjeri, Amon Mlambo, a former migrant echoed the same sentiments. He said that, "If you asked for water, you had to pay for it. Buying a cup of water. You were made to pay for the water. So what you had to do is that when you got to

[10] NAZ S138/203 Superintendent of Natives, Fort Victoria to Acting Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury 30 August 1926.

a place, you would ask where the source of the water was. If you were told where it was then you dashed there while there was still time and fetched the water."[11]

In Zimbabwe's communal areas, and most urban centers, water is one of the commodities that a visitor or passer-by would expect to get free of charge even under the most difficult of conditions. People who sell or deny others access to water are usually considered mean. In other communities, such as among the Korekore people in the north-eastern part of the country, when a stranger arrives in the homestead residents give him/her water even when he/she has not asked for it. The giving of water is a sign of welcoming strangers. That by the 1950s the inhabitants of Beitbridge were selling water to travelers goes a long way to show how their world's view had changed as a result of interaction with desperate passers-by. In fact, by 2010, the practice appeared to have grown to higher scales. Border residents sold home-packaged water, milk, fruits and all sorts of wares to passers-by in Beitbridge district.

Beitbridge residents also provided transportation to travelers who could pay for such services. As one colonial official observed in 1930, some local people used their donkey wagons to transport "natives who wish to work in the Union, between certain places in the Southern portion of our colony and the Limpopo," continuing, "if natives are making a profit by transporting natives with donkey wagons it is probable that motor transport is also being utilized."[12] Indeed, a number of people with cars used them to ferry travelers from different parts of the colony to the border area. In 1935, the police pointed out that Turner, a resident of Beitbridge used his lorry to transport illegal

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[11] NAZ OAH/46 Mlambo, interview.

[12] NAZ S235/418 Supervisor of Facilities for the passage of Northern Natives to the Secretary Department of the Colonial Secretary, 25 June 1930.

migrants between Bulawayo and Jessie Sacks Store. The police report also indicated that Turner used to drop undocumented migrants a mile or so from the border-post, enabling them to "proceed through the veldt and evade the authorities at the Bridge."[13] Apart from Turner, an African named Kamba also used his car to move illegal migrants between the border and other areas in Southern Rhodesia.[14]

During rainy seasons, travelers who were not familiar with the Limpopo engaged border inhabitants who understood the river's landscape and its flowing pattern to help them with crossing. By the 1940s a class of "crossing agents" who used homemade canoes and other devices to assist people to cross the river had emerged in Beitbridge. Helping travelers to cross the Limpopo became a profession with rules and regulations that those who needed assistance had to adhere with. For instance, canoe owners who deployed traditional medicine (*muti*) as protection against drowning would not carry travelers with any other kind of *muti* in their pockets or bags. As Mlambo stated, before crossing the river, in what he referred to as an "African-made ship or *mukumbi*," the owner had to first make sure nobody possessed traditional medicine. Travelers believed that "if you have some *muti* you say that out otherwise if you don't, the ship capsizes or you will be thrown overboard. You will not be allowed to proceed further."[15]

These forms of business exchanges associated with illegal migration often escape the attention of scholars working on informal sector economies in Africa's borderlands. The usual trend is for scholars to focus on smuggling and other forms of informal cross-

[13] NAZ S1226 L.L.A. Seward, BSAP West Nicholson to Chief Superintendent CID, Bulawayo 2 December 1935.
[14] NAZ S1226 BSAP Investigation Diary
[15] NAZ OAH/46 Mlambo, interview

border trading activities.[16] As the foregoing discussion shows, exchanges and interactions between illegal migrants and border inhabitants might have been connected to the mainstream economies, but they operated within their own unique parameters. Borderland economies were intimately grounded into the border's socio-cultural milieu, which changed with the growth of illegal migration in the region. To a larger extent, people like Kamba and Turner who provided transport to illegal migrants in the 1920s and 30s, laid the foundation for the *malaitsha,* who became a prominent feature of the border's informal economy in the early twenty first century. In the same vein, unlicensed border agents who used *mukumbi* to ferry illegal migrants across the Limpopo River in the early twentieth century, paved the way for *maguma-guma* and other groups of unlicensed border agents who assisted travellers to cross the border illegally.[17]

Ethnicity

Interactions between illegal migrants and residents of Beitbridge also created opportunities for inter-marriages and other activities that, in turn, produced what William McNeill refers to as polyethnic communities in the border zone.[18] According to T. Ndou, most migrants who stayed in the border area for long periods of time often married among the local people, built homes and settled for the rest of their lives. To this, Ndou said, "if a migrant servant agreed to work for a cow you knew he was there to stay. He

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[16] See for example Sally Ann Peberdy, "Border Crossings: Small Entrepreneurs and Cross-border Trade Between South Africa and Mozambique"; Janet MacGaffey, (ed) *The Real Economy of Zaire: The Contribution of Smuggling and other Unofficial Activities to National Wealth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

[17] For a discussion of malaitsha and maguma-guma, see Chapter Five of this dissertation.

[18] William H. McNeill, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

would eventually marry a girl from the same household and stay forever. The Venda people do not want to send their grandchildren away so they would give such foreigners pieces of land to build their homes. There are quite many among us today."[19] Ndou was not the only one of my informants who made such an observation. One of the village heads in Beitbridge said "in my family we have two men whom we took in as young men when they got here in the early 1950s. My father treated them as his own sons, so they have stayed with us ever since. They are elderly men with their own families now."[20]

An interview with A. Ncube provided more details on how marriages between migrants and local women left imprints on the border's cultures. Ncube talked about three men who arrived in Chabili Village in 1970s, took up employment as herd-boys, got married and cancelled plans of proceeding to South Africa. Having married and lived in the village for more than ten years, the three, all of whom came from Mozambique, managed to convince the local Village Headman to register them as members of his clan after which they obtained Zimbabwean identity documents as residents of Beitbridge.[21] For some migrants, sharing a common totem with groups of people in the border zone was a resource they utilized effectively in "blending" within border communities. As T. Muroiwa pointed out, this practice was quite common with Shona speakers from areas such as Mberengwa and Chipinge. In this case, the Nzou people adopted Ndou as their clan name, while the Dziva and Mbizi people referred to themselves as Mbedzi and

[19] T. Ndou, interview
[20] C. Madzive, interview with author, Madzive village, Beitbridge, 19 May 2010
[21] A. Ncube, interview

Dube, respectively.[22] Ndou, Mbedzi and Dube are some of the commonest clan names among the Venda people of Beitbridge.

If inter-marriages and migrants' assimilation into border communities obscured ethnic divisions in Beitbridge district that was probably to a very limited extent. A group interview I had in Rukange village revealed that marriages between migrants and local women sometimes led to tension in other parts of the district. One woman talked about her aunt who married a man from Malawi early in the 1940s, built a home and lived peacefully until the mid-1970s when her grandfather (father to her aunt) died. Less than a year after the death of her grandfather, some local people began questioning her aunt's husband's rights over a piece of land he had used for more than three decades. A legal wrangle over the ownership of the land forced the Malawian man, who was quite advanced in age, to leave for South Africa. Since then nobody has ever heard about him.[23] As the discussion revealed, some border inhabitants were not comfortable with migrants who accrued larger herds of cattle, sheep and/or goats than indigenous people. Greedy and jealousy were major causes of conflicts in Beitbridge.

Interactions between migrants and residents of Beitbridge district also led to negative stereotyping and labeling along ethnic lines. While describing the nature of relations between passers-by and residents of Malabe Village, D. Siyasongwe pointed out that the local people used some derogatory terms to refer to people from other parts of the country. For instance, they refer to passers-by as "*vana mvuraivete,"* which literary means those who think flowing water is sleeping. According to Siyasongwe, the label emanated from the locals' realization that most people from places far from the border

[22] T. Muroiwa, interview with author, Chipise Village, Beitbridge 2 June 2010
[23] Rukange Group, interview

were unable to judge the strength of Limpopo River's flow. As Siyasongwe put it, the locals believed that many people from "up-country" thought that the best time to cross the Limpopo was when it flowed quietly. Lack of knowledge about the river's behavior cost many migrants' lives. Siyasongwe went further to say that the majority of people who drown in the Limpopo every rain season are from other parts of the country, not Beitbridge residents, who know when, where and how to cross the Limpopo River.[24]

An interview with T. Ndou revealed other ways in which ethnic stereotyping characterized migrant-host relations in the border zone. As he pointed out, Venda speakers of Beitbridge believe that, "keeping a Shona person in your home is like keeping human waste in a container. It will always smell and make you uncomfortable." Ndou said the idea of likening travelers from Shona speaking regions of Zimbabwe to smelling human waste emanated from what Beitbridge residents perceived as unthankful behavior of travelers who often called upon the locals for assistance. He explained that there were cases where local people took care of desperate travelers for weeks, giving them food, accommodation, clothes and others things. However, before leaving their hosts' homesteads, migrants would do something bad. Ndou said there were stories of "travelers who killed some people for no apparent reason, maybe asking for sexual favors and all that," adding "we have a vast experience of dealing with people from upcountry, and now we are very much reluctant to have them in our homes…. I have kept a number of them at my home, but in the end they would always steal something and disappear, be it a radio or a blanket."[25]

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[24] D. Siyasongwe, interview
[25] T. Ndou, interview

The scenario playing out in Beitbridge district was a microcosm of Africa's frontier regions where indigenous people (technically early settlers), use customs, languages, ascribed social roles, and other attributes to *en-strange* late-comes who they give labels such as alien, intruder, foreigner, outsider, among others.[26] As Rebecca Saunders notes, anti-foreign sentiments usually emerge when certain groups deploy myths of origin or politico-legal stipulations to portray others as pathological or threatening to self-identity."[27] It was not only in Beitbridge district that host communities gave derogatory labels to migrant groups. In his study of ethnicity in northwestern Zimbabwe, Eric Worby argues that the Shangwe community labeled people who settled in Gokwe in the 1940s *madheruka*, "an onomatopoetic word intended to evoke the sound of the lorry engines that brought them."[28] Scholars also argue that South African citizens generally refer to African migrants as *makwerekwere*, which means those whose language is inaudible.[29] Interactions among migrants, residents, recruiters and state representatives in Beitbridge sometimes turned into violence.

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[26] For a discussion of the frontier thesis see Igor Kopytoff, (ed) *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Leonard M. Thompson, and Howard R. Lamar, (eds) *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

[27] Rebecca Saunders, "Belonging, Distance" In Saunders (ed), *The Concept of the Foreign: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (New York: Lexington Books, 2003). See also Loren Landau, "Transplants and Transients: Idioms of Belonging and Dislocation in Inner-City Johannesburg," *African Studies Review*, 49, no. 2 (2006): 125-145; Bambi Ceuppens, and Peter Gecshiere, "Autochthony: Local or Global? New Modes in the Struggle over Citizenship and Belonging in Africa and Europe," *Annual Review of Anthropology,* 34 (2005): 385-407; Peter Geschiere, and Stephen Jackson, "Autochthony and the Crisis of Citizenship: Democratization, Decentralization, and the Politics of Belonging," In *African Studies Review,* 49, no.2, (2006): 1-7.

[28] Eric Worby, "Maps, Names and Ethnic Games: The Epistemology and Iconography of Colonial Power in Northwestern Zimbabwe" *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no.3 (1994): 389. See also Pius Nyambara, "Madheruka and Shangwe: Ethnic Identities and the Culture of Modernity in Gokwe, Northwestern Zimbabwe, 1963-79" *Journal of African History* 43, no.2 (2002): 287-306.

[29] Francis B. Nyamnjoh, *Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa* (Dakar: CODESRIA Books, 2006); Belinda Dodson and Catherine Oelofse, "Shades of Xenophobia: In-Migrants and Immigrants in Mizamoyethu, Cape Town," *Canadian Journal of African Studies, 34, no.1* (2000): 124-148.

Violence

As illegal migration rose in response to official restriction of cross-Limpopo mobility, violence featured prominently as part of the Zimbabwe-South Africa border culture. In 1916, Southern Rhodesia's Chief Native Commissioner revealed that his office had, for thirteen years, received complaints about violent activities associated with labor recruitment at Crooks' Corner. As he noted in his statement, unlicensed recruiters deployed a combination of persuasion and force to obtain recruits from the colony's southern districts of Ndanga, Chibi and Melsetter. He pointed out that of the eighteen well-known recruiters operating between the Transvaal border, Lundi and Sabi Rivers, Portuguese Territory and Southern Rhodesia, Bernard, Diegel and Roux were the worst characters. "These men have been terrorising all the natives in the districts by flogging them and threatening to shoot them, the natives are afraid to stay in their kraals on account of these men. When we were down there quite a number of kraals were deserted and the natives were living in the bush," he wrote.[30] The Chief Native Commissioner further pointed out that Bernard and company had informed the border people that they were going to shoot the first policeman they happen to run into.

Two years later, the Sub-Native Commissioner for Sibasa on the South African side of the border described Bernard as "a notorious scoundrel who, I understand, is wanted by Rhodesian Police, on several different charges," adding that, "Bernard collects gangs of boys, more often than not, with a rifle leveled at their heads, and brings them to

[30] NAZ N3/22/4 Vol.2 "Illicit Recruiting of Native Labour- Rhodesia, Transvaal, Portuguese Territory: A Draft Dispatch by CNC for Submission to the South African High Commissioner, 7 February 1916.

the border at Makuleka where they are received by the NRC representatives there…. Bernard's methods may be said to be similar to those adopted by the Australian bushrangers except that instead of specie, Bernard's object is the acquisition of gangs of natives."[31] Bulpin's 1954 biography of Bernard sheds more light on how unlicensed agents at Crooks' Corner deployed violence in recruiting labor for the Transvaal mines. He writes that, "too often the recruiter was a drunken scoundrel who would resort to the most infamous means of securing 'boys.' The methods of these individuals were generally on a par with those employed by naval press gangs in the days of old," adding, "they asked no quarter from life, and gave none. Black ivory was a trade commodity to them, and they would utilize every dodge to obtain it."[32] Bulpin further points out that blackbirders sometimes "robbed each other of their recruits by force, terrorise a district; corrupt degenerate chiefs into coercing their people."[33]

Recruiters were not the only perpetrators of violence in the border zone. In fact, illegal migrants sometimes deployed violence as a means to cross the border. Southern Rhodesian Police's 1943 Intelligence reports reveal a situation where unlawful travelers assaulted state officials at Beitbridge border-post. The report states that, "on the night of 19th March 1943 a number of Nyasaland natives migrating south rushed the European details (Union Special Constables) on guard duty at the Northern end of the Bietbridge. Two rifle shots were fired over their heads as they ran across the bridge," adding, "the guard on the southern end, having been warned by the rifle shots and by whistle, endeavoured to stop the natives; he was attacked and although blows from knobkerries

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[31] NAZ N3/22/4 Vol.2 Acting Sub-Native Commissioner, Sibasa to Native Commissioner, Zoutpansberg, 7 February 1918.

[32] Bulpin, *The Ivory Trail:* 159.

[33] *Ibid*.

were aimed at him, managed to ward most of them off by means of his rifle…"[34] The report goes on to say that although the majority of migrants in the group managed to cross into South Africa, one was arrested, charged with assault and sentenced to a fine of £9 or three months imprisonment with hard labor. This mid-twentieth century account, as is the case with T. Ndou's claim that migrants sometimes assaulted people who hosted them in Beitbridge, shows that violence in the border has not been a unidirectional affair.

In the last two decades, *malaitsha* and *maguma-guma* became the major perpetrators of violence against illegal migrants in the Zimbabwe-South Africa border zone. Between November 2008 and March 2009, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) conducted a survey to identify some of the challenges facing Zimbabwean women and children who traveled to South Africa illegally. Among its major findings the IOM report notes that *maguma-guma* took advantage of travelers' impulse towards informal channels of crossing the border as well as their lack of knowledge about South Africa's immigration laws to exact money and abuse people in desperate situations."[35] In addition to stealing travelers' clothes, shoes, cell phones, and cash, *maguma-guma* also raped, physically assaulted and even killed people who sought their help with crossing the border. In one of several stories in it, the report says a group of migrants paid *maguma-guma* who had offered to help them cross the Limpopo River. After crossing the River onto the South African side, *maguma-guma* asked travelers to pay more money. "Most of the people paid. But there was one, about 25 years old, who

[34] NAZ S1226 BSAP Monthly Intelligence Summary: Bulawayo District, March 1943.

[35] International Organization for Migration, *Migrants' Needs and Vulnerabilities in the Limpopo Province, Republic of South Africa: A Report by the IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa* (Pretoria: IOM, 2009): 4.

said he had no more money. The magumaguma lifted him out and threw him into the river. He was swept away," says the report.[36]

As the IOM report indicates, *malaitsha* subjected their clients to more or less the same type of violent treatment. The story of Chipiwa, a fifteen years old girl from Harare sheds light on *malaitsha*'s behavior. Chipiwa and her sister left Harare for Johannesburg without the necessary travel documents. They arrived at Beitbridge bus terminus at night and did not know how to proceed across the border. As they wandered at the terminus, two men who identified themselves as *malaitsha* approached them and offered to take Chipiwa and her sister to Johannesburg. The two sisters paid R750 and boarded the *malaitsha*'s car, which took them to some rural homestead in Makhakhabule village where a lot of women and a few men were gathered. After spending two days at that place, where they heard stories of rape and physical assaults perpetrated by their kidnappers, Chipiwa and sister escaped to another homestead and then walked back to the border town.[37] To a large extent, the activities of *malaitsha* and *maguma-guma* are reminiscent to the situation that prevailed in Crooks' Corner early in the twentieth. As was the case in 1910, state officials on either side of the Limpopo River failed to control unlicensed border agents who abused migrants in the twenty first century.

Although a few scholars have written about early twentieth century violence in the border zone,[38] activities of *malaitsha* and *maguma-guma* have attracted the attention of many academics and human rights practitioners working in Zimbabwe and South Africa. In addition to IOM, which had offices in Beitbridge and Musina, international

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[36] *Ibid:* 19.
[37] *Ibid*. : 25-26.
[38] See Mavhunga, "Navigating Boundaries of Urban/Rural Migration in Southern Zimbabwe"; Murray, "'Blackbirding' at 'Crooks' Corner'"; Murray, "'Blackbirding' at 'Crooks' Corner'".

organizations such as MSF and Save the Children, work closely with local authorities and churches to assist migrants abused by criminals in the border area. Although these organizations largely focus on human rights issues, their reports constitute an important archive on violence in the region.[39] Scholars working with research organizations such as the Southern Africa Migration Project, the Human Science Research Council and Wits University's Forced Migration Studies Program (Migration Studies Center) have also carried out research on the activities of unlicensed border agents and transport operators who abuse illegal migrants.[40] Policy-makers and media houses in the two countries have also contributed to debates surrounding the activities of *malaitsha* and *maguma-guma*. There has not been any discussion about violent interactions between migrants and ordinary villagers in the border zone.

While describing the state of an average migrant when he arrived at Crooks' Corner en-route to South Africa, Bulpin pointed out that one would be "dressed in skins, and perhaps a few scanty rags, with all his personal belongings, some scraps of food, and a calabash of water tied on a stick and carried over his shoulder in a net of rushes."[41] For T. Muleya, that state of near destitution is what forced most migrants to seek help among border communities. Muleya said "some migrants arrived in Beitbridge with tattered clothes and torn shoes, having walked very long distances, sometimes from as far as

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[39]Human Rights Watch, *Neighbors in Need: Zimbabweans Seeking Refuge in South Africa* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2008); Save the Children Uk and International Rescue Committee, "Child Protection Rapid Assessment Musina Municipality, Limpopo Province, South Africa," (August 2008); Save the Children Uk, "Children on the Move: Protecting Unaccompanied Migrant Children in South Africa and the Region" (2007).

[40] Forced Migration Studies Program, "Zimbabwean Migration into Southern Africa: New Trends and Responses" (November 2009); Forced Migration Studies Program, "Report on Human Smuggling across the South Africa/Zimbabwe Border" MRMP Occasional Report (March 2009);

[41] Bulpin, *The Ivory Trail:* 162.

Malawi."[42] A few months of working on the South African mines changed the image of most migrants. When they returned home, which was usually after fifteen or twenty-four months, migrants looked different. Those who stayed at home referred to returning migrants as *magaisa,* which literally means the rich ones. They wore new clothes and carried various kinds of goods they bought in South Africa. In Bulpin's words, returning migrants wore "new jerseys, emblazoned with football colours; new loincloths; stylish hats gaily coloured scarves," and carried gaudily decorated tin or wooden trunks packed with blankets and cloth."[43] Some villagers attacked returning migrants, sometimes killing them, in a bid to steal clothes and other materials they brought from South Africa.

During my research in Beitbridge, I gathered a number of stories about migrants who either lost their possessions or lives to people in the border district. In one of the stories, which occurred in the 1930s, two brothers killed a man who sought accommodation at their father's homestead on his way from South Africa. The victim, whose name was Masungemvura, initially spent a week at Manyaya's place while traveling to South Africa. On his way back from South Africa, several months later, Masungemvura arrived at Manyaya's place just before sunset and decided to spent a night there. Before Masungemvura proceeded with his journey the following morning, his hosts, who had received some gifts from their "friend," prepared a meal for him and gave him some food to eat on the way. When he left this homestead, Manyaya's two sons offered to carry assist with carrying his bags for part of the journey. When they got into some thick forest on the outskirts of the village, the two brothers killed Masungemvura

[42] T. Muleya, interview.
[43] Bulpin, *The Ivory Trail:* 162.

and buried his body before returning home with everything he brought from South Africa.[44]

In another case, which took place in the 1950s, a family residing in Mahuhushe village, near Luthumba Business Centre, offered employment to a Mozambican man who ran out of supplies on his way to South Africa. A few months later, the employer of the Mozambican migrant approached a *n'anga* with the intention of obtaining *muti* to increase his wealth. The *n'anga* informed him that the type of *muti* he needed could only work if mixed together with human brains and parts of a man's genitals. The Mahuhushe man then devised a way of killing the Mozambican migrant to obtain the human parts that the *n'anga* needed to make the *muti*. He told his employee that the family situation had changed so much that they did not need a herd-boy anymore. He gave the migrant some food and clothes and asked him to leave. When the Mozambican man left the homestead, his former employer secretly followed and killed him in the forest. He mutilated the migrant's body to obtain the parts he needed to take to the *n'anga*.[45]

Other cases of violence involved the use of women as baits. In his interview with Munjeri, Mlambo provided a clue on how this happened. He said, "when you came from Johannesburg you would find women who were sent to welcome you. You were met by women who would cry out, 'that one is mine, and that one is mine,' and they would help you carry your luggage and take you to their homes," proceeding, "many people never made it to their homes for the would have been enticed by the women. They would

[44] The narrator of this story, a close relative of the Manyaya family requested to remain anonymous.

[45] E. Ncube, interview with author, Makombe village, Beitbridge 25 May 2010. Stories of ritualistic killings are common among Zimbabwean followers of African religion.

actually pay lobola and then they would die there."[46] While many migrants married in this way and settled in the border region, there were cases where villagers sent off women to intercept migrants with the view of robbing them of their belongings. At a discussion with workers at Knottingham Estates, one of them talked about a migrant from Mt. Darwin district who lost his possessions to a family of a woman he met in the early 1980s, while returning from South Africa. Having agreed to spend a night at the woman's place, the migrant was physically assaulted and robbed by a group of men accusing him of sleeping with their relative's wife. The Mt. Darwin man later learnt that the men who attacked him were actually brothers to the woman who brought him into that particular homestead.[47]

Public Healing

In an environment where state institutions did very little to administer justice to victims of violence or to rehabilitate perpetrators, a socio-cultural way of dealing with these issues developed in the border zone. While responding to my question about the nature of interaction between passers-by and people of her village in the Makombe area, S. Vhomo said, "that is an issue which is troubling many families in this area right now. If you move around Beitbridge you will see some small huts, which look like chicken runs. They are not for chickens but for the spirits of foreigners who were killed long ago by people of this area."[48] Further research in the district revealed that there were indeed

[46] Mlambo, interview
[47] Group Discussion with author, Knottingham Estates, Beitbridge, 27 June 2010.
[48] S. Vhomo, interview with author, Makombe Village, Beitbridge, 25 May 2010.

many homesteads with small huts (some too small to be livable) located at the margins, a bit removed from other houses. Beitbridge residents referred to these huts as z*vimba zvemupfuko*, which means little huts for avenging spirits. In line with the local people's beliefs in avenging spirits, which they referred to as *ngozi*, they built the huts to appease the spirits of migrants who died or lost their possessions to the inhabitants of the border district.

People who had z*vimba zvemupfuko* in their homesteads built them after experiencing different kinds of misfortunes, especially mysterious deaths of family members. As P. Mabhureni explained, "when a person dies in Beitbridge his family members consult at least three *n'angas* to enquire about the cause of death. People become suspicious when two or more family members die in the same year. In some cases those people die from the same kind of disease."[49] It was after consulting *n'angas* that many villagers learnt about how their fathers, grandfathers or other relatives allegedly killed or robbed some migrant whose spirit was causing the mysterious deaths in the family. In a process locally referred to as *kufemba mweya womufi* (reviving the spirit of the dead), the *n'anga* would make the dead migrant to speak through a member of his killers' family. This allowed concerned people to actually speak with the dead individual and got to know what he wanted in terms of compensation. Mabhureni pointed out that when the spirit of the migrant possessed an individual, his or her voice and mannerisms changed completely, leading people to believe the authenticity of everything they heard from the possessed member of their family.

[49] P. Mabureni, interview with author, Beitbridge Town, 28 June 2010.

Speaking through a medium, the migrant would identify himself, name the individual(s) who killed him, how they killed him, where they buried his body, and many other details. The migrant would also say when he was killed, which in most cases would be some decades in the past. It was during such occasions that the dead migrant would say the kind of compensation he wanted and give the family of his killers an option of taking his spirit and the payment to the migrant's original home or accommodate him in their homestead. If they chose to take him to his home area, the migrant would give them directions on how to get there and who to contact when they got to his people. As Vhomo noted, many people preferred to accommodate the spirit of the dead migrants in their homestead than taking them to Chipinge, Mt. Darwin, Mozambique, Malawi or any other place where they had to deal with his relatives and, possibly other *n'angas*.[50]

The process of accommodating or domesticating the avenging spirit of the departed migrant usually involved the construction of a hut at one of the concerned family members' homestead. The sizes of huts differed from one homestead to another (see pictures below), but most of them appeared too small to be of any use other than serving their ritualistic purposes. The concerned people would dedicate a young girl, between five and twelve years of age, to serve as a symbolic "wife" of the spirit. The girl's duty was to sweep the hut and make a fire in it every night as if somebody lived there. Once the girl started her menstrual periods, the family had to replace her with a younger one. In some cases, that also meant moving the hut from one brother's homestead to another's or from an uncle' homestead to a nephew's place, within the extended family network. The family would also dedicate everything they paid to

[50] S. Vhomo, interview

appease the spirit, usually cattle, goats or sheep, to the young girl as property of her husband. Before slaughtering or selling a cow, goat or sheep dedicated to the migrant, they had to consult his spirit to avoid making him angry.

Fig 9: Two homesteads, showing the location of *zvimba zvemupfuko*. Pictures by author

Fig 10. Slightly bigger and decorated huts for avenging spirits. Pictures taken by A. Matibe

In the case of Masungemvura, which we discussed above, it took more than forty years for other members of Manyaya's extended family to know about him and how he died. Sometime in 1978, during Zimbabwe's war of liberation, a vehicle carrying a group of people travelling from the Luthumba Cattle Sales hit a landmine and over-turned. Of all passengers in the car, only two grandsons of Manyaya died from the accident. The father of the deceased, who was also one of the two brothers who killed Masungemvura in the 1930s, consulted a *n'anga* that told him that the spirit of a foreigner he killed and buried in the bush caused the death of his sons. The *n'anga* advised him to find ways of appeasing Masungemvura's spirit, but the man did nothing about it.

In December 1981, after experiencing more deaths, members of Manyaya's extended family got together consulted a *n'anga* believed to posses the power to exorcise evil spirits. The *n'anga* told them about Masungemvura and went ahead to make his spirit possess one of Manyaya's daughters who was present. Speaking through a sister of his

killers, Masungemvura narrated the story of his death and told the group how many of their family members he had killed in revenge. Masungemvura demanded five cows and a wife as payment, further instructing Manyaya's family to take him and his belongings to Chipinge district, in the eastern side of the country. After some negotiations, Masungemvura accepted fifteen goats instead of five cows. The dead migrant also agreed to "reside" among the Manyaya people in a hut they were going to build for him. One of Manyaya's grandsons pledged his daughter as Masungemvura's wife.

While many former wives of avenging spirits lived normal lives, some experienced various kinds of problems in their adulthood. An interview with T. Zodzi of Chikwarakwara revealed that if a girl married before the process of transferring the spirit to another one took place, she would have difficulties relating with her husband and in-laws. As Zodzi said, the migrant would even prevent such a woman from sleeping with a man before the transfer of the spirit. The spirit would possess the woman when she tried to make love and make her fight her lover. The spirit would tell the concerned lover to not touch "his" wife. Zodzi narrated a story of a man whose urinary system blocked in 2007, after making love with a woman he met at Chikwarakwara Business Center. For two days, the man could not urinate. Upon consulting a *n'anga* about his bizarre sickness the man learnt that his lover once served as a spirit wife, but left for South Africa before the rituals to transfer the spirit took place. The spirit prevented the woman from obtaining employment in South Africa, forcing her back home to Chikwarakwara where she met her lover. The *n'anga* gave the man some *muti* and instructed him to engage the parents of the woman he had slept with so he could seek forgiveness to her spirit husband.[51]

[51] T. Zodzi, interview with author, Chikwarakwara Business Center, Beitbridge, 29 June 2010.

Sometimes a spirit wife became a *n'anga* and stayed in charge of the hut for the rest of her life. Such women would then use the departed migrant's spirit as the source of divination and healing powers to help other people and generate income. By 2010, Masungemvura's spirit had become a prominent *n'anga* who helped people to deal with *ngozi* spirits. She also provided *muti* for people to protect their homes against witches and evil spirits, as well as *divisi*—medicine to enhance livestock and crop productivity. Masungemvura's hut, in which the woman performed her healing functions, became a religious shrine of sort. In it, the *n'anga* kept her kit composed of a red, black and white spotted piece of cloth—big enough to cover her entire body, a headdress made of ostrich feathers with white and black beads (*zvuma*), musical instruments made of dried pumpkin (*hosho*) as well as numerous small ball-like objects with little stones inside. The balls were threaded to form chains that produce some rhythmic sound when she danced. A spear, knobkerrie and calabashes containing various types of *muti* in oily liquids and throwing bones (*hakata)* were some of the things the *n'anga* kept in the hut.[52]

Beginning in 1998, Manyaya's family and relatives held annual celebrations led by Masungemvura's spirit wife. During such celebrations, which took place at the end of the harvest season, people drank homemade beer, played drums and sang and danced the entire night. Masungemvura's wife and other spirit mediums would advise the family on many issues of interest. Outside the annual celebration, Manyaya's family consulted Masungemvura's spirit in times of illnesses and when one of their members encountered social problems such as losing a job or failing to obtain one. The family member in need of assistance would pay some money after which they put some ground tobacco (*bute*) in

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[52] Anonymous, interview with author, Beitbridge Town, 26 May 2010.

front of Masungemvura's hut to provoke the spirit to speak through his wife. As a *n'anga*, Masungemvura's wife raised some income, which assisted in the general welfare and upkeep of Manyaya's extended family.

In *zvimba zvemupfuko* and rituals associated with them, one can see a border community in search of public healing. This culture, which gained prominence in the 1970s, was an expression of people's attempts to deal with memories of a troubling history. As of 2010, many people of Beitbridge believed that the only way to live peacefully was to acknowledge and take responsibility for the acts of violence, which some residents of the district committed in the past. From that perspective, people were not ashamed to have the little huts in their homestead. There was no stigma associated with having the huts because many people built them. As Siyasongwe said, "these huts are found at every homestead, so who stigmatizes who? Actually, a family without such a hut can be castigated for not coming out in the open. The young girls who sweep the huts go to school like any other girls in the community. Everybody knows them, but they don't treat them as social outcasts."[53] Many people of Beitbridge referred to the practice of taming and domesticating an avenging spirit as *kuchenesa mweya womufi,* which means purifying the spirit of the dead. In this respect, they viewed the construction of *zvimba zvemupfuko* as the only way to regain peace and sense of security.

The practice was also a form of indigenous system of administering justice and restitution. It provided an opportunity for victims of violence to receive justice posthumously. Given the environment in which most of these violent acts took place, perpetrators would easily get away with their atrocious deeds. The belief in avenging

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[53] D. Siyasongwe, interview.

spirits actually helped people to account for some of the things they did in secret. As L. Mbedzi pointed out, the culture also instilled fear in people who would otherwise engage in similar acts hoping that no one would ever get to know about them. Mbedzi said that border inhabitants think that the Shona, especially those from Chipinge will always avenge if one killed them.[54] As of 2010, most people of Beitbridge were convinced that the majority of *malaitsha* and *maguma-guma* who abused unlawful travelers in the Zimbabwe-South Africa border zone came from areas far away from the border. There was a general sense that border residents, many of whom came from families with *zvimba zvemupfuko* in their homesteads, did not engage in acts of violence against foreigners.

In as much as the practice appeared to heal communities reeling in memories of a violent past, it also divided the people of Beitbridge along religious lines. While followers of African religion saw the *zvimba zvemupfuko* as the only way of healing troubled families, Christians generally castigated the practice as sinful. In many families of Beitbridge, the elderly members tended to be conservative followers of African religions while the youths and young adults easily converted to several Christian denominations that operated in the district. While followers of African religion revered the role of *n'angas*, homemade beer and many other aspects of this culture, most Christians believed that prayer, fasting and the Bible were the weapons they needed to fight avenging spirits. A category of prophets specializing in exorcising what they referred to as "evil spirits" had emerged and competed with *n'angas* in Beitbridge. As Siyasongwe noted, "prophets openly encouraged young girls to refuse to marry the spirits

[54] L. Mbedzi, interview.

of dead foreigners."[55] This explains why some girls would run away from their families before the rituals of transferring the spirits took place.

An interview with A. Ncube revealed that there had been calls for Beitbridge Local Government authorities to intervene on behalf of the young girls pledged as wives of the spirits.[56] While the identity of the people who approached district authorities about this issue remained unclear, the local police issued a statement in 2007, castigating the practice for its alleged abuse of young girls, but did not do anything further. Because the huts and the rituals associated with them were found in the rural areas of Beitbridge district, they did not feature in mainstream debates about migration and violence in the border area. As of 2010, the Zimbabwean media, which regularly ran stories about the abuse of women by *malaitsha* and *maguma-guma* in the Zimbabwe-South Africa border, barely mentioned anything about *zvimba zvemupfuko* and the involvement of young girls in this culture of public healing. It was also surprising that organizations such as IOM, MSF and World Vision that deployed field officers across the district to teach people about safe migration strategies, how to prevent and deal with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, among other topics, did not seem to be aware of this practice.

[55] D. Siyasongwe, interview
[56] A. Ncube, interview

CONCLUSION

Illegal migration is, undoubtedly, one of the major challenges that many areas of the world are currently grappling with. What makes this phenomenon more troubling is its association with organized criminal activities such as drug and human trafficking as well as uncontrolled movements of weapons across international boundaries. Fear of terrorist attacks, which significantly increased after the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11 2001, adds to the world's concerns about illegal migration. While the world has witnessed huge investments in borderline security in recent years, there is no evidence to suggest that the battle against illegal migration can be won anytime soon. If anything, public concerns about illegal migration seem to be increasing, especially in North America and Europe, which are the two major destinations of migrants from other parts of the world.[1] Given this scenario, what can states do to prevent unlawful movements across international boundaries? Is it really possible to eradicate this phenomenon and make the world free of illegal migration?

The foregoing discussion, which focuses on one particular border in Southern Africa, shows not only how difficult it is to deal with illegal migration in the modern world. It also illustrates how the current idea of the state, which emanated from developments that took place in Europe in the nineteenth century, actually produces and encourages illegal migration. Within a decade of British conquest and occupation of the Zimbabwean plateau in 1890, the colonists had put in place a pass system and other

[1] For more detailed discussions of the state of illegal migration in North America and Europe see Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron and Patrick Weil, (eds) *Migration Control in the North Atlantic World: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-War Period* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003); Catherine Dauvergne, *Making People Illegal: What Globalization Means for Migration and Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

measures to control the movements of Africans across the Limpopo River into the South African Republic (Transvaal). The inhabitants of the Limpopo Valley and other areas within and outside the Zimbabwean plateau, who had utilized cross-Limpopo migrations as a source of livelihood for generations before colonization, defied official attempts to impose a new order of things. This marked the birth of illegal migration between these two countries.

Over the course of the twentieth century, as differences between Southern Rhodesia and South Africa widened, cross-Limpopo movements became very difficult to control. Competition for regional labor prevented state authorities on either side of the border to ensure that everyone who moved between these two territories followed official procedures. While employers in Southern Rhodesia put pressure on their government to impose more stringent measures against people intending to travel south of the Limpopo River, South African mine owners and farmers lobbied their government to promote free movement of labor in the region. An opportunity for the two territories to merge and, possibly remove the border came in 1922, when the British South Africa Company's permission to administer Southern Rhodesia on behalf of the British government expired. However, Southern Rhodesia's British dominated legislature voted against amalgamation with South Africa, fearing political by Afrikaners. Had the two territories merged that would have helped to eliminate illegal migration in the Limpopo Valley.

As this dissertation demonstrates, economic disparities between the two former British colonies in Southern Africa created more opportunities for illegal migration to thrive. In response to the hardships they experienced in Southern Rhodesia, Africans devised various ways of evading the colony's efforts to stop emigration to South Africa.

Migrants worked with unlicensed labor agents, cross-border transport operators as well as corrupt officials in state institutions to develop what this dissertation refers to as "networks of illegality." Networks of illegality, a huge expression of subaltern agency, benefitted immensely from the lack of cooperation between state authorities on either side of the border. A brief period of cooperation between Southern Rhodesian and South African authorities, which came as a result of the intensification of African nationalist struggles in the 1960s and 70s, came to an end in 1980, when Zimbabwe became independent. Following the fall-out between the two neighboring states, South Africa's attempt to stop illegal migration by erecting an electrified fence along its borders with Zimbabwe and Mozambique in the mid-1980s failed to achieve intended objectives.

Despite the end of apartheid rule in 1994 and the resuscitation of diplomatic ties between Zimbabwe and South Africa, illegal migration has remained a major issue of concern in the region. Since 1995, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has made attempts to solve the problem by lobbying for the elimination of travel restrictions in the region.[2] While in general agreement with the idea of having an instrument to manage the movement of people in the region, the post-apartheid South African government rejected the original SADC Protocol and proposed a "Green Paper on International Migration."[3] South Africa's proposal, which became the basis for the revised protocol that SADC public in 1997, watered down the idea of "free movement,"

[2] See SADC, "Draft Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons in the Southern African Development Community," (1995).

[3] Republic of South Africa, "Draft Green Paper on International Migration," *Government Gazette,* volume 383, No. 18033, (1997).

which the original document emphasized.[4] Had the region adopted and ratified the protocol as proposed in the 1995 document, Southern Africa would have emerged more unified in terms of its approach to illegal migration. As Article 3 of the 1995 Protocol states, SADC's main objective was to prevent illegal movements of persons into and within the region through a "progressive elimination of all controls on SADC citizens."[5]

Despite downplaying the idea of "free movement," the 1997 document upholds the original proposal to abolish visa requirements for citizens of SADC member states on short visits in the region. It also encourages the issuance of temporary and/or permanent residence permits to SADC citizens wishing to relocate to another member state.[6] Although the SADC Heads of States adopted the 1997 protocol in 2005, by 2010 only nine out of fourteen member states had signed the agreement. Of those that signed, only four—South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique and Swaziland, had ratified the agreement and taken steps to implement it.[7] The countries' lack of enthusiasm has delayed the full implementation of the Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in the SADC region because nine member states have to ratify it before its application. As long as some form of border control remains, the Southern Rhodesia's efforts to eradicate illegal migration will not succeed. Also, as emerging research in the European Union suggests,

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[4] See SADC, "Draft Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in the Southern African Development Community," (1997).

[5] SADC, "Draft Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons in the Southern African Development Community."

[6] To a larger extent, the SADC formulated its protocol following the European Union's Schengen Agreement of 1985, which led to the abolition of border controls between member states and the adoption of a common immigration policy towards non-EU citizens.

[7] See IOM, "Towards Facilitation of the Movement of People in the SADC Region," Paper presented at the 27th SADC Parliamentary Forum, (Livingstone, Zambia, May 2010).

there will always be challenges concerning the management of migrants from countries that are not members of SADC.[8]

The economic and political crisis that hit Zimbabwe in the first decade of the twenty first century has not helped, but worsened Southern Africa's concerns about illegal migration in the region. The shortage of basic commodities, the rise in unemployment, a hyper-inflationary environment and general conditions of repression, which Zimbabwe experienced between 1999 and 2008, forced many people to look across the Limpopo River for survival. Many Zimbabweans migrated to South Africa on temporary or semi-permanent basis without following official procedures. By 2005, between 70 and 95% of workers on farms in South Africa's Limpopo Province were Zimbabweans—altogether amounting to between 18,000 and 20,000.[9] Most of them were seasonal workers who did not have proper immigration documents.

By 2010, when research for this study took place, the Beitbridge border-post had become one of Africa's busiest in-land ports of entry. Long queues of over-loaded vehicles were a common sight at this place where travelers spent hours and even days waiting for clearance by the Zimbabwean or South African border officials. Beitbridge Town, on the Zimbabwean side of the border, had become a hive of activity due to the volume of traffic that passed through the border-post on daily basis. Various kinds of mobility-related enterprises featured prominently in this small border town. High-standard hotels and grocery stores existed side by side with makeshift lodges and street-based food vendors, while multi-national freight companies faced competition from

[8] Henk van Houtum, and Roos Pijpers, "The European Union as Gated Community: The Two-faced Border and Immigration Regime of the EU" *Antipode,* 39, no.2 (2007): 291-309.

[9] See Blair Rutherford, "Zimbabweans Living in the South African Border-zone: Negotiating, Suffering and Surviving" *Concerned African Scholars Bulletin,* no.80 (2008): 35-42.

hundreds of unlicensed moving and travel agencies. A vibrant commercial sex work industry also thrived in this place where a handful of NGOs provided free health education to passers-by and residents of the town.

Violence, corruption and poverty dominated media reports of developments in the Zimbabwe-South Africa border zone, with the presence of unemployed youths, the homeless and unaccompanied children adding to the atmosphere of desperation, which prevailed there. Yet, cross-border migration was a source of hope for Zimbabweans who viewed South Africa as a solution to a host of challenges they faced in their country. Illegal migration provided entrepreneurs in the formal and informal sectors with important connections that helped them to conduct business in Zimbabwe, South Africa and beyond. The existence of the border fence and the presence of soldiers and police officers on some portions of the borderline did not seem to deter many people who struggled to make ends meet. As this dissertation has shown, networks of illegality, which migrants utilized to dodge systems of migration control, had become more sophisticated than they were in the early twentieth century.

Following the 2008 attacks on Zimbabweans and other African immigrants in South Africa, the Pretoria administration removed the stringent visa requirements for Zimbabweans travelling to South Africa on short visits.[10] South Africa's policy shift attracted criticism from the country's main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (D.A), which has criticized the post-apartheid government for taking a soft approach to border security. In fact, a few months before South Africa replaced the visa requirement with a ninety-day visitor's permit, which Zimbabweans could easily get at the port of

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[10] See Jean Pierre, et-al *Towards Tolerance, Law, and Dignity: Addressing Violence against Foreign Nationals in South Africa* (Arcadia: IOM, 2009).

entry, the DA issued a statement castigating the ANC government for withdrawing the military from the country's borders with Namibia, Botswana and Lesotho. The DA's position was that strict enforcement of borderline security was not just necessary for a proper control of "illegal foreigners," but would also "alleviate an overall burden on our existing service delivery."[11] In South Africa, as is the case in other countries that host large numbers of illegal migration, this phenomenon remains a site of political tension.

Chapters in this dissertation have shown that illegal migration is an integral component of modern state systems in which clearly defined and secured geo-political boundaries play an important role. Yet, the enforcement of international boundaries through various measures of migration control is what generates and sustains illegal migration. In arguing that illegal migration across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border was unavoidable, the foregoing discussion contradicts scholars who see this phenomenon as a symptom of weak or failed states and those who view it as a manifestation of migrants' creative subversion of authority. Thinking about illegal migration as "naturally" embedded within broader frameworks of state formation and border enforcement provides a refreshing perspective on the relationship between illegality and statecraft in the modern world.

[11] Democratic Alliance, "Sealing Our Borders: A Democratic Alliance Proposal to Tackle Cross-Border Crime and Illegal Immigration" April 2008. http://www.da.org.za/docs/606/Sealing%20Our%20Borders_document.pdf. Accessed on 26 March, 2012.

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