

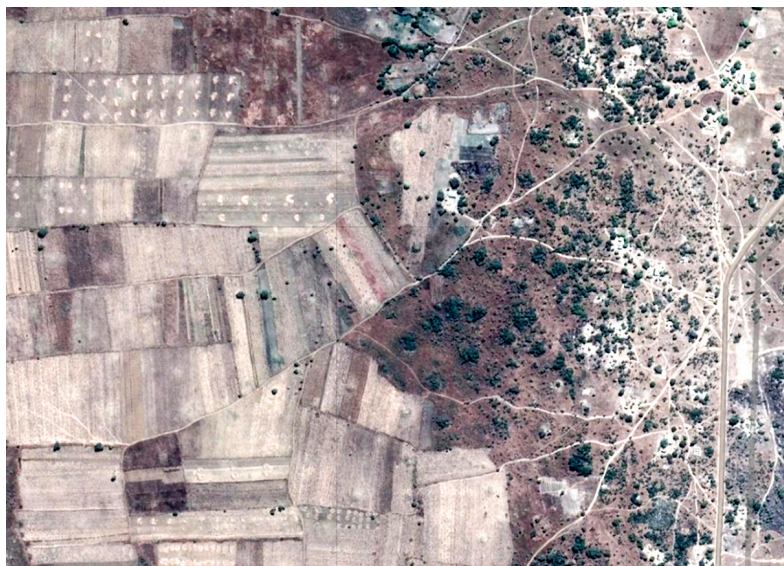


DOCTORAL THESIS No. 2020:67  
FACULTY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

# At the limits of state governance

Territory, property and state making in Lenje Chiefdom,  
rural Zambia

LINUS ROSÉN





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rural Zambia

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SWEDISH UNIVERSITY  
OF AGRICULTURAL  
SCIENCES

**DOCTORAL THESIS**

Uppsala 2020

Acta Universitatis agriculturae Sueciae  
2020:67

Cover: An aerial view of Mooya village, Lenje Chiefdom, on the border between State Land (left) and chiefly territory (right). (Google Maps: Bilder ©2020 CNES / Airbus, Maxar Technologies, Kartdata ©2020)

ISSN 1652-6880

ISBN (print version) 978-91-7760-652-9

ISBN (electronic version) 978-91-7760-653-6

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Print: SLU Service/Repro, Uppsala 2020

# At the limits of state governance. Territory, property and state making in Lenje Chiefdom, rural Zambia

## Abstract

African state property regimes – embedded in a racialized structure of land ownership that stretches back centuries – are at the center of contemporary land struggles. At present, the Zambian government is appropriating ‘traditional land’, controlled by chiefs and headmen molded through colonial rule, in an effort to bring it into the fold of ‘modernity’. On paper this process appears as a powerful state-building project. Yet on the ground it is riddled with legal contingency, with land survey beacons appearing unexpectedly on people’s doorsteps, and chiefs finding themselves torn between asserting their sovereignty and maintaining recognition by the state.

This thesis examines the material and conceptual remaking of chiefly lands as constitutive of new forms of exclusion and political authority. Yet, instead of focusing on the ‘achievements’ of state power, analytical attention is placed on the creative ways state governance is subverted by chiefly obstruction, insubordinate peoples and unruly nature. Drawing on long-term fieldwork and archival research, the thesis argues that the process of ‘state making’ and its effects are inseparable from the myriad material practices that thwart state power. A conceptualization of ‘boundaries’ is developed to capture how relations of stately and chiefly power operate on an unstable political landscape. The analysis knits together insights from legal pluralism, political ecology, critical geography, anthropology and postcolonial theory in a grounded reading of everyday forms of state formation that captures how colonial histories and spatialities intertwine with present-day politics.

Building on this analytical foundation, the thesis links up four case studies of ‘state making’: (I) the colonial racialization and sedentarization of African bodies, and their refusals to conform to colonial territoriality, (II) the government enclosure of a forest repeatedly reoccupied by chiefly authority (III) the emplacement of survey beacons on village land, and their demolition by local inhabitants, and (IV) the promotion of state-sanctioned title deeds on customary land, and their reinvention as implements of chiefly control. Each case makes visible the fissures of state power and how creative people exploit indeterminacies to resist eviction and reassert their claims to home and land. Through a recognition of ‘ordinary people’ as political protagonists, fully capable of contestation and critique, the thesis shows how marginalized people continuously test the limits of state governance, and how such practices are not ‘irregularities’ to otherwise effective performances of governance, but crucial political enactments that constitute new forms of property, territory and an uneven and variable state.

*Keywords:* state making, boundaries, land struggles, resistance, property, territory, chieftainship, Zambia

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# At the limits of state governance. Territory, property and state making in Lenje Chieftdom, rural Zambia

## Abstract

Den statliga styrningen av markägande i södra Afrika – vars system är präglad av sekelgamla rasstrukturer – står i centrum för dagens politiska strider över mark och rättmätigt ledarskap. Den zambiska regeringen exproprierar s.k. 'traditionell' mark, förvaltd av lokala kungar och byäldstar, i syfte att inlemma marken i 'moderniteten'. På papperet är det ett effektivt verktyg för statsbildning. Men i praktiken genomsyras processen av rättslig ambivalens, med nya gränsmarkörer som dyker upp utanför byinvånarens dörrar, och med kungar som balanserar mellan att hävda sin förvaltningsrätt och bli erkända av staten som legitima politiska aktörer.

Den här avhandlingen undersöker den materiella och konceptuella omdaning av mark kontrollerad av kungadömet Lenje i centrala Zambia, och hur den skapar nya former av exkludering och politiska auktoriteter. Men snarare än att fokusera på vad statlig maktutövning 'uppnår' läggs analytiskt fokus på hur det statliga styret ständigt utmanas av kungadömet, lokala småbrukare och oregerlig natur. Med utgångspunkt i arkivforskning och deltagande observation argumenterar avhandlingen för att processen 'statsbildning' är oskiljbar från den myriad av kreativa praktiker som utmanar statlig maktutövning. Analysen bygger på en konceptualisering av 'gränser' för att förstå hur statligt och kungligt maktutövande yttrar sig på ett politiskt instabilt landskap. Undersökningen väver samman insikter från politisk ekologi, rättspluralism, kritisk geografi, antropologi och postkolonial teori, vilket lägger grund för en analys av vardagliga former av statsbildning som också fångar hur koloniala historier och geografier sammanflätas med samtida politik.

Avhandlingen kopplar samman fyra fallstudier av statsbildning: (I) den koloniala rasifieringen och sedentariseringen av afrikanska kroppar, och deras vägran att fogas in i den koloniala geografien, (II) den statliga exproprieringen av ett skogsområde som upprepade gånger återockuperas av kungadömet, (III) statens utmätning och utplacering av gränsmarkörer på bybors mark, och hur lokala invånare demolerar dem, och (IV) statligt främjande av nationella lagfartsbevis på mark som regleras av lokala normsystem, och hur lagfarter omtolkas av lokala byäldstar till politiska verktyg för sin egen maktutövning. Varje fallstudie synliggör sprickorna i den statliga styrningen, och hur kreativa människor utnyttjar politiska ovissheter för att motsätta sig vräkningar och återartikulera sina rättigheter. Avhandlingen visar hur marginaliserade människor kontinuerligt testar gränserna för statligt styre, och hur sådana praktiker är betydelsefulla politiska handlingar som konstituerar en ombytlig och föränderlig stat.

*Nyckelord:* statsbildning, marktvister, motstånd, egendom, territorium, kolonialism, kungadömen, Zambia

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## Acknowledgements

This thesis is a product of the enthusiasm and encouragement of a number of extraordinary people. Over the past few years, I have acquired many debts, and these pages are not enough to express the gratitude I feel. What follows below are just some of the enabling conditions under which I wrote this thesis.

I thank, first, all the residents of Mulonga village and Munyama Forest. Although I cannot name them, I want to register their tremendous hospitality and generosity in having an inquisitive PhD student in their midst for almost a year. I learned more from them about state governance than one can learn from any report or study. A special thanks to headman Chiwala for welcoming me into Munyama Forest. A warm thank you also goes Newman Nkandu for assisting me in the field. As a friend, culture broker and critical reader, your help has been indispensable. I also thank the staff at the Zambia Land Alliance (ZLA) for generously sharing their detailed knowledge about Zambian land politics, and the librarians at the National Archives of Zambia who patiently helped me to navigate the ledgers.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors: Andrea Nightingale, Emil Sandström and Harry (Hal) Fischer. Andrea, you are the most unwavering and compassionate mentor and supervisor one could ask for. You pushed my thinking beyond what I thought was possible. Your brilliant mind permeates these pages. Emil, your commitment and perceptive comments have been crucial for keeping me on track. Thank you for sharing your political savvy, for keeping me on my toes, and for not letting me wander (too far) off course. Hal, thank you for stepping in at the right moment to advise me on what to do, or to explain what I was already doing. Your incisive critiques and comments have been invaluable.

I would also like to acknowledge the financial and institutional support of the Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences (NJ), the Department of Urban and Rural Development (SOL) and the Division of Rural Development (LAG). Many thanks to all my colleagues at the LAG and beyond. I do not now always remember just who it was who turned my thinking in a particular direction, but I want to acknowledge the encouragement and insights of Flora Hajdu, Seema Arora-Jonsson, Patrik Oskarsson, Malin Beckman, Alin Kadfak, Yvonne Gunnarsdotter, Cecilia Waldenström, Örjan Bartholdson, Klara Fischer, Noémi Gonda, Linley Chiwona Karlun, Patrik Cras, Kristina Marquardt, Margarita Cuadra, Kjell Hansen, Stephanie Leder, Marien González Hidalgo, Opira Otto, Linda Engström and Marien González Hidalgo – you have all broadened my world and sharpened my thinking. I would also like to extend my gratitude to all the administrative staff at the department, who have always been so helpful. A special thanks to Anni Hoffrén for thesis layout support. To all my PhD buddies at the department, thank you for sharing the pains and pleasures of writing, for your support and comradeship. A special thanks to Stefan Granlund, Arvid Stiernström and Katarina Landström for making my PhD studies a joy.

I am also grateful for feedback from more far-flung scholars. A special thanks to Penelope Anthias, Anders Sjögren, Tariq Jazeel and Muriel Côte who offered constructive critique on sections and drafts of this thesis. I am indebted to Kathryn White whose editorial skills greatly improved the text. Many thanks also to the Conflict Research Group (CRG) at Ghent University for hosting me during a month-long research visit. My stay among the bright minds of the CRG allowed me to write a first draft of Chapter 6 of this thesis. Thanks also go to the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography (SSAG) for a generous fieldwork stipend.

Finally, thank you Emelie for your insightful comments on text and thought, for walking me through both the rough and the smooth, for tolerating my absences and for your loving care.

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# 1. Introduction

*Mulonga village, Lenje Chieftdom, autumn 2016*

It was early morning when the survey vehicle rolled in. It was ornamented with the coat of arms of the 'The Republic of Zambia' with the text 'One Zambia – One Nation' enfolded within, and carried five men and all the devices needed to carve up the land in modular units and inscribe them on the landscape: charts, prism poles, spades, rebar, cement. Their mandate and the reactions of the people they encountered on the ground is emblematic of the central concern of this thesis; namely, the detailed ways material land works both as a conduit for state authority and a potent terrain for resistance, sabotage and insubordination.

According to the map the surveyors carried, the land was 'empty', yet the landscape was dotted with farmsteads, fields, fallows, pastures and orchards, telling of a space already inhabited. Among the inhabitants, the arrival of the survey vehicle incited confusion. 'I don't know what is happening', Chipepo said, 'I think they are government people'. 'You haven't talked to them?' I queried. 'No', he replied quietly, 'they just came and started to put those beacons in the ground.' Rumors of the sudden appearance of the surveyors traveled rapidly across the village lands, and that same evening people gathered at the village pub to air their concerns: 'What if they return tomorrow? Where will they put those beacons then? ... I don't like this, we have to keep our eyes open', someone remarked. 'Yes, if that vehicle enters our land, things will be very bad', someone else commented. It was not long, however, before people discovered cement survey beacons implanted in fields and farmlands, uncomfortably juxtaposed with the cairns, trees and streams delineating their customary rights. In the wake of the survey vehicle, the contours of a new property regime were materializing on the land,

rendering in *concrete* emergent relations of state authority and new spatialities of exclusion.

That the survey vehicle entering Mulonga that day was marked with the text ‘One Zambia – One Nation’ was symbolic of a wider context; the slogan was coined by Zambia’s founding father and first president, Kenneth Kaunda, in 1964, to thwart tribalist revolt and sub-national divisiveness and secessionism among Zambia’s seventy or so ethnolinguistic groups – what colonial administrators called ‘tribes’ – and to instead foster a feeling of national cohesion. The slogan has lingered on as a powerful national axiom, and seen here on a government vehicle, it mirrors its material-historical ramifications: by mapping, surveying and beaconing the land, it is brought within the fold of the nation. At the same time, however, the rural poor are edited out of the land on which they depend. Such events have been observed and retold in extensive scholarship on state making and land reform. Yet what happened in Mulonga over the following weeks troubles such narratives. In the wake of the survey vehicle, villagers repeatedly tested the limits of state governance: some demolished cement beacons and buried the remains in the bush or piled them up at the roadside as an open spectacle. Others built sturdier houses, replaced thatch with iron sheets and transplanted fruit trees to more strategic locations, all to reinforce their presence on the land. Instead of an effective performance of authority, the demarcation of Mulonga evolved into a localized conflict between a creative citizenry rearranging the landscape and picking apart boundary stones and a bureaucracy struggling to make them perform the political work assigned to them. Somewhat ironically, people resisted eviction by turning the tools of state governance against itself.

## 1.1 Arguments and objectives

Agrarian reforms toward private property have been rolled out across the African continent, reordering rights to land and changing the ways crucial resources can be held, accessed and controlled (Boone 2019; Chimhowu 2019). The Zambian government is among those that are in the midst of appropriating ‘traditional land’ – governed by chiefs and headmen molded through the colonial technologies of tribal rule – in an effort to bring it into the fold of ‘modernity.’ These lands have become powerful vectors for political contestation, and reports of displacement abound. Still, land’s

material emplacement means that people on the ground usually have some say, if not through institutional arrangements then through acts of subversion, non-compliance or force (Li 2004). This thesis is about those acts. I examine the material and conceptual remaking of chiefly land – physically reconfiguring, politically relabeling, discursively reimaging – as constitutive of new forms of exclusion, orderings of power and political authority. Yet, rather than focusing on the ‘achievements’ of state power, I shift analytical attention to the myriad ways state governance is refused, challenged and unsettled by chiefly obstruction, insubordinate peoples and unruly natures. My ambition is to rescale ‘state making’ into the messy geographies of everyday life, where we can take seriously the insistent materiality of physical land and its more-than-passive presence in our lives, and the ingenuity, makeshift creativity and experience of local peoples.

Scholars writing on the political ecology of land have spent a great deal of effort analyzing land’s constitution as ‘territory’, ‘governable space’ or ‘space of contestation’, and how efforts to control land and other resources are intimately related to the reproduction and consolidation of the state, both materially and symbolically (Peluso 2001; Neumann 2004; Harris 2012; Lund and Boone 2013; Hoffmann and Vlassenroot 2014; Bridge 2014; Nightingale 2018; Sud 2019). Their work shows how the relationship between land and the institutions that act upon it is co-constitutive, with the very notion of stateness wrapped up with control over land and the people who dwell on it. States ‘come into being’, as Neumann (2004: 185) famously averred, through the ‘assertion of control over territory, resources, and people’ (cf. Mitchell 1991).

This thesis builds on these insights, but I also push them forward by bringing into clearer view the hidden, invisible and ‘backstage’ work that continuously thwarts state governance and reinjects elements of eventuality and uncertainty into processes of ‘state making’: exclusionary property is etched onto the land yet fences corrode and boundary stones are unearthed; eviction troops are deployed but ancestral spirits command heavy rains that thwart their travel; abstract property rights are inscribed onto title deeds in a faraway capital, but documents are lost or manipulated; huts are burned and fields ploughed under to erase signs of human occupation and use, but people repeatedly write themselves back into the landscape through tree planting or chiefly sanction. Such contingencies certainly appear in critical scholarship on the state. In particular, there has been a surge of writing that explores the

‘negotiability’ of rights in land and legitimate authority to govern, offering important insights into the indeterminate effects of state governance (Sud 2019; Hoffmann, Vlassenroot and Marchais 2017; Lund 2002). What has received less attention, I contend, is how such indeterminacies are actively produced by people on the ground in their efforts to stake claims to home and land, and how material land works as a conduit for the *subversion* of state power.

My analysis brings into analytical view how people continually exploit indeterminacies in the situation, or indeed generate such indeterminacies, using whatever areas there are of inconsistency, contradiction and ambiguity (cf. Moore 1978). Once we rescale our analysis onto the ground, however, we see how the rural poor are not alone in navigating these uncertainties. State bureaucrats, surveyors and field officers also deploy surreptitious tactics – sabotage, feigned ignorance, dissimulation – in order to manipulate relations of governance (cf. Scott 1985). For example, when reports came in about people uprooting boundary stones in Mulonga, the surveyors received orders to ‘plant beacons strategically, so people couldn’t tell the boundaries’, as the chief surveyor hesitantly disclosed, suggesting that rendering visible the intentions of government made it vulnerable to obstruction. As such, analytical attention to the fissures, fractures and cracks of state power shows how practices of subversion and state governance evolve together, with seemingly ‘failed’ attempts to govern being constitutive of new enactments of authority. In this thesis, I use such moments not to query some radical reconfiguration of rule (cf. Lund 2016) but rather to probe how state governance is, at every turn, troubled by unruly peoples and natures, and how moments of contestation – however miniscule – are not anomalies to otherwise effective performances of government, but crucial conceptual resources for our understanding of agrarian struggles as productive of the state as a contested and variegated political authority. I use such moments to think through the state and its colonial history, charting out the ways racial exclusion, displacement and dispossession unfold (or not) in geographies of everyday life.

There is a second aspect to my analysis. The thesis sits in productive tension with literatures suggesting that customary lands across the African continent have become the ‘new frontiers’ for capitalist expansion, leading to the expungement of local rights and claims to land (Chimhowu 2019; Kelly and Peluso 2015). While I do not disagree with these views, my concern is that

these narratives attribute to state governance a coherence that it does not have, and hide from view the experience of marginalized peoples – those for whom courtrooms are not viable terrains of struggle and those who constantly face deferrals of legal-official resolution. This thesis, in contrast, shows how the rural poor stake claims to home and land *within* the currents of structural inequality. Some scholars have cautioned against privileging contingency and negotiability, arguing that attention to ‘small acts’ might conceal structural forms of oppression and inequality (Peters 2004). My argument is a different one: the fact that local rights and claims to land are being eroded across southern Africa makes it all the more urgent to probe how people resist and subvert change, what practices – even ‘miniscule’ and quotidian – manipulate the mechanisms of dispossession, and, finally, what practices form the counterpart of the processes that organize the establishment of new agrarian orders. Ultimately, if we fail to recognize ‘small acts’ as legitimate political claims, we also fail to recognize some people as political protagonists, fully capable of contestation and critique, and to honor contestation and critique as meaningful political action.

Consequently, this thesis shifts the analytical focus away from overall strategies of government and toward the political toil – adjustments, deployments, readjustments, redeployments – that goes into making state governance work (or not), and the opportunities for subversion, refusals and insubordination that emerge within. By placing the analysis here, the state is revealed as an uncertain achievement, with a crisscrossing of social relations that draw its institutional bounds out into a world of ambiguous authority, diffident bureaucrats, insubordinate citizens, unclear jurisdictions and unruly ecologies (Sud 2019). Thus, attending to the cracks, failures, fissures and inadvertent outcomes of state governance is not to explore ‘state failure’ (see Hagmann and Péclard 2010 for a critical review); rather, it mirrors an analytical interest in the inability of state power to ‘block the contingencies of the world’ (Meehan 2013: 8), and how those contingencies provide possibilities for people to resist eviction, reoccupy disputed lands and assert their claims to a patch of ground. Attending to such moments, I shall argue, is not a distraction from our understanding of agrarian struggles; it is fundamental to it. It is against this background that my overarching research question should be read:

- *What are the ‘limits’ of state governance in rural Zambia?*

I operationalize my inquiry through two sub-questions:

- I. *How are new state territorializations shaped by the materiality of landscapes and the people that inhabit and move across them?*
- II. *What political work do artifacts of statutory land governance – survey beacons, official uniforms, title deeds etc. – perform in the opaque reality of the everyday?*

With these questions, my aim is to further our understanding of how everyday contingencies shape land struggles and state making in rural Zambia. Ethnography and archival research orient my analysis, with a focus on two particular field sites in Lenje Chiefdom, Central Province: Munyama Forest in Chisamba District and Mulonga village in Chibombo District (see figure 3), but I also draw on fieldwork from Lenje Chiefdom as a whole. The thesis links up four ‘agrarian events’ – corresponding to four empirical chapters – from the past and present, each one focusing on a critical moment of ‘state making’ that features a government attempt to remake chiefly land, yet which leads to highly ‘unfixed’ outcomes.

I begin my analysis in the 1890s to explore the colonial appropriation of indigenous lands and the concomitant displacement of racialized *bodies* onto marginal geographies. Instead of exploring the ‘achievements’ of colonial state power, however, I shift analytical attention to the bodies that refused or ignored the appellation assigned to them to probe how boundaries of race, gender and tribe were repeatedly challenged by bodies moving across the landscape. Subsequently, I explore the government enclosure of a *forest* claimed by chiefly authority. I analyze the racialized history of the landscape, going back to the 1940s, and examine how its ecological-spiritual layers and the materiality of terrain trouble present-day state governance. I then move on to explore the demarcation of village land, and how the material artifacts of private property, *survey beacons* in particular, provide an opportunity for villagers to engage in covert political struggles with the authorities of the state. Finally, I examine how the *title deed*, and its paper-y existence, become reappropriated by chiefly authority, opening up the tenets of exclusionary property law for creative renegotiation.

Conceptually, I read these contestations as ‘boundary struggles’, with the body, forest, beacon and title deed figuring as four ‘boundary objects’ located in the betweenness of stately and chiefly spaces of authority and control. Each of these ‘objects’ foregrounds localized material practices through which

relations of rule work – the movement of bodies, the emplacement of boundary stones, the circulation of documents – locating state power not at a fixed center or within a systemic logic but in *relational processes* that are translocal yet have highly localized effects. Taken together, my four case studies reveal how the outcome of agrarian struggles remains crucially contingent upon how state governance becomes tangled up with colonial histories, the materiality of things, spiritual ecologies, the flammability of paper, accidents and unforeseen events. They reveal how land – at different scales – never becomes fully exclusive but rather takes on liminal qualities through which a plurality of political actors reinjects elements of indeterminacy, rendering absolute orderings all the more impossible. By bringing these processes to the fore, this thesis contributes to a reimagining of (state) power and political authority in rural Zambia, one that shows how material land is turned into an object of political control in ways that authorize violent exclusions and reproduce social hierarchies, but also how land, at the same time, is inhabited, labored on and creatively navigated in efforts to subvert repressive power and authority.

## 1.2 Conceptual delineations

### 1.2.1 Land, power, meaning

On the cover of this thesis is an aerial photo of one of my field sites, Mooya village in Lenje Chiefdom. It shows a seemingly clear line separating out neat parcels of cadastral property from the meshwork of rights on chiefly land – a geography organized by statutory law, on one side, and a chiefly topography, on the other. Yet the aerial view is misleading insofar as it creates a conception of chiefly lands as somehow located ‘outside’ the ordering power of state institutions. The boundary between stately and chiefly authority emerged out of the formation of the colonial settler state, which was founded upon the displacement of the African population onto marginal geographies and the concomitant inauguration of indirect rule (Mamdani 1996). Acknowledging these relations negates conceptions of contemporary state governance as expanding ‘outwards’ and ‘into’ places and fields not previously regulated by state power (Chimhowu 2009; cf. Scott 1985, 1998). Instead, what we see in the aerial view is the political life of ‘imperial debris’ (Stoler 2008: 193), that is, an ‘evasive space of imperial formations past and present as well as the perceptions and practices by which

people are forced to reckon with features of those formations in which they remain vividly and imperceptibly bound.’

In this research, I account for the spatial, ecological and temporal texture of these relations, articulating how current forms of subjection to state rule are molded on the back of a colonial past, recurring in a ‘colonial presence’ (Stoler 2016). My analysis captures that which is ‘past but not over’ and how ‘colonial relations are disparately and partially absorbed into social relations...’ (ibid: 25). In this optic, Zambian land is what Donald Moore (2005) has called an ‘entangled landscape’: a space where state power mingles with chiefly authority, where colonial histories and spatialities intertwine with the politics of the present, where people become subjected to multiple matrices of power.

Consequently, this thesis tacks between past and present to situate the analysis in a wider field of historical and cultural practices and imaginaries – and relations of power – through which land and its users have been invested with multiple layers of cultural and political meaning. This is also to suggest that lands people inhabit and cultivate do not lie external to culture and history, but are themselves artifactual: objects made, materially and conceptually, through many different historical and spatial practices. On the most fundamental level, the notion that land is *made* (and subject to state making), rather than existing as a pure identity external to social and political processes, forces us to take responsibility for *how* this making of land occurs, in whose interest and with what consequences for the rural poor (Braun 2002). Rather than probing a linear change toward the capitalization of land, this thesis highlights the continuation of the many lives – a postcolonial plurality, or socially intertwined trajectories – of land.

This departs from most treatments of contemporary land politics in Zambia, which see conflicts over the land in terms of competing interests and diverging beliefs about how it should be used, held or developed (per de Soto 2000). In these accounts, land is self-evident and exists in a space outside politics; it is simply the object *over which* politics happens. This thesis, in contrast, probes how something called ‘land’ is made visible, how it enters history as an object of social and political control, and emerges as a site of material, emotional and libidinal struggle. In this analytic, land is a category of power; there is no place ‘outside’ social and material relations and practices from which land can be objectively known – it is simultaneously epistemic, cultural, material and political. The same chunk of land or group of trees might be valued as an important source of gathered products, essential for the current and future food



security of the household; a place of work; a marker of historical settlement; a resource to be accumulated and sold for economic gain; a place of social memory and ancestral worship or one that provides a cool, shady spot for spirits to reside (see Li 2014). Land can be claimed through birth rights, first settlement, conquest, residence, cultivation, habitual grazing, tree plantation, spiritual sanction or bureaucratic allocation (Shipton 1994: 348). These ways of valuing and claiming land are not commensurable with each other, and are indeed the subject of ongoing negotiations and debate in local social and political life. Even when our relation to land seems most immediate, it is profoundly shaped by histories, knowledges and practices that enable experience (Derrida 1976). As Rouse (1987: 173, 182) notes, ‘what things are, and what characteristics they can have, depends in part upon the practical configuration within which they become manifest. There are no essences independent of this configuration of practices and the language invoked within it. ... We encounter “nature” through our practices, as it fits in and is revealed intelligibly in that context’.

My intention is not only to move away from talking about land in the singular, but also to move away from the notion that landscapes can be understood as discrete, bounded places. In and between the chapters of this thesis, place emerges at the nexus of multiple material-semiotic practices. These do not coalesce to form a stable entity, nor do they respond to a single logic. There is no one spatiality or temporality in Lenje Chiefdom. Places are inherently rhizomatic, the effect of spatial linkages and temporal rhythms that operate at different speeds (Massey 1994; 2005). This does not empty place of its meaning; rather, it suggests the opposite. Drawing on a phrase used by Kathleen Stewart (1996), all places are ‘occupied places’, at once subject to the occupation of external forces, yet occupied – experienced, lived, hoped for – in their own right. Indeed, land is not a spatial container for the implementation of state rule (Moore 2005). State making occurs on and through land crosscut with meanings irreducible to a singular logic of power, a view that refuses modernist ideas of non-human nature being some object of ‘state capture’ (Parenti 2014). Instead, land becomes the material and social fabric through which the state emerges.

Analytically, this translates into an attention to how state governance unfolds in *encounters* with rural subjects already embedded in relations with the land, relations that extend into a colonial history and entangle with land’s geophysical substance. Practices of government that remake land in rural

Zambia, I maintain, do not institute a *new* regime of rule, erasing, eclipsing or occluding previous power, but rather *reconfigure* the relations through which power works. In this analytic, land emerges as a current of power and resistance, with the aim of displacing state power from structural dictates and specters of bureaucratic rationality. My work *rescales* the analysis of state making onto the land and onto rural subjects, and *conceptually inserts* state making into spaces of everyday life.

My thinking is informed by a long tradition of research that has sought to unsettle conceptualizations of the state as a singular, rational and stable entity, and instead has centered the analysis on the state's conditional emergence, elevation, endurance or erosion (Foucault 1980; Taussig 1992; Nettle 1986; Abrams 1988; Mitchell 1991; Bourdieu 1994; Ferguson and Gupta 2002). The fundamental argument emerging from this body of thought is that the state is a product of practice, an effect, a provisional achievement, and that its durability is contingent upon its constant renewal, effectively relocating the analysis of the state from structural dictates to process and attempts at stabilization, successful or not.

Foucault (1980, 1995), in particular, has been an important theorist in this regard, stressing the constitutive effects of power and how its exercise materializes into different assemblages of rule (see also Li 2007). Instead of analyzing some apparatus from which power proceeds (i.e. some localizable, expansionist, repressive and legal institution), Foucault (1995) analyzed the 'miniscule' technical procedures acting on and with details, comprising the means of a generalized 'discipline'. 'Discipline fixes', Foucault (1995: 219) contended, because 'it arrests movement; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about in the country in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions.' My analysis poses questions both similar and contrary to those of Foucault: similar, in that my goal is to bring into view 'ordinary' practices that endure within social and territorial productions and deflect their functioning by means of a multitude of 'tactics' articulated in the details of everyday life; contrary, in that my goal is not to make clearer how the violence of order is transmuted into some disciplinary technology, but rather to bring to light the surreptitious forms taken by the dispersed, tactical and makeshift creativity of people already caught in the nets of 'discipline' (colonialism, modernity, land law reform etc.). Pushed to their limits, these procedures and ruses

compose ‘anti-disciplines’. In my writing, however, they feature as acts of resistance or subversion.

From this theoretical vantage point, we escape the isomorphism among state, force and territory that locates power both spatially and institutionally inside a unitary state with functional desires and an inherent tendency to expand through its own dynamics. Instead, by focusing on the *practices* of government – surveying, fencing, enclosing, reclassification – political authority becomes visible as unfolding, never fully constructed but always under construction, materially and symbolically, and our analytical attention is drawn not to where power proceeds from, but to the lands on and through which it is exercised (Hansen and Stepputat 2001). It is here that I place the analysis, in moments and places where state authority tries to inscribe new governing relationships, yet which lead to uncertain, unfixed or awkwardly overlapping outcomes.

Thus ‘the state’ is not some actor-like entity, although it sometimes appears like one (Mitchell 1991). Chiwala, a headman in Munyama Forest, told me that ‘the state is a camel’. We were sitting at his homestead in Munyama Forest, a stretch of land nestled within a mystique of sovereign ambiguity (see Chapter 6). Once a ‘Protected Forest Area’ policed by rangers in colonial costume, Munyama is now occupied by a peasant population governed by a group of village headmen subservient to Chief Liteta IV of Lenje Chiefdom. State authorities have repeatedly tried to reclaim control over the forest lands, issuing eviction letters, ordering the arrest of unruly forest cultivators, burning huts and ploughing fields under. State incursion, however, has been met with resistance, both human and more-than-human. Government vehicles entering the forest have been stoned and at other times impeded by heavy rains, summoned, some aver, by an ancestral spirit. Fields have been replanted and homesteads rebuilt, often with ash-tainted remains. ‘Yes, a camel, you know, like in the story’, Chiwala continued when noticing my bewilderment. I had stayed with him for some time and had grown used to his wit, but a camel? Chiwala ran inside his house and collected one of his son’s school books, and started to read:

One day an Arab and a camel crossed a desert. At nightfall the Arab raised his tent and went inside. It was not long before the camel put his nose under the flap. ‘Master’, he said, ‘it’s very cold out here, can I just put my nose in your tent?’ ‘By all means’, said the Arab, and went back to sleep. Soon the Arab awoke again. This time the camel asked if he could put his forelegs into

the tent. ‘Yes, you may put your forelegs within,’ said the Arab, moving a little to make room for the camel. A little while later the camel woke the Arab up again: ‘may I not stand wholly inside?’ ‘Yes, yes,’ said the Arab, ‘come inside. Perhaps it will be better for both of us.’ So the camel crowded in. The Arab, now crammed to the corner of the small tent, again went to sleep. When he woke up the next time, he was outside in the cold and the camel had the tent to himself.

Listening to Chiwala tell this story was something like an extended ethnographic pre-sneeze sensation that infused new life into my conceptual world. The camel embodies many of the enigmatic attributes of the state as depicted in anthropological writing (Spencer 2007; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Aretxaga 2003). It shadows its subjects, at once diligently and aloofly. It is inimical, yet provides comfort. It is seemingly possessed of an ‘autonomous organicity’ (Laszczkowski and Reeves 2015), able to powerfully affect its subjects in ways both denigrating and cunning. And all the same, ‘the state’, like the camel, remains just an imaginary, a construct that can be critiqued and chased away, sometimes by hurling rocks at its material incarnations. Above all, the state is inseparable from the socionatural relations it is embedded within (Nightingale 2018), with both colonial and postcolonial rule intertwining in legacies of conquest, dispossession and radical inequalities of rights.

### 1.2.2 Colonial connectivities

Even the most localized and momentary struggles over land reflect wider histories and geographies of power (see Boone 2014). Zambia is a bifurcated nation, with lines of social division sedimented over a long history of colonial rule. In 1924, the first British governor in Northern Rhodesia, Sir Herbert Stanley, proclaimed that Northern Rhodesia should be developed into a ‘white man’s country’ (see Roberts 1976: 183). Consequently, the most attractive and accessible land was named Crown Land, vested in the governor of Northern Rhodesia and set aside for white settlers, while Africans were forcibly relocated to more remote lands, Native Reserves, and incorporated into regimes of indirect rule, with chiefs and headmen policing infringements of domestic order, procuring taxes and labor while providing conduits for colonial administration (see Gould 1995; 1997). Colonial spatial segregation was founded upon constructs of racial, cultural and legal difference – a colonizing bourgeoisie holding land as private property and a colonized proletariat rendered too backward for individual ownership – ideal

types reified as historical facts mapped onto discrete geographical and institutional sites (Mamdani 1996). As such, colonial spatial rule animated a ‘sedentarist metaphysics’ (Malkki 1992), pinning people to place; a ‘raciology of statecraft’ (Gilroy 2000) that spatialized racial categories, inscribed them on the landscape, effectively territorializing relations of colonial domination (but see Chapter 5 for an analysis of the limits of colonial rule).

At national independence in 1964 the first Zambian government, fronted by Kenneth Kaunda and his United National Independence Party (UNIP), inherited a divided nation-space, torn along racial, political and spatial lines. Liberation from the command of colonial spatiality did not occlude previous power, but reworked it; Crown Land was relabeled State Land and Native Reserve land was renamed customary land, or, in everyday speech, traditional land, with chiefs and headmen reconstituted as situated sovereigns of rural lands. Indeed, as colonial spatialities of power remain consequential even as they became reworked, the divide between State Land and chiefly territory remains not only a spatio-tenorial division, but a politically significant boundary between social blocks (Sitko and Chamberlin 2016). People still navigate this landscape of historical refusals and permissions predicated on various forms of colonial land categories: Protected Forest Areas, Crown Land, Native Reserve, Proper Villages – spaces whose categorical definitions continue to define the people and practices within.

To some extent, then, these two blocks represent two different realms of law, bureaucracy and modes of relating to the land. In chiefly territory, property is governed by the idea that rights are a progressive result of human labor on the land; on State Land, property rights are understood as resulting from legal recognition in an abstract code. However, while the neatness of this distinction might hold in legal argumentation, empirical investigations, of course, reveal a more complicated picture. Different forms of written contracts and legal agreements shape use and access also on customary lands, ranging from notes scrawled on pages torn from spiral notebooks to more detailed accords transcribed onto documents using a typewriter. The title deed might be the epitome of a market signal, but in its absence, people look for other markers than can stand in for it (a cairn, a score on a trunk or a field of maize). Yet huts, trees and manioc gardens do not signal possession as successfully as brick buildings and fields of wheat planted in straight rows. And the rural poor know that their attempts at signaling possession are not

as strong as the attempts of title holders and that, more often than not, their possession markers are disqualified simply because they made them themselves (see Chapter 8 for a critique and a more detailed discussion of the relation between the material and abstract rights). Thus the land itself – its location, occupation and material imprints – becomes a site for political contestation.

Contestation over what constitutes legitimate claim to land speaks, at least in part, to a long-standing tension in liberal thinking about the relationships between and among property, law, and citizenship, going back to one of the founding liberal narratives of private property, that of John Locke. Locke (1963[1772]) believed that ‘in the beginning’ and on new frontiers, men could reasonably appropriate those elements of nature that they improved with their own labor. He saw as a principle of natural law that property followed from the extension of the one’s body into the land on which he worked (see Radin 1993). But Locke saw this form of appropriation as ultimately limited and likely to generate conflict as people multiplied and resources became scarce. Conflict was the reason for the invention of land titles. Once land titles came into effect, labor in itself was not enough to justify appropriation of a resource, and property moved into the realm of abstract rights tacitly agreed on by members of society.

The narrative that grounds the Lockean understanding of property tells a tale of the birth of civilization in the moment of the founding of a consensual abstraction (cf. Rose 1994). Locke’s story pivots on a radical historical break between a moment when human relations were governed by their relations with material things through labor and the moment when relations came to be governed by the higher order of the social contract (Blomley 2003). The Lockean narrative reemerges constantly throughout proposals both for and against land reform in Zambia, with proponents arguing that for Zambia to ‘modernize’, it must create institutions that supersede the material and allow for governance to be conducted at the level of nationally recognized representations of ownership rights (titles), all to unlock ‘dead capital’, as de Soto (2000: 55) put it. Within the state bureaucracy, those obstructing ‘modernization’, such as the people in Mulonga and Munyama, are seen as troublesome reminders of rural Zambia’s not-quite modernity. Much like Locke (1963[1772]: 341) holds, some land uses are still tantamount to ‘waste’, because the inhabitants of those lands have not acceded to the abstract-legal order established by ‘Mankind’. The opening of the Zambian

property frontier in 1995, which I elaborate on in Chapter 2, had as its goal the founding of a new modern nation. Yet it is not difficult to see that project's exclusions, which are similar to those implicit in the Lockean view of the 'empty' American frontier.

This thesis imbues those spaces with meaning, matter and substance, and, in so doing, brings to the fore the *political animated* by those who 'obstruct' projects of state modernization. I want to stress that I do not posit a domain of cultural and political life that somehow remains protected from the incursions of colonial modernity, and find in these spaces resources for anticolonial politics (Scott 1985; Chatterjee 1993). While previous work along these lines has reminded us that colonialisms – and their spatial and discursive formations – were uneven in effect and extent, such studies often assumed the existence of separate spaces (colonial/precolonial, modern/premodern) between which subjects consciously moved, taking on different identities at different sites. Not only did this rely on questionable assumptions about the integrity of these spaces and a consciousness subjects who moved between them, it also revealed a somewhat disabling nostalgia for a 'pure' subject of resistance who, in the name of authenticity, speaks from a position 'outside' colonial modernity (see Braun 2002). There are no 'pure' spaces in rural Zambia. As I demonstrate in this thesis, efforts to contest colonial spatialities never do so from positions 'outside' colonialism's discursive and political fields, but rather by turning the terms and tools of colonial power against itself. Attending to the limits of state governance is crucial in this regard; here, practices of government become tangled up in other ways of being and moving with material land, and the legitimacy of colonial power is not given, but must be continually reasserted, and in its assertion lies the risk of failure. At the limits of state governance, the regimes of truth that provide the basis for repressive authority might be rearticulated otherwise. My ambition is to give ethnographic and historical texture to these processes, empirically grounding the analysis of how state authority comes into political existence on lands that are multiple in meaning and materiality, what possibilities for alternative articulations of rights and politics emerge, and how people navigate these possibilities for rightful presence and a piece of ground.

### 1.3 Outline of empirical chapters

To structure the analysis, the thesis is divided into four empirical chapters, each featuring a government attempt to remake land yet leading to highly ‘unfixed’ outcomes. These four empirical chapters form the core of this thesis and are intended as individual ‘cuts’ into Zambian land politics, past and present, which inform a historically and empirically grounded exploration of state authority as a nascent and contested field of power in spaces of everyday life. Each chapter builds on a methodology that works to summon up a theoretical imperative to make visible the cracks, failures and fissures of state governance, and shows how room for resistance and non-compliance emerges within. This methodology – developed in Chapter 3 – is structured around four ‘boundary objects’ that sit in between spaces of chiefly and stately control, where different orders of power coincide: the body, the forest, the beacon and the title deed.

The thesis as a whole connects a number of conceptual points, drawn from a wide body of theoretical literature: legal pluralism, political ecology, critical geography, anthropology and postcolonial theory, each providing different insights into the indeterminate effects of state power. In each case study chapter, I lift some of these to the fore while holding others in tension, yet there is a myriad of recursive links between each of them. Consequently, they should be read as interwoven case studies, which, taken together, build a larger case of state formation; they are instances in and through which relationships between state, land and subject are reordered amid struggles over land and legitimate authority.

In and between the chapters that follow, the reader will also find a number of ‘text boxes’ in which I explicate and elaborate on themes arising from my argument, but which fall outside the scope of my narrative. These include colonial connectivities that show how past struggles recur in the present and empirical elaborations that serve to situate the analysis, yet that would disrupt the narrative if embedded in the main text.

*Table 1. Outline of empirical chapters*

THE BODY CORPOREAL	THE FOREST	THE SURVEY BEACON	THE TITLE DEED
Race, gender, territory: how ‘out of place bodies’ made (a) difference in colonial Zambia	State, chiefdom and the forest in between: the reinvention of legitimate authority in Munyama	Property becoming otherwise: state, affect and materiality in Mulonga	Fickle abstractions: the material politics of land titling in Lenje Chiefdom



### 1.3.1 Empirical Chapter I: The body corporeal

The formations of power I try to understand are embedded historically and materially by specific political, social and cultural structures. The first empirical chapter locates contemporary formations in the histories and geographies of their colonial context, starting with the appropriation of indigenous lands by British South Africa Company (BSAC) in the 1890s, and the subsequent inscription of ‘proper villages’ and ‘tribal homelands’ on the rural landscape. Yet rather than probing the ‘achievements’ of the colonial administration (per Mamdani 2006), I take the body corporeal as the point of departure, showing how myriad colonial boundaries were displaced onto people’s bodies and naturalized, negated and negotiated through bodily practice, movement and encounter. The body itself – raced, sexed, placed – became a site of territorial inscription through which the construction and contestations of the colony and its boundaries took place.

The chapter builds on feminist geography and postcolonial theory, showing how bodies are places where discourse and power relations are simultaneously mapped, embodied *and* resisted (Grosz 1993; Nightingale 2011, 2013; Valdivia 2009; Longhurst 1997, 2001; Gatens 1996; Butler 1993; McClintock 1995). This literature has been eloquent in showing how bodies are written upon, marked, tagged and scarred, and how these ‘scripts’ are not only corporeal but extend into spaces of everyday life. In following this analytical path, I set out to ‘read’ colonial territory not as exclusive space, not as something drawn up on maps, but as experienced and disputed by those who moved across the landscape. At its core, by rescaling the spatial architecture of colonial rule onto the body we escape narratives of colonial state territorialization as an expanding imperial frontier, seeing instead the limits of colonial control, and how bodies territorialized onto marginal geographies were not pacified bodies, but potent bodies, carrying the ability to unsettle spaces ordered by colonial power. The chapter shows that while social and corporeal particularization was an important resource with which the colonial administrators constructed the settler state, conceptions of race, gender and territory were repeatedly challenged by the stubbornness and unruliness of the very bodies (and lands) that they defined.

### 1.3.2 Empirical Chapter II: The forest

To understand the ‘limits’ of state governance vis-à-vis chiefly assertions of rule in today’s Zambia, I make an analytical move from the body corporeal to a forest claimed by both customary and statutory authority: Munyama Forest. The analysis draws on scholarship that probes chiefly authority as a product of historical struggle, practices of rule and negotiation over authority to govern (Hoffmann et al. 2020; Lund 2006). I couple these insights with political-ecology work on nature and state making (Nightingale 2018, Peluso 2011; Paasi 1996; Harris 2012), arguing that we must take seriously *the forest* not simply as an ecological configuration over which politics happen, but as an ‘unruly’ space, existing simultaneously in multiple registers of political, spiritual and ecological life. The chapter maps out the layers of ecological, political and spiritual meaning with which the forest has been invested over the past seventy or so years; at least since the 1940s, the forest has been iteratively classified, enclosed, used as a hiding place, reclassified, occupied, spirited, burnt and replanted – with each of these configurations constitutive of new natures, exclusions and enactments of stately and chiefly authority. What emerges from this analysis is a complex landscape, layered with buried epistemologies and subjugated histories and riddled with state decree, chiefly power, remnants of burnt homesteads, spiritual dwellings and innovative land users navigating material and historical terrain.

Making visible these layers marks the forest as not one place, but multiple places, ‘entwined’, to paraphrase Haraway (2016: 1), ‘in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.’ The forest is, in short, not some predefined ‘nature’ stuck between ‘state’ and ‘chiefdom’, but a layered landscape through which these categories are continually reinvented, materially as well as conceptually. My hope is that the chapter will further an understanding of state-chiefdom relations that captures the interplay between different natures, histories and attempts to govern, and the forms of inclusions and exclusions that emerge within these shifting configurations.

### 1.3.3 Empirical Chapter III: The survey beacon

As becomes evident throughout this thesis, private property is a major route of state power. In this research it figures as a heuristic rubric concerned with how access to, use of and control over ‘things’ and resources are organized in society. The third empirical chapter examines the political work performed by the material architecture of private property, cement survey beacons in

particular. Building on recent scholarship in geography and political ecology, in which materiality is taken seriously as a pivot for political inquiry (Ahlborg and Nightingale 2018; Meehan, 2014; Shaw and Meehan, 2013; Valdivia 2008), I show how the emplacement of survey beacons are fundamentally imbricated in the ways state-chieftdom boundaries are mapped onto the landscape – not as a secure achievement, but as a critical moment of political contestation. Once state artifacts are exposed to a creative citizenry, they become susceptible to alteration and alternative interpretation.

The analysis sits in productive tension with previous scholarship on the co-constitution of property and authority (e.g. Bridge 2014; Lund 2016; Sikor and Lund 2009; Vandekerckhove 2011); while this work has opened up a prolific field of analysis, most previous accounts privilege conceptions of state and property as socio-legal constructs. By bringing the ‘stuff of property’ into critical view, my analysis shows how boundary stones themselves, rather than the legal terms of their placement, become the terrain of struggle. These processes are analyzed through a case study of property making in the village of Mulonga. Returning to the vignette that opened this thesis, I explore how a group of surveyors unexpectedly entered the village in order to demarcate the land. Through an ethnography of material and bureaucratic encounters, I show how villagers reappropriated the land structured by property’s exclusionary logic, effectively reworking its outcome. Making this empirical shift away from how private property is legally legitimated (which was largely invisible to the inhabitants of Mulonga) and toward a more careful engagement with the materiality of property troubles narratives of a passive citizenry, showing instead how inventive and ingenious villagers redeploy state materialities, and how an equally inventive and ingenious bureaucracy struggles to make them perform the political work assigned to them. These iterative moments, I conclude, are foundational for our understanding of how both state and citizen co-constitute each other’s existence and capacities in a material field of property politics.

#### 1.3.4 Empirical Chapter IV: The title deed

The fourth and final empirical chapter explores more carefully how people navigate the legal-tenurial divide between chiefly territory and State Land through the written contract. The point of departure here is a piece of legislation that allows for individual tenants within a chief’s jurisdiction to convert their landholdings into private property. The legislation provides, in

other words, for individual landholders to become political agents in the reformation of the tenure regime, working their way into the body politic and the land market through the abstraction of their rights in the form of a state sanctioned title deed (Brown 2005). While the procedures of conversion are carefully codified in law, my research points to how the process is collapsed into a myriad of personal and political relations that create a complex landscape of legal and political overlaps on which people then maneuver for rights in land. As Lund (2008: 155) writes, ‘laws, regulations and policies do not determine access and use of resources as such, but erect a structure of opportunities for the negotiation of these rights.’

The chapter follows the title deed as it wends its way through headmen’s homesteads, chiefs’ palaces, and both government and back offices, to explore how, at each site, it becomes imbued with new meanings and associations. The analysis builds on anthropological work on the ‘shadows’ or ‘margins’ of the state (Harris-White 2003; Das and Poole 2004; Sud 2019) to show how the title deed continuously escape its formalized scripts and take on new meanings and associations once it becomes enmeshed within the social and material fabric of chiefly terrain – at the ‘limits’ of state law. Here, the title deed is reappropriated by chiefs and headmen and is redeployed to other effects, and its papery existence – bundled with fragility, flammability, loseability and age – forms part of the document’s own politics (cf. Hetherington 2009). As such, contrary to Lockean ideals of land’s abstraction from sociality, property law refuses reification of the materiality of land and paper; and rather than contributing to a change toward some market-aligned form of land as commodity, land titling opens up new spaces of struggle, exclusion and a potential for the reinvention of chiefly authority.

## 1.4 Analytical summary

Taken together, the juxtaposition of these chapters draws attention to the simultaneity of many land politics, rather than just one, and points to the various arenas and scales that critical scholarship on the state must engage. Each case study chapter points to important dynamics at play, pointing to *where* and *how* the state emerges as a highly contested authority, from the body corporeal, into material nature, onto material objects and through paper-work, extending from a past into the present. As state power travels, so too does my

analysis, tracing out its flows and dwelling on moments where the spatialities and temporalities of state power become enmeshed with sediments of authority, the movement of bodies, materiality of milieu, chiefly authority and rural subjects. By moving across various sites and levels of analysis, and by drawing on different histories and practices, the analysis brings into sharper view how state authority emerges and produces new forms of subjection that redefine social and political possibilities in particular spatial and temporal conjunctions, but always as highly uncertain achievements that are open to contingencies, unruly lands and creative citizens. The thesis provides windows onto such unfolding processes, which help explicate and push forward theorizations of the relationship between projects of government and the formation of new spaces of exclusion and state control, and the possibilities for alternative articulations for politics that emerge within.

In the next chapter, I sketch out the historical and political contours of the Zambian land regime in order to situate my analysis within a wider context. I am not trying to excavate some origin story of Zambian land struggles here, but rather to make visible the forms of politics enabled (and indeed disabled) by the ‘leftovers’ of colonialism. This task is not simply descriptive. The chapter traces out the continuities and discontinuities in state-chiefdom relations since the advent of British colonization, with a particular attention to the historical relations that make possible, but also obfuscate, the conceptual separation of ‘state’ and ‘chiefdom’ in today’s Zambia. As such, Chapter 2 forms a historical backdrop against which I develop my conceptual approach around ‘state-chiefdom boundaries’ in Chapter 3.



## 2. Historical contours

### 2.1 Colonialism and the politics of difference

Prior to British colonization, Zambian lands were loosely bound up into what anthropologists call ‘early African states’. Yet rather than being territorial entities, the authority of African monarchs was expressed in terms of the number of followers, or subjects, that they could gather around them and the amount of tribute and tribute labor that they could command. Wherever a subject population dwelled, that was the territory over which she or he could enact control (Ranger 1971). By extension, anywhere an African monarch could form new ties represented a spatial expansion of his or her authority. The principal political objective of African rulers was, therefore, to attract, retain and expand their subject population, rather than to control the land itself (see Moore and Vaughan 1994; also Herbs 2000). As such, the spatiality of African political power was forever fractional, always in the making, and in some cases eroded to the point of irrelevance, thus giving way to new political-territorial formations (Crehan 1997a; Roberts 1976; Chanock 1985; Meebelo 1971).

It was into these lands that the British South Africa Company (BSAC) arrived in the 1890s through commissioners venturing north of the Zambezi river to make agreements between the BSAC and ‘tribal chiefs’. Exclusive rights to land and precious stone were exchanged for subsidies and promises of prosperity and protection from neighboring tribes (Galbraith 1974). One of the commissioners, sent north by Cecil Rhodes, was Frank Lochner. When he reached the Lozi in Barotseland (roughly corresponding to Western Province in today’s Zambia) in 1890, he declared to Chief Lewanika that by accepting a concession the Lozi would ‘grow rich, make progress, graze your flocks and cultivate your land with full security’ (cited in Galbraith 1974:

218). Lewanika gave his consent. Shortly thereafter, however, he claimed that he had been defrauded. Not only were the promises of riches, railroad and postal service illusive, but in the Lozi translation of the contract, the word 'grant' had become 'borrow' (Galbraith 1974: 218). Lewanika had unknowingly given his consent to an exclusive mineral concession over all Barotseland (Caplan 1970: 54). With similar strategies, more land was vested in the BSAC, until the whole area of what became Northern Rhodesia was placed under BSAC administration in 1899.

Yet the BSAC administration soon discovered that the territorial variability of chiefly authority and the frequent movement of the African population undermined collection of the hut tax (introduced in 1901) and eroded the authority of African rulers, making their function as agents of the BSAC administration falter. As the collection of tax demanded a known and controllable population, the priority was to gain control over settlement patterns and shape chieftaincies to the needs of orderly administration (see Moore and Vaughan 1994). Villagization efforts failed, however, and when administrators admonished that chiefs' authority would corrode if they allowed their subject populations to move over large tracts of land, chiefs blandly responded that 'the greater the number of villages, the greater the prestige of the chief' (cited in Ranger 1971: 27). It was not until 1924, when Northern Rhodesia was proclaimed a protectorate of the United Kingdom, and its administration was taken over by a governor (Sir Herbert Stanley), that more systematic efforts were made to bring African rulers into a spatial logic of rule.

Underpinning this project was a vision of a settler colony. Sir Herbert Stanley had previously served in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and South Africa, and under his supervision the government sought to encourage further European immigration. When he was installed, blocks of land set aside for exclusive European use were identified and labeled Crown Land, covering the most attractive and accessible areas, around Fort Jameson (now Chipata) in the east, around Abercorn (now Mbala) in the north, and along the rail line running from Livingstone in the south to the Copperbelt in the north (Roberts 1976). This land was amalgamated under rubrics of civil law, with private property (freehold tenure) being the guiding tenet of government. Yet African occupancy and movement repeatedly emerged as a 'hindrance to the economic development of land by settlers' (Johnson et al. 1967: 17). The lack of clear settlement patterns among the African population posed a particular challenge:



the key colonial target became, in short, to ‘recode’ chiefly authority so as to establish a spatial organization of rule.

This was achieved in a functionalist fit between anthropologists and administrators, drawing out ‘tribal lines’ and chronicling ‘origin stories’ of different ethno-linguistic groupings, mapping the African population onto ‘tribal homelands’, or, in an administrative verbiage, Native Reserves. Classification became a science, that of taxonomy, derived ultimately from Linnaean botany but applied to space and population (Pels 1997). Dirks (2001) has described this as ‘the ethnographic state’, which wielded the anthropological survey not only as a way of acknowledging difference but also as a way of shaping, even producing, difference (see also Chanock 1985; Sorrenson 1967; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Some 60 000 Africans were displaced in the process (Roberts 1976: 183). The relocation of Africans onto Native Reserves corresponded to the introduction of indirect rule, a political apparatus crafted by Sir Henry Maine, and later developed by Lord Frederick Lugard along with Lord Donald Cameron in Nigeria (see Mamdani 2012). Architects of British colonial rule such as Lord Frederick Lugard proclaimed that imperial states had the ‘grave responsibility of ... “bringing forth” to a higher plan ... the backward races.’ Europeans were responsible for developing ‘the bounties with which nature has so abundantly endowed the tropics’ because subject races were ‘so pathetically dependent on their guidance’ (Lugard 1926: 66, 68). The white man’s burden of colonial rule required administration of both nature and natives; both were resources to be managed, improved and developed for the benefits of metropole and colony.

In Zambia, as elsewhere in British Africa, the principle was that the conduct of the population could be controlled through a proxy of ‘tribal leaders’, chiefs and their headmen, each mandated to govern a distinct ‘tribe’ in a distinct geographical space. In areas where there were too many chiefs for orderly administration, some were ‘retired’ or subsumed by other chiefs. Where there were too few chiefs, new were appointed. In this way, chiefs and headmen were absorbed into the colonial state apparatus, installed as localized agents of government, instructed to police infringements of domestic order and punish unruly cultivators, and were vested with regulatory powers to hold local courts, collect tax and administer local land use (Gould 1995). These ‘customary’ decrees were represented as the official recognition by the colonial administration of the immemorial principles by

which chiefs had always governed – consigning chiefs to a space ‘outside’ civil law and colonial modernity.

Western notions of law and property are deeply imbricated in such a colonial geography, a white mythology in which the racialized figure of ‘the savage’ plays a central role; imagined as incapable of an appreciation of legal rights and duties, the savage is deemed both pre-political and pre-historical and thus set irrevocably apart from the civilized (Mafeje 1971). Indeed, the very creation of Native Reserves, and the displacement of Africans onto them, was legitimized on the basis of offering *protection* of African ‘tradition’ from the *dangers* of ‘modernity’, thus rendering racial segregation benign.

The making of cultural difference here becomes visible as a political technology that legitimized both intervention (such as the eradication of witchcraft and swidden cultivation) and non-intervention (such as the preservation of tradition and custom). It is against this background that Mamdani (2012: 43–4) conceptualizes indirect rule as a form of governmentality aimed at reproducing and governing cultural difference as custom, rather than its eradication as savagery. Indirect rule was, in short, founded upon a regime of regulated difference that reproduced boundaries between the modern and the traditional, the savage and the civilized. Difference did not mark the limit of processes of control and regulation; on the contrary, difference *enabled* control and regulation.

These differences were spatialized with the fixing of territorial boundaries over which chiefs were made guardians, thus reinforcing the link between political authority and authority over land (Iliffe 1987). In turn, the distinctions between peoples and property regimes were themselves dependent on deep-rooted differences between those forms of property that lay within the frontier of colonial modernity and those that lay without (Blomley 2003). Here it is imperative to revisit Western foundational narratives that tell property’s story, which often begins from an *a priori* and usually violent world *before* property (e.g. Locke [1690] 1980; Blackstone [1765] 1838). For Hobbes, this space behind the frontier of modernity was one where ‘there can be no propriety, no domination, no *mine* and *thine* distinct; but only that to be every man’s that he can get, and for so long as he can keep it’ (in Fitzpatrick 1992: 77). On these lands, the absence of government and property, Hobbes ([1651] 1988: 186) argued, underpins a life of ‘continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.’ As Fitzpatrick (1992, 81) writes:

‘The sources of disorder must exist outside of law – in the eruptions and disruptions of untamed nature or barely contained human passion against which an ordering law is intrinsically set’. The effect was to create a distinction such that law’s violence – rational, regulated, commonsensical – was separated from and imagined as a counter to the ‘anomic or sectarian savagery beyond law’s boundaries’ (Sarat and Kearns 1992: 5). Without such a division, the commonplace distinction between civility and barbarity would break down (see Williams 1983: 329–31).

The spatialization of chiefly and stately power onto distinct geographies came coupled with these imaginaries (Moore 2005). On the ground, however, colonial control was far from absolute. As Berry (1993: 29) incisively has noted: ‘colonial regimes imposed themselves on societies already engaged in struggles over power and the terms on which it would be exercised. By announcing their intention to uphold “traditional” norms and structures of authority, colonial officials were, in effect, declaring their intention to build colonial rule on a foundation of conflict and change’ (see also Mbembe 2000; Chanock 1985; Gould 1995, 1997). In more theoretical terms, colonial constructs of race and space are repeatedly challenged by the recalcitrance of the bodies and groups they define – like all hegemonies, they have to ‘continually be renewed, recreated, defended and modified’ (Williams 1977: 112; see also Moore et al. 2003). The most radical rupture in this configuration occurred at the time of national liberation in 1964.

## 2.2 National independence and the remodeling of difference

The processes of crafting a settler colony differentiated chiefly and stately power, both spatially and culturally (Iliffe 1987), and set the conditions under which the postcolonial administration could practice land governance. At the time of independence, the statutory administration sought to construct an independent state polity as the singular source of government. Postcolonial rule, however, emerged from sediments of political authority in the plural (Sitko and Chamberlin 2016).

National liberation resulted in that chiefs, who previously had been part and parcel of the colonial state, now took on a more ambiguous position, sparking a debate over the political future of chieftainship. Images of chiefs as backward, clad in primitive mystery, despised by their subjects and

irrelevant in a context of modern government flourished. Kalenga Simwinga, a lecturer at the University of Zambia in Lusaka, considered chiefs to be obsolete now that the United National Independence Party (UNIP), spearheaded by Kenneth Kaunda, had ‘captivated the allegiance of the rural masses’ (Simwinga 1972). Simwinga noted the following:

In the implementation of development projects in a country like Zambia, where political mobilisation of the masses through the party [UNIP] is so strong and successful right down to the grass root level of society the need for chiefs to solicit the support of rural folk does not arise. The party can easily and effectively achieve this without the Government paying for a bit of mystical support from the chiefs.

The political position occupied by chiefs had, Simwinga argued, lost its function. Now was the time to liberate the Zambians from the unfreedoms as serfs under chiefs. And it was not long before the judicial powers of the chiefs, vested in them during colonialism, were taken away. Yet, Simwinga’s portrayal of the Zambian chiefs was countered by images of chiefs as guardians of rural land, morality, law and social order, fighting urban unemployment by supporting ‘the return to the land’ of the young urban unemployed (van Binsbergen 1987). Far from being relics of a colonial past, chiefs had a role to play, it was argued. As noted by the Zambian historian Mr. B. Kakoma:

As paid servants of the Government, chiefs cannot afford to oppose the Government and at the same time expect recognition ... The base of the chiefs’ political power lies in their local areas. In those areas where the institution of chieftainship is strong the selection of a new leader through traditional procedures more or less serves as an automatic guarantee of his popularity ... It is for this reason that political parties seek to captivate local support through the chiefs because it is essential for winning both local and general elections ... When the party promised reform the elders took this to mean restoration of power to the chiefs. Hence UNIP scored an overwhelming victory in the 1964 election. However by 1968 when the next general election came, the traditional leaders had been estranged by the Government’s nationalist reforms which increased central government control. The price which UNIP paid for this was the loss of the province to the opposition party. (Kakoma 1972)

Realizing the rallying function of chiefs, their powers were restored by UNIP. It was reasoned that with each chief ruling over only a small portion of the population of Zambia, the chiefs' calling was defined as bringing their respective sections within the fold of the nation (and the party) and to not foster sub-national divisiveness, let alone, secessionism (van Binsbergen 1987: 166). As a result, chiefs were incorporated into the House of Chiefs, a complementary institution to Parliament and the Central Committee of UNIP, effectively becoming local cadres of the emerging one-party state. Chiefs disloyal to UNIP were dismissed and spattered in the national press – in many ways the postcolonial technologies of indirect rule. In 1971 the enactment of the Village Registration and Development Act further stressed the responsibilities of chiefs and headmen. Chiefs were allowed to propose and initiate development projects, leading to chiefs clamoring for schools, hospitals, roads, dams and agriculture cooperatives (van Binsbergen 1987: 164). In short, chiefs and headmen became important institutional sites in a developmental state.

Thus, national independence did not mark an end to using chiefs and headmen as proxies of state authority. The chiefs' subsidies are still powerful instruments in the hands of the government to enforce chiefly conformity. Yet the subsidy is but one element in a set of formal bureaucratic arrangements by which the government seeks to capture the chiefs and bring them into the fold of the state apparatus. A condition for subsidy, as stipulated in the Chiefs Act, is that a chief, upon accession, be recognized by the President of the Republic and gazetted as such in the *Government Gazette*. Only gazetted chiefs can get subsidies and be part of representative bodies such as Rural Councils (in many ways the postcolonial successors of the Native Authority), Provincial Council of Chiefs and the national House of Chiefs (The Chiefs Act, The Laws of Zambia, Ch. 287, Section 3). Thus, by turning the principles of indirect rule into instruments of postcolonial government, postcolonial rule did not occlude, erase or eclipse historical sedimentations of authority; rather, a robust recursivity among temporalities and spatialities intertwine with regimes of rule, institutional sites and assemblages of state power. Indeed, the legacy of colonialism remains alive in today's Zambia, offering uncanny echoes amid administrative interventions into chiefly territory, where political life remains shot through with state decree.

Thus, the conception that state and chiefdom constitute two separate worlds, each with a logic, a field of relationships and a history of its own, is

nothing less than an illusion. A telling example is Princess Nakatindi, who, during her political career, held political office as both chieftainess in Sesheke Chiefdom and as District Governor in Sesheke District, and was a member of both UNIP Central Committee and the House of Chiefs. After her death in 2012, she was celebrated as ‘Nakatindi the bridge’, linking old and new, neotraditional politics and state governance. Another instructive example is Chief Mukuni, who sought the permission of the district governor in Kalomo, Mr. J. Hamatwi, before enlisting the services of a witch-finder, and only staged a rain ritual after the same official told him to do so. The same governor, keen to integrate the chief into his political performance, later backed Mukuni’s plea for national registration to be conducted at the chief’s palace rather than at the District Council (see van Binsbergen 1987).

It is in this context, stressing continuity rather than rupture between chiefly and stately politics, that state officials can afford to recognize chiefs as political protagonists. Yet officials of the state still stress a qualitative difference between ‘state’ and ‘chiefdom’. ‘Because of the essential distinction between neo-traditional and modern office-bearers’, van Binsbergen (1987: 175) writes, ‘the modern government can sanction the traditional practices of chiefly selection and election, even if these differ in form from the type of democratic logic underlying the modern state and the party.’ It is also, he (176) continues, ‘by virtue of the same distinction that the state, even while paying a subsidy to the chiefs, can afford to deny the chiefs the sort of facilities and public services to which they could lay claim if they had been perceived as civil servants’.

The ‘distinction’ that van Binsbergen refers to is a precarious one. On the one hand, chiefs insist on being incorporated into the general fabric of the modern state, on being civil servants, claiming material benefits from the government (cars, fuel, secretarial services etc.), which are to serve as symbols of authority, as signs of state recognition and as a logistical means to enable them to play the development roles assigned to them by government. On the other hand, chiefs need to assert a qualitative difference to legitimize their claims to political authority. In his eloquent analysis of Zambian chieftainship, van Binsbergen (1987) turns his attention to the material culture of chiefly authority, observing that chiefs have a particular set of regalia, paraphernalia and ceremonial and courtly practices that stand apart from the symbolic register of state power. This produces, he argues, an ‘illusion of two separate worlds, of boundaries between the modern and neo-

traditional.’ This boundary ‘is carefully maintained – almost as if the *raison d’être* of chieftainship in postcolonial Zambia is to evoke a political and cultural focus that appears to be outside of and independent from the state’ (van Binsbergen 1987: 47). What this means, then, is that the notion of a fairly rigid separation between state and chiefdom in itself belongs to a political culture. The boundaries emerge as devices of difference making, of holding apart but at the same time maintaining relations of power. Put differently, the separation between state and chiefdom becomes visible as a critical site of legitimation, a site where political authority is *made*.

This is perhaps most evident in the form of accoutrements in their dealings with state authority. Ceremonial robes and headdresses, animal species or parts thereof, such as leopard skins or hippopotamus tails, which are exclusively reserved for chiefs, ceremonial ironware, stools, barges, musical instruments, royal shrines and architectural details are all symbols of chiefly authority. These chiefly paraphernalia are particularly apparent at installations, funerary ceremonies and in meetings between chiefs and state bureaucracy. Yet, it is not difficult to identify a chief walking the streets of Lusaka, often carrying a chief’s cane or animal tail. In short, much like ‘the state’ has a ‘language of stateness’ (Lund 2006: 677), so too have chiefs, with different practices and meanings becoming emblematic of different political authorities. These cultural-material articulations have remained on the margins of social analysis, but they serve an important political purpose: they continue to embody the chiefs with ‘customary authority’ (Hoffmann et al. 2020). This authority is neo-traditional in the sense that it has been adapted to colonial incorporation, including selectively dropping elements, such as offerings to spirits, which were less favored by the colonial state; but the cultural forms of chieftainship are still very much alive today. Chiefs have also adopted the documentary practices of state bureaucracy, having their own councils of advisors, unique stamps, seals and emblems on paperwork and protocols. In short, the salience of chiefly authority is founded upon creativity and invention as much as upon ‘tradition’. Some chiefs have started to experiment with different types of land certification outside the circuits of the state bureaucracy (see Chapter 8), thus imitating the symbolic and material practices of the state and at the same time competing over authority to govern.

In sum, in Zambian political culture, different symbols of power and political legitimation fade into and out of each other and refuse essentialist

or functionalist divides between ‘state’ and ‘chiefdom’. Thus, while the Africanist wisdom that ‘customary authorities’ ground their legitimacy in a set of norms and practices that preexist the establishment of the colonial state still holds some traction (Williams 2010; Logan 2011; van Binsbergen 2003), we must eschew a search for authentic origins of authority grounded in ‘tradition’ and instead track the effects of practices of rule.

## 2.3 The property landscape

On the property landscape, however, state-chiefdom boundaries are splintered into different legal regimes, mirroring those drawn up during colonial rule. In 1975 the government of Zambia, as part of its transition to single-party rule and under the guise of its ‘humanist’ state ideology,<sup>1</sup> stripped all land of its value, vested it in the president, and converted all freehold titles on State Land to leaseholds. Lands held by absentee landlords were expropriated, and only ‘unexhausted improvement’ in land could be owned (Roth et al. 1995; Ng’ombe et al. 2014; Sitko et al. 2014). This was an important step in the consolidation of the Zambian state, which came to be largely synonymous with Kenneth Kaunda’s UNIP, which tried to unite the citizenry under the banner of ‘One Zambia – One Nation’. Yet in the late 1980s, after two decades of land policies that suppressed land transactions and market interaction, discontent started to spread within the international donor community, which led the World Bank to encourage Zambia to initiate market reforms. It was declared that:

The current system of land administration ... is badly in need of modernization. Private ownership is effectively repressed if not prohibited ... Lack of private ownership and a land market ostensibly constrains development ... and inhibit economic growth. (Roth et al. 1995: 1)

The Zambian government opposed external intervention, however, which led the World Bank to isolate Zambia from international loans and bilateral donors, creating civil unrest and food riots (Ihonvbere 1996). This ultimately resulted in the fall of UNIP, and in 1991 Zambia changed government and a liberalization of the economy began with the intention to stimulate economic

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<sup>1</sup> This was based on a combination of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century ideas of central planning/state control and what Kenneth Kaunda considered ‘African values’: mutual aid, trust and loyalty to the community.



activity and market interaction. As requested by overseas donors, and finally conditioned by the World Bank in return for international loans and debt relief, land administration was to be deregulated and subjected to market reforms (Christensen et al. 2011). The new government, led by Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), declared the following:

The MMD shall institutionalize a modern [...] land law code intended to ensure the fundamental right to private ownership of land. [...] The MMD shall attach economic value to undeveloped land [...] and promote regular issuance of title deeds to productive land owners. (cited in Roth et al.: 33)

Three years later, the Land Act of 1995 (henceforth the Act) was passed in Parliament, serving to commodify land in order to stimulate agricultural productivity and land investments (Brown 2005). The Act reaffirmed a legal divide between State Land and chiefly territory (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1: An approximation of the geographical extent of State Land (darkened) at the time of national independence in 1964. No national land audit has been conducted since independence, but see Sitko and Chamberlin (2016) and Sitko et al. (2015) for a discussion on the geographical expansion of State Land since 1995. Map provided by the Ministry of Lands, Lusaka.*

As stipulated in the Act, State Land is to be held in the form of private property, and its tenants are required to pay annual land tax, while customary land falls outside formal legislation and tenure security enforced by common

law. Yet the Act took it one step further. In order to promote further commodification of land, the Act provides for the conversion of customary land into State Land, i.e. into private property, which has led scholars to conclude that the Act ‘is designed to permanently diminish the amount of land held under communal tenure and to open up more land for investment’ (Brown 2005: 87; see also Malambo 2013; Ng’ombe et al. 2014; Sitko and Jane 2014).

While the Act does little to clarify the rights of customary landholders, it states that no land should be allocated ‘without consulting any other person or body whose interest might be affected by the grant’ and further that ‘the President shall not alienate any land situated in a district or an area where land is held under customary tenure – without taking into consideration the local customary law on land tenure *which is not in conflict with this Act*’ (The Lands Act, The Laws of Zambia, Cap. 184, Section 4, emphasis added). However, this implies that *if* customary law is in conflict with the Act, such considerations are not required, rendering customary rights legally invisible to the statutory administration when different interests over the land are at stake (see Brown 2005). In many ways, state legislation has institutionalized insecurity on lands located outside the legal sphere delimited by the Act by opening up chiefly territory for government appropriation, rekindling taxonomies of the primitive peasant whose use of and relation to land is deficient and destructive.

It is against this backdrop that this thesis is set. What should be clear from the historical overview above, however, government appropriations of chiefly land do not correspond to some expansion of state power and authority into places and fields that have not previously been regulated by the state (per Scott 1998). The historical and cultural ambivalence permeating political life in rural Zambia blurs and denies clear-cut conceptions of power and legitimacy and brings out severe limitations of approaches whose purpose is to account for discrete, mutually irreducible logics of chiefly and stately authority (cf. Hoffmann et al. 2020; Lund 2006; Boone 2014).

How chiefly land becomes an ‘object’ of ‘state capture’ is no longer the right question to ask, as it suggests a more rigid distinction than the actual intertwining of activities, histories, roles and cultural aspects seem to warrant; rather, we must draw analytical attention to the myriad relations through which power works, to the struggles for home and land through which legitimate authority emerges, and to diverse ways that state practices

become entangled with the material-ecological fabric of the landscape and the social-historical texture of chiefly territory, thereby opening up an analytic unconstrained by ideas of jurisdictional and territorial fixity. Because, as I will show, state-chieftom boundaries are very much open to struggle and negotiation across myriad sites, with chiefs, headmen and smallholders continuously testing the limits of state governance, in turn provoking new attempts to govern – iterative struggles which continue to produce new natures, forms of authority, social closures and exclusions. In the following chapter, I map out the conceptual groundwork that forms the basis of such an investigation.



## 3. Conceptual work

It is wrong to look for boundaries between preexisting social entities. Rather we should start with boundaries and investigate how people create entities by linking those boundaries into units. We should not look for boundaries of things but things of boundaries. (Abbott 1995: 857)

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter showed, through historical elaboration, the shifting and variable relationship between state and chiefdom in Zambia. It drew attention to some of the ways state and chiefdom intertwine, intermingle, and pull apart. My analysis is situated in this contested interface, and at the foundation of my thinking lies a performative notion of power and political authority that unsettles conceptualizations of state and chiefdom as singular and stable entities with a fixed set of relations in between. From this perspective, there are no entities awaiting my exploration as some ready-made objects of analysis; rather, state, land and chiefdom are continuously made and remade, conceptually and materially.

The key conceptual figure I use to explore their making is that of the boundary, a heuristic rubric that captures both relations of power, authority, exclusion and control *and* moments of contention, transgression and fissure. In this chapter I link up analytical insights drawn from five bodies of literature to enable me to 'see' how boundary struggles manifest and play out in the messy geographies of everyday life: legal pluralism, political ecology, critical geography, anthropology and postcolonial theory. My conceptualization brings these literatures together by weaving theoretical argumentation and empirical insights. This is because, in my reading, state-chiefdom boundaries

are both abstract and material, they link the conceptual and the empirical – an articulation that has emerged from both my data and from theory.

While the concept of the boundary might evoke a concern with spatial territory – dividing stately and chiefly spheres of authority into distinct geographies – here, I develop a broader approach that captures how state-chieftdom boundaries operate across multiple social and spatial sites: state-chieftdom boundaries, wherever they emerge, do not demarcate a line of ideological or geographical division between different modalities of power and authority, but, on the contrary, *enable* the exercise of power and control, whether in the form of fences on the ground, lines on a map, thresholds to government offices or engrained colonial imaginaries that set the ‘savage’ apart from the ‘civilized’. Yet, rather than marking out sites of separation and estrangement, I take boundaries to be sites of relational emergence (Bhabha 1994; Pratt 1991; Wilson 2017), where stasis and rootedness give way to struggle, negotiation and invention. Boundaries mark political encounters, sites where authority, exclusion and control are negotiated, struggled over and grappled with.

In the latter half of this chapter I use this broader conceptualization to develop an analytical strategy around four ‘boundary objects’, corresponding to the four case-study chapters that make up this thesis: (I) the body corporeal, (II) the forest (III) the survey beacon and (IV) the title deed. Each of these ‘objects’ sits, in different ways, in the betweenness of chiefly and stately authority without fully belonging to either of them. They mark sites of political struggle and, as such, reside not on some periphery, but rather constitute a *shared space* of political engagement. As such, boundary objects are *analytical locations* that allow for critical investigation not only of how relations of domination, dispossession and exploitation are being redefined presently but also of the struggles and creative politics that take shape around these changing relations (cf. Mezzadra and Nielson 2013). My boundary objects are drawn from ethnographic fieldwork as well as archival research, and they mark, in short, points on my conceptual map where state-chieftdom boundaries are vividly open to the play of insubordinate citizens, diffident bureaucrats and unruly lands.

First, however, I shall briefly anchor my ‘boundary thinking’ in poststructuralist thought, arguing that an emphasis on boundaries signals a ‘methodological readiness’ to explore the effects of power, but also their attendant cracks and slippages.

### 3.2 Boundaries: a brief poststructuralist account

My analytical interest in boundaries and boundary objects should not be understood as a negation of more postfoundational approaches that attempt to destabilize categorical orders. Quite the opposite. It should be seen as an affirmation of the crucial role boundaries play in how power operates, how order is established and contested, and how boundaries shift, fold, harden and soften over space and time. In generic terms, boundaries are instruments through which order is established and power exercised, and there is always a concomitant suppression of alternative ways of life as new boundaries are imposed, as highlighted by a diverse range of scholars including Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Derrida (1976) and Foucault (1971). Indeed, scholarly inquiry into boundaries is not a recent phenomenon. As Brubaker et al. (2004: 31) have noted, as the social constructedness of categories has been widely accepted, ‘categorization has emerged as a major focus of research’ (see also Jones 2009; Newman 2003; Newman and Paasi 1998). Foucault (1971), for example, focused specifically on how society is ordered, arguing that power emerges from obscuring difference by forcing the multiple into manageable units (categories) with solid separations (boundaries) between them. I shall return to some of these literatures in the conclusion of this thesis, but the key point here is that boundaries do not simply mimetically mirror the world but simultaneously create and limit it.

This analytical move shifts our attention away from whatever boundaries enclose – a place, a community, a culture, a polity – and toward the construction of the boundaries that do the enclosing, exclusion, or de-fining (Barth 1969; cf. Anderson 1983). In other words, this is a move away from structure and fixed conditions of possibility and toward ‘lines of potential’ (Stewarts 2007: 11). Andrew Abbott (1995) furthered this argument by contending that the boundary must come before what is inside can be understood as an entity. In his processual ontology, it does not really matter what these boundaries were, at first; rather, ‘they began as simple, inchoate differences. They were not boundaries of anything’ (Abbott 1995: 868). Abbott argued that the ‘thing-ness’ of any entity is not pre-given but, rather, is only the result of the contingent process of linking up ‘locations of difference’. As he noted in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, ‘We should not look for boundaries of things but things of boundaries’ (Abbott 1995: 857; see also Brubaker 2002; Loveman 1999).

In this thesis I build on the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1993) to suggest that boundaries are *performative*. Understanding boundaries as performative draws analytical attention to the necessity of re-narrating, re-fixing, re-writing and constantly patrolling boundaries, which also is evidence of their incompleteness and inchoateness – a fact that allows for further contestation and re-evaluation. The notion that boundaries are always ‘in the making’ is supported by ubiquitous references to ‘possibility’ and ‘potential’ (Ahmed 2000; 2002; Stewarts 2007), or is expressed in the language of ‘becoming’ (Nightingale 2018), signaling the potential of becoming ‘otherwise’ (Povinelli 2014). In short, stability is not a sign that nothing is happening, but of effective reiteration. This, I claim, is a key modality of power, whether boundaries are operating along lines of gender (Butler 1990; 1993), distinctions between nature and society (Watts 2005; Whatmore 2002), between state and society/citizen (Mitchell 1991; Gupta 1995), or intertwine to form more socionatural entanglements (Nightingale 2018).

A boundary is ‘a doing’; the boundary and the world it delimits emerge together, and not simply as intertwined with one another as in the joining of distinct entities but as lacking independent existence. There is no nature without society, no modern without the traditional, no black without white. Boundaries, in other words, are expressions of the power relations that make up the world. Consider, for example, Douglas’ (1966) astute notion of ‘dirt’ as ‘matter out of place’. This underlines not only the cultural constructedness of social-spatial boundaries, but also that belonging is a product of power relations. As Douglas (1966: 98–99) writes, some-*thing* that is ‘out of place’ becomes ‘pollution’, referring to a ‘particular class of danger’ to ‘sources of power’. The danger that is ‘risked by boundary transgressions is power’, so that ‘though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality.’ That which does not belong thus exerts both danger and power in its ability to challenge existing forms of order.

This observation permeates critical scholarship, in which the deviate, degenerate, apart or Other become conceptual resources for the theorization of power (e.g. McClintock 1995; Foucault 1989). In many ways, then, a focus on boundaries signals, first and foremost, a methodological readiness to explore relations of power, authority, exclusion and control, but also transgressions and fissures. Many thinkers on ‘the political’ share this view. Sennet (1970) urges us to ‘make use of disorder’, Levin (1989) evokes



‘productive incoherence’, and Derrida (1996: 84) writes that ‘chaos is at once a risk and a chance’:

[C]haos and instability, which is fundamental, founding and irreducible, is at once naturally the worst against which we struggle with law, rules, conventions, politics and provisional hegemony, but at the same time it is a chance to change, a chance to destabilize. If there was continual stability, there would be no need for politics, and it is to the extent that stability is not natural, essential or substantial, that politics exists ... Chaos is at once a risk and a chance.

Boundary struggles – what is ‘dirt’ and what is not – thus provide strategic grounds for the analysis of political contestation. Land’s making and remaking in rural Zambia – surveying, fencing, appropriation, reclassification – bring the importance of investigating such processes into sharp focus, not least because the boundaries between State Land and chiefly territory are very much ‘in the making’, and something that cultivators, administrators, chiefs and headmen navigate around every day. As I explicate below, these boundaries emerge not only on a border geography of the landscape itself, but more generally manifest themselves in social and material practices on the land, in encounters with bureaucracy, on the body corporeal and in the movement of spirits, in storytelling and legislation. These are all sites of ‘chaos’ – however minute – where acts of subversion, compliance, opposition, support, evasion, confirmation, transgression and inculcation shape the way new orders emerge (or not). My ethnographic explorations of (state) practices bring into clearer view the inherent uncertainty of land’s making by taking seriously the history in which these boundaries become embedded and the material and social landscapes through which relations of power operate.

### 3.3 Studying the state in the everyday

My analysis takes its cue from the work of Timothy Mitchell (1991), which revolves around the boundary between the state and its conceptual twin, society. According to Mitchell, the state is reproduced in visible, everyday forms, such as the language of legal practice, mapping, lettering, architectural forms, the wearing of uniforms and the marking out and policing of frontiers (see also Hansen and Stepputat 2002; Painter 2006). These material practices produce, or rather enact, the state as standing apart

and above a social order, producing the effect of an external ‘state’ intervening ‘in society’ (cf. Foucault 1980; Abrams 1988). As such, state-society boundaries do not mark the limit of authority, but enable it, and rather than ‘searching for a definition that will fix the boundary’, Mitchell (1991: 78) writes, ‘we need to examine the detailed political processes through which the uncertain yet powerful distinction between state and society is produced.’ Subsequent scholarship has probed a range of practices through which political authority is produced as distinct from its social surround: by regulating property relations (Lund 2016; Sikor and Lund 2009), laying roads (Rankin et al. 2016), through foreclosure (Neumann 2004) or by mapping and surveying (Mitchell 2002), to name a few. In short, the relationship between land’s making and the institutions that act upon it is co-constitutive, with the very notion of stateness wrapped up with control over land (and forests) and the people who dwell on it (Nightingale et al. 2018). In this thesis, I take up this analytical imperative, emphasizing land as a key arena through which myriad ‘state-chiefdom’ boundaries are drawn and contested, with different institutions deriving their authority (or ‘stateness’) from their shaping of land and land use through practice and legislation.

Yet this thesis offers a shift in analytical emphasis, away from how the state emerges as a distinct form of authority through the ‘assertion of control over territory, resources, and people’ (Neumann 2004: 185) and toward how stately authority emerges within the current of people’s involved activity, in the specific relational context of their practical engagement with their material surroundings. It is a move away from displays of overall strategies of government and toward the opaque reality of local encounters and makeshift tactics. In many ways, this corresponds to an interest in what Foucault (1995[1977]: 11) has called the *imbrication* of people and things, as expounded in this oft-cited passage:

Government does not bear on territory but rather on the complex unit constituted by men [and women] and things. Consequently the things which government is to be concerned about are not men, but men in their relations, their links, their *imbrication* with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility etc.; men in their relation to that other kind of things which are customs, habits, ways of doing and thinking, etc.

This passage is, of course, too imprecise to offer any theoretical direction other than pointing us toward some of the relations through which governance works, entangling subjects, space and geophysical substance (cf. Moore 2005). My point here is a different one: if we take the quote above seriously, we can start to see how (state) power is sunk into social and material relationships and, as such, uncertain in its effects precisely because it remains susceptible to the eventualities of the social and material relations of the everyday (Valdivia 2008; Meehan 2014; Nightingale 2018). As the boundaries of the state stretch, they become susceptible to critique, resistance and other ways of being and doing. Contrary to Foucault, therefore, my ambition is not to make clearer how (state) power works as a disciplinary technology, but rather to bring to light how ‘government’ is continuously troubled by unruly natures and the surreptitious forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, makeshift creativity of citizens.

In what follows below, I assemble five conceptual components of state making, drawn from five different bodies of literature, each serving, in different ways, to push our understanding of state power as riddled with sociality, uncertainty and ambiguity. Taken together, these literatures serve to summon up an analytical critique of the effectiveness of state power to produce stable effects, showing instead how spaces never become fully exclusive but take on liminal qualities through which a plurality of political actors reinject elements of indeterminacy, rendering absolute ordering all the more impossible.

### 3.3.1 Component One: Legal pluralism and the fragmentation of authority

Political pluralists invite us to move our analyses beyond ‘the state’ as the sole source of public authority, probing instead how governance proceeds at different levels and through an assemblage of different actors who employ a range of state and state-like tactics to secure their claims to legitimate authority (von Benda-Beckmann and Turner 2018). Here I build on work that has studied negotiations of disputed political authority among rebels and guerilla groups (Korf 2005; Suykens 2010; Vandekerckhove 2011; Hoffmann and Vlassenroot 2014) as well as Africanist literature that underlines the political and cultural constructedness of the distinction between ‘state’ and ‘chiefdom’ (Moore 1978; Berry 1993; Moore 2005; van Binsbergen 1987). Indeed, Zambian chiefs and headmen, too, have a

‘language of stateness’ (Lund 2006: 677) with a repertoire of symbols of power and political legitimation that mimic, but also mock, those of statutory bureaucracies. In the context of Zambia, a multiplicity of dispersed authorities – bureaucrats, field officers, chiefs, headmen, forest rangers, land surveyors and spirits – are complicit in land’s making, and they may derive influence through proximity to (or indeed distance from) the institutional sites of the statutory administration, or operate in their ‘shadows’ or ‘margins’ (Das and Poole 2004; Harris-White 2003).

Thus, far more than a mute backdrop upon which ‘state meets citizen’, rural Zambia is contested territory, or what Donald Moore (2005) has called an ‘entangled landscape’: a space where state power mingles with chiefly authority, where colonial histories and spatialities intertwine with the politics of the present, where people become subjected to multiple matrices of power. Here the domains of stately and chiefly government overlap and rub up against each other, sometimes fitting uneasily within the ‘paper boundaries’ (Byrne et al. 2016) surrounding them. Turning attention to diverse and dispersed practices of government (both stately and chiefly), and to the boundaries that emerge as an effect, thus shifts analytical attention away from both state and chiefdom as predefined entities with a fixed set of relations and toward the plurality of actors exerting authority to govern, with different registers and faculties of power, ranging from the application of statutory law, situational adjustments and spiritual sanction to references to embryonic rules and myths (Lund 2002). As Berry (1997: 1228) notes: ‘people interact, within and across various social boundaries, in multiple ways and relations among them are constituted less through the uniform application of written or unwritten rules, as through multiple processes of negotiation and contest’. In short, as the state wends its way through land through surveying, titling, enclosing and demarcation, it is remade, dispersed and stretched into a myriad of social and material relationships – it becomes susceptible to both chiefly resistance and a creative citizenry that comply, subvert, support and evade different practices of government. State-chiefdom boundaries become visible as situational and highly elastic. The first component thus reads: state governance does not proceed from some nexus of centralized power, but from multiple and translocal sites. Political authority is, at its core, an empirical question.

### 3.3.2 Component Two: Political ecology and the unruliness of land

The second conceptual component I wish to introduce concerns the very grounds of state politics: land. Land is, in many ways, the material and symbolic base of state making; it is measured, mapped, enclosed, demarcated, classified and so on. Yet political authority and its principles of government are not simply ‘mapped onto’ the land; land is not external to culture and history or an inert object over which politics happen – it is ‘artifactual’, emergent with the practices upon it (see Braun 2002; Paasi 1996). But land is not only elastic in the sense of its existence in multiple and incommensurable registers of social and political life (Li 2004), but also in a firmly material sense. Building on work within political ecology, and that of Andrea Nightingale (2011, 2018) in particular, I shall insist that the outcome – or boundary effect – of struggles over land and legitimate authority remain crucially dependent on the diverse ways that practices of government and resistance become entangled with the material-ecological fabric of the physical landscape (which Foucault hinted at but never developed). As Nightingale (2018) theorizes, as we bring into analytical view how state (and state-like) efforts are thwarted by water sources silting or drying up (Harris 2012) or roads eroding beyond repair (Butz and Cook 2011), we can no longer separate political authorities from the material environment or landscape through which they come into social and political existence (see also Peluso 2011; Meehan 2014).

In conceptual terms, political authorities not only come into being through efforts at ‘making natures’, but material-ecological environments themselves – the very physicality of land – are constitutive of social and political boundaries. Rains render slopes slippery, thwarting attempts to climb paths easily ascended during dry seasons. Erosion washes away soil and rock while simultaneously redistributing sediment in ways that frustrate travel and movement. In Chapter 6 of this thesis, we see how both the materiality of food crops and heavy rains shape struggles over land and forest. Thus, where the physicality of land ends and where its sociality begins is not easily delineated (in itself a boundary effect). What we often encounter are socio-material or socio-ecological entanglements (Harris 2012; Nightingale 2018). Peters (2004; 2009), for instance, observes how drought produces stricter definitions of those with legitimate claims to resources, catalyzing more exclusively defined group boundaries. And, as Sud (2019: 12) concludes, ‘Recalcitrance to the authority of the state can come from the people it seeks

to order, but also from land and nature that remain unruly in the face of official decrees' (see also Kadfak and Oskarsson 2017). What these studies in political ecology suggest, in short, is that we cannot understand state power and its effects without contextual and empirical investigation, without which we would be unable to appreciate unexpected and inadvertent fractures and fissures in the flows of power, prompted by material-ecological conditions. The second component thus reads: state making is crucially contingent upon the material-ecological properties of the landscape through which authority is produced.

### 3.3.3 Component Three: Critical geography and the uncertainty of territory

What emerges from these insights is an image of state authority as fragmented and variable in its material and spatial relations, open to political contest and the play of unruly citizens and erratic ecologies. It is also against this background, I propose, that we need to understand the spatiality of political authority, or, more simply put, the concept of territory. Territory is the spatial effect of the deployment of authority in material space, effectuated through variable practices of controlling or claiming authority or rule over it (Peluso and Lund 2011; Byrne et al. 2016; Korf, Hagmann and Emmenegger 2015). A performative notion of boundaries, however, renders territory not immutable or inert, nor a source of stability for discourse. Rather, it is a process that stabilizes over time to produce the *effect* of bounded space: nations, colonies, provinces, protectorates, districts, tribal homelands, chiefdoms, settler estates, villages, spiritual dwellings, forests and townships, with their boundaries – or lines of difference – disciplining the practices within and defining who belongs to a place and those who are subjected to exclusion from it (Paasi 1996). Some territorial formations are more durable than others, contingent upon their re-narrating and re-fixing. Territory determines what is 'dirt' and what becomes 'pollution' (Douglas 1966), but it is never more certain than the boundaries that make up its constitution (Brighenti 2010).

These boundaries are not merely geographical, but spill over into other domains (Paasi 1996). A century back in Zambia, for example, a black female body in a mining compound was seen as a danger to the orders of colonial spatial control; envisioned as a site of social reproduction, the black female body was supposed to remain in the rural village. As such, colonial

territory was displaced onto the bodies of women, with their movement becoming a central concern for the administration (see Chapter 5). Such boundaries sediment over time, with new territorializations not simply replacing old ones, but rather creating fractured and multilayered landscapes (cf. Byrne et al. 2016). Zambian lands are crisscrossed with territorial boundaries, past and present, moving in and out of formal-jurisdictional ambits – well past the scripts of statutory bureaucracies. As the chapters that follow will show, the authority of the state is never written onto the land as a secure achievement; territorial boundaries are constantly negotiated and redefined, as are the social categories in which people are placed, forcing us to remain alert to the ways some territorial formations are entrenched, while others are blurred and struggled over, and how processes of entrenchment and struggle intertwine to define rights, belonging and difference. The third component reads: territory is an unstable product of practice.

### 3.3.4 Component Four: Anthropology and the trappings of officialdom

Geographical thought offers important insights into the processes through which stately and chiefly authority achieve a spatiality, and how territorial boundaries determine who can occupy what space and who cannot. Yet territory is but one expression of stately and chiefly power; orderings of state power are always more-than-territorial. Specifically, they become manifest in government offices, in courtrooms, in people's encounters with agents of officialdom, through documentary practices and paperwork (Hetherington 2011; Hull 2012; Mathur 2015; Gupta 2012). In anthropological work on the state, the uniform, letterhead and signature, along with many other insignia of officialdom, have been analyzed as symbols of social distinction (see Hansen and Stepputat 2001). These artifacts imbue agents and organs of the statutory apparatus with 'stateness', or 'statehood', which (re)produces a division – or boundary – between 'state' and 'society/citizen' in bodily encounters. Already Friedrich Engels noted that agents of the state need to 'present themselves as organs of society standing above society', and embody 'a power which estranges them from society, they have to be given special decrees, which invest them with a peculiar sanctity and inviolability' (Engels 2016 [1941]: 157). Others (e.g. Hull 2012; Gupta 2012) have stressed bureaucracy as a domain of officialdom, with waiting rooms and government offices as crucial sites wherein unequal power relations between state and citizens are reproduced; bureaucratic practice – writing, lettering,

stamping, documenting, endorsing – are all practices that reproduce and reify the state and agents of officialdom, making them distinct from their social surround (see also Das and Poole 2004). What these literatures say, in other words, is that boundaries of officialdom do not *represent* authority as much as they bring it into *being*.

Africanist theory has underlined the same phenomena for neo-traditional authorities: chiefs, headmen, rainmakers and earth priests are all dependent upon an expression of a quality or ability of difference (e.g. van Binsbergen 1987). Officialdom is a social performance of difference – a qualification for the claim to legitimate statehood that reproduces unequal relations of power between those who are governed and those who do the governing. However, like territorial boundaries, social boundaries are open to political contestations, with manipulation or forging of stamps and signatures (Hull 2012). In the ‘epistemic murk’ (Bubandt 2009: 556) that often characterizes bureaucratic arenas, the truth or falsity, authenticity or inauthenticity of paperwork is often not what determines its effects (see Hull 2012b: 259). State artifacts, like documents, are ‘iterable’ or ‘citable’, susceptible to forgery, mimicry and alternative interpretation (Das and Poole 2004). Official dress is also a site of contentious politics, as evident in colonial efforts to redesign chiefs’ outfits so as to reposition African rulers as more distinct from their social surround (see Chapter 5). The fourth component reads: material performances of officialdom are important arenas for the reproduction of political authority, but also for its contestation.

### 3.3.5 Component Five: Postcolonial theory and the spaces of encounter

What I have shown above is that state power is always fragile and uncertain in its effects, open for contestation and subversion across political, ecological, spatial and social sites. Yet to fully understand how political authority is constituted in the present, we also need to understand how state power echoes a past, with colonial boundaries constructed around race disparately and partially absorbed into social and spatial relations. Here, I follow Ann Stoler’s (2016) invitation to study the multiple temporalities in which people live, for many boundaries we encounter in Zambia today are sediments of a racially scripted landscape formed around constructs of cultural difference that legitimized the colonial appropriation of lands for white settlements, and a concomitant displacement of ‘tribal natives’ onto



marginal geographies ‘outside’ the bounds of colonial modernity (see Chapter 2). The Zambian landscape still bears the marks of this history; the trope of the ‘frontier’ that separates the ‘civilized’ from the ‘savage’ is still powerfully operative, and my argument here is that land’s making and remaking reanimate colonial and sometimes hidden relations of power that shape the ways that land is struggled over.

Yet as Stoler (2016: 26) reminds us, colonial legacy is not a question of unbroken continuity; rather, in probing imperial effects in the present we need to attend to their partial, distorted, and fragmentary qualities, to uneven and intangible sedimentations. Residues of historical-colonial inequalities becomes visible throughout my ethnography, and not only as enduring divisions between State Land and chiefly territory, but also in concrete places and encounters. For example, for those outside the circuits of statutory land law, for those without documented titles to the land they farm, the threshold to government offices is not only a boundary of postcolonial officialdom (cf. Gupta 1995), but remains embedded in colonialist epistemologies of law and property; government offices are both contemporary spaces of engagement between ‘state and citizen’ *and* historical places of colonial repression of those who occupy spaces ‘outside’ modern land law. Still today, people face discrimination for lacking ‘papers’, official documentation for their land claims, in encounters with bureaucracy (see Chapter 7). As such, state-chiefdom boundaries fold into themselves a history that become complicit in how people engage with and across them in the present. Thus, colonial struggles are not historical and ‘over’, but fold into everyday spaces where enduring taxonomies of the primitive peasant, whose use of and relation to land is deficient, continue to shape geographical imaginaries (see Peters 2009 for an excellent review).

Yet I wish to debunk a common perception of colonial discourse, namely, that it appears everywhere to be effective to the point where it becomes almost impossible to imagine its contestation. Subaltern studies, in particular, has been eloquent in exposing the internal contradictions and gaps and fissures within colonial discourse that open up possibilities of subversion, or the manner in which colonial discourse fails to suture the totality of social and ideological fields (Bhabha 1994). The potential for different forms of transformations is perhaps best articulated by Pratt’s (1991: 34) descriptions of the ‘contact zone’ as the space of colonial encounter where ‘cultures met, clashed and grappled with each other’ in instances of highly unequal relations

of power. For Pratt (39), the contact zone was characterized by ‘rage, incomprehension, and pain’, but also exhilarating moments of wonder’ (see also Nash 2002; Shaw et al. 2006). It was a site of destabilization that was laden with coercion and inequality, but also improvisation and creativity. In Bhabha’s work, such boundary moments appear as ‘interstices’, that is, ‘the overlap and displacement of domains of difference’ (1994: 2) – where stasis and rootedness give way for oppression and domination, but also struggle, negotiation and invention (see also Wilson 2017). It is here – in encounters – that we can locate the failures and fissures of the colonial discourse, and the insubordination and ingenuity of subaltern and indigenous peoples.

Subaltern studies offer important insights into how spaces of encounter contain the possibility for subversion and disruption of the ongoing, rendering cultural difference a relational process rather than some ontological essence (Chakrabarty 2000). In this thesis, colonial discourse is indeed both present and folded into multiple temporalities, but the analytical focus is placed on its localized reiteration; here lies the risk of failure and the troubling of authority, rightful presence and power (Bhabha 1994). In colonial Zambia, for example, native women altered their bodies and dressed up as men to avoid detection at police checkpoints, and chiefs tossed their attire in acts of defiance (see Chapter 5). And today, even ostracized farmers probe their way into government offices, navigate the state bureaucracy to obtain signatures on various documents, or track down agents of the state at their private residences when turned away from government compounds (see Chapter 6 and 7). A focus on spaces of encounter serves to throw into relief enduring colonial relations that can otherwise become obscured by everyday, often hidden, repetition, but at the same time *it also* makes visible their failure to suture the totality of social and ideological fields. The fifth component reads: colonial orders of power are neither over nor omnipresent, but fold into different social and spatial relations.

### 3.4 Toward an analytic of the uncertainty of state power

As shown above, any theory of the state needs to take into account its constitution through a complex set of performances and practices and take seriously that land occupies multiple registers of social and political life and weaves its way through multiple polities, relationships and histories. The five bodies of literature introduced above serve to disturb the conception of state

power as everywhere effective, and provide for an empirically grounded analysis of the state as an utterly uncertain achievement. Indeed, previous scholarship, across disciplines, provides spectacular insights into the variability of power and political authority, and bringing these insights together means querying state power's entanglement with material-ecological properties of land, a plurality of political authorities, uneven territorial productions that escape scripted lines, the circulations of bureaucratic artifacts, material performances of officialdom and colonial-historical sediments of racial exclusion.

To understand agrarian struggles and the state-chieftdom boundaries that emerge as a result, I contend, we must hold these processes in view simultaneously. From the insights assembled above, we can explore how state-chieftdom boundary making, connected officialdoms and exclusions take place at myriad sites. Because, state-chieftdom boundaries do not locate only a border area on the landscape itself, but are also 'spread'; fences on the ground, lines on maps, thresholds to government offices, the body corporeal and colonial imageries of the savage all mark spaces of struggle, where power and political authority are negotiated and struggled over. As becomes evident throughout this thesis, state-chieftdom boundaries are inscribed onto the land, yet fences corrode and boundary stones are unearthed, they are written onto documents in a faraway capital but writings are lost or manipulated; they are written on the bodies of chiefs in the form of official regalia but chiefs toss their attire; huts are burned and fields ploughed under to erase signs of human occupation and use, but people repeatedly write themselves back into the landscape through tree plantation or chiefly sanction. Such strategies continuously reinject elements of eventuality into processes of boundary making, rendering absolute ordering all the more impossible (Bhabha 1994), and introduce or maintain an element of plasticity in land's making and remaking.

To render these dynamics visible, this thesis features four case-study chapters, each following an evolving struggle around a particular 'boundary object' sitting in between stately and chiefly forms of authority: the body, the forest, the beacon and the title deed. Each of these boundary objects connect – in different ways – to the insights assembled above: they are *analytical locations* that link the empirical and the conceptual, folding the study of state making into concrete places and encounters.

'Boundary object' is a sociological term used to designate an interface between different communities of practice (Star and Griesemer 1989; Star 2010). Boundary objects are plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a 'common identity across sites'; they 'have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation.' (Star and Griesemer 1989: 393). A geographical map provides a good example. It allows for different people to come together in mutual understanding, yet it is elastic enough to allow for different deployments. It can be used to detach land from lived reality but also to inscribe new geographical truths. It is an instrument of power, it performs political work, it is malleable, open to contestation. It has a history and materiality that opens up for different readings etc. To capture the transience and changeability of boundary objects, Lee (2005) has proposed that we call them 'boundary negotiating artifacts.' As such, a boundary object is a *shared space*, and consequently does not reside in some periphery, marginal space or at the edge of the political, but rather constitutes the political (cf. Mezzadra and Nielson 2013). Boundary objects, in short, are methodological instruments that provide for *situated* analysis of larger-scale processes. This guides me not only in the selection of the relevant empirical settings for my investigations but also in the very construction of the 'objects' to be studied.

The illustration below (Figure 2) shows my four boundary objects, sitting in between State Land and chiefly territory, where multiple powers coincide. All of these objects are, in different ways, hooked up to institutions of both stately and chiefly forms of authority. They sit at different levels of analysis, and all have a particular materiality that shapes how they are engaged with, from fleshy corporeality, topographical 'nature', fragile stonework to brittle paper. My boundary objects are derived from ethnographic engagement and a reading of the colonial archives, and they function as points of departure in my exploration of how land comes to be struggled over, inhabited, labored on, and a powerful conduit for the subversion of state power.

By centering the analysis on these boundary objects, I argue, we can open up a translocal – localized yet scalar – reading of the limits of state governance that captures connectivities between different sites, linking localized and particular contestations and wider geographies and histories of 'state making'.

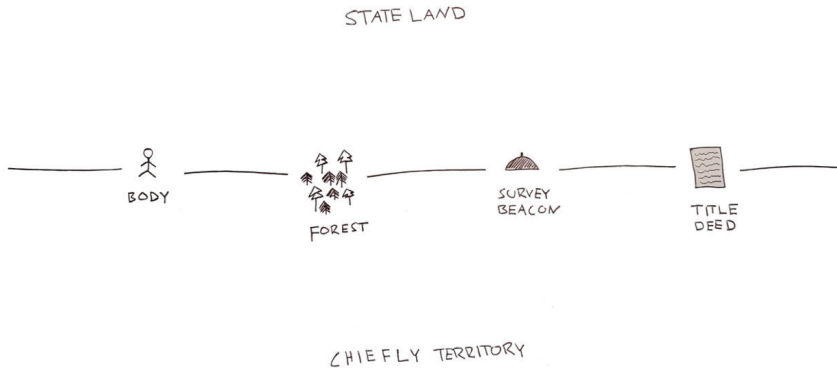


Figure 2: Four boundary objects. Drawing by the author.

But why these four boundary objects? On lands subjected to state appropriation, people often struggle to stake claims to home and land, and the courtroom is seldom a viable terrain of struggle. More often than not, conflicts over land in rural Zambia ensue in other domains, visible only on the ground itself. My boundary objects signal the more hidden spaces through which people engage with change on the ground: the colonized were deprived of their rights, but not of their bodies, which became political tools in the face of colonial decree; those dwelling in the forest face dispossession, yet maneuver its materiality and ecology (ruggedness and remoteness) and invoke the histories and spirits that lie buried within to resist eviction; farmers who discover survey beacons on their land know that it has been targeted for government appropriation, but they have few other options than acting upon the boundary stones themselves; the title deed detaches land from lived realities, but by reworking its meaning, people reconnect it to the land to which it refers, and in so doing open up a space for other forms of claim-making. Thus, my boundary objects connect sites that all carry the common denominator of being spaces of political engagement – from the body corporeal, into material nature, onto material objects, through paper-work,

extending from a past into the present – revealing how marginalized peoples exploit indeterminacies in the situation or indeed generate such indeterminacies, using whatever areas there are of inconsistency, contradiction and ambiguity to stake claims to home and land.

My ‘boundary objects’ are not analytically given, nor are they simply ‘there’; rather, they are made into ‘boundary negotiation artifacts’ (Lee 2005) by people themselves to open up possibilities for subversion and opposition. What I have done above is to recast them in conceptual cloth, taking four schemes of government with scripted outcomes (settler colonialism, forest enclosure, physical demarcation and land titling) and rendered them analytical locations for the study of the contested means through which power and political authority operate. At their core, my boundary objects allow for critical analysis not only of relations of domination, dispossession and exploitation, but also of the struggles and creative politics that take shape around these changing relations. Taken together, they provide for an emergent, empirically grounded and historically contingent analysis of how land becomes struggled over, and the different ways state power operates and positions people with variable capacities for action and critique within shifting state-chiefdom relations.

## 4. Methodology

All readings are also mis-readings, re-readings, partial readings, imposed readings, and imagined readings of a text that is originally and finally never simply there. Just as the world is originally fallen apart, the text is always already enmeshed in contending practices and hopes. (Haraway 1991: 124)

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter laid out the theoretical foundation for this thesis and developed an analytical strategy around four boundary objects, which correspond to the four case-study chapters that make up this thesis: the body, the forest, the survey beacon and the title deed. Each of these objects are *analytical locations* that link the empirical and the conceptual, folding the study of state making into spaces of everyday life. In this chapter, I explain how I approached this study during fieldwork, employing a case-study methodology with an emphasis on ethnography and archival research, with each individual case-study chapter being a constituent of the larger question of how the cracks, contingencies and inadvertent outcomes of governance shape land struggles and state making in rural Zambia. Laying out my methodological orientation implies more than elaborating a set of methods, however; it signals my approach to knowledge production, and how the worlds of others may be brought into my 'epistemological reach' (Trouillot 1995). Certainly, to disentangle what we think we know about others from the worlds we inhabit ourselves is not an ethnographic challenge to overcome, but a process of permanently provisional translation, and the process of translating culturally contingent idioms into a unidimensional textual form is never innocent. Different methods of 'reading' realities open and foreclose different understandings of the world, and these readings are

always partial. Knowledge is a product of interpretation between the observer, the observed and the method of observation, forming a ‘research assemblage’ (Fox and Alldred 2015). Like other assemblages, it is never a certain accomplishment; it shifts, sometimes holding together and at other times breaking apart, and I am far from its only architect. Simultaneously, as I navigated and positioned myself on Zambian landscapes, others’ conduct both governed and politically positioned me.

In what follows, I elaborate on my process of assembling methods. First, I detail my methodological approach, or what it means to approach ‘state making’ through case-study research, and map out my ‘ethnographic field’. Subsequently, I elaborate the particular methods I employed: ethnographic observation, interviews and archival research (see Table 2 for a scheme of methods and how they map onto each empirical chapter). Thereafter, I explain my analytical strategy. In the final part, I think through the power relations within which this research is embedded, reflect upon questions of positionality and elucidate my approach to ethics and anonymity.

*Table 2. Scheme of methods.*

<b>CHAPTER / CASE STUDY</b>	<b>STUDY FOCUS / GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE</b>	<b>DATA COLLECTION</b>
<b>Empirical chapter I The body</b>	The colonial appropriation of indigenous lands / colonial Zambia (multi-sited)	Archival research (1 month) and interviews with Chief Liteta IV and his advisors. Participant observations also inform the analysis.
<b>Empirical chapter II The forest</b>	The enclosing of an inhabited forest / Munyama Forest, Lenje Chiefdom	Participant observations in Munyama Forest (around 5 months). Archival research (1 week). Interviews at the chief’s palace, District Council, Provincial Government, the Ministry of Lands and Forestry Department.
<b>Empirical chapter III The survey beacon</b>	The demarcation of village land / Mulonga village, Lenje Chiefdom	Participant observations in Mulonga village (3 months). Interviews at the chief’s palace, District Councils, Provincial Government and the Ministry of Lands.
<b>Empirical chapter IV The title deed</b>	Land titling / Lenje Chiefdom (multi-sited)	Interviews with title holders, applicants of land conversion, village headmen, Chief Liteta IV and land officers at different statutory levels. Participant observations also inform the analysis.



## 4.2 Case study research and its ethnographic field

As laid out in the previous chapter, land's making and the formation of political authority are intimately intertwined. I proceeded by rescaling processes of state making onto the land, and thus into people's lives, proposing an analytic around how state-chiefdom boundaries are lived, performed and engaged with in everyday life. Methodologically, this serves the purpose of making visible how (state) efforts at making land remain open to the play of insubordinate citizens, diffident bureaucrats and unruly lands. This research is, therefore, situated at the interface between practices of government, subjects of rule and materiality of milieu, where efforts at making land become enmeshed with immediate political ecologies; it is here that state authority and chiefly politics emerge as items of *ethnographic* analysis. Hansen and Stepputat (2001: 14) write:

By treating the state [and, I would add, the chiefdom] as a dispersed ensemble of institutional practices and techniques of governance we can ... produce multiple ethnographic sites from where the state [and chiefdom] can be studied and comprehended in terms of its effects.

Consequently, my 'cases' are not to be mistaken for spatial domains into which the state 'enters'; rather, they should be understood as relational *spaces* through which state power operates, where the practices of government make and remake land and produce particular places, peoples, bodies, expectations and desires. A case is an 'analytical construct' (Lund 2014: 224) aimed at arranging knowledge and structuring my thought processes around certain phenomena, and not some pre-constituted unit of analysis (see Yin 2018). Likewise, an 'ethnographic field' is not some pre-existing research site awaiting the analyst, but something that we *make* in order to erect boundaries around our exploration. 'An ethnographic field', Madden (2010: 38) writes, 'provides an interrogative boundary to map onto a geographical and/or social and/or emotional landscape that is inhabited by a participant group.'

While this thesis is about the political, material and imagined lands inhabited by the people of 'the Lenje', these lands are certainly not contained within the boundaries of 'a community'. The Lenje is a loosely bound category – an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) – with its spatial and cultural boundaries shifting, depending on whom you talk to. My conceptualization of state-chiefdom boundaries draws diffuse, separate, mobile and distant places together into a single ethnographic field of enquiry. For example, in Chapter 8

I introduce Mr. Mulenga, a farmer in Chibombo District who is in the process of acquiring a title deed. When he receives a letter ornamented with the official seal of the 'Republic of Zambia', summoning him to the Ministry of Lands, my conceptualization of the state, my 'analytical construct', informs me to follow. Mr Mulenga's spatial movement expands my ethnographic field, incorporating an encounter at an office at the Ministry of Lands into my analytical frame. This movement is both spatial and temporal; I trace relations of power both into the offices of state agents (Chapter 7 and 8) and into a colonial past (Chapter 5 and 6). In this manner, I travel *translocally* between 'sites' – both spatial and temporal – within the ethnographic field. Just as the state is multi-sited, so too, is my ethnographic field.

I stayed in two sites that were targeted for government appropriation: Munyama Forest (Chapter 6) and Mulonga village (Chapter 7). Both are located in Lenje Chiefdom (previously Lenje Native Reserve), Central Province, but they are separated by a district boundary between Chibombo and Chisamba (previously one district, Kabwe Rural). Munyama Forest was previously located in Chibombo District, but following a district rebordering in 2003, it was subsumed into the new district of Chisamba (see Chapter 6 for the political implications of this). Two of the case-study chapters are broader in scope, drawing on empirical material from Northern Rhodesia as a whole (Chapter 5) and Lenje Chiefdom at large (Chapter 8).

The selection of these particular field sites was a strategic-methodological choice, emerging out of a pilot study I conducted in 2016. Rather than seeking 'representativeness', I sought field sites that could 'speak back' to the overall concerns of this thesis. The field sites were, in other words, selected with reference to their theoretical application, to their relevance to my research questions, my theoretical position and to the phenomena I was trying to understand (see Silverman 2010). Put somewhat differently, my research did not aim to be representative of the empirical world but of the processes outlined by theory. Geographically this translates into a borderland situated between State Land and chiefly territory; Lenje Chiefdom is situated at the spatial-political intersection of stately and chiefly authority, and Munyama Forest and Mulonga village are places where these spaces, in different ways, overlap, entangle and 'rub up' against each other. They are at once frontier spaces of the statutory land law regime and places where social, political and historical-spiritual practices on the land provide considerable friction to state processes. As such, these sites form focal points between state practice, chiefly

territory and rural subjects, which allowed me to explore in detail how (state) power operates on and through lands with multiple and malleable political and historical layers. Taken together, then, my choice of field sites was driven by an effort to look for critical research units that would help me to ‘better illuminate the case’ (Baxter and Jack 2008: 550; Yin 2018: 179; Bryman 2012: 70), providing the opportunity to building an explanation within a certain frame of analysis.

While case-study methodologies have been celebrated as a strategy to understand the ‘how’ of power and the practices that govern our relations to the environment (Peet and Watts 2004; Robbins 2012; Rocheleau et al. 1996), a limitation to case-study research is what might be called the ‘localist trap’. My case studies (body, forest, beacon, title deed) are certainly connected to wider geographies, histories and regimes of knowledge, and an analytical focus on everyday life might conceal these larger-scale processes that are shaping the case (Peters 2014). At the same time, as Goffman (1989: 130) writes, ‘you can more easily move up a social system, than down.’ Indeed, research that starts from larger-scale dynamics risks seeing a ‘government rationality’ that does not necessarily reflect local experience. This is, in part, why I chose to approach the study of state making from the perspective of four case studies: because this would allow me to collect multiple readings that could then be assembled into an understanding of social processes ‘from below’. In turn, this helped me to uncover exceptions to representations of state governance as the rationalization of power, and instead reveal the multiple and contending forces shaping the conditions of each case.

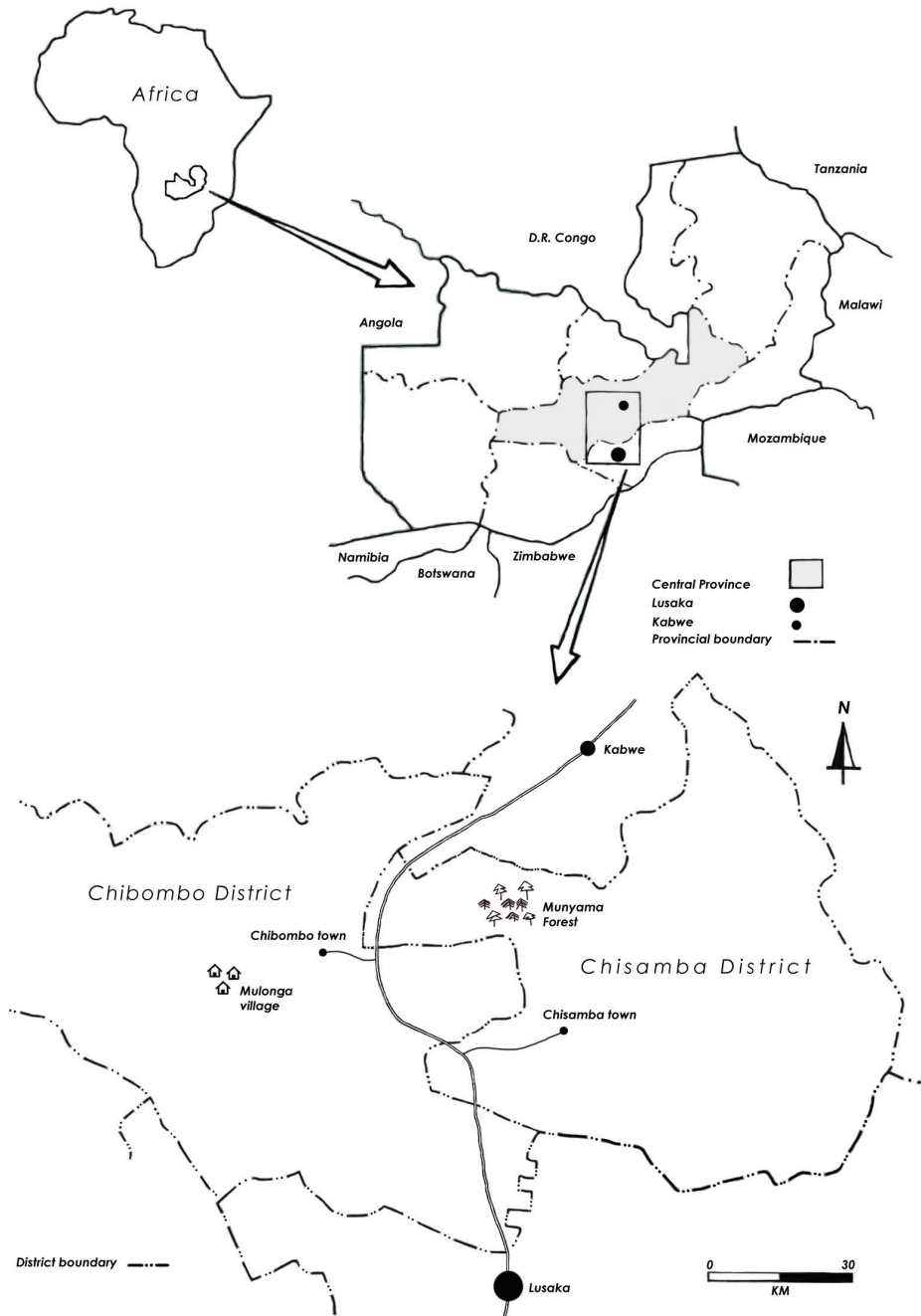


Figure 3. Study area. Map drawn by the author.

### 4.3 Ethnography

Ethnography forms the foundation for this thesis, particularly in Chapter 6 (the forest) and Chapter 7 (the beacon), yet it also supports parts of Chapters 5 and 8. At the center of my research lies questions pertaining to the operation and exercise of power, to relationships between state and citizen, subject and authority, people and place, and to how different people interpret, resist and endure change in their social and political surroundings. Ethnography provides opportunities for close and contextual readings of these relationship and processes as they occur in everyday life (Burawoy 1991). Above all, ethnography provides for a ‘slower accumulation of evidence and for key insights to arise unexpectedly, during experiences that allow glimpses of how the world is experienced by local peoples’ (Roncoli et al. 2009: 88). The primary value of a fieldwork strategy based on ethnography, then, is that it provides certain kinds of insights that are difficult to obtain in any other way, such as people’s social positioning, relations to land and connections to officialdom, and it allows the ethnographer to encounter and discern the differences between what people say (meaning), what people do (practice) and what they imagine (emotion) in their everyday contexts (Lofland and Lofland 1995). It is not that living in a place and watching its daily life ebb and flow somehow enables you to capture its totality or essence; it is, rather, that the bits of life that you do see, you see in context. In other words, the advantage of data collected through observation, rather than through direct questioning, is that data is arrived at not as a response to some conjectural question but as it spontaneously occurs: the quarrel that erupts outside your front door, the unprompted storytelling over breakfast, the unexpected arrival of a survey vehicle. You expose yourself to chance encounters and events. It is, in short, the practice of being there in ‘continued proximity to the studied reality’ (Flyvbjerg 2006: 22) that forms the foundation of my analysis.

My time in the field was split into three fieldtrips (November 2016–March 2017, August–October 2017 and April–June 2018), and while at times generating discontinuities in the relationships I developed, this also allowed me to refine my research strategy and locate important gaps in the data between each period of fieldwork. The latter proved critical, especially in my understanding of past experiences and events, as oral accounts are often conflictual and fragmentary (Moore 2005). I also benefited greatly from two pre-doctoral field visits (in 2013 and 2015), during which I established

relationships with state officials at the Provincial Government in Kabwe, in the District Councils of Chibombo and Chisamba, at the Ministry of Lands in Lusaka, and with several headmen and families in Lenje Chiefdom, all of them deepening during subsequent field work (in 2016, 2017 and 2018). Several of my early contacts have become informants, others friends.

During fieldwork, I took part in daily work, routine activities and village meetings, closely observing people's myriad material and affective encounters with state authority, and charting out the historical, material, political and emotional dynamics at play in these encounters – all recorded in a research journal. Chapter 6 (the forest) is based primarily on following people's involvement in their daily activities – how they invoked and maneuvered the historical, material and ecological terrain of the forest to position themselves in relation to state authority. In addition to observations of everyday serendipitous occasions, particular events became objects of more focused study. Most of Chapter 7 (the beacon), for example, is centered on the three-week-long period of material demarcation of the land in Mulonga, and the villagers' responses to that demarcation. But I also traced survey lines into the offices of the state administration to map out the bureaucratic field from which the beacons had sprung. Here, another set of encounters took place that were equally important to understanding state-chiefdom boundary dynamics.

Throughout my time in the field I spent single days in the halls of the District Councils, in various offices and winding corridors of the Ministry of Lands in Lusaka, and at the chief's palace. Field research at these sites is best described as a form of 'step-in-step-out' ethnography (Madden 2010: 80): I observed meetings in District Councils, listened to hearings at the chief's court, trailed documents as they traveled between offices and departments in the Ministry of Lands, and spent time with people in halls and waiting rooms, delivering, collecting or trying to push paperwork through. While this work primarily maps onto Chapter 8 (the title deed), it also informs a more general understanding of encounters with officialdom (see Appendix 1 for a sample list of participant observations).

Munyama and Mulonga are located about a half day's travel apart (in dry the season), and while lodging in one location, I often received telephone calls from informants in the other, telling me about recent events or upcoming meetings, inviting me to come along. Thus, while I dedicated specific field-research time to each site, there was also frequent movement

in between, sometimes on a weekly basis. In Mulonga village I stayed with Chipeco, Thabo and their two sons on their small farmstead comprised of a cluster of a few thatched mud-and-wattle sleeping huts and a larger cooking hut made from sun-dried bricks. In Munyama I lived with Bernard, Samfya, and their two daughters. Headman Chiwala, however, insisted that I stay with him and his family, as he had a ‘better roof’, and he convinced me to split my time between Bernard and Samfya’s family and his own. In Munyama, the politics of my whereabouts were tangible. Chiwala was often curious about whom I had been talking to and what people were telling me, on occasion cautiously advising me against talking to certain persons. More often than not, it turned out that these persons were critical toward Chiwala’s rule. Gatekeepers abound. During my first field visit to Munyama (2016), my research attracted considerable suspicion. If I was seen at Chisamba District Council at times of heightened political tension, the group of headmen administering the forest lands questioned me carefully to ensure that I was not ‘working for the government’. Over time, however, a certain amount of trust was built, and both Chiwala and Chief Liteta IV crafted hand-worked ‘research permits’ for me to carry. Yet my association with both state officials and farmers sometimes conflicted. For example, quite early on in my field research, Chisamba District Council grew increasingly suspicious of my inquiries into Munyama Forest, and I learned that there were discussions within the Ministry of Lands in Lusaka about ‘whose side the white researcher is on’, as my informant within the Ministry informed me over the phone. When returning to Lusaka for a few interviews at the Ministry, my request to see the officer in charge of Munyama was denied, and I was warned of the risks of ‘allying’ with ‘forest headmen’.

These shifting relationships required constant tending, and I endeavored to be as transparent about my research activities as possible, continually explaining the reasons for my movement in the field while ensuring that the anonymity of research participants and informants was maintained when issues were contentious (see below for a discussion on ethics and anonymity). Yet it was inevitable that my movement between translocal sites within the field – frequenting the palace of Chief Liteta IV of Lenje Chiefdom, District Councils, the offices of Kabwe Provincial Government, and the corridors of the Ministry of Lands in Lusaka – entangled me in scalar relations of power. It is from these situated entanglements that this thesis is written, for it is through them that ethnographic insights on state-chiefdom

relations emerge; and my intention is to bring these entanglements and insights into contextual view in each of case-study chapters. The tension-laden field of Munyama Forest, for instance, proved critical for understanding how colonial categories of forests, modernity and chieftainship still shape interactions and encounters between headmen who claim the forest as their own and state officials who seek to bring it into the fold of the statutory administration.

While I have basic knowledge of *iciBemba* (the regional lingua franca), both Chipepo, Bernard and Chiwala are fluent in English, and they facilitated my efforts at contextual understanding. Newman Nkandu, a research assistant whom I have been working with since 2015, supported me at times when the local vernacular *Lenje* was spoken. Yet Newman's role extends far beyond offering translation support; he read drafts of most of my empirical chapters and provided critical feedback and suggested alternative readings of data; he contributed new questions in interview situations that proved critical to my understanding; and he also, on more than one occasion, pacified people who had perhaps had one drink too many and wanted to pick a fight with the odd white guy. Newman was, in many ways, indispensable for my fieldwork, and helped me in my labors for contextual understanding.

Still, I have, of course, been unable to capture the totality of social, political and ecological processes that shape the ways land becomes struggled over. Some important limitations to what I could learn through fieldwork have to do with the names and the categories I inevitably used to process what I saw: land, forest, state, chiefdom, etc. How much of the life going on around me in the field was I capable of seeing? Part of the baggage I took with me was the intellectual legacy acquired in the course of my studies, and inevitably this kept telling me what I was seeing: *this* is significant, *that* insignificant; *this* falls into that category, *that* into another one, and so on. In other words, what I was seeing had already been named in the literature with which I was familiar, and it was impossible for me to think about it without using those names. In other words, my research is not only a product of my relationships in the field, but also with a body of scholarly theory that defined certain questions as important and others as irrelevant. Central to the experience of my fieldwork, therefore, was the continual struggle between the names I carried and the untidy realities in which I moved.

In this sense, the ethnographic field is a site of 'betweenness' (Staeheli and Lawson 1994) through which we can learn about events, experiences and



oppressions but never fully know the worlds of others or speak with authority for them (Stoler 2009; Spivak 1988). This is perhaps particularly evident in relation to ecological-spiritual entwinements (Chapter 5 and 6). Yet, while it is important not to underestimate the difficulties of seeing and naming elements of different realities, it is equally important not to retreat into a position that holds that the difficulties are so great that it is simply not possible to gain any knowledge of that which lies beyond immediate 'epistemological reach' (Trouillot 1995). While it is never possible to experience these realities in any 'unnamed' way, the world 'out there' can sometimes stretch and tear those names in such a way that we are forced to rethink them. My strategy in the field for disturbing my preconceptions involved attempting to undermine my own preconceptions, and to allow empirical insights to challenge my ready-made names. Still, however open to doubt I have tried to be, I remained bound to a particular moment in time; I joined a dialogue already in progress in which certain ways of naming reality have become hegemonic.

#### 4.4 Interviews

Apart from following the ebbs and flows of daily life in Mulonga and Munyama, I have done interviews (semi-structured and targeted 'elite' interviews) and chronicled oral narrations of colonial histories to understand past experiences, to capture how people talk about themselves, how they understand and interpret their social and material environment, what social and political categories people invoke and how they explain processes of change. Interviews were the main source of data used for Chapter 8 (the title deed). As the title deed is an odd element in rural villages, I purposefully interviewed farmers across several sites in Lenje Chiefdom who have tried to convert their landholdings into private property (20 in total, of which 3 were successful), people who had inherited title (5), as well as Chief Liteta IV, a number of his headmen (11) and officials within the statutory bureaucracy (9). Together, these interviews sought to understand how the title deed was taken up and reworked in spaces outside statutory bureaucracy.

Asking questions is not an easy thing to do, however. What fieldwork is often about, it seems to me, is the struggle to discover the questions we have not asked but which our informants hear and are struggling to answer in their attempts to make sense of the questions we do ask. For instance, in my

interviews I asked how much land title holders cultivated. I soon learned that people exaggerated these figures because they assumed, whatever I might say to the contrary, that I would pass this information on to state officials, and that land which was not under cultivation would be reappropriated by a headman or the Ministry of Lands. The threat that uncultivated lands would be edited out from people's control was a staple of the exhortations delivered by various officials. What the answers to my questions about cultivated lands were actually telling me about, therefore, had less to do with actual practices on the land and more to do with the relationship between farmers and officialdom. In other words, what those questioned heard was a question about whether they were properly productive farmers, and whether the extent of their cultivation justified their claims to the land.

Although I took to my interviews as a set of topics, I used these more as a way of starting conversations than of getting answers to specific questions. In my ambition to enable respondents with a variety of perceptions and subject positions to freely articulate their opinions, I was careful to ensure that my interviews followed from a natural rather than imposed, interface, apprehensive of the fact that the interview setting in itself carries implications for the outcome. The space wherein the interview is conducted, as Elwood and Martin (2000: 659) write, 'produces "micro-geographies" of spatial relations and meaning, where multiple scales of social relations intersect in the research interview.' Many people who participated in this research were suspicious of formal interview situations. Therefore, interview questions were asked within flows of conversations taking place at the respondent's house or homestead, whilst working the land or walking into town, serving to mitigate some of the interpersonal artificiality commonly associated with the interview setting. Some, however, preferred a more formal interview setting, sitting face to face across a table, as this provides a more tangible forum for 'setting the record straight' or 'getting the facts rights'.

Targeted 'elite' interviews were conducted with purposefully selected representatives occupying key positions in the land regime – including those in the Ministry of Lands, Provincial Government, District Councils as well as members of the royal family of the Lenje dynasty – both as part of the background research and as a response to specific data collection requirements emerging from empirical insights gained through participant observation. The demarcation of Mulonga, for instance, led me to conduct a number of interviews with land surveyors and cartographers, which were not included in

my original design, and when learning that the Ministry of Lands had ordered the burning of fields and farmsteads in Munyama in 1994, I tracked down forestry officers who were on civil duty at that time. For these interviews, I benefited greatly from my already established relationships which facilitated research access. I had repeatedly interviewed some of these officials since 2013, and also had a social acquaintance with them; and I met several of them over beers on weekends, which allowed for a more open interaction with these agents of the state than I had expected to be possible (see below for ethical considerations).

Over the course of my research, I shifted between using a tape recorder, notebook and transcribing the interview from memory. Using a tape recorder often compromised rapport and conversational tone, and sometimes, it seemed, implied a hidden motive of the research. Not taping interviews, however, posed challenges for creating accurate annals. For this reason, I carved out time for transcription immediately after all interviews; yet sometimes an interview would evolve into lunch or a visit to a neighbor, which made recollection a trial. On days when my research assistant, Newman, was present, we often transcribed these interviews together. In many cases I also interviewed the same person several times, giving opportunity for clarification on points raised on earlier occasions. In total, the number of interviews exceeds 100, half of which are with ‘officials’, either in the statutory administration or in the ‘traditional’ leadership of Lenje Chiefdom. Throughout the research I was driven by the aspiration to attain a variety of interview participants with regards to age, gender and class (see Appendix 2 for a list of interviews).

## 4.5 Archival research

Parts of this thesis (in particular Chapters 5 and 6) draw on archival research carried out in the National Archives of Zambia in Lusaka. In total I spent five weeks in the archive, out of which four weeks were spent on locating ‘the body’ in colonial space (Chapter 5). This research objective emerged out of a more general reading of the founding of the settler state of Northern Rhodesia (originally meant as background research). In the colonial records, the ‘unruliness’ (in various formulations) of Africans is cited repeatedly from the 1890s through the 1930s. This led me to a focused reading of the ways the movement and practices of the African population frustrated colonial

control, emanating in a conceptualization of ‘the body in colonial space’. The archive itself made a systematic approach difficult, however, with outdated inventories, misplaced files and an organizational logic that at times escaped my comprehension. I chose to structure my inquiry around three themes, corresponding to three colonial spaces (territories): ‘the proper village’, ‘the native reserve’ and the ‘mining compound’, allowing a more systematic reading of the relations between particular constructions of space and the people meant to occupy those spaces. More than fifty files were reviewed for each of these spaces. The remainder of the time spent in the archive (1 week) was devoted to charting out the enclosure of Munyama Forest in the 1940s (Chapter 6). These records were more easily obtained as they were neatly organized into a handful of binders (see Appendix 3 for a list of archival source materials).

The archive is not a container of ‘raw data’, however. In itself, the archive tells a great deal about how the colonial administrators *claimed* to know the colony in which they intervened, and how they intervened in that world on the basis of the knowledge they generated (see Burton 2005). Indeed, elements of the archive were intended to be performative: to bring into being the very reality to which they referred. Colonial documents were projective devices, narrating the future of a colonial project while at the same time reconstructing the past (Stoler 2009). Archived accounts of colonial governance must be read and analyzed in that light. My aim, thus, was not to uncover some hidden rationalities behind colonial interventions, to chart some linear form of change, or to use historical documents to reveal the truth about the past, but rather to provoke new ways of thinking about peoples and spaces subjected to imperial power, and the duress and durability of boundaries drawn during colonial rule. As Walter Benjamin (1968[1940]) once wrote: ‘To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it “the way it really was” ... It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at the moment of danger ... The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers.’ With this in mind, I am relying on archived accounts not to bear the weight of theoretical assertions, but rather to stimulate reflection and elaboration on theoretical propositions (Chapter 5), and to see what political traffic the gap between archived and oral history harbors (Chapter 6).

## 4.6 Analytical strategy

Through my fieldwork, field notes have been systematically recorded in a research diary, describing fieldwork situations and chronicling unrecorded interviews. These have been transcribed and analyzed using standard qualitative techniques by coding in NVivo for key themes, patterns and repetitions. Archival documents have been photocopied and arranged according to themes. I combined inductive and deductive research approaches to stimulate reflection and an iterative generation of insights.

The transcripts gave an overview of ideas, depth, width, credibility and quality of the information. Thereafter, the materials were carefully reviewed synchronously as segments and observations of theoretical significance were labeled, categorized and organized into themes, moving from tenuous ideas and concrete details in the data toward a more comprehensive analysis of wider processes (see Neumann 2007: 337). While I coded interviews, field notes and archival materials, new topics and codes emerged: for example, the ‘the body’ in colonial space, which formed a stand-alone case study (Chapter 5), or the spiritual ecologies of land (Chapter 6) and materiality of documents (Chapter 8), which inform the analysis more broadly. These pointed to themes that I had not considered beforehand but which were important to give greater insight into the theoretical framing of my research. The relationship between these ‘new’ grounded codes and my more deductive codes, derived from previous scholarship (see Chapter 3), helped me move toward more general themes and then to narratives and results and, finally, to the contributions of each empirical chapter.

This process is not sequential; rather, it is characterized by constantly traveling between empirical material and emergent codes grounded therein, evolving theoretical themes and concepts, and the relationships between themes and concepts. My analytical codes have emerged in an iterative process spanning three years of intermittent fieldwork, with momentary ideas and topics nuanced with new empirical material and fieldwork. In other words, as new empirical insights are gained, the theory is infused with empirical meaning, meaning that theory ‘evolves’ during the course of analysis. That is, theory is both *a priori* and *a posteriori* in the sense that theory has not been generated but ‘elaborated’ in relation to my case studies (Yin 2018: 180). The premise of this strategy is that ‘theory cannot be understood without empirical observation and vice versa’, creating a ‘cross-fertilization where new combinations are developed through a mixture of

established theoretical models and new concepts derived from the confrontation with reality' (Dubois and Gadde 2002: 555). Once the themes had been elaborated, I revisited the original journal entries and audio-recordings to saturate the themes. Particular attention was directed toward themes that arose often, and toward how such themes related to the conceptual foundation upon which the analysis rests. The themes were then reviewed through the theoretical frame and arranged to speak back to my research questions.

#### 4.7 Positionality, ethics and anonymity

Fieldwork is laden with unequal power. I arrived in Lenje Chiefdom as an envoi of a distant world: with an impressive letter of introduction from a foreign university and my apparent access to that limited and vital resource, transport, I obviously belonged to a world of 'development experts' – always, in various ways, politically charged in my presence. Indeed, my presence had a tendency to turn any occasion into a public one. I clearly remember Chipepo's laughter resounding across the lands while teaching me to work the land. It was one of my first days in the field, and he was instructing me how to maneuver the plow behind their oxen. 'It's lucky that white farmers have tractors, otherwise the world would be a different place', he mused. The following day it appeared to be the only thing people were talking about: 'the white researcher that can't plow' – an expression that mapped an inexperience of manual labor onto my body, extending into historical and geographical configurations of power.

Being in the field offered constant lessons and new ways of locating myself, making me awkwardly aware of my own position of privilege (England 1994), but also of how different people were sizing *me* up, politically positioning *me*. In her writings on 'situated knowledges', Donna Haraway (1989: 193) elaborates a method of 'critical positioning', stressing that 'positioning implies responsibility for our enabling practices' (see also Fabian 2001). In effect, this links questions of my positionality to the ethical responsibilities that I carry toward those I worked amongst. Being a white researcher allowed me to move between farmsteads and offices of high-level bureaucrats in a way that few rural Zambians can, a movement that constantly generated ethical predicaments. This is perhaps particularly evident in relation to my work in Munyama Forest (Chapter 6), which has a

long and conflictual history, with charges of police beatings, violent evictions and hut burnings ordered by the government. On several occasions I was asked by forest inhabitants to make inquiries into ‘government plans’ or deliver messages to state officials, often to the effect of ‘leave our land alone’. Simultaneously, those same bureaucrats continually asked me what I had learned about the activities of the forest inhabitants, whether they carry firearms, and how many heads of cattle the average forest household has.

Navigating these different sites required continuous ethical monitoring. The approach that seemed most appropriate to me was to have an open and ongoing dialogue about my presence and role as a researcher, and to stand by my commitment to not engage in palpable political action. This is a fine line, of course. The simple act of sharing a piece of information across sites can be highly political, and I did so only when the security and integrity of all informants, bureaucrats and forest inhabitant alike could be ensured (for anonymity, see below). For example, on the request of the forest headmen, I took a photocopy of a document that they had in their possession (purportedly proving that a state official once authorized their settlement in the forest) and showed it to an officer at the Ministry of Lands, and then reported back what that officer had told me about the validity of that document. Certainly this action also served me in terms of data generation, but I was careful to make my motives clear on such occasions. Throughout my research, I was careful not to raise any false expectations emerging out of my stay, and to have open conversations about such expectations if and when they did arise; I did so based on my conviction that bringing to light conflicting interests may in itself hold value. Still, I was inevitably altering the reality in which I was trying to participate, with both my research agenda and that of the participants shaping the outcome of this research. Often my data collection was limited by my ethical commitments to not obscure my motives, yet this was also crucial for building trust across conflicting sides and, in extension, ensuring long-term research access.

My encounters with research participants were never ‘neutral’; they were marked by emotion and shaped by the social and political context in which they took place, with each side having particular interests and presumptions as to what was involved in our encounters. Over time, many of these encounters also evolved into friendships. This was somewhat of a double-edged sword, creating both a nourishing fieldwork environment and a host of ethical dilemmas, particularly related to involuntary sharing of information (see

Banks and Scheyvens 2014). Some informants certainly divulged information that they would not have shared had we not been friends (and sometimes under the influence of alcohol). These dynamics were carefully considered throughout this research, and many events, experiences and stories that I recorded have not been included in this thesis on the basis of protecting the integrity of research participants.

Ethics command continuous attention to how actions and reactions, questions and answers, are determined by relations of power. Anonymity is often presented as a solution to ethical problems, yet it also poses its own quandaries. While most participants of this research remain anonymous by choice, other have expressed a will not to be silenced through anonymization. Chiwala, for instance, insisted that I use his real name, expressing that it validates his claim to personhood. In all such cases, the decision follows from careful consideration and sometimes a dialogue with the person in question. Others I chose to anonymized, guided by my concern for their security, even when I was conscious of the fact that doing so might go against their desire not to be silenced. In Mulonga village, for example, all names have been replaced. Many people have chosen their own pseudonyms. Anonymized state officials sometimes feature under vaguer titles, such as ‘forestry official’, so as to conceal the identity of people who occupy a position easily connected to a particular person (see Appendix 2).

I have also changed the name of the village I call Mulonga, shifted its location on the map (see figure 3), altered or omitted some geographical signifiers and shifted the timeline of the demarcation of the village lands. Efforts to identify Mulonga by the events I describe are impeded by the fact that demarcations of village lands were underway throughout the district over the years 2015 to 2018, with outcomes similar to those I narrate in Chapter 7. Yet the district in which Mulonga is located is featured under its real name, thus enabling identification of local state officials figuring in my narrative. Since the time of the demarcation, however, key officials have (as per routine) been rotated to other districts. The village that features under the name Kangwa has also been renamed (Chapter 8). Munyama Forest, and all other places referred to in this thesis, carry their real names, but data are only presented when the security and integrity of the participates living in those places can be ensured.

The following chapter mirrors my attempt to navigate contested and conflictual landscapes. As shall become clear, research is never about raw



unmediated 'reality'. Views of informants (and my own) are shaped by the historical, geographical and political context in which they are recorded. Still, this is not to say that knowledge produced through fieldwork is somehow 'false', or that beyond a tainted understanding we could find absolute 'truth'. Knowledge is always partial, situated and determined historically, locally and personally and, in effect, produced from particular subject positions (Haraway 1991; 1998; Rose 1997). We are, as Kate Crehan (1997a: 43) writes, 'condemned to scrabble about with our secondhand categories in a tension-laden field. The best we can do is to try to conscientiously follow the threads dangling from the different truths back to their origins.' Why might this person have told me this? What kind of associations might those terms have in this particular context? Such questions have guided me throughout my research as methodological means to produce results both rigid and situated.

While living in Lenje Chiefdom, I always, to some extent, represented the eye of the outside world, and it was inevitable that I appeared as a potential channel through which local interests might be able to make themselves heard. At the very least, I was recording what went on locally, and would later tell people outside Lenje Chiefdom what I had learned. Many have been keen that their history, plight and 'traditions' should be recorded. Translating these diverse and sometimes contradictory voices into an academic text is not an innocent project; it is necessarily an imperfect translation and involves bringing some voices to the fore and silencing others. In the end, I hope my writing mirrors plurality rather than singularity.



## 5. Empirical Chapter I: The Body Corporeal

### Race, gender, territory: How 'out of place' bodies made (a) difference in colonial Zambia

Bodies – raced, sexed, classed and ethnicised – were the sites through which imperial and colonial power [was] imagined and exercised. (Ballantyne and Burton 2014: 6)

#### 5.1 Introduction

*Mwomboshi Forest, Lenje Chiefdom, sometime in the 1940s*

When Thandiwe was young, she moved outside the tribal area in which she was registered to settle on a piece of untenanted land on an abandoned and overgrown plantation a couple of hours' walk from Chisamba township. In doing so, Thandiwe challenged the orderly rule of the colonial state, which differentiated settler estates from Africans neatly and securely fixed in villages next to them. When the taxmen came the following year, Thandiwe first went into hiding. Yet they returned after a week or so and found her at home. Standing there at her new homestead, she refused to pay them, insisting that 'only villagers' are obligated to pay tax. Her conception of 'villagers' was not shared by the tax collector; one of the men grabbed a chicken by one of its legs, asserting, as Thandiwe recalled, that 'all people are villagers ... this chicken will be your tax if you refuse to pay'. She quickly grabbed hold of the chicken by its other leg, repeating her argument. Even after receiving a blow, she did not let go. The dispute ended with a tug-of-war, with the chicken 'going in two pieces', as she put it to me. Her strong assertion was based on the fact that she was outside her tribal 'homeland', 'in the forest'. For Thandiwe, tribal boundaries were written on the land,

meaning that one could exit tribal territory simply by walking away. For the tax collectors – themselves African – the signs marking the territory to which she belonged were written on her skin; they ‘saw another black African’ and therefore placed her within a tribal geography. Thandiwe explained: ‘Those days were all black here and white there. Myself, I didn’t look at my skin. But those people looked, even deep inside there [gesturing towards the forest]. It followed you.’ The words ‘it followed you’ signaled to Thandiwe that, for the tax collectors, race had a geography, but it had been displaced onto her body, which then carried it across space, even ‘deep inside there’. Yet the tax collectors left without their levy, and when I asked her why, she replied: ‘There was blood coming out of here [pointing to her eye], they saw suffering ... I think they were scared’. The vulnerability of her body shaped a politics of indignity; her skin broke, disturbing the boundary between her-Self and the Other, producing a gendered space of defiance.

My conversation with Thandiwe kindled my thinking about how the colonial appropriation and organization of space was lived and experienced. Indeed, the spatial architecture of African settler colonialism has been subject to ample research in the field of geography and beyond. Most salient, perhaps, is Mamdani’s (1996, 2012) rendition of how racialized constructs of cultural difference were reified as historical facts, which legitimized the creation of tribal territories, fixing African bodies to institutional sites in marginal geographies: ‘Encased by custom, frozen into so many tribes, each under the first of its own Native Authority, the subject population was, as it were, containerized’ (Mamdani 1996: 51; see also Mbembe 2000, 2003; Moore 2005; Berry 1993). ‘Tribe’ and ‘tribal homeland’ were among the most rigid categories that yoked people and place together. Importantly, however, they were synthetic concepts in the ‘creation’ (Ranger and Hobsbawm 1983) or ‘invention’ (Vail 1989). The British annexation of Northern Rhodesia (later Zambia) largely followed this logic, with African bodies being pinned to particular places in a racial topography of tribal rule (see Roberts 1976; Gould 1995; Moore and Vaughan 1994). But Thandiwe’s story made me wonder what such narratives hide. Is it so, as Robyn Longhurst (2001: 2) writes, that hegemonic plots of geographical theory ‘offer a purity that materiality and practice threatens to taint and soil’?

In this chapter I shift analytical attention to the bodies that transgressed colonial boundaries, to the bodies that moved ‘out of place’ and unsettled the orderly administration of the colonial state. Rather than treating these bodies

as ‘stray’ in an otherwise rigid grid of racialized rule, I pause at the moments when those who were racially marked refused – or simply ignored – the appellation assigned to them, when the rubrics of racial bifurcation failed to work, albeit momentarily (cf. Stoler 2010). I think of these ‘out of place bodies’ and their ‘grammar’ as *analytical spaces* through which we can read colonial territory at the intersection of the corporeal, political and spatial, with the ambition to make visible the political work performed by these bodies: how their movement engendered administrative anxiety and ultimately became critical sites around which race, gender and territory were constructed and contested in intimate relation to each other. In short, placing the body at the center of analysis draws attention to what Sundberg (2008: 876) calls the ‘intimate frontiers of geopolitics’ where ‘embodiment renders visible things that would otherwise remain hidden about the everyday, material practice of geopower’. In following this analytic path, I claim, we are better able to understand the localized effects – their achievements, failures and limits – of colonial spatial rule, but also how the traces of past struggles still linger in the present.

The term ‘out of place bodies’ is a rendition of Douglas’s (1966) notion of ‘dirt’ as ‘matter out of place’, signaling a ‘by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements’ (35). ‘Out of place bodies’ unsettle order. Yet they are not merely passive sites of inscription; they are lived and ‘encultured’ through material interactions with the world, and when they move, they carry with them the ability to rework the spaces they occupy. Here, I draw insights from a wider body of feminist and postcolonial theory that explores how bodies are places where discourse and power relations are simultaneously mapped, embodied *and* resisted (Grosz 1993; Nightingale 2011; Valdivia 2009; Longhurst 1997; Gatens 1996; Butler 1993; McClintock 1995). The unruliness of bodies, I contend, is something we need to probe more carefully in order to understand how the colonized body was not only subjected to cultural spatial politics, ‘walled in’ as Franz Fanon (1967[1952]: 117) put it, but also how the colonized redeployed their bodies to challenge the social truths and legal decrees that secured racial segregation. This, I propose, has not been adequately drawn out in the geography of settler colonialism, which tends to privilege analyses of *population and its disposition* in geographical space rather than of the *body and its being* in the world. Put somewhat differently, I am interested in how colonial spatial rule operated not only *on*

bodies but also *through* bodies, and how bodily movement and comportment emerged as critical sites for political contestation over social difference and belonging to place. As such, it is not a question of bodies – raced, gendered – being ‘territorialized’, but rather a question of how race and gender emerged through various attempts to make space and population governable. Out of my analysis comes a conception of territory that is not simply bodily experienced; instead, territory emerges as an extension of and extend onto the body as a site of subjugation, negotiation, invention and resistance.

This chapter probes, first, the political landscape into which the British South African Company (BSAC) entered in order to understand *how* the African body was tangled up in colonial administration. Subsequently, I explore three governable spaces bordered by colonial power: the ‘proper village’, the ‘tribal homeland’ and the ‘colonial township’. I will show how the construction of each of these spaces (territories) was contingent upon the making of African bodies as objects and subjects of colonial imaginary, effectively becoming public sites on which the construction and contestation of the colonial state and its boundaries took place. By ‘reading’ these spaces through the body, I show that administrative efforts to control ‘out of place’ bodies were not merely ‘extra-ordinary’ work, undeserving of scholarly attention, but central to the making of race, gender and territory; at the same time that bringing ‘out of place’ bodies ‘into place’ was paramount for maintaining the imperial body politic, colonial conceptions of race, gender and territory were repeatedly challenged by the recalcitrance of the very bodies that the colonial regime defined. I attempt, in short, to unsettle the colonial state’s boundaries, to scratch on the surface of their ‘hard’ crust, tracing out the interstices that make visible colonial space as insecure and unstable.

## 5.2 The bodily performance of chiefly territory

To understand how the African body was tangled up in colonial administration, we have to first understand the territorial configuration of pre-colonial Zambia. Here, food production was the predominant aspect of social life, with its activities – cultivation in particular – bound up in material and symbolic practices of territorialization. Most people practiced *citemene*, a form of swidden agriculture whereby fields are prepared by cutting and burning trees and branches so as to create a nurturing bed of ashes (Moore and Vaughan 1994; Richards 1995[1939]). The word *citemene* is derived

from the Bemba word *kutema*, meaning ‘to cut down trees’, which is the first stage in citemene cultivation. The first tree to be cut is the *umufungo*. The chopping of this tree is done with a blessed ax, invoking and acknowledging the succor of ancestral spirits, a ritual called ‘to return thanks for the food’ (*ukulubulo lupe*) (Rasing 2001: 70). After cutting, branches are collected, piled in a circular formation and left to dry, a practice known as *kuanse fibula*. Traditionally, it is the chief who decides on the date of firing, or *kuoce fibula*, which marks the beginning of the agricultural year. The term *icitemene* denotes a new millet plot during preparation. When the field has been sown, it is known as an *ubukula*, and in its further years of life, it is called an *icifwani* until it reverts back to *mpanga*, or bush (field notes).

A citemene field has a lifetime of about five years, after which it is abandoned and only revisited once the vegetation has recovered and new brushwood can be cut and burnt (Kakeya and Sugiyama 1985). Due to this system, people were grouped in ambulatory hamlets, or *mushi*, which shifted between sites of citemene cultivation. In oral history, land which has not been cultivated by citemene is often referred to as a place ‘not burnt’ or ‘untouched by fire’, denoting a place not only far from human habitation, but, as Gould (2010: 117) puts it, ‘magically invisible to human imagination’. I have spent considerable time mapping out these practices in oral history. Chief Liteta IV of Lenje Chiefdom explained to me that it is to such places that *cibanda* (wicked spirits) are expelled, and can later be awakened if you are unfortunate enough to plow a field where these spirits dwell, which may then manifest in a bad harvest, sickness or even death (interview, Chief Liteta IV). This ontology is captured in the work of Binsbergen (1981: 109), who notes that ‘everywhere places remain which have not been subjected to man’s ecological transformation or which, once used, have been abandoned again ... [These places are] of great significance; they tend to represent hidden forces on which man draws for his survival but which, on the other hand, are only too prone to hurt him.’

This spatial symbolism is key for our understanding of the formation of chiefly territory; the forces resting in unbroken lands were not only cultural constructs but were also bound up in a wider system of chiefly governance. For example, the perils associated with tilling unbroken land could be averted by a spiritual leader (*chinganga*) or a chief with spiritual powers who, as people moved onto unknown lands, first ‘cleansed the land’ and thereafter emplaced the ancestral (matrilineal) spirit of the chief in the land

so as to 'fertilize the soil' (interview, Chief Liteta IV). It was through such ritual practices, rather than through legalistic procedures, that chiefs controlled land (see Binsbergen 1981). One of Chief Liteta IV's advisors explained it thus: spiritual fertilization served to establish a governing relation between chief, land and subject through the practices of cultivation, so that as new land was cut and burnt, it was incorporated into a relational chiefly territory, with its boundaries being continually redrawn as people moved between sites of citemene cultivation (interview, chief's advisor). Chiefly authority was, in other words, carried across geographical space by bodies and territorialized by toil, producing social, political and spiritual territory (for similar observations, see Moore and Vaughan 1994; Ranger 1971; Herbs 2000). In other words, chiefly territory was not a bounded space within which people resided; rather, it emerged out of social relations and practices on the land, performed by moving and laboring bodies. As such, the spatiality of chiefly power was forever fractional, always in the making and in some cases eroded to the point of irrelevance, thus giving way to new political-territorial formations (see Crehan 1997a; Roberts 1976; Chanock 1985; Meebelo 1971).

These lands were reached by commissioners of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in the late 19th century. Sanctioned to enter into 'agreements' with 'tribal chiefs', these commissioners effectively traded promises of prosperity for exclusive rights to land and precious stone. The land mass vested in the BSAC gradually grew, until the whole area of what became Northern Rhodesia was placed under BSAC administration in 1899. I will not reiterate the history of BSAC expansion here (but see Caplan 1970; Galbraith 1974); rather, what I want to draw attention to is that the encounter between BSAC and chiefly authority marked a point of contact between two conflicting conceptions of political territory. For the BSAC, control over laboring bodies was assumed to follow from control over the land these bodies inhabited. To dwell in the territory was to submit to colonial authority; once the colonial state was instituted, consent consisted in residence (Galbraith 1974: 220; for a genealogical exposition of territory, see Elden 2013). This rendered the body politically passive, inhabiting a geography written into possession of a sovereign authority. Control over material space was, in other words, assumed to extend also to the bodies that occupied it, with political territory both preceding and prescribing the movement and actions of bodies. For chiefs, as laid out above, this governing relationship



was reversed; land was not something that could be proprietarily ‘held’; rather, control over material space was an effect of the chiefs’ abilities to govern the bodies inhabiting and moving across it (see Meebelo 1971). In this political arrangement, the body is politically active, with its material practices on the land (citimene in particular) reproducing relations of authority, thereby rendering space political.

From an administrative view, then, the African body was an impediment to centralized control. As the BSAC established its control over these lands, the frequent and unpredictable movement of the African population resulted in administrative confusion. This is most evident in early attempts at taxation, as moving bodies undermined the collection of hut tax (introduced in 1901), which relied on a known and spatially located population. As expressed by one BSAC officer: ‘The chiefs ... have almost no control whatever over their people. This renders administration difficult for the official who is compelled to deal with the individual instead of the tribe’ (BS3 A 2/1/14, Memo from the Secretary of Native Affairs, Aug. 1910). The African body, thus, needed to be folded into a spatial organization of rule. It is against this background that I set out to explore how the African body was tangled up in colonial administration. My ambition is to map out how colonial constructs of bounded space (territory) rewrote relations between bodies and environments, and how African bodies transgressing these boundaries enacted Other realities, and so become pivots for racial and gendered discourse.

### 5.3 The ‘proper village’ and its antithetical outside

The BSAC administration was quick to ascribe the frequent movement of the African population to the citimene system. Thus in 1906, in an effort to recode chiefly territory and fix African bodies in space, citimene was banned and people forcibly rounded up into what were called ‘proper villages’, defined as twenty huts or more, wherein the payment of colonial taxes could be more easily enforced (see Moore and Vaughan 1994: 13). The ‘proper village’ is best described as a material-discursive construct. The English word ‘village’ was an approximation of the Bemba term ‘*mushi*’, but their meanings diverged in important ways: while ‘village’ denoted place and fixity, ‘*mushi*’ signaled a translocal and ambulatory kinship group with its boundedness independent of any particular spatial location. While the

‘mushi’ was in movement, the ‘village’ was considered an administrative unit that remains in place.<sup>2</sup>

In early Northern Rhodesia, the very category of the domiciled ‘villager’ was, in this sense, a construct that *discursively* pinned bodies to a particular place, presuming that a ‘villager’ inhabits a ‘village’ which by definition is spatially fixed. In the village, then, villagers were allotted enclosed fields in the immediate vicinity of their dwellings, affixing land rights to a precise site, and were instructed to build houses that were square instead of round. This architectural reordering wrote new sexual and symbolic divisions of labor into material space at the household scale. Above all, it shifted the location of the hearth – the central point of the hamlet – from the main house to a marginal outbuilding (BS1 A 9/6/3 Report on housing, Oct. 1906). As the hearth was a symbolic site – a ‘domestic shrine’ (Rasing 2001) – through which women exercised authority over social life, the repositioning of the hearth bodily and symbolically displaced women from the locus of mushi politics, and placed them more firmly in marginal kitchens void of political import.

In an administrative optic, villagization brought people ‘into place’ and into more legible relations of power and production. The historical literature is relatively consistent in that most chiefs encouraged more permanent settlement, in part because they were promised a share of the taxes in return for their political support and in part because it consolidated their realms (see e.g. Meebelo 1971; Roberts 1976), producing both emergent alliances and tensions. Colonial boundaries are not simply lines of demarcation, they are the subject of social struggle and of negotiation in ways that pose challenges for the powers that maintain them (Paasi 1996). The archive tells of administrative problems with ‘natives wandering off’ to settle in the forests beyond the village boundaries where the rugged terrain provided ample opportunity for covert citemene cultivation (e.g. BS1 C 3/3/3 TR, Kempe, Aug. 1908), as well as spaces for resistance and rebellion (*loc. cit.* West Awemba Division Report, Sept. 1909). The situation evolved into what Moore and Vaughan (1994: 11) describe as a ‘guerilla war between cultivators and administrators’, with cultivators resisting attempts at sedentarization and administrators burning fields and farmsteads discovered outside their grid of intelligibility. What I want to draw attention to here,

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<sup>2</sup> Traces of the discrepancy between ‘village’ and ‘mushi’ can be seen in today’s Zambia, where a ‘mushi’ can dissolve whereas ‘the village’ in which that mushi has homed can remain ‘in place’.

then, is that these conflicts drew bodies, material space and symbolic practices into racial regimes of knowledge and social struggle.

In particular, the now 'illegal' citemene fields often lay at a great distance from the 'proper village' in which people were registered. On these distant fields, people built seasonal dwellings, or *mitanda*, which allowed entire families to reside on the citemene site during clearing, seeding and cropping. For BSAC administrators, it thus became impossible to know where people resided; people might be registered in certain villages but for part of the year lodged in the forest. Mitanda came to represent uncontrollability, a place located outside modern time and space. As one officer commented:

In the Mitanda are collected the mass of malcontents who have renounced the authority of the Boma [colonial district office]. Here the fungoid growths of superstition flourish unchecked ... the mitanda are the chosen haunts of the prisoner, the outcast and the adulterer. (*loc. cit.* West Awemba Division Report, Sept. 1909)

Here we see clearly how material place and cultural images of backwardness were yoked together. The Mitanda emerged as a site 'out of place' and was enrolled in colonial administration as such: in 1909 the BSAC set out to modify the citemene ban to bring these spaces into administrative view. Citemene was once again allowed, but was confined to the environs of a 'proper village', and the construction of any mitanda was prohibited. Instead, people were allowed to build *sakwe*, a temporary shelter in which the male head of household was allowed to stay, but not his wife or children, at the time of cutting, gathering of branches and burning. Messengers (*kapaso*) were instructed to investigate the men working in the citemene fields. If a messenger found a man accompanied by a woman in the sakwe, he was to be arrested and fined (KSD 4/1, Vol. 2: Indaba at Chilonga, Feb. 1909). Again, village boundaries were mapped onto bodily relations; not only did the new regulation entrench the sexual division of citemene labor, pinning women to village farmsteads, but the administration entered the symbolically charged area of sexual relations. Above all, it prevented men and women from sleeping together in the mitanda. For the farming population, sex, soil and the social body were intimately entangled in both symbol and substance, with the mitanda figuring as a symbolic site for social reproduction, drawing its symbolism from the fertility of the bush. As Rasing (2001: 72) writes about Northern Rhodesia:

The bush refers to the fertile powers needed for food production and the well-being of the people. The sexual act may result in the procreation of humanity and symbolizes the procreation of the soil and if it is performed in the *mitanda* in the bush, it was thought to be a powerful act for the well-being of the people and the land.

This symbolism echoes in today's Zambia. In Lenje Chiefdom, a *mitanda* (or *sakwe* – a temporary shelter) is often built in the bush for the purpose of a girl's initiation rite. In the house, the girl is made to lie down on a bed of maize or millet, linking the fertility of the soil to that of a woman's womb (field notes). In this way, social reproduction and cultivation are intimately bound up in each other, with bodily encounters in the *mitanda* endowing space with social meaning.

My point here, then, is that in BSAC-controlled Zambia, both race and gender would emerge out of these practices on the land and would take on qualities as boundary markers. This becomes evident when reading these struggles through the archive, where 'out of place bodies' became places on which symbolic and corporeal ideas of difference were mapped and inscribed. For example, one officer proposed that an 'inherent restlessness' prohibited 'natives' from 'staying in one place' (BS1 B 5/8/3 TR Ndola, Feb. 1908). At the *mitanda*, another officer wrote, the 'native mind' is 'clouded in the smoke of the burning bush', making him 'superstitious' and 'utterly unmanageable' (BS3 A 2/6/9 TR, Kaoma, June 1909). Increasingly, practices of cutting and burning became symbols of a 'primitive native' that, rather than farming enclosed fields, 'ravages the forests' where 'his already dark skin' turns 'almost grey in the ashes' and takes on 'ghost-like features' (BS1 A 7/7/9 Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Aug. 1910). Territorialization worked through the African body which was rendered different in form and phenotype by repeated citations of Other ways of being in and interacting with material space. For the BSAC, the forest became the antithetical outside of the village – an 'anti-territory' – where race was assembled both discursively and materially, bound up in spatial and symbolic practices and written onto bodies and landscapes.

It might be tempting to read these as discursive or epistemic inscriptions. Yet as feminist theory shows, what certain bodies come to mean or symbolize is inextricably bound up in the environment within which they move and come into view (Gatens 1996), requiring equal emphasis on social difference and material space (see Elmhirst 2015; Nightingale 2011; Faria

and Mollet 2018; Longhurst 1997, 2003; Moore et al. 2003). Constructs of cultural difference are not only bound up in the environment in a symbolic sense, but also in a firmly material sense. Several BSAC officers explained the difficulty in getting people to stay in designated villages with reference to the ‘male native’ who had an ‘urge to cut tress’, and it was said to be in ‘his nature’ to ‘swing the axe’ (e.g. BS1 A 7/7/12 Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Aug. 1910). Historians concur that citemene was gendered in particular ways. Kutema (to cut down trees) was done mostly by men, while kuanse fibula (to collect and pile branches) was done mostly by women (Rasing 2001), and it might be true that the citemene fields cut out of the forests were an important symbol of male autonomy, as Richards (1995[1939]) maintained. Yet, as skillfully argued by Moore and Vaughan (1994), it was only after citemene was banned that being a man became intertwined with the right to cut tress. As such, citemene acquired new and powerful symbolic and political meanings in a contested colonized context, so that masculinity was re-inscribed amid struggles over land and symbolic control over territory (for similar insights in other contexts, see Nightingale 2011). In this sense, the regulation of cultivation and settlement was not only a form of spatial fix, but also a reconfiguration of the performance registers of masculinity; cutting trees was now re-expressed as a material exercise of rights to land and forest. Through the analytical lens of the body, it becomes quite apparent that while the ‘guerilla war’ between administrators and cultivators was territorial, it was not fought ‘over’ territory, but through its very fabrication; while administrators struggled to enforce permanent settlements, citemene and mitanda reproduced geographies of resistance. Indeed, colonial concep-tions of race, gender and territory (village) were repeatedly challenged by the movement, practices and recalcitrance of the very bodies that they defined.

The ‘proper village’ never materialized as envisioned by the BSAC. Administrators were too few to enforce the new regulations, and messengers and tax collectors were repeatedly beaten when policing the forests (Meebelo 1971). In a way, the most significant product of villagization was not the villager but the ‘non-villager’, the ungovernable native, discovered through attempts at territorialization. Using bodies to think with reveals the friction of these boundaries and their intimate places of contestation: the village, the hamlet, the forest mitanda, the citemene field. It was here that (some of) the boundaries of an emerging colonial state were drawn, and the more intimate

territorial struggles played out in early colonial Zambia. Attending to the ways symbols and material environments become entangled collapses the distinction between intimate and political space, thus pushing forward an understanding of how bodies become enrolled in territorializing practices (e.g. masculinity becoming a function of territoriality). It also troubles tales of BSAC territorialization as a hegemonic project, showing instead how the social truths and legal decrees deployed to secure boundaries (racial and gendered imaginaries, bodily restrictions) also contain the seeds of their failure to determine what bodies ought to belong and where.

#### 5.4 The tribal homeland and its bodily scripts

In this section I wish to push these insights a little further through an examination of the tribal homeland, established in the mid-1920s in an effort to create more conducive conditions for the in-migration of white settlers. Lands needed to be free of African occupancy and more rigidly bordered to enable control of the unpredictable movement of the native population. This process is well-rehearsed in Africanist and historical literatures, which point to the ways administrators and anthropologists chronicled each chief's history, installed origin stories and established ethnic boundaries through tribal totems and subclan praise names, casting assumed inherent tribal traits as a ceremonial recognition by the colonial administration of immemorial principles, thereby imbuing the tribal homeland with territorial authenticity (see e.g. Chanock 1985; Sorrenson 1967; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Gould 1995, 1997; Crehan 1997a; Mamdani 1996; Moore 2005). What I want to draw attention to here, instead, is how – through the production and protection of the tribal homeland – the colonized body was not only depicted as Other and pinned to place, it was rendered tantamount to place, collapsed into it – making it all the more difficult to move beyond the organizing principles of race. Yet it was never a certain achievement, but always open to unruly lands and to bodies that moved across its boundaries.

The tribal homeland was patrolled by colonial officers, as well as anthropologists, for whom the native body became something that could be studied in efforts to understand the traits of the tribe as a whole (see Pels 1997). This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the village-to-village tour reports that colonial officers were tasked with writing. For example, one officer touring Kasempa district noted that people were 'dirty', 'diseased',

‘unmanly’, not one ‘free from some deformity’. This was, he continued, because the ‘tribe preferred to remain under nourished and diseased rather than expend a little more energy in cultivation and adopt new practices’ (ZNA, sec, 2/936, Kasempa Tour Reports, Tour Report no. 2, 1927). Reports like this abound, and they all describe an African body that is reduced to a mere vector for backwardness; what is being mapped and narrated in these reports, then, are people’s bodies as carriers of racial distinction, with poverty and social distress figuring as biological flaws (cf. McClintock 1995: 48). Colonial administrators rarely spoke of the fact that it was the relocation of the African population that *produced* bodies as different. It has been left to historians to show that much of the ‘tribal land’ was unsuitable for cultivation, and that cultivating the generally poor soils depended on frequent movement from one patch of land to another to allow soil and brushwood to recover. And the construction of tribal homelands meant that such movement became severely restricted, and neither soil nor trees were given enough time to regenerate (Roberts 1976: 183–185). Projects of government literally eroded the conditions of possibility for material survival. Thus, what was inscribed onto people’s bodies were the effects of poor material-ecological conditions (disease, dirtiness, malnutrition), which colonial officers then translated into markers of *social* difference (idleness, backwardness, unmanliness). As such, tribal natives not only came to wear social difference on the body, they *became* bodies.<sup>3</sup> In these ways, the African body was implicated in the production of the tribal territory as pre-modern space populated by natives bound to the instincts, rhythms and desires of their fleshy, located bodies. Put differently, embodied ideas of difference were not discursive products simply *mapped onto* the landscape, but were *folded into* the fabric of a territory that was at once ethological and political.

In an administrative optic, tribal boundaries followed a natural order, and a significant amount of political work went into maintaining this order. At the same time, the relocation of the African population onto Native Reserves engendered new concerns for the colonial administration. Especially, as the new wave of expected white settlers never came, much of the Crown Land set

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<sup>3</sup> Of course, administrators also ‘had bodies’ but the difference lies in that administrators could speak and pursue universal knowledge, unencumbered by the limitations of a body placed in a particular time and space (see Longhurst 1997; Rose 1993; Grosz 1993; Kirby 1992) ‘The knowing subject who produces knowledge’ Grosz (1993: 19) writes, has been ‘bracketed off from the knowledges thus produced’. White bodies need an Other upon which to found their (insecure) identity (see Gatens 1996; Rose 1993). For the vulnerability of officers’ bodies, see Crehan (1997b).

aside for Europeans remained mostly uninhabited. Thus, despite the fact that movement between the two domains was regulated, many Africans entered unoccupied Crown Land – especially in the railway farming belt where rugged and forested terrains provided for covert cultivation – and created autonomous enclaves thereon (SEC2/1185: Natives on private estates, May 1932). Tour reports started to arrive, describing people organizing themselves into ‘new tribes’ under ‘new chiefs’ outside grids of colonial control (ZNA, sec, 4/651, Lenje Tour Reports, Tour Report no. 1, 1931). For the colonial administration, these ‘out of place’ Africans were seen as a significant threat to orderly rule as they challenged the reciprocal exclusivity of Native Reserve and Crown Land, and therefore the racial basis upon which their differentiation rested. Of particular concern was what administrators labeled ‘detrribalization’, as a ‘detrribalized native’ in the context of indirect rule would literally be an ‘ungovernable native’ (Moore and Vaughan 1994: 140; Crehan 1997a: 73). This was discussed in some detail during the Governors’ Conference in Livingstone in 1933, where it was concluded that ‘natives occupying Crown Land are beyond the control of their tribal chief ... The dignity of the chief is affected ... conditions are not conducive to good order or the maintenance of tribal authority’ (SEC2/1168: Governors’ Conference, June 1933). Thus the limits of tribal rule lay not in discourse or territorial imaginaries, but in the more ‘intimate frontiers of geopolitics’, in the contingencies of bodily movement and encounter.

Thandiwe, whose story began this chapter, was one of those who left her proper place and upset the established order. On the one hand, her violent confrontation with the taxmen speaks to how tribal rule was upheld though a topography of power operating on racialized bodies, and thus to the impossibility of moving outside the vision of ‘white eyes’ (Fanon 1967[1952]: 116). Indeed, the color of her skin became an important resource with which the colonial regime re-expressed spatial categories of belonging. As such, tribal territory was never more actualized than when one tried to leave it; it was the moment of ‘exit’ which made the disciplinary boundaries of the tribal homeland visible as bodily script. On the other hand, despite leaving Thandiwe with an open wound, the tax collectors were unsuccessful in editing out the conception of the forest as space that she had rights to. The chicken ‘going in two pieces’ metaphorically speaks of a partial territorial achievement, and she had quite literally ‘stood her ground’, and used her body to do so. ‘There was blood coming out of here [pointing to her eye],



they saw suffering’, Thandiwe told me. In postmodernist thought, bodies are sometimes depicted as though they were little more than surfaces etched with discourse and social messages, a ‘linguistic territory’ (Longhurst 2001: 23). Yet Thandiwe’s story points to the limits of such an understanding. Thandiwe occupied a site of sovereign betweenness that disturbed identity, system and order by not respecting borders, positions and rules. Her bleeding marked an unpredictable interstice in the boundary between her body and the world, and in its seepage lay the danger of contaminating the space of encounter with emotion and abjection (see Longhurst 2001), which Thandiwe interpreted as making the taxmen ‘scared’, resulting in the men fleeing the scene. Thandiwe spoke of it with pride and joy: ‘I chased them’, she laughed during one of our conversations.<sup>4</sup>

### Text box 1: Franz Fanon and the body

Franz Fanon is perhaps the most evocative theorist of the colonized body. For him, social difference was not only mapped onto the bodies of others, but was embodied by the colonial subject, which made it all the more difficult to escape bodily confinement and the racialized relation between body and the world (see Gibson, 2003: 133). The colonist, Fanon writes, ‘is not content with physically limiting the space of the colonized’, as if to ‘illustrate the totalitarian nature of colonial exploitation, the colonist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil’ (Ibid: 6), that is, the embodied Other. White and black are separated spatially, geopolitically; but conceptually, their common reliance on racialization ensures that they are (hierarchically) bound to each other so tightly that each is unthinkable without the other. White bodies need an Other upon which to found their (insecure) identity (see also Gatens 1996; Rose 1993). Along these lines, Fanon describes forms of everyday separation as ways of being immobilized, of being ‘walled in’ (Fanon, 1967[1952]: 117). Through racialization, he writes, ‘the white man is sealed in his whiteness and the black man in his blackness’ (Ibid: 9). Kipfer (2007: 708) observes that the metaphor of sealing alludes to ‘spatial relationships that, through body language, gestures, looks, and physical distance, separate colonizer and colonized’. Fanon writes:

I am the slave not of ‘the idea’ that others have of me but of my appearance ... I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed* ... I slip into corners, and my long antennae pick up the catch-phrases strewn over the surface of things – nigger underwear smells of nigger – nigger teeth are white – nigger feet are big – the nigger’s barrel chest – I slip into corners, I strive for anonymity, for invisibility. Look, I will accept the lot, as long as no one notices me! (Fanon 1967[1952]: 116)

From Fanon’s phenomenology of racism a colonial order thus emerges at the intersection of space, race, body *and* Self, and the spatial grids of colonial rule are seen operating not on a population and its disposition in geographical space, but on the body and its being in the world.

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<sup>4</sup> To ‘chase’ someone denotes, in Zambian lingo, to ‘evict’ or ‘displace’.

My intention here is not to take Thandiwe's experience as a springboard to theoretical assertions; rather, encounters such as Thandiwe's tell of the everyday boundary-work involved in protecting the system of tribal rule, forcing us to remain alert to the conditions and interactions through which bodies become subjected to systems of knowledge, entangled with the material landscape and its physical properties, and how bodies both embody territory and carry its symbolic boundaries across geographical space. Indeed, racial imageries carry with them – sometimes on the body corporal – a material and symbolic weight that reproduces racial hierarchies even when people struggle to move out of them. Yet bodily movement also draws alternative lines that extend beyond the corporeal and into administrative regimes, and thus become part of geographies and histories of resistance.

The 'pollution' (Douglas 1966) of Crown Land by African bodies continued to haunt the administration throughout the 1930s. As one officer commented, 'natives' bring with them 'spears, guns & dogs' which is 'appalling'; the 'invasion of natives [into Crown Land] means serious trouble' (LOC 216: Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Sept. 1931). Yet administrators were too few to enforce spatial segregation, thus the protection of tribal territory remained contingent upon the reification of the chief as an authentic African authority, meant to embody the spirit of the tribe. Put somewhat differently, indirect rule was contingent upon the recognition of chiefly authority; if the authority of chiefs diminished, the colonial state as a whole would be undermined. Chiefs needed to be 'men of authority vested with powers not possessed by common people' (cited in Negi 2011: 214). The administrative concern revolves around the belief that the authority of the chiefs was eroding, allowing Africans to simply leave their designated lot by foot to break new land elsewhere (SEC2/1168: Governors' Conference, June 1933). It was around this time that the chief reemerged as a site of politics. Interestingly, the political work deployed to entrench the chief as a legitimate authority worked not (only) through abstract law, but through the materiality of his body.

Prior to the 1930s, the absence of spatially bounded chiefly power meant a corresponding lack of importance of material markers of majesty and of imposing physical space in which power and authority took physical form (Crehan 1997a: 48). The continued movement of the African population resulted in a reorganization. Chiefs were classified into Paramount Chiefs, with a subject population of not less than 20 000, and Senior Chiefs and

Subordinate Chiefs, ruling over ‘less important tribes’. They were given annual subsidies and clothed in emblems of authority: a Paramount Chief was given a red fez with a brass or chromium plate replica of the territorial crest on the front, a cloak, a coat, a collar and a staff (CNP 2/11/2: Official dress for Chiefs, Dec. 1933), making colonial authority manifest on their bodies. If a chief was found violating his mandate, he was stripped (quite literally) of his chiefly apparel. The archive tells of chiefs clamoring for these artifacts (CNP 3/11/3: Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Dec. 1933) as well as chiefs refusing to wear them. One such moment occurred when Chief Kapwepwe arrived for a meeting at the local boma (district government office) in Nshiki District without his chiefly attire. The incident resulted in an officer writing a letter to the Ministry of Native Affairs, describing how the chief was ‘stubborn’ and ‘un-cooperative’. The officer demanded further that the ministry should explore the ‘grounds for [the chief’s] decommission’ if he continued in his ‘refusal to represent the tribe’ by not wearing the ‘official dress given to him’ (CNP 1/5/2: Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Feb. 1934). In these ways, symbolic ideas of difference, of boundaries between colonial state and colonial subject, were reproduced and expressed through bodily interactions that were firmly corporeal yet extended into social spaces of everyday life. Chiefs’ bodies became interfaces between space and politics, public sites on which the construction of the colonial state and its tribal boundaries took place.

Once we rescale our analysis of the tribal homeland onto the body corporeal, we can begin to discern how its boundaries were not rigid, stable and imposed from above, but required constant policing, patrolling and redrawing in spaces of everyday life. The body acts, in this regard, as a methodology by summoning up a theoretical imperative to make visible the micropolitics of tribal rule, its banality, if you will. Yet it also expands beyond the body into material space, into the colonial administration for which unruly bodies disturb the order of things. In the movement of bodies, we can thus locate disorder, ‘matter out of place’ – a ‘by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter’ (Douglas 1966: 35) – that undermined colonial visions of the tribal homeland: the cultural and spatial separation of some bodies from others. Tribal territory worked through the mapping of tribal bodies as dirty, diseased and unmanly and through the bodies of the chiefs by making them distinct from their social surround; but its boundaries were repeatedly challenged by the insubordination of the very

bodies they defined. Bodies were both the ‘script’ of oppression and the means of resistance.

Thus far I have charted out how a reading of the ‘proper village’ and the ‘tribal homeland’ through the body can taint narratives of colonial space as bordered by sovereign power. Instead, I have laid bare the intimate sites where the colonial boundaries were open for struggle and political contestation. I now turn to an examination of ‘township’ to link up both village and tribal homeland to a wider discussion of the colonial state and its boundaries. In particular, I will show how the male migration into towns redrew village boundaries around constructs of gender and linked up the control of bodily movement and sexuality (one’s relation to one’s body and the bodies of others) to an administrative anxiety over the health and wealth of the imperial body politic.

## 5.5 The township and its gendered frontiers

Both the ‘proper village’ and the tribal homeland were founded upon a sedentarist cultural politics that fixed bodies in space. Yet the introduction of hut tax (followed by a dog tax, radio tax and wheel tax – the latter evidently introduced to stall independent spatial movement) and the subsequent eviction of Africans from the most fertile lands deterritorialized farmers from subsistence farming and produced a ready supply of wage labor (Roberts 1976). As envisioned, many men sought employment in the mines or on the plantations along the line of rail (Meebelo 1971). Yet, not all bodies were eligible for work in town. Arrival in mining towns was followed by a health examination that determined bodily abilities, and if rendered bodily unfit, the aspiring worker had to leave town (SEC 2/786 Kasama: TR Nov. 1936).<sup>5</sup> In town, then, bodies were separated according to their different qualities, with tribal particularization leading to conceptions of different bodies being suitable for different work, such as the Lovale people on the

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<sup>5</sup> An example of this appears in a tour report from 1936, which tells the story of a man who struggled to raise money for the hut tax. In an effort to gain a monetary income, he walked to Ndola to apply for wage work in the mines. When finally reaching Ndola, he failed the medical examination and was turned down. While in Ndola, however, he was given a pair of trousers, which he brought back to Northern Province and sold for 3/6d. He took the money he raised to Laupula Province and used it to buy salt, which he then sold along the Laupula River, raising 6/-. After borrowing 1/6d, he was finally able to pay his tax. In total, it had taken him over six months (SEC 2/786 Kasama: TR Nov. 1936). As this report shows, the introduction of tax stimulated new, sometimes quite peculiar, patterns of movement and interaction which, to the resentment of administrators, defied the logic of the colonial economy.

Copperbelt being considered ‘unclean’ and therefore suitable as night-soil removers (Siegel 1988; Negi 2013). What distinguished the township the most, however, was that it was a male space, with women tied to a rural economy as symbols of social reproduction and rural domesticity (Parpart 1986). While men ventured into a ‘modern’ urban space, women were charged with the duty to uphold ‘tradition’ in the villages. At the same time, however, men’s presence in town was dangerous; while indispensable for their labor power and labor time, townsmen posed a threat to the stability of the boundaries between the modern and traditional. This danger permeates colonial reports from the 1920s onwards. The anxiety revolved around the question of social disintegration, seen as an inevitable result of the impact of urbanization and modernity on a ‘traditional’ way of life. As noted by one colonial officer in his memoir *In Witch-Bound Africa*:

The miscalled ‘mission boy’, the worker on the mines and on farms, the house boy (all equally anathema to the chiefs and headmen), pick up bits of knowledge, lose their old habits and religious checks and become a disintegrating, destructive element. (Melland 1923: 305)

As Gould (1997: 156) notes: ‘the sudden and massive incidence of migratory labor to towns ... was seen as having split apart primordial domestic units and communities, casting large sections of the population into situations for which they had no moral guidelines’ (see also Mayer 1961; Onselen 1978; Ferguson 1999: 87–90). The African townsman might be urbanized in terms of inhabiting an urban space, it was reasoned, but not in terms of having abandoned his ‘tribal’ identity.<sup>6</sup> These accounts mirror, of course, the conception of the tribal homeland as an authentic native space, legitimizing the notion that townsmen were simply expected to ‘go home’, to be reintegrated or reterritorialized into their ‘tribal’ environment after retirement or termination of contract.

What I want to draw attention to here, then, is that the ‘integrity’ of the colonial township was contingent upon controlling bodies, and bodies of women in particular. In 1935 several chieftainships introduced laws that permitted a woman to divorce her husband if he had been absent for more than thirty months (Moore and Vaughan 1994: 166). These laws were

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<sup>6</sup> For a much more detailed analysis of migration dynamics in colonial Zambia, see the Ferguson-Macmillan debate (Macmillan 1993; Ferguson 1994).

evidently intended to encourage men to return 'home' quickly to prevent their wives from divorcing them. However, these laws proved to be ineffective, in part because many women chose to migrate to town of their own accord. Married women were allowed to stay in town, but only as dependents, feeding and caring for their working husbands (Parpart 1986); but soon reports emerged around a problem known as 'unattached women', sometimes divorced, sometimes unmarried, but always 'unattached' (Moore and Vaughan 1994: 165). For example, a colonial officer touring Central Province reported the following:

... a large number of unmarried women appear to have gone to Broken Hill [now Kabwe] and Ndola of their own accord ... gone to find husbands. This indiscriminate migration of young women to the mining areas is a thing to be deprecated not only from the moral point of view, but from the point of view of the effect it has on village life. (ZA 2/4/1 Awemba: TR Nov. 1929)

In the 1930s, thus, fears of the 'uprooted' and 'detrIALIZED' male mine-worker who was a 'menace in town and a liability in his rural village' were mirrored in images of desolate villages, inhabited only by 'dogs and old women' (Gould 1995). In effect of these concerns, various measures were put in place to prevent women from leaving rural villages. The administration installed road blocks along the major bus routes to stop women from traveling to town (SEC/1350 NR police inspector, Fort Jameson, to deputy commissioner of the police, Lusaka, Feb. 1949; see also Negi 2010: 216). Yet women frequently bribed bus drivers, walked around checkpoints and got back on the bus, and when police searched the compounds for unattached women, they had conveniently 'disappeared' (Parpart 1986: 15). The archive also tells of women dressing up as men to avoid detection at checkpoints (SEC/1102 NR police inspector, Broken Hill, to deputy commissioner of the police, Lusaka, Nov. 1941), thereby altering the frontier of their bodies as symbols of rural domesticity.

By deploying one's body as male, women made the checkpoint a site from which the boundary between the bodily substrate of sex and the spatial relations of gender could be challenged. The influx of women in towns was, in an administrative optic, what Douglas (1966) refers to as 'pollution' or 'a particular class of danger' to systems of control (see also Foucault 1989). The discourse of 'pollution' looms large in colonial reports from this time. As one officer commented: 'Unmarried women unnerve the mineworker ...

[and] spend their energy on chasing men rather than village upkeep ... they pick up diseases' which they then 'transmit in the villages' (CNP 1/7/1: Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Sept. 1940). Implicit here, of course, is that disease transmitted 'in the villages' would threaten reproduction of the labor force. Indeed, the migration of women to towns generated administrative anxiety over their propriety and possible degeneration of their bodies, so that controlling people's sexuality became paramount for controlling the health and wealth of the imperial body politic (cf. McClintock, 1995: 47).

The measure of control was matrimony, deployed as a political technology to police the relations between men and women, because when reaching town, most women took 'husbands', some more than one, to avoid repatriation (see Parpart 1968: 15). Initially, for a woman to be recognized as a wife she had to live with a man for a week and cook his food (Spearpoint 1937: 37), so that women's ability to stay in town was arbitrated in the kitchen. Soon, however, legislation was passed that branded a woman who had been 'married' three times a prostitute, giving the mine police the legal means to ban her from town (Acc. 72/13: Native Courts of the Copperbelt, district commissioner's office, Mufilira, May 1939).<sup>7</sup> The socio-legal category of the prostitute was thus a product of an administrative effort to protect urban space from dangerous elements (as well as to protect rural space as a site of social reproduction). As such, the prostitute was an integral part of territorialization that linked together the scales of body, town, village and colony. Indeed, the boundary-work that protected the township from degeneration was, at least in part, rescaled onto the bodies of women, surveilled, classified and controlled.

Spatial corporeal politics – what body can occupy what space and under what conditions – are paramount for understanding the colonial township and how its boundaries became rescaled into kitchens and onto the bodies of women. We cannot understand the colonial township without attention to the bodies that occupied it (or not), and the bodies of women in particular; entry into town was bodily sanctioned, and the ability to remain in town was mediated through bodily conduct. And these processes were not contained within 'the local'; for the colonial administration, controlling sexual relations between men and women was paramount for maintaining the order of

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<sup>7</sup> It was in 1944 that marriage certificates were first introduced as a measure of urban control. Still, these documents were often forged and traded among women in town (Parpart 1968).

difference between the modern and traditional, which, in turn, was the foundation upon which the colonial project rested. These efforts were, at least in part, routed through bodies that navigated these boundaries – not only as lines of demarcation but also as sites of social struggle and of negotiation in ways that posed challenges for the regime that maintained them.

## 5.6 Chapter conclusion

The theory and methodology I have laid out in this chapter suggest that attention to bodies can offer insights into *where* colonial boundaries are drawn and *how* they operated by tracing out *what* bodies could occupy what spaces (or not) and under what conditions. I have shown how myriad colonial boundaries were displaced onto people's bodies and naturalized, negated and negotiated through bodily practice, movement and encounter. The body itself – raced, sexed, placed – became a site of territorial inscription through which the construction and contestations of the colony and its boundaries took place. If the practice of drawing boundaries, while in many cases implicit and even invisible, is the constitutive process of territorialization (Brighenti 2010), using bodies to think with offers incomparable insight into how the colonial state and its boundaries worked on the scale of the intimate and how colonial space was lived and enlivened. Bodies – chiefs' bodies, deceased bodies, tribalized bodies, women's bodies – became important bearers of symbolic value, subjected to racial regimes and power relations, all of which were expressed and implemented in the making and contestation of the colonial state.

Focusing on how bodies become enrolled in colonial politics and interact with and shape spatial relations is necessarily a subjective exercise and a limited lens through which to make theoretical assertions. Yet the kind of theorization and methodology used here underscores the need to remain alert to the inseparability of body and material space, where spatial corporeal politics – what body can occupy what space and under what conditions – are paramount for understanding territoriality (the strategies by which control over territory is asserted) and how the configuration of territory remains crucially contingent upon the bodies that inhabit, move through and intermingle with it, and how those bodies linked up wider systems of knowledge and discourse. In previous research on the architecture of British colonialism in Africa, of which Mamdani's (1996) is perhaps the most prominent, structural binaries



are seen to separate exclusionary spaces. Citizens and subjects, the urban and the rural, savage and civilized become ideal types reified as historical facts mapped onto discrete institutional sites. Mamdani's brilliance has been to chart the condensation of chiefly power inaugurated by the colonial institution of indirect rule. Yet as Moore (2005) has argued, his institutional analysis pivots on ideal types of power, identity and space which risk obscuring both African and administrative practices. By rescaling the spatial architecture of colonial rule onto the body, we escape grand narratives of territorialization as an expanding imperial frontier and put into question understandings of colonial space as bordered by a colonial authority that is distanced and detached from the lived realities of everyday life. Instead, we see the limits of colonial control, the micropolitics of spatial rule and the pervasive ambiguity permeating categories such as 'proper village', 'tribal homeland' and 'township'. We see how the subject-bodies defined by colonial spatial power (the villager, the tribal native, the rural, domesticated woman) refused or ignored the appellation assigned to them by government and instead became bodies of resistance (the non-villager, the detribalized native, the unattached woman).

Here it is important to probe the ways discourses on race, tribe and gender carry with them – sometimes on the body corporeal – a material and symbolic weight that reproduces hierarchies even when people attempt to move out of them (Nightingale 2013). At the same time, bodies – raced, sexed, placed – are not pacified bodies, but potent bodies, carrying the ability to unsettle spaces imbued with eternal necessities. As bodies move, they open up spaces of contestation on a scale that exceeds the body. From BSAC villagization in the 1910s, to tribalization in the 1920s, to the male in-migration into mining compounds in the 1930s, the movement and practice of bodies repeatedly challenged the orderly rule of the colonial administration. Recognizing that such practices permeate the history of Northern Rhodesia is a testament to how administrative efforts to control 'out of place' bodies were not merely 'extra-ordinary' work; rather, bringing 'out of place' bodies 'into place' was paramount for maintaining the imperial body politic.

This analysis presents glimpses of such dynamic processes, yet processes that I argue help explicate how ways of being and moving in material space were implicated in the construction and contestation of the colonial state and its territories. The construction of race and gender is inseparable from these processes, as cutting trees becomes part of masculinist performances as a

reaction against villagization, as women become tangled up with kitchens and marital relations to secure their access to town, or as poor ecological conditions in tribal homelands become racial markers once they have left their imprints on the human body. Taken together, this chapter points to how territory is not external to the body, not simply bodily experienced, but emerges as an extension of and extend onto the body as a site of subjugation and resistance.

## 6. Empirical Chapter II: The Forest

### State, chiefdom and the forest in between: the reinvention of legitimate authority in Munyama

Connecting history to a place is the condition of possibility for any social analysis. (Michel de Certeau 1997: xv)

#### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shift analytical focus from the body to a forest claimed by both chiefly and stately forms of authority to probe the ‘limits’ of state governance vis-à-vis chiefly assertions of rule. The analysis maps out how the forest has been constituted through multiple practices and imageries, past and present, and brings to light the different sediments of the landscapes to which we must attend in order to understand how geographical space is struggled over in Zambia today. At issue here is the life of ‘imperial debris’ (Stoler 2008), or leftovers of imperialism, and I pick up many of the points that I left hanging above. In particular, I trace (some of the) boundaries drawn during colonial rule into the present to bring into view how colonial classification, chiefly takeover, spiritual sanction and state recategorization have placed forest dwellers within an entangled landscape of property, territory, rights and belonging that does not map onto the jurisdictional borders surrounding them. As such, the forest provides a potent ‘analytical location’ for understanding the interplay between different authorities, ‘natures’ and histories, and the form of inclusions and exclusions that emerge within.

*Headman Chiwala's homestead in Munyama Forest, September 2017*

The cry of the cock cut through the predawn air, slowly stirring the household awake. Veronica, Chiwala's eldest daughter, was first to her feet, fetching a bucket of water, which she then put to boil. I emerged into the chill where two watchdogs named after Zambia's most prominent freedom fighters, Kapwepwe and Nkumbula, announced my awakening with lurid yelps. 'The water is hot', Veronica said while chuckling at my futile efforts to prod the obtrusive dogs away. 'Maybe you want to take the dogs with you? They look like they need a bath too', she tittered. Chiwala appeared at the doorstep with a towel slung over his shoulder. 'Yes, and take the goat too', he chuckled. The jaunty tone was interrupted by a familiar ring. Chiwala hastily climbed the tree behind the storage hut. His climb was effortless, almost graceful, but at the same time quite amusing as he was still in his underwear. Climbing trees was a necessary skill in these parts of Munyama; it was the only way to pick up a cellphone signal. On the line was headman Kambobe, sitting in another tree two villages away.

Over the past few weeks the headmen in Munyama Forest had been in dialogue over the future of their lands. Munyama Forest was to be reappropriated by the Ministry of Lands, which would entail the headmen's demise as administrators of the land. This day, Chisamaba District Council had summoned Chiwala and his fellow headmen to a 'sensitization meeting', which was the name given to it by the district secretary (DS) when I met her a few days later. Yet the meeting was only the most recent development in an unfolding historical drama that extends into a violent colonial past. In 1947, during British colonial rule, Munyama was proclaimed a 'Protected Forest Area' and thus was edited out from the jurisdiction of Lenje Chiefdom. In many ways, this was achieved through the constitutive erasure of indigenous territorialities, with the forest inhabitants displaced onto a territorially fixed topography of tribal politics. Following national independence in 1964, however, Munyama was re-occupied by a peasant population governed by a group of village headmen loyal to Chief Liteta III of Lenje Chiefdom, and was thus brought back into the fold of chiefly control. State authorities have repeatedly tried to reclaim control over the forest lands, issuing eviction letters and ordering the arrest of unruly forest cultivators. Huts and homesteads have been burned, and fields ploughed under, in efforts to erase signs of human occupation and use. In 2009

Munyama was reclassified anew, this time as State Land – giving legal license for the production of a private property regime in the forest.

The meeting was still hours away, but Chiwala was visibly nervous and spent the morning pacing his grounds. From an old coffin, he assembled a dossier of paperwork – pleas, appeals, certificates, court rulings – which he had amassed over the past twenty or so years. Ever since Chiwala had moved to Munyama Forest in 1994, these documents had functioned as his armaments in meetings with agents of the state; they established what Chiwala considered to be a legitimate claim to the forest lands. Many of the documents are brittle, the writing faded, and folded so many times that they nearly fall apart, undermining the political work that these documents are meant to perform. Even if he could, Chiwala makes no claim to autochthony, in the sense of someone who sprung from the soil he inhabits. Autochthony, he has learned, is not a language that state agents understand. For most officers of the statutory bureaucracy, the boundaries of Munyama Forest are unamendable decrees, fixed by law, rendering the people living in the forest illegal settlers. In this chapter I situate a critique of these boundaries within a wider field of cultural and historical practices in order to make visible their variability and mutability.

The scholarly study of chiefly power and authority is rich and diverse, and somewhat difficult to navigate. To some extent, the literature is divided between those who consider chiefdoms to be principally ‘inventions’ of repressive colonial regimes (e.g. Mamdani 1996) and those who consider chiefdoms to be grounded in pre-colonial culture and tradition – the latter position often seeing anti-imperial tendencies in chiefly power (e.g. Englebert 2000; van Rouveroy et al. 1999). Both of these positions have been heavily criticized, however. The first for omitting the political agency of African rulers, and the latter for resting on a static conception of culture and tradition. This chapter maps onto a third strand of scholarship that probes how chiefdoms emerge as a political category through historical struggle, practices of rule and negotiation over authority to govern (Hoffmann et al. 2020; Lund 2006; Buur and Kyed 2006; Stacey 2015, 2016). In this analytic, state and chiefdom are not predetermined categories with appropriate spheres of influence and different symbols of power and political legitimation; rather, state and chiefdom emerge together, with their variable and shifting boundaries shaping who has the authority to govern, who belongs and who is subjected to exclusion. Yet my analysis expands beyond the boundary

between state and chiefdom. Building on work within political ecology and that of Nightingale (2011, 2018) in particular, I shall insist that the outcome of struggles over land and legitimate authority remain crucially dependent on the diverse ways that practices of government and chiefly resistance become entangled with the material landscape. In other words, without taking seriously the landscape (or ‘nature’) in and through which boundaries emerge, we cannot understand why land becomes such a powerful vector for political contestation, and why struggles over land are so easily transmuted into disputes over authority to govern, belonging and rights.

I will show this by telling nine stories about Munyama Forest, each revealing a layer of cultural, spiritual or political meaning with which the forest lands have been invested over the past seventy or so years, each representing an event, accident or practice that reworked the boundaries that make up the forest’s ‘constitution’, and consequently who can control and use the forest lands. The first eight stories interrogate the conditions of possibility of things being as they are – an attempt at tracing the historical relations that make possible the conceptual separation of ‘state’, ‘forest’ and ‘chiefdom’ in Munyama today. There are no neat divides between these stories, and they do not always line up chronologically; my hope is that by juxtaposing and insisting on the simultaneity of multiple spatiotemporalities, rather than viewing time as a unity, it becomes possible to imagine Munyama not as one place but as multiple places that co-exist and intertwine. For the struggle over the forest land is not simply a struggle ‘over’ a piece of nature; it is equally a struggle over what the forest *is* (cf. Côte et al. 2018).

After telling eight stories, I return to the meeting that Chiwala was preparing for in the beginning of this chapter, which is the ninth and final story. This story is in many ways the culmination of the preceding eight insofar as it explores how the sedimentation of earlier boundaries are exposed, invoked, silenced and maneuvered in the context of contemporary struggles over land and legitimate authority in Munyama.<sup>8</sup> Taken together, then, these stories amount to a wider story of state-forest-chiefdom boundaries and their constitution and the political work they perform, which is discussed in a concluding section. In following this analytical path, my hope is to contribute to a reimagining of political authority in rural Zambia,

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<sup>8</sup> These stories span the reign of two Lenje chiefs, both carrying the name of Liteta. Chief Liteta III reigned up until 2003, when the throne was assumed by Chief Liteta IV, previously serving as an advisor to Chief Liteta III.

one that captures the interplay between natures, politics and histories and the forms of inclusions and exclusions that emerge within them.

## 6.2 Munyama Forest: Nine Boundary Stories

### 6.2.1 Boundary Story #1: The Making of Protected Forest Area No. 62

I wish to begin with the story of how Munyama Forest first became a space set apart from chiefly control, as narrated from within the colonial archive. The archived history of Munyama dates back to 1946 when a report telling of Chief Liteta III's 'incapacity' to 'protect valuable tree species' from 'encroaching tribesmen' in 'his area' reached the forestry department (ML 1/6/12: Report to DS Wallace, Member of Agriculture and Natural Resources, May 1946). Protecting forested lands was one of the duties devolved to him through the conduits of tribal rule, specifically aimed at prohibiting citemene cultivation which, in an administrative optic, was seen as a primitive practice that depleted both soils and forest resources (see Chapter 5). Chief Liteta III, the report concluded, had failed in his obligations toward the colonial office, allowing 'his subjects' to continue with their 'primitive methods'. Following the report, a longer correspondence between different forestry officers ensued, in which it was established that a 'traditional Chief' ultimately was unable to understand the 'principles of forestry', and, consequently, that Munyama Forest needed to be edited out from Chief Liteta III's jurisdiction. Chief Liteta III appealed, citing the existence of burial sites in the forest and that his people depended on forest resources for their livelihood (ML 3/7/7: Lenje tribal council meeting, Chibombo, May 1946). Yet his appeal was overruled with reference to what was described as his 'proven reluctance' to 'prosecute natives for offences in the Chief's court as stipulated in the Forest Act' (ML 3/7/7: Letters to Chief Conservator of Forests, Ndola, June–Sept. 1946). Thus, the following year Munyama was reclassified as a 'Protected Forest Area' with the objective, the forestry department declared, to 'restore the forest to its natural state' (ML 1/1/6: Report to DS Wallace, Member of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Feb. 1947). 'Protected Forest Area' was a categorical construct meant to discipline the practices within, and it comprised a bundle of prohibitions, including:

fellings, cutting, taking, working, burning, injuring or removing any forest produce; squatting, residing, building any hut or livestock enclosure; grazing livestock or allowing livestock to trespass; clearing, cultivation or breaking up land for cultivation or any other purposes; and entering in or being in or upon while in possession of any implement of cutting, taking, working or the removal of forest produce. (ML 4/2/12 Government Notice No. 305 of 1947: The Forest Ordinance vol. III, cap 105, Feb. 1947)

The people that had previously depended on the forest lands for shifting citemene cultivation, for grazing and watering livestock, as hunting grounds or as a source of firewood and wild foods were forcibly relocated to what colonial bureaucrats called ‘proper villages’ of ‘20 huts or more’, administrative spaces for social life within the confines of the now rebordered Lenje Native Reserve (ML 1/1/6: Report to DS Wallace, Member of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Feb. 1947), thereby drawing distinct nature-society boundaries on the landscape of indirect rule.

A wide range of material, cultural and political technologies were deployed to entrench the forest as a space set apart from the chiefdom. First, surveyors were sent to Munyama to produce a written narrative that graphed a territory, demarcating its spatial boundaries in relation to prominent landmarks – rivers, ridges and rock formations – offering a perfunctory sketch of an abstract space subsequently known as ‘Protected Forest Area No. 62’ (ML 5/11/1: Government Notice No. 413, Protected Forest Area No. 62, Sept. 1947). Cartographers plotted the narrative onto maps, inscribing the forest boundaries in the consciousness of the forestry bureaucracy. Cement survey pillars ornamented with the colonial iron crest were erected along the outer lines of the forest, writing on the ground its boundaries as material facts. Finally, armed and uniformed forest rangers – authorized to confiscate livestock and burn huts and field crops discovered in the forest – were installed in encampments at its perimeters, from where they could patrol its boundaries (ML 5/11/3: Report to DS Wallace, Member of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Nov. 1947). Indeed, the organizational structures and institutional patterns of forestry mimicked those of the military, as reflected in the territorial structure of forest range management, the partitioning of space, the rotation of foresters to avoid their becoming attached to the people in the district and the arming of forester enforcement units (see Kaufman 1960; Peluso and Vandergeest 2011). Through these colonial practices of boundary making – classification, mapping, demar-



cation and patrolling – Munyama was set apart and integrated into a colonial topography of exclusion, making it difficult for people to tend to their trees and field crops in the forest.

In and around the forest, the extensive border concession made the colonial state highly visible. The cement survey pillars, still standing today, inscribed in material space new relations of rule and became permanent landscape installments with territorial jurisdictions of land and forests in the vicinity decades after the end of physical violence (see Chapter 7 for an analysis of boundary stones). Elders in Munyama still recall how they taught their children not to venture past the landmarks marking the boundaries of the forest when grazing or watering livestock, dreading that their young might be beaten or arrested by forest rangers. Within the forest, thus, there should be no society; those defying the spatiality of colonial classification were rendered ‘encroachers’, beaten, fined and arrested. Previous settlements and existing forms of land use were not recorded on the maps produced, effectively erasing human occupation and use. As such, Munyama was posited as something that lies ‘outside’ history, thereby denying other histories of nature’s occupation and use (cf. Cronon 1995). If the previous chapter shows how native populations were *collapsed into nature* in the tribal homeland, forming a pre-modern harmony protected in its totality from the threats of colonial modernity, this chapter shows, instead, how natives were *erased from nature*, drawing distinct nature-society boundaries in an effort to protect forest resources from its social and destructive surround (cf. Braun 2002), establishing different government jurisdictions, categorical divisions and state-forest-chiefdom boundaries.

The inscription of these boundaries marked the beginning of a longer boundary struggle, still ongoing today. Yet it is important to not take these boundaries at face value. As postcolonial scholars stress, colonial archives are performative; they bring into being the very reality to which they refer. Colonial documents were projective devices, ‘narrating the future of a colonial project while at the same time reconstructing the past’ (Stoler 2009), with the past here referring to a forest in its ‘natural state’. Outside the archive, *in the forest*, lie subjugated histories and buried epistemologies, hidden by and within the terms through which forest politics was, and indeed still is, understood. Together, these make up the second story I wish to tell.

### 6.2.2 Boundary Story #2: What the archive doesn't tell

The archived history of Munyama as laid out above differs dramatically from the history as told by those who inhabit the forest today. In oral history, Munyama is the ancestral abode of the Lenje People. Its 'first mother', Natota, is said to have been born on the highest mounds of the forest, where a shrine comprised of a miniature hamlet shadowed by a cassava plant is maintained in her memory. As the story goes, Natota was a powerful chieftainess, but was beheaded in an act of envy and her body further mutilated. Her spirit is still believed to loom over the land, her blood symbolically drifting with the brooks traversing the wooded landscape. It is not accidental that Natota's mystical presence takes material form in waterways. Munyama covers several dambos, a class of shallow wetlands found in central, southern and eastern Africa, particularly in Zambia and Zimbabwe. They are generally located in higher-rainfall flat-plateau areas and have river-like branching forms, which in themselves are not very large, but combined add up to a large area (Chidumayo 1992). Dambos are valued for many things, including as a dry-season water source, for rushes used as thatching and fencing material, for clay used for building, brick-making and earthenware, for hunting (especially birds), for soaking bitter cassava in dug ponds, and for growing vegetables and other food crops, which can be vital in drought years since dambo soils usually retain enough moisture to produce a harvest even when the rains fail.

For the Munyama inhabitants, the dambos are not simply ecological but also spiritual-historical symbols of ancestral belonging. Some people moving out from Munyama to resettle on a new piece of land fill a flask of forest dambo water and pour it into the water source at their new homestead, thereby carrying ancestral spirits with them as they move. Elders and headmen visiting their relatives are also often seen carrying these bottles, and while they are sometimes ridiculed for being superstitious, they are also respected for manifesting care for land and people. Yet, where the ecological ends and where the spiritual begins is impossible to delineate. In my conversations with the forest inhabitants, I found it incredibly difficult to distinguish between Natota as mystical force and Natota as the system of waterways that provide ecological benefits. Still, Natota features in many stories and practices of ancestral belonging and spiritual fertilization that link landscape and lineage, engendering horizons of belonging to this day.

Whether ancestral claims and stories of historical belonging predate, were reinvigorated by, or emerged out of the 1947 enclosure of Munyama is difficult to say. In some versions of the story, Natota was decapitated by a ‘white charlatan’, which seems to suggest the latter. In another version, her corpse was carried out from Munyama by foresters so as to break the tie between her spirit and the land – but her dogs found her body and dragged it back into the forest. She is now believed to lie underneath the shrine that is maintained in her memory. Yet, the shrine was constructed much later (see Boundary Story #6 for the significance of its construction). Either way, the oral histories I collected in Munyama reveal that the land was never edited out from people’s conceptions of what belonged to them. My point here is that the making of ‘Protected Forest Area No. 62’ placed Munyama between different conceptions of what the forest was, how it could be used and by whom.

The boundaries of the forest – its cultural, ecological and political demarcation – were, in other words, far from fixed, opening up new spaces for struggle over rights in land, legitimate authority and ways of moving and living in the landscape. These struggles were already apparent in the 1950s. Chief Liteta III, though stripped of formal judicial authority over Munyama, continued his efforts to retain political-spiritual influence in the forest. Through covert channels, he instructed people to abandon *citemene* cultivation so as not to reveal their location, yet ‘maintain active presence’ in and around the forest (interview, chief’s advisor). The most striking testimony of how chiefly politics played out on the ground was given by Papilo, a man I befriended in Munyama. Papilo doesn’t know exactly how old he is, but he remembers living on the outskirts of Munyama sometime in the 1950s. And he remembers being ‘chased’ and resettled in a new village about a day’s walk to the west when the forest was enclosed. The stories he is most eager to share concern how people – encouraged by Chief Liteta III – discovered that the forest rangers were too few to guard the vast forest, and how the rugged terrain frustrated surveillance and eviction, which, taken together, provided for various forms of covert cultivation in the forest. While grazing animals was deemed too risky, as valuable livestock were confiscated if found in the forest, people established gardens and temporary shelters that easily could be abandoned if discovered: ‘We built *sakwe* [temporary shelters] inside [the forest] and planted cassava because the leaves are green like the forest’. Papilo continued: ‘It was hard work, but that

was the only land we knew ... we worked together, carrying those loads of roots on our backs down the hills.’<sup>9</sup> Cassava not only melds with the forest cover, making crops difficult to spot, Papilo explained, it also requires very little care; the plant can be abandoned for months and harvested years after planting (cf. Scott 2009). Papilo’s story resonates in many accounts of the past, all recounting a people testing the limits of state governance by using unguarded passages and cultivating crops that melded with the forest and could be abandoned without loss of produce, all to outwit the forest rangers.



*Image 1. Papilo’s homestead in Munyama Forest, surrounded by cassava plants (dark green). Photo by the author.*

What I want to draw attention to here, then, is how the particular materialities of the forest – its ruggedness and the ecological and spatial properties of trees and plants – facilitated its continued use, with people folding crops into the undergrowth of the forest so that forest rangers would fail to recognize human activity during their patrols. Chief Liteta III, for whom the forest was of political-spiritual significance, offered shelter when people had to abandon their forest fields and go into hiding. Both state forestry and the practice of chiefly resistance worked on and through the materiality of the landscape, with the forest cover being both the object of colonial conser-

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<sup>9</sup> I’ve also heard stories of Chief Liteta III instructing people to burn the camps of forest rangers, but I have not been able to corroborate these accounts.

vation *and* what allowed people to continue using the forest lands, and consequently what provided for Chief Liteta III to maintain political-spiritual influence in the forest.

State efforts to isolate nature from society thus created a new form of sociality. In oral history, this period is almost romanticized, through tales of a forest community emerging around a shared sense of marginalization, dispossession and struggle. Some were beaten, arrested and had their shelters and granaries burned, but most reentered the forest upon release, only to resume, albeit using different forms of, covert cultivation practices. This not only underlines the entwinement of social, cultural, political and ecological relations in the worlds we inhabit, but it also troubles the divide between political authority and the landscape through which they come into social and political existence (per Nightingale 2018). As such, Munyama became a ‘boundary object’ sitting between administrators and cultivators, a space of betweenness where neither state nor chiefdom could exercise absolute control, a space ‘outside’ the grids of indirect rule, where administrators and cultivators engendered different territorial imaginaries using different territorial tactics. What Munyama Forest was, how the land could be used and by whom were contested, rendering its boundaries (spatial, ecological, political, cultural, epistemological) profoundly unfixd.

The making of Munyama into ‘Protected Forest Area No. 62’ certainly rebounded colonial power, shifting authority over the forest from Chief Liteta III to the Forestry Department of the colonial regime, yet it did not detach Munyama from the chiefdom, but brought it into a contested colonial territoriality where the very materiality of the landscape (ruggedness and remoteness) made the enforcement of colonial spatiality difficult. Indeed, the materiality of the terrain made possible the articulation of an alternative politics: for forest dwellers and Chief Liteta III, the imagined geography of Munyama comprised community, and they used cultivation practices to engender it. Encouraged by Chief Liteta III, people outwitted forest rangers with concealed cultivation and their knowledge of unguarded passages. In sum, the making of Protected Forest Area No. 62 was fundamentally imbricated in how ‘state’, ‘forest’ and ‘chiefdom’ were all mapped onto the landscape as epistemic categories (Neumann 2004) – not as secure achievements, but as unresolved processes of social, political and ecological contestation.

### 6.2.3 Boundary Story #3: The making of 'Chief's Forest'

If the two first stories present a relatively stable boundary between the colonial state and 'tribal' chiefdom – two spheres of political association with different symbols of power and political legitimation contending over what 'the forest' is – I wish to now put these boundaries into question by drawing attention to a series of discontinuous 'state-like' strategies and practices through which Chief Liteta III reasserted his authority over the forest. The story begins with the political turmoil leading up to national independence in 1964, during which many white landlords abandoned their estates amid threats from nationalist movements, thus leaving large tracts of lands open to other forms of claim-making. People who had previously depended on remote forest lands now saw an opportunity to cultivate more accessible lands around the forest, where they faced less risk of legal retribution. National independence thus coincided with outmigration from Munyama. As a result, Munyama was pushed outside the terrain of struggle and lay in political fallow for almost thirty years. This was a window of time during which the Forestry Department managed and witnessed the regrowth of the forest with relatively little effort (interview, Forestry Dept.). In 1979, Munyama Forest was even reclassified as a National Forest, signaling its significance for the Zambian nation.

But by the early 1990s, Munyama was once again enrolled in conflict. This time, however, the driving force of change came not from other claimants, but from a global push toward austerity and deregulation in the form of structural adjustment programs (SAPs). Conditioned by the Bretton Woods institutions in return for international loans and debt relief, public spending was cut, and, as a result, the Forestry Department became heavily underfinanced (see Rakner 2003). On the ground in Munyama, this resulted in the renouncement of the forest rangers<sup>10</sup> (interview, Forestry Dept.). On paper, of course, Munyama remained a National Forest under the jurisdiction of the Forestry Department, albeit now lacking the capacity to meet its mandate to uphold it. Different scales and political itineraries thus became entangled in the reconfiguration of the forest boundaries (cf. Byrne et al. 2016). What I want to draw attention to here, however, is what followed this reconfiguration, namely, how Chief Liteta III saw an opportunity to once again bring Munyama into the fold of chiefly control.

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<sup>10</sup> The forest rangers were not actually retracted, but as their paychecks stopped coming, they simply left their camps to seek employment elsewhere (interview, retired forestry official).

In early 1993, following the discharge of the forest rangers, Chief Liteta III summoned all his headmen to his palace, where he declared the Munyama a 'Chief's Forest', a category of his own making. A new position called 'Chief's Forester' was created and assumed by Mr. Kakoma, the son of his most trusted advisor. Today Mr. Kakoma is in his late sixties and lives in a small house on the outskirts of Chisamba township. When Chief Liteta III died in 2003, Mr. Kakoma left chiefly politics due to a quarrel within the royal family, and while he was hesitant to let me in on the matter of this dispute, he talked about his accomplishments as a 'Chief's Forester' with fervor. Mr. Kakoma was tasked with 'monitoring activities' to ensure that people 'followed the rules of the forest', as laid down by Chief Liteta III and his council of advisors. These rules both borrowed and deviated from state legislation: establishing permanent settlements and breaking new land using citemene methods were both prohibited, but people were allowed to collect wild foods and medical herbs, as well as water and graze animals in the forest. Cultivating land that had already been cleared was allowed if Mr. Kakoma gave his permission. At these plots, people were also allowed to build temporary shelters where they could stay during seeding and reaping. At the onset, the forest's remote and rugged lands made cultivation utterly laborious compared to working the lands that surrounded it, but people slowly started to use the forest lands again, mostly for grazing, although it also turned out to be a valuable resource for the land poor, who reopened gardens and orchards at the fringes of the forest. In contrast to the Forestry Department, Chief Liteta III became a 'leader of people instead of a leader of trees', as Mr. Kakoma mused in satisfaction.

In many ways, Chief Liteta III was 'territorializing like a state', mimicking the practices of the Forestry Department, yet adjusting them to his political landscape. Still, 'Chief's Forest' was not a land category recognized in statutory law, but something that Chief Liteta III had invented, and that he actively concealed from the state establishment. With memories of colonial dispossession still strong, Chief Liteta III instructed Mr. Kakoma not to disclose his title if encountering a state agent in Munyama, imagining that a chiefly forest concession would be taken as a threat to the sovereignty of the Forestry Department. Also, the people using the forest were instructed not to disclose that their use of forest lands had been sanctioned by the chieftainship. Instead, Chief Liteta III hoped that by extending his loyalties through people using the forest, he would entrench his hold in a silent

territorialization move. In Mr. Kakoma's words: 'With our people in the forest, those people [state foresters] could not just come in and chase us ... they had to leave it like that ... and maybe they would see we did a good job looking after the forest and also giving people a place to farm ... That's what a chief is supposed to do.' The 'Chief's Forest' was not only a particular configuration of forest boundaries but could perhaps more accurately be described as a rewriting of the relationship between state and chiefdom. As much Chief Liteta III was 'territorializing like a state', he was also quietly encroaching on the 'paper boundaries' of the state to probe the limits of the existing relationships, to see what could be gotten away with on the margin, and to include this margin as part of an accepted, or at least tolerated, territorial claim.

#### 6.2.4 Boundary Story #4: Resettling the forest

The making of the 'Chief's Forest' meant that state-chiefdom-forest boundaries were redrawn anew, generating new registers of rule, forms of authority, resources, territories and legitimate forest uses and users, all emergent with wider-scale politics. The 'Chief's Forest' was a short-lived creation, however. In mid-1993, on one of his patrols, Mr. Kakoma discovered that people of Tonga Chiefdom had established permanent settlements in the forest and were in the process of installing a new chief in a new forest chiefdom called New Monze (Monze being the capital of Tonga Chiefdom).<sup>11</sup> Taking it as his duty to manage the forest lands, Mr. Kakoma sent notice of their eviction, but the settlers refused to comply. Chief Liteta III and his council were notified, and in their reasoning, they could not appeal the statutory judiciary, fearing that Munyama would be closed off by the Forestry Department. Instead, Chief Liteta III sent word to Chiwala, one of his most trusted allies in the royal lineage, asking him to form a 'war party' and 'chase the intruders from the forest' (interview, chief's advisor). Chiwala was working in Choma, a day's journey to the south of Munyama, in the UNIP Central Committee (for the then-crumbling one-party state, that is). Upon hearing from Chief Liteta III, he handed in his resignation papers,

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<sup>11</sup> According to some sources, it was a group of dismissed forest rangers who, based on their knowledge of the forest, coordinated the Tonga settlements. If so, they had skillfully maneuvered a shifting political landscape, moving from civil/public service to a terrain of chiefly politics. The Tonga settlements in Munyama draw attention to how boundaries between different chiefdoms are also sites of political invention and contestation. This topic, however, falls outside of the scope of this thesis.



knowing that his work for the party was irreconcilable with ‘tribal war’, as he called it. One late night in early November 1993, Chiwala, together with a larger group of men, initiated the operation. Armed with shotguns, they camped out in the forest for about three months, ousting the settlers in what Chiwala described as a ‘serious battle’.

This marked yet another juncture in chiefly forest politics. Chief Liteta III believed that leaving the forest uninhabited would continue to attract unauthorized settlers that he would be unable to control. Thus, in order to *protect* the forest, the ‘Chief’s Forest’ was abolished. Instead, Chief Liteta III awarded Chiwala a large portion of the forest land and the permission to establish a permanent village in his name thereon. Chiwala moved to Munyama in January 1994 and founded the first farm and permanent settlement in the forest. It was not long before Chief Liteta III installed more headmen in the forest and started to direct aspiring farmers to Munyama. The procedure of resettlement was quite orderly. The headmen who came to establish villages in Munyama Forest were first given permission after approaching Chief Liteta III (apart from a select few approached by the chief himself). The chief would then refer each case to a ten-man land-allocating committee, which allotted portions of the forest to each village, setting boundaries based on physical features such as hills, streams and dambos. Then, each settler approached a particular headman who allocated a portion of his village land to an individual or group of individuals. In many cases, however, settlers selected their own sites. After negotiating with neighbors, they informed the headman, who bore witness rather than actively allocating rights.

As a symbol of chiefly recognition and authorization, the forest headmen were given what is known as ‘books’ (*ibuku*) – village registers that serve to incorporate land and its users into the administrative fold of the chiefdom. During colonialism, ‘the book’ was a key vector of government: it invoked at once a tax roll and state registry of domicile, a geographical subdivision of a chiefdom, and government legitimacy accorded to an appointed overseer, or headman (cf. Moore 2005: 250). For a headman, the possession of a ‘book’ symbolized recognition of his authority by both the chiefdom and colonial administration. And for administrators and local residents alike, ‘the book’ proved critical to colonial rule’s grid of intelligibility: having one’s name noted down in ‘a book’ meant being pinned down in a ‘proper village’ and thus subjected to the lattice of indirect rule. In short,

the colonial practices associated with ‘books’ – censuses, tax registers, forced labor, court jurisdictions – contributed to the production of both space and colonial subjects.

Farmers who now were allocated land in Munyama were noted down in these books and incorporated into a local tax regime, with tax paid in the form of one day’s labor a year on their headman’s land (known as the *nduna day*). Similar to what Hoffmann, Vlassenroot and Marchais (2017) have argued in relation to eastern Congo, taxation was *constitutive* of chiefly jurisdiction. Today, ‘the book’ is still a powerful token of rule and subjection and the basis of chiefly authority in Munyama. If a headman is found misallocating land or in any other way abusing his authority, the book is withdrawn and taken to the chief’s palace, only to be returned to the rightful ruler after the misconduct has been tried in the chief’s court and an appropriate penalty has been passed. Thus, even though the ‘book’ was introduced in colonial time, it has subsequently been incorporated into chiefly governance as a instrument of social and territorial control, as well as a form of symbolic recognition of headmen’s authority. As such, Chief Liteta III’s efforts to contest colonial boundaries did not proceed from positions outside colonialism’s discursive and material fields, but proceeded instead by turning the terms and tools of colonial power against itself. Put differently, technologies of colonial taxation and tribal rule remain in play, yet have been reinvented and put to political work in efforts to reclaim and consolidate chiefly power over lands outside the formal-judicial boundaries of the chiefdom.

The resettlement of Munyama marked a profound shift in chiefly institutional practices as well as land use practices on the ground. The previous ban on cutting and burning trees was revised to permit ‘necessary’ cutting and burning for establishing fields and farmsteads (interview, Mr. Kakoma). Following the immigration of hundreds of aspiring farmers, Munyama slowly turned into an agrarian landscape, with maize fields, cassava plantations and gardens on lands opened up with citemene methods. For many, the boundaries of Lenje Chiefdom were realigned to correspond to historical claims, with the category of ‘National Forest’ construed as a relic of a colonial past illegitimate in the context of post-independent administration (interview, chief’s advisor).

Still, the forest dwellers found themselves sitting within an entangled landscape of property, territory, access and rights that did not map cleanly

onto the paper boundaries surrounding them. As such, the resettling of Munyama Forest helped set the conditions under which the Forestry Department could subsequently practice forestry and the terms by which forestry officers could challenge chiefly claims to exclusive control over the forest. What I want to draw attention to in the next story is how the resettling of Munyama was crucial to refashioning the forest dwellers as racialized state subjects, in turn reconstituting their spatial relations to national forests and their political relations to the Forestry Department.

#### 6.2.5 Boundary Story #5: Reconstructing the pristine

Nature, in the broad sense, has held a key position in the national iconography of many nation-states. One important question to examine is how the meanings of nature are constructed and exploited in the continuous nation-building process. During my fieldwork I tracked down several of the forestry officers that were on civil duty around the time of 1994 – when news of Munyama’s resettlement made its way to the Chibombo District Council and later the Forestry Department in Lusaka. I was surprised to find that their understanding of the forest and its settlers rested on a reading of maps and forest-cover records produced during colonialism (see Boundary Story #1). In many ways, it seemed like the postcolonial administration had inherited a rhetoric of an external nature, which had now reemerged and become complicit in the construction of the forest dwellers as ‘encroachers’ whose political presence in Munyama was a threat to both nature and state sovereignty. As one officer who previously worked in the Forestry Department said: ‘National Forests are no place for people ... their backward ways [referring to citemene] destroy the forest, so much is burned’. Having a ‘National Forest’ populated by ‘those primitive people’ was ‘unacceptable’, and it was ‘not up to some chief to order the state administration around’, his former colleague commented.

From their offices in Lusaka, the forestry officers had little opportunity to know about the political presence and practices of the Lenje, or the layers of cultural and political meaning with which the forest lands had been invested over the previous fifty or so years. It was a ‘sorrow’ to see a ‘National Forest ruined’ by ‘primitive farming’, as one retired forestry officer told me. He continued: ‘They think the area was abandoned [in 1994], then they moved in. Just like that. Some chiefs just want more land. But they knew it was a National Forest, but they have no respect for what land is what,

you see ... That's why in old times that forest was guarded, but when those guards left, ay ay ay'.

These were all administrative sentiments contributing to a conception of Munyama Forest as a natural space now tainted by human occupation, and consequently they determined the political response to chiefly resettlement. In mid-1994, with the intent of reincorporating the forest into the administrative fold of the Forestry Department, Chibombo District Council gave Chiwala and his fellow headmen notice of their eviction. Refusing to relocate from the forest, the headmen were arrested for 'unlawful cultivation and habitation in a National Forest' (Court Order, Kabwe Central Prison, June 3, 1994), and a number of forest dwellers were evicted by force. Chiwala spent fourteen days in Kabwe Central Prison in the provincial capital. Upon reentering Munyama after his release, he was arrested anew, spending another thirty days in jail. When reentering the forest upon his release this time, farmsteads had been burned and fields ploughed under.

State forestry goals clearly coincided with those of counterinsurgency (see Peluso and Vandergeest 2011; Peluso 2003): to transform the forest from an untamed, dangerous mixture of people and allegedly wild and separate natures into more orderly, state-administered and integrated, though differentiated, forest and agricultural areas, with people settled neatly and securely in villages next to them. The burning of fields and farmsteads followed this logic; by erasing signs of existing human use and modification, the forest was reconstructed as pristine. At least in part, these post-independence displacements occurred through the reiteration of colonial erasures. As one forestry officer recalls the decision to evict the forest inhabitants: 'We looked at the maps, and on the maps it was a National Forest, it was not a difficult decision or anything like ... I served the public, and it is in the public's interest to protect our forests'. When I prodded him a bit, querying whether or not the forest inhabitants were part of the public, he replied briskly: 'You don't find the public in a National Forest, only those tribal people'. His comment speaks to how constructions of space and cultural images of backwardness were yoked together in a dangerous mixture of people and allegedly pristine natures. Haraway's (1992: 292) insights come to mind: efforts to preserve nature often 'remain fatally troubled by the ineradicable mark of the founding expulsion of those ... for whom the categories of nature and culture were not salient.'

The marginalization of the forest dwellers, and their history in forest politics, was not only a result of how the forest was conceived, of course; it had also been achieved through legal and political means, backed by the coercive power of the colonial regime. But there can be little doubt that colonial concepts of nature, culture and modernity have been deeply implicated in postcolonial state practices, and that a series of discursive displacements made it difficult for forest bureaucrats to recognize the political presence and practices of the forest dwellers, or to register ways of being and relating to the land that diverge from the maps and land-use plans in front of them.

Even if the forest – as an ecological configuration – is long gone, ecological imaginaries seem to have formed part of an epistemology that continues to structure perceptions of Munyama as a place outside modernity, and its inhabitants as a primitive people that do not belong. Indeed, epistemic erasures are not innocent; they justify political and territorial erasures (see Gregory 1994). Such erasures also evolve into new struggles that set modernity against barbarity, allowing these framings of the world to be sedimented into the public discourse. During my visits to the Forestry Department in Lusaka, more than twenty years after chiefly resettlement, I was personally warned of the dangers associated with my staying in Munyama Forest. ‘You be careful, it’s a dangerous place ... those people [the headmen] have guns, and there are no police to protect you’, as one forestry officer told me, further pointing to the ways Munyama was posited as a space outside law’s boundaries, still awaiting its integration into the nation.

This story points to the relation between discursive and territorial displacement and to the reinvention of the pristine and concomitant making of racialized subject. Yet, although discourse and colonial notions of nature and culture are clearly important for understanding how the boundaries were constructed around race and tribe, they are ultimately unable to capture the degree to which forest headmen were able to navigate the forest and stake claims to home and land within the currents of structural inequality. For this, we have to return to the ecological-spiritual fabric of the forest landscape.

### 6.2.6 Boundary Story #6: Material terrains and spiritual landscapes

The 1994 burning of fields and farmsteads incited a violent response. Convoys of government vehicles entering the forest were stoned, and at least one farmer died in clashes with the police. In an effort to put an end to the violence, the Forestry Department called a meeting between Chief Liteta III, his council of advisors, all Munyama headmen, the provincial forestry officer and the district secretary of Chibombo District Council. The meeting was held at the chief's palace, about a day's walk west from Munyama Forest, and though not invited, hundreds of forest dwellers were also present. During the meeting, it was explained that the legal label of 'National Forest' proscribed settlement within. Eviction letters were once again distributed, which caused the meeting to escalate into conflict, with government officials fleeing the scene.

What I want to draw attention to here, however, is what happened after the meeting. Chief Liteta III had remained silent during the meeting, for his authority depended upon state recognition, and he was not in a position to challenge the rulings of the Forestry Department, at least not openly. After the meeting, however, he lingered, advising the forest dwellers to 'go home and plant a lot of mango trees' and 'put iron sheets on your roofs' to fortify their presence in the forest (interview, chief's advisor). He did not suggest that the headmen should invoke chiefly authority to reinforce their claims to the forest lands – to back up their claims with institutional influence, so to speak – but rather, to more firmly imprint their material presence on the land and alter the landscape so as to demonstrate permanent use, and that the forest was 'lived', as a former advisor to the chief put it.

Chief Liteta III thus revived the tactics deployed during colonial times, covertly encouraging his headmen to maintain active presence in and around the forest, thereby allowing for people's rights in the forest to follow from their bodies onto the material land on which they labored. For the Forestry Department, of course, labor in itself is not enough to legitimize chiefly claims to forest resources; any human intervention on the land must be *preceded* by state-sanctioned rights in the abstract (see Chapter 8 for an elaboration of this point). Over the course of two years, between 1994 and 1996, these different ways of relating to the land translated into material struggles. Fields, farmsteads and orchards were intermittently burned and ploughed under, after which the forest dwellers consistently replanted and

rebuilt, often with the ash-tainted remains (some houses still bear marks of these fires). Thus, while administrators incessantly erased signs of human occupation and use, the forest dwellers snuck in via narrow paths weaving through the valley – hidden from the view afforded by the lone dirt road – to reassemble their homesteads. As such, the political field was visibly material-ecological, with mango trees, field crops, iron sheets and heavy rains all performing political work. The hilly forest also obscured hiding places while at the same time affording a view of anyone approaching from below. Localized knowledge and ingenuity mixed with the materiality of the landscape to produce potent places of defiance. Through these contestations, Chief Liteta III could also stake a claim to Munyama Forest without engaging in open conflict with the Forestry Department.

The materiality of the landscape once again emerged as a terrain of politics. Inadvertent material change, such as the annual flooding of the lower parts of the forest, also played a pivotal role in how different political claims came to be articulated. Let me demonstrate this with an episode from my fieldwork. In late 2017, I experienced the first heavy rains over Munyama. In a day or two, the heavy downpour had submerged the roads in a layer of mud, making the forest inaccessible other than by foot or a four-wheel drive. ‘Now we don’t have to worry about these people for a while’, Chiwala mused, referring to land survey patrols, ‘they never come during the rains’. In Munyama, state projects are put on hold when it rains, I thought to myself, smiling. Seeing my smirk, he added, ‘Yes, sometimes a bad road is a good road’, affirming my own thought that the material faculty of the landscape shapes the conditions of possibility for state rule. After probing these patterns more carefully, I learned that all state interventions had occurred during the dry seasons, while the rainy season provided somewhat of a rest from violent confrontations. This was also true in the period between 1994 and 1996. The burning of farmsteads usually started in May and lasted up until September, after which the forest dwellers reentered and rebuilt their homesteads in November through March. I recalled how forest inhabitants regularly referred to the rainy season as ‘peaceful’ and ‘calm’, and I saw that these words took on new meaning once I realized that they referred not so much to the agricultural year as to a lack of political intrigue.

Yet I wish to add a spiritual-historical layer to this material landscape by suggesting that state-forest-chiefdom boundaries are struggled over in arenas that are not always visible, or easily spoken about. As laid out above

(Boundary Story #2), Natota is believed to reside in the waterways that crisscross Munyama and in the rain that replenishes the forest dambos. It took me months of fieldwork before people were comfortable enough with me to talk about Natota, and even then, most people did so hesitantly. Yet her presence was most commonly cited in relation to the 1994–1996 violence; for many of the forest dwellers, the rains that prohibited (and still prohibit) state agents and survey patrols from entering into Munyama are not a ‘natural’ or ‘fortuitous’ phenomena, but a manifestation, or the ‘doing’, of Natota’s spirit, which makes disentangling the ecological from the spiritual and the natural from the political all the more impossible.

It is not accidental, then, that the shrine which is maintained in Natota’s memory was constructed around the time of 1994–1996. The shrine transmuted her mystical presence into a physical imprint, morphing her decomposing body into the soil, which then seeps into waterways, linking history and abstract rights in a material emplacement of ancestral history. Many of those who don’t consider themselves ‘Lenje’ have nevertheless also incorporated Natota into their own histories – not in terms of ancestral heredity but as a symbol of historical suffering and common toil, thus reinforcing a communal sense of marginalization among the forest dwellers.<sup>12</sup> Bernard, a man in his fifties, helped me to understand:

It is like Natota is in the rain, and she can also rain on government as she did before [in 1994–1996] ... It is difficult to explain but, like back then, Natota helped us to come back [to rebuild and replant after episodes of hut burnings], that is why we are here today like we were here before. So we the people here don’t forget, OK, some people maybe don’t remember, but together we know, and that place on the other side [the shrine], people can go and remember ... It is not only for Lenje, there are so many people from different tribes [in Munyama] now, and like if a Lenje person has a field and the rain comes, it [the rain] will also come on my fields.

During the course of my fieldwork, I heard many accounts similar to Bernard’s. Taken together, they suggest that the era of hut burnings is crucial

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<sup>12</sup> My fieldwork indicates that the population in Munyama is not united by kinship or constructs of ethnic belonging, but through a shared sense of oppression fomented by a sense of common toil, with Natota being a powerful symbol of historical suffering, animating the landscape and people’s horizons of belonging. The remoteness and difficult terrain of Munyama certainly help in cementing these sentiments as well. See Moore (2005) for how loss, struggle and suffering can be a productive pathos for a sense of community and belonging.



for the construction of a shared history, even marking what Veena Das (1995) has termed a ‘critical event’, a culturally marked historical hinge generative of identity. My point is not to form an argument around identity, but rather to suggest that practices of hut burnings, the subsequent reconstruction of ash-tainted homesteads and spiritual ecologies combined to entrench positions of struggle. Rather than editing out people from the forest lands, government efforts to undermine the livelihoods of the forest inhabitants instead added to the multiple layers of the forest, even if these are hidden within forest ecologies or within more invisible cartographies of power. These layers, and how they sediment and entangle, are important to lay bare, for they explain, at least in part, why struggles over land so easily transmute into disputes over belonging.

I shall return to these hidden layers of the forest in the ninth and final boundary story, for they still structure the ways forest inhabitants engage with the state. Before doing so, however, I shall turn analytical attention to another field of politics: the bureaucratic arena, through which the forest headmen would come to interact with state administrators in the period following the violent confrontations of 1994–1996. Chronologically, the next story thus takes to where this one ends, yet it marks a radical shift in focus, charting out the ways the headmen changed tactics and took the struggle into the bureaucratic field.

#### 6.2.7 Boundary Story #7: Speaking the language of the state

The headmen were well aware that, like solid roofing, fruit trees and shotguns, a document, if carefully managed, can open up new possibilities in the struggle over forest boundaries. Following two years of violent conflict, the forest dwellers, thus, changed tactics, seeking state authorization for their settlements. In 1996, Chiwala and a group of headmen went to see the newly appointed provincial forestry officer (PFO) in Kabwe, Mr. Lewis. The PFO asked the headmen to come back the next day with copies of all village registers (‘the books’), in part to ensure that the settlements were, in fact, authorized by Chief Liteta III, and in part to assess the size of the population now dwelling in Munyama. Upon assessing the registers, Mr. Lewis instructed the headmen to ‘go back to Munyama’ and ‘ban the felling of trees’, in Chiwala’s words. The headmen asked Mr. Lewis to confirm his request in writing, and so he did. Whether or not the PFO expected that his order would have any political ramifications is difficult to say (I have been

unable to locate Mr. Lewis), yet Chiwala interpreted the ordinance as conditional authorization for his settlement. 'In that meeting, I became a forester, doing the work of the forestry people in the government', Chiwala smugly stated in one of our conversations. He suggested, in other words, that this order changed the dynamics of state-chiefdom boundaries by redefining the relationship as one of alliance rather than of conflict.

Chiwala hinted here at the fact that any form of official recognition represents a space of possibility with the potential of being put to use in the repertoire of claims he could make. The headmen did not stop here, however. After the meeting with the PFO, the headmen continued on to Chibombo District Council with the PFO's written endorsement, telling the district secretary that 'the books' have been 'approved' by the PFO, and that 'we are working with the government now', as Chiwala put it. As the PFO outranked the forestry officials at the district level, the district secretary also 'approved' the settlement in Munyama. Upon Chiwala's request, the District Council also confirmed its 'authorization' in writing. Chiwala made photocopies of the letter, leaving one with Chief Liteta III to be stored at the palace and handing out the rest to the headmen of Munyama. In a clever move that took advantage of and skillfully maneuvered a fragmented state bureaucracy, the headmen now had 'state authorization' for their settlements, endorsed in writing. Chiwala, in particular, developed a reputation for being able to 'talk the law' as much as for having a body marked by police beatings. Such movement remains critical to a seeming paradox: Chiwala kept government at a distance by appropriating its practices.

If one were to read these documents with a skeptical eye, however, it is unclear what they actually say. In many ways, they are mere acknowledgement that the meetings took place, and that the state administration acknowledges the presence of people in the forest. Yet in the 'epistemic murk' (Bubandt 2009: 556) that often characterizes bureaucratic arenas, the truth or falsity, authenticity or inauthenticity of documents is often not what determines their effects (see Hull 2012b: 259). State artifacts, like documents, are 'iterable' or 'citable' (Das and Poole 2004), susceptible to forgery, mimicry and alternative interpretation that extend 'the state' into domains of life that bureaucratic practices would never access otherwise. Munyama Forest is a case in point: previously undocumented, existing only 'outside' the written record, the Munyama settlements were now citable in relation to official writings, and to something that at least resembled government consent. Even today the

headmen are eager to display these documents and to recount the achievement of obtaining them with pride.

Yet, just as bureaucracies exercise control through the uncertainty, ambiguity and fear created by leaving people and things undocumented (see Mathews 2008; Ticktin 2006) – by leaving boundaries open for continuous renegotiation – they do so by disputing the validity of documents (Kelly 2006). For example, in 1999 Munyama was shifted from the jurisdiction of Chibombo District to the newly established Chisamba District Council. When the headmen presented the letter authorizing settlement in Munyama to officers in the new district, those same officers simply invalidated the endorsement with reference to the fact that Munyama was no longer under the jurisdiction of the district that had issued it (on the politics of district rebordering, see Byrne et al. 2016). The newly established district instead took this as an opening and sent another eviction convoy to Munyama (interview, retired forestry officer). Fields and farmsteads were yet again burned, but the convoy was eventually overthrown with stones, and the eviction attempt failed. Yet the letter would continue to mediate the relations between state and chiefdom. In 2001, for instance, Mr. Lupunga, the then Minister of Lands (under which the Forestry Department was located), once again ordered the arrest of the forest headmen. Chiwala was, together with two neighboring headmen, once again taken to Kabwe Central Prison. This time Chief Liteta III was informed of Chiwala's arrest and went to the prison and, citing the endorsement of the settlements issued five years earlier, demanded his headmen's release. His request was granted. The following day, Chief Liteta III summoned the provincial police to the chief's palace, where they were ordered not to interfere in Munyama, again citing the letter of authorization.

Even if the document had accomplished some important political work, it had far from secured forest boundaries. The forest headmen still believe that the document signals that Munyama settlements were once authorized by state bureaucracy; yet over time, the document has been subjected to rain and moisture, changing its form and quality, impacting how it is read and received. In recent years when it has been presented to officials at various administrative-institutional sites, they have laughed at the old document with the faded writing and dismissed it, not so much on the basis of its content as on its form. That the political potential of documents is contingent upon their materiality has been subject to ample research (Hull 2012a; 2012b;

Hetherington 2009; Kafka 2009). What I want to draw attention to here, however, is that a document's materiality not only opens up new sorts of interpretive possibilities and closes down others, it draws lines of difference between categories of people.

For example, before the meeting in September 2017 (Boundary Story #9), Chiwala was not content with the copy of the 1996 document he had in his possession, which bore obvious signs of exposure to rain. This was one of the reasons he was up in that tree, talking to his fellow headmen. It was not only a matter of locating *the* document, but of locating the copy which had the least faded writing, the fewest dark spots, and the smoothest paper. As Chiwala explained later on: 'I have been to different places showing this document [referring to his own 'ruined' copy], they didn't even want to look at it. They think I'm not someone that could have anything to show them only because I live here ... If they see a document that is ruined by rain like this, they see someone who cannot take care of anything; it's not good, you see.' What Chiwala suggested was that the shape of a document also says something about its holder, his or her house, whether the roof is leaking, and whether she or he has been careful enough to protect the document in a plastic folder. The social position (class, if you will) of a document's holder is inscribed onto the document itself.

In Munyama, documents are incredibly difficult to protect from climatic imprints, with prevalent poverty making it hard – even for the relatively better-off headmen – to afford quality roofing, especially as people have been forced to rebuild their houses with materials damaged by fire. Thus, even if the content of a document signals an entitlement, the material quality of that document can also signal that its holder is incapable of taking good care of it, which in turn can render the entitlement invalid. As such, it is not the document itself which fails to signal a rightful claim, but the person holding the document in his or her hand, and indeed *where* and *under what conditions* he or she lives. Even though Chibombo District Council purportedly endorsed Munyama settlements in writing, today the very materiality of that document – molded by the ecological-material-historical condition of the forest itself – draws new lines of difference between those who are able to protect the integrity of documents and those who are not.

I shall come back to this document in the ninth and final story, when it once more takes center stage (see also Chapter 8 for a discussion of documents). For the headmen, the document was never seen as an 'end point', but

as a site of possibility, to be put to use to generate indeterminacy and ambiguity in the struggle over forest resources. Before returning to the 2017 meeting, however, I wish to make another analytical move, telling the story of how Munyama changed from a ‘National Forest’ to ‘State Land’, which altered the terrain of struggle and reconstituted anew people’s relations to the forest and the statutory administration.

#### 6.2.8 Boundary Story #8: Reclassifying space

The letter of authorization issued by Chibombo District Council in 1996 did not mark and end to the conflict over Munyama. What sustained the conflict, the forest dwellers believed, was the very category of ‘National Forest’, a legal category designating the population as ‘encroachers’. In 2008 a group of headmen thus traveled to the State House in Lusaka to petition for the declassification, or de-gazettement, of Munyama as a ‘National Forest’. They reasoned that a de-classification would return the forest to the Lenje Chiefdom, thereby changing people’s status as illegal cultivators.<sup>13</sup> I was unable to unravel exactly how their petition landed with the state administration; the labeling of Munyama as a ‘National Forest’, however, did indeed change, but the new label puzzled the forest dwellers: in 2009 Munyama Forest was reclassified into ‘State Land’. From my interviews with officials at the forestry department, I learned that the decision was made because there was ‘no longer any point’ in trying to practice ‘any form of forestry’ as ‘the forest was gone’. It therefore made administrative sense to incorporate Munyama into the jurisdiction of the Department of Lands, thus rendering the area ‘State Land’. The reclassification not only shifted the administration of Munyama from the underfinanced Department of Forestry to the relatively potent Department of Lands, but it changed the very logic of state intervention: from a forest that was to be restored and protected, Munyama became an ‘underdeveloped’ stretch of land that was to be ‘transformed into an area of commercial farming’, as a former Lands officer put it to me. As such, it also transformed the forest dwellers from ‘encroacher’ in a National Forest to ‘squatters’ standing in the way of modernization. Somewhat ironically, the headmen themselves had inadvertently instigated this transformation by their visit to the State House.

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<sup>13</sup> At this time, Chief Liteta III had also passed away, and his successor, Chief Liteta IV, was more reluctant to openly oppose the government. This also underpinned the headmen’s decision to opt for a de-gazettement.

The years following the reclassification were marked by tension. In contrast to the Department of Forestry, the Department of Lands has access to military means, the Land Task Force, deployed to evict ‘unlawful settlers’ from lands that fall under the category of State Land. Violent clashes ensued in 2010, 2011 and 2013. Farms and fields were burned, but government surveyors trying to measure and demarcate the forest lands were repeatedly threatened and on occasion stoned. Many of the documents that the headmen had assembled were lost in these fires. Many forest inhabitants also lost identity cards, marriage certificates and their children’s birth certificates, making it all the more difficult to legally plead their cases.

In a countermove, the headmen loaded a truck with local residents and drove to the district headquarters in Chisamba township where they staged a riot, storming government offices and threatening district staff, thereby moving the conflict from the remote forest lands into the heart of district politics. The actions of the forest dwellers were vigorously condemned by district staff. A government memo written by the then district secretary of Chisamba District portrays a ‘wild crowd’ demanding ‘government retraction’ from ‘State Land’. ‘Under no circumstances’, the memo continues, ‘can we allow a tribalist faction to dictate government policy and encumber the development of the nation.’ (Government memo, Chisamba District Council: Public Response to Munyama Squatters, Nov. 4, 2014). The framing of these struggles is revealing, setting an anarchic world that seems to show no respect for law and property against a settled world of agrarian order – in many ways a reiteration of colonial constructs between the civilized and the savage, the latter imagined as incapable of an appreciation of legal rights and duties and occupying a space of absence of law and property and the concomitant presence of violence (e.g. Hobbes ([1651] 1988; Locke ([1690] 1980). Notably absent in these accounts, of course, are the legalized violences of dispossession and interdiction that underpin such narratives (see Fitzpatrick 1992).

My point here, then is that the reclassification had profound state-forest-chiefdom boundary effects, entrenching Munyama as an anachronistic space *within* modernity, populated by a people too backward to understand the concept of law, whose enunciations of rights are wild and violent. In many ways, the reclassification was constitutive of capitalist modernity, in that Munyama became a constitutive outside to property, a stock of resources for the accumulation of wealth and for nation-building, while at the same time it

worked to solidify already highly exclusive notions of belonging to the modern nation.

### 6.2.9 Boundary Story #9: Assembling the past in a colonial presence

At least since the 1940s, Munyama has been stabilized and destabilized as an object of economic, political and cultural control. It is an unfixed space in which the future of people, natures and institutions hangs in the balance, a landscape of rupture, discontinuity and turmoil, where boundary effects have been fragile and preliminary in their achievement. These effects extend far beyond the spatial compartmentalization of political territory. If we only look at this step – the territorialization of categories at different scales and sites in the world – then the previous processes of bounding and categorization are overlooked and left unexplored. Yet, and as I hope my storytelling shows, it is in the processes of ‘bounding’ and ‘bordering’ rather than in the compartmentalized outcomes of the various social, political, ecological and spiritual processes that we can discern the relations of power that determine who is on the inside, who is on the outside and who becomes authorized to govern, with *de jure* and *de facto* orders rarely aligning. These processes are very much ongoing, with state, forest and chiefdom continuing to shift, blur and fold in and out of each other.

When I first arrived in Munyama Forest in 2016, two years had passed since the ‘Chisamba riots’, and the new district secretary had recently announced plans to resume the demarcation of the forest lands. But rather than relying on military means and forceful eviction, the forest dwellers would be given the opportunity to be part of the future titling process, and thus form part of a land regime under statutory law.<sup>14</sup> A year later, in September 2017, a rather chaotic meeting was held to this end. This meeting shall be the subject of my ninth and final story, and my hope is that the eight stories above will help to disentangle what was said (and done), why it was said (and done) and, above all, how multiple layers of political and cultural meaning and sediments of earlier boundaries are, to varying degrees, still at play – that is, how they continue to create spaces of exclusion and inclusion and structure that ways power is exercised across myriad boundaries that crisscross contemporary Munyama Forest.

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<sup>14</sup> This was a decision partly based on an experience in a neighboring district where violent clashes between land claimants and military had resulted in two dead.

‘Aha’ I heard from inside the house. Chiwala came out with the letter of authorization, dated 1996, in his hand. It was a brittle document, the writing faded, and folded so many times that it nearly fell apart. Not content with its quality, he once more ascended the tree behind the storage hut, trying to locate a better copy. I sat scribbling in my notebook, and I picked up bits and pieces of conversation: ‘After we were released from jail ... in 1996 ... yes ... the police inspector wrote something ... where are you now? Don’t worry, late is good ... No, that road is flooded, go up the hill...’ His voice echoed across the landscape that I had come to know over the past seven months. I still had difficulties navigating the myriad roads, footpaths and passageways that traverse the forest and coaxing my ramshackle motorbike through the bog soils in its sinks. More than once I have been the laughingstock of people trying to pull my bike out of the mire. A ringing once again prompted Chiwala up the tree. This time it was someone from the government convoy calling. They were on their way to the old school building in the center of forest, the venue of the meeting, but one of their cars had been caught in the clay. ‘Ah, those people don’t know anything ... how could they manage a place like this?’, Chiwala laughed. Once again, due claim and ecology of landscape entwined.

When Chiwala and I arrived at the school, the classroom was already crammed full with people, and there was a large gathering outside in the courtyard. Under the blackboard stood three empty chairs, reserved for the district secretary (DS) of Chisamba District Council, the provincial planning officer (PPO) from Central Province, and Chief Liteta IV. The place of the meeting had its own politics, chosen to signal the government’s inclination to ‘meet the population on their terms’, as the DS would tell me two days later when I met her in Chisamba township. I spotted many familiar faces in the room. Many of those in attendance had helped me to understand the historical sediments of Munyama, and seeing them gathered under one roof made me think of the meeting as a window into an unfolding political drama. Soon, the convoy of government vehicles pulled up outside the school. Apart from the expected guests, two police officers with automatic rifles slung over their shoulders also arrived at the scene. After what seemed like an endless exchange of courtesies, everyone took their seats. Chiwala, taking the role of moderator, spoke the first word to the PPO in a smug comment: ‘Tell us why you have come’.



The PPO explained that Munyama was ‘officially State Land’, and that the land was to be divided up into modular units and sold on the land market. Those currently living in Munyama would be given an opportunity to ‘buy land at a reduced price’ and form part of a ‘modern land government’ and ‘enjoy tenure security’ enforced by the ‘Ministry of Lands’. The PPO was reading from a tablet computer, and the rhetoric was pompous. The suit that he was wearing was stainless, and so were his shoes. He embodied urban officialdom, which made him stand out as an odd element in the room. And much like Locke, he spoke of a break between a moment when human relations were governed by their relations with material things through labor and the moment when relations came to be governed by the abstract order of the legal contract.

The PPO was persuasive, yet I was immediately reminded of the arena and audience of this performance when an older man in the back raised his voice: ‘Now, why should we buy our own land?’ Encouraged by this comment, another man intervened: ‘Yes, only a fool would buy something that is already his’. ‘We have cleared the land, we have built roads, irrigation channels and planted trees, and now you are saying that we should pay? We have already paid’, the man in the back continued. ‘We have suffered for this land. I have rebuilt my house after you burned it, I have replanted my fields after you burned everything’, a third man interceded, asserting moral cause in the face of persistent discrimination. Indeed, any enactment of officialdom needs to be set in context, revealing how geographies and histories of the present pivot on how past struggles gain traction and recur to shape material and discursive fields of action. The PPO seemed genuinely surprised at people’s unwillingness to acquire titles: ‘Like I said, Munyama is State Land, only the government can give such land’. He added, ‘Let me put it like this: land titles mean that no one can take the land away from you’. The PPO continued his invocation of codes and efficiency implying the superiority of abstraction over the material, whereas the forest dwellers repeated that such abstractions are an outgrowth of material-historical processes.

What constitutes a legitimate claim is a question with deep historical-colonial roots in Munyama (e.g. Boundary Story #2 and #8), and here we see how it continues to define the relations between agents of the state and those who find themselves sitting outside the circuits of statutory law, with the PPO suggesting that property rights *require* state enforcement. This, of course, is the paradox at the very heart of liberalism: if possessive

individualism as an ontological claim to freedom rests on the tenet of private property, then property itself depends on state power (see Roy 2017). That is, private property ‘does not exclude but on the contrary demands the supremacy of the state over the individual’, as Macpherson (1962: 256) writes. In my reading, it is precisely this relationship between property and state enforcement that the people in Munyama position themselves against: it was a direct critique of a place-less, labor-less and history-less conception of property.

The tension between the abstract-legal and material-historical was not simply a tension between different ways of relating to land and history; however, it was equally strategic. No doubt, previous struggles had produced a strong skepticism toward government promises, and most people believed, despite pledges from the PPO that their land would merely be ‘transferred’ to the statutory administration, that they would be evicted once the land had been surveyed. Yet this assumption was not based on distrust alone. The prevalent poverty in Munyama meant that even at a ‘reduced price’ most forest dwellers would struggle to afford a title and pay annual land tax. Thus, even if people got the opportunity to ‘buy their own land’, the result would be eviction as they would be unable to amass the necessary capital. The mechanism that would spark the dispossession of the forest dwellers would, in other words, be folded into ordinary bureaucratic procedure (see Chapter 8 for a discussion on titling). As one person said: ‘We are subsistence farmers, we don’t have money in our pockets like you do [talking to the PPO]. Yes, maybe we can sell some maize and goats, but you say we should buy, but how should we buy?’ In my reading, the forest dwellers’ invocation of history and material struggle was, at least in part, founded upon the concern that boundaries previously constructed around the savage and the civilized (see Boundary Story #1 and #5) would transmute into difference constructed around class (even if not articulated as such).

It seemed to me that the PPO interpreted people’s assertions as resistance against the idea of private ownership, rather than resistance against a conception of property rights that excludes the rural poor. Tangled up in these concerns was also the question of *how* social and material practices on the land can be translated into abstract lines on maps. As Layla, an older woman from Chiwala village, put it to the PPO: ‘I have some land here and some land there, I collect mushrooms in the forest, and I know some people grazing there as well. Some land we don’t farm because [silence] how can I

say [silence] our ancestors live there ... How will you know what land to give and not to give?’ She pointed to the complex property system of nested and overlapping boundaries, with people holding both territorial and non-territorial resource-specific concepts of rights, such as claims to specific types of trees in collectively managed areas. These vary by space, time, the age and gender of the resource user, the types of trees, their products and uses. The inclination of the land, as well as its proximity to waterways, determines what crops are suitable to plant, and also who is suitable to cultivate what land. And some lands, as she hinted at, are resting sites for ancestral spirits.

I knew Layla from following her and a group of other women on forays. While struggling to keep up with their busy stride, I would listen to the group share stories of how the spirit of Natota makes trees grow tall in certain parts of the forest, how she forms fertile grounds from mushrooms in some places, and creates productive soils for cultivation in others (see Boundary Story #2). The boundaries of the landscape follow from Natota’s movement, Layla suggested. The question I heard her pose during the meeting was ‘how can private property be mapped onto such a geography?’ Implicit in her question was a concern that drawing distinct boundaries in the sand may disturb spirits and intensify struggles over the kinds of rights these boundaries signify, rather than clarify them. I was not surprised that Natota remained hidden in the subtext. As Layla had told me the day before the meeting, rendering Munyama a place of spirits would make the population seem ‘irrational’ in the eyes of stately officialdom. Indeed, storytelling can legitimize claims to land by connecting it to history (Fortmann 1995), but some stories are best kept secret, Layla had reasoned. Thus, when the PPO, who seemed annoyed by her question, simply stated that ‘everyone will get land, don’t worry’, and ‘we can leave burial sites out of the planning grid, don’t worry’, no rebuttal followed, and Natota remained a hidden force in a secret geography.

Instead, headman Kambobe raised his voice: ‘You say everyone will get land, we say we already have land, and it is not just something we say just like that, we have proof’. He pulled out the document showing that Chibombo District Council had acknowledged Munyama settlements in 1996, redirecting attention toward something that he believed would resonate better with the PPO. Headman Kambobe continued: ‘The land was given to us by [the] government in 1996; it is here in this document’. With this, he asserted that their rights are no mere abstraction of labor, but products of a

legal agreement: ‘See, it is stamped and everything’, he continued, suggesting that the stamp was a decisive sign of government recognition (see Boundary Story #7). This evidently took the PPO, who was unaware of the existence of such a document, by surprise. An awkward silence filled the room as the PPO took a seat to study the document. The murky room apparently made it difficult for him to read it, so eventually he took the document and went to the entranceway where there was more light. The DS joined him at the doorway where they exchanged a few imperceptible words. It was clear that the materiality of the document transformed and distorted the meaning it was supposed to carry. The humidity had inscribed on the document patches of dark gray, and it was clear that age had shaped the relationship between the document and the object to which it referred. The DS held it up against the light and shook her head.

Back in their seats, the PPO concluded in a rather submissive voice: ‘I don’t know what to do with this. I mean, anyone at a government office can write a document like this ... and look, it’s so old that the districts have changed ... Even if the district would be the same, you cannot come with a document looking like this, I mean, what would a court say? They would toss it ... and a district council cannot authorize settlement on State Land, only the Ministry of Lands can do that’. Headman Kambobe took advantage of what he saw as a glitch in the PPO’s statement: ‘It was not State Land in 1996, it was a forest, and we took care of the forest for the province... You cannot just change the land and tell people this is state land when it was a forest before, we have other documents; even the forest people in the province told us to take care of the forest’. Kambobe went back to his seat and pulled out the document that stated that the 1996 Provincial Forestry Officer (PFO) had instructed the headmen to ban the felling of trees, and he put it in the hands of the PPO. ‘You see, it was a forest, and we did what the province said’. Kambobe’s point here was that the headmen successfully had performed the duties assigned to them by the government (see Boundary Story #3), which for him signaled a legitimate claim to the forest lands.

During the course of the meeting, there were several moments when the silence in the room was painfully awkward. One of those moments occurred when the PPO and the DS sat with the various documents in their hands, pointing to different segments in the text while whispering inaudibly to each other. Indeed, documents carry a ‘messy and *excessive* potentiality’ (Navaro-Yashin 2007) with multiple and contingent affects engendered in their

holders and readers across different legal regimes and social situations. It was the documents' excesses, rather than legal-formal validity, that were the terrain of struggle during the meeting. Both documents were highly indeterminate objects that conveyed information, but never in a direct or even predictable way. Instead, they were radically open, and hence allowed for all sorts of disputes about the role of the state and the chiefdom, and about the relations that the state facilitates. When finally pressed by headman Kambobe to confirm that Munyama was 'a forest' in 1996 (which was meant to validate the documents in his hand), the PPO simply said: 'But the forest is not there anymore ... if you were protecting the forest like you say, why is the forest not there? There's nothing to discuss'. 'Yes we must discuss, because it is there', Kambobe retorted, 'just look, we could cut all trees but we have rules for that. Ask anyone, they will tell you ... the forest is there and the document is there', he said, trying to ground the document's validity in the material landscape.

What this exchange hides, of course, is that prior to 1947, Munyama was not 'a forest' in need of 'protection', at least not in a stately administrative sense. Before the enclosure of the forest by the colonial Forestry Department, Munyama had been a collectively managed resource for shifting cultivation, grazing, the collection of wild foods and the like. During the meeting, it was the headmen who pressed state bureaucrats to recognize Munyama as 'a forest' in need of 'protection' and administration, thus appropriating the forest management rationale which had edited out Munyama from chiefly control in the first place (Boundary Story #1). But the PPO didn't want to comment on the matter further. Instead, he wanted to take all the documents with him for 'further validation'. Although he promised to give them back, Kambobe was reluctant to hand them over, and not only because these were his only copies, but also because he would be unable to control their impact once they traveled into a domain to which he had no access. Headman Kambobe was well aware that their 'validity' would be challenged once they entered into the ambit of state bureaucracy. Kambobe's documents are not places where boundaries could become stable, but resting places for signs, held for deployment in different times and places. Certainly they had introduced an element of indeterminacy in the meeting, and the PPO was getting visibly aggravated when Kambobe and others tried to get him to recognize Munyama as 'a forest'. In a quite punitive voice he said: 'Look,

we didn't come here to have a debate about what a forest is; this is not a court, we are giving you a chance to get titles, that's it'.

At this, the PPO nodded toward Chief Liteta IV, encouraging him to intervene. While the meeting had thus far held few surprises, it took a new turn when Chief Liteta IV spoke up: 'My predecessor was wrong in letting people settle here', he avowed. 'It was never his land to give; you have to work with the government'. Then and there, Chief Liteta IV rendered the headmen's historical claim to Munyama illegitimate. During the meeting itself, no one had dared to confront Chief Liteta IV. Immediately after the meeting, however, many of the forest inhabitants speculated that Chief Liteta IV had had no choice, that he could be removed from the throne if he openly opposed the government. Some recalled the story of when Chief Liteta III, his predecessor, had lingered after a meeting to tell the people to plant mango trees and replace their thatched roofs with iron sheets. They believed that the current chief was in a similar situation, and that instead of openly exercising his institutional authority, he would reinvent the tactics of more covert action (Boundary Story #3). But when Chief Liteta IV left the meeting without further addressing them, most came to believe that he had become a 'puppet chief', bought off by the District Council (a view that was reinforced by the fact that he traveled in the same car as the district secretary) to support the government, with his monthly state allowance representing an illicit form of wealth grounded in his denial of historical rights.

This latter belief was reinforced by the fact that their chief had arrived to the meeting clad in jeans and a sweatshirt rather than in his royal garb. When Chief Liteta IV first entered the classroom, this had immediately stirred confusion, with people whispering about his appearance: 'Where is our chief?' and 'he looks nothing like our chief' were some of the interjections I scribbled down in my notebook. These statements were uttered not in the sense of people failing to recognize their chief in plain clothing, but in surprise that he didn't exhibit chiefly officialdom. When Chief Liteta IV unexpectedly disavowed claims based on historical prerogatives, a new layer of meaning was added to these statements, signaling that the potentially renegotiated boundaries between state and chiefdom had been visible on his body from the very onset of the meeting. When I asked Chief Liteta IV about this a week later (one of the more awkward questions I've asked during my fieldwork), he disclosed that he had, in fact, been told by the DS that 'it is not an official meeting' and that 'you come in plain clothes.' Intentionally or

not, the configuration of state-chiefdom boundaries had been rescaled onto the body of the chief, structuring the ways his authority became tangled up in state rule on the day of the meeting. In many ways, the situation echoed indirect rule's public performance of an orchestrated alliance of chiefly and state authority.

Following Chief Liteta IV's lodgment in the meeting, the atmosphere in the room was dim. The DS, who had been quiet up to this point, suggested that the headmen 'maybe could become village chairmen', thus renouncing their chiefly titles while still retaining a position of authority. Before anyone had a chance to respond, the PPO announced that he needed to travel back to Kabwe, and that the meeting was over. In a last effort, headman Kambobe addressed everyone in the room: 'Don't you see, we will lose our land; do you think that you can keep your land if the government moves in? No, they will sell your land to people from town and you will have nowhere to go'. These words marked an abrupt end to the meeting, as the PPO, DS and Chief Liteta IV were already on their way out the door.

### 6.3 Epilogue

What actually occurred during the meeting? This is not an easy question to answer. For Chiwala, the meeting had been a coup, an attempt at replacing a chiefly administrative regime with the governing principles of the state. The story of the camel that I recited in the introduction to this thesis was told by Chiwala on the evening of the meeting. It describes a camel cunningly probing its way into an Arab's tent during a trek across a desert. The Arab is kind enough to invite the camel in, but then find himself displaced from his own abode. 'The state is a camel', Chiwala asserted. As a metaphor for state governance, the story speaks to colonization more generally, but also to the engineered alliance of chiefly and state authority during the meeting. For Chiwala, the difference is negligible: 'Ever since the white masters came here, it's the same; first they come and say this is a forest and you must leave, then they come and say this is State Land and you must pay. What can they say next time? That this will be a mine?' In this, Chiwala directly addressed the intersections of state power and the management of 'natures', territory and displacement.

Yet the meeting, and the history in which it was embedded, also trouble narratives that posit a state that 'construes' external 'natures', and thereby

'overwrites' local knowledge and power (per Scott 1998; cf. Harris 2017). For me, the classroom is a conceptual place through which stately and chiefly forms of authority have been reinvented and struggled over since at least the 1940s. The meeting, in this optic, should not be seen as taking place on predefined ground (desert/forest) between fixed points of difference (Arab/headmen and camel/state); rather, the meeting (as all boundary events before) was an opening for the renegotiation and rearticulation of what the categories of state, forest and chiefdom are. In Munyama, the 'content' of these categories has never been pre-given; they are ultimately storied and practiced, always a product of action and reaction, events, accidents or attempts to govern that rework the boundaries that make up the forest's 'constitution', and consequently who can control and use the forest lands. The meeting provides a detailed account of how such negotiations play out on the ground, how contemporary struggles pivot on how past struggles gain traction, in turn bringing into view the contested geographies upon which state and chiefdom take form.

Yet the meeting certainly opened up new terrains of struggle, principally those of private property and the potential shifting allegiance of Chief Liteta IV. When I met the PPO for a separate interview after the meeting, he avowed that 'the people will calm down ... it's always like this in this country. Apparently, those people have history there; they even had some old documents, you have seen, I'm sure. We don't want to evict those people ... they will be given land for a small fee'. The PPO explained that the Ministry of Lands would provide funding and surveying support while the provincial government in Kabwe would take responsibility for cadastral mapping. The first step, however, was a 'social survey', which was to be done by Chisamba District Council. The purpose of the 'social survey' was to map out how much land each household in Munyama cultivated and how many heads of cattle each household had in its possession, in order to estimate how much land each household was entitled to in a future titling process. The land's 'objective qualities', I was told, would define what land was suitable for residence, cultivation, grazing. 'Agro-ecological' and 'economic' criteria would determine the size of holdings and the number of livestock allowed. 'Planned land use', the PPO argued, would prevent 'random settlement,' which is an obstacle to 'good governance'. At the time of writing this, however, the 'social surveyors' are yet to be deployed.



Also the question of whether the forest headmen have lost the patronage of the chieftainship remains open. In my conversation with Chief Liteta IV, he remained elusive, often resolutely declining to speak about Munyama Forest. Yet the headmen still have in their possession the ‘books’, signaling a continued ambiguity of the chieftainship. ‘Yes, my headmen still have them, maybe I will collect them, maybe not, let’s see’, was all he was willing to say. Chiwala believes that Chief Liteta IV needs ‘controlling’ and to be reminded of his ‘forefathers’ and their ‘cause’. In the meantime, the wider forest population is in the midst of erecting sturdier houses and breaking new land to signal expansive use, and the headmen are in the process of crafting their own land certificates, adding yet another symbol of political legitimation to their repertoire – perhaps in an effort to bolster their legitimacy amid fears of shifting loyalties.

## 6.4 Chapter conclusion

This chapter is about a piece of earth that exists in both stately and chiefly registers of social, political and ecological life. I have laid bare the overlays and frictions of these layers in an effort to better understand how land is struggled over and to contribute, thereby, to a reimagining of political authority in rural Zambia that captures the interplay between different natures, politics and histories, and the forms of inclusions and exclusions that emerge within. I have shown how people have been collapsed into nature, erased from nature, written themselves back into the landscape through chiefly authorization and spiritual sanction, been constituted and reconstituted as racialized state subjects and have sought state recognition through documentary practices – throughout time articulating and rearticulating their relationships to the resources and authorities of the forest. The forest headmen and inhabitants have continually tested the limits of state governance, in turn provoking new attempts to govern, iteratively reconfiguring the landscape, chiefly control and the possibilities for people to use the forest lands.

In concluding this chapter, I wish to underline three insights emerging from my analysis. First, Munyama Forest bears a striking resemblance to the ‘imperial debris’, as defined by Stoler (2008: 193), caught up in ‘the evasive space of imperial formations past and present as well as the perceptions and practices by which people are forced to reckon with features of those formation in which they remain vividly and imperceptibly bound.’ The debris, or leftover

effects of imperialism, that I have discussed here are not only those that were created through the imperial projects of traditional colonial powers. Other effects have arisen from the reinvention or extension of colonial-era imperial practices and imaginaries by a postcolonial administration, making its control over territorial formations within the nation-state appear commonsensical (cf. Peluso 2011). What I have shown, however, is that the boundaries that mark out Munyama Forest as a particular place (whether a Protected Forest Area, National Forest or State Land) are anything but commonsensical; the boundary stories I have told make Munyama into not one place, but multiple places – a heterotopia, ‘juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible’ (Foucault 1986: 25). If what determines the constitutive elements of Munyama Forest is an effect of these multiple histories, practices and imaginaries, then it becomes vividly clear how taking the forest as commonsensical conceals and reinforces the relations of power that are constitutive of, and internalized within, its historical forms of legibility.

Second, the relationship between ‘state’ and ‘chiefdom’ is not simply some dialectic between expansion and resistance evolving with linear time, but is, rather, complicated by a series of discontinuous strategies and practices that proceed from multiple temporalities and spatialities; they mingle and engender hybrid formations that ultimately blur and refuse the distinction between them. Even if the boundaries between state, forest and chiefdom began as inchoate differences, of Chief Liteta III being unable to protect ‘valuable tree species’ from ‘encroaching tribesmen’ (see Boundary Story #1), these divisions did not reflect any ‘out there’ reality, but rather the crucial boundary work that imbued state, forest and chiefdom with particular meanings and distinctions (e.g. that a ‘traditional Chief’ is unable to understand the ‘principles of forestry’) that lay the ground for subsequent struggles. The making of state, forest and chiefdom, my analysis suggests, is contingent upon the continuous reproduction and recognition of a myriad of such distinctions – creating an ‘illusion of two separate worlds’, as van Binsbergen (1987: 47) writes. Such ‘illusions’, my analysis shows, have powerful material effects: they set up systems of social closure, exclusion and control, comprising the formation and delimitation of a field of government, the making and unmaking of spaces of political intervention and the determination and contestation of what is nature and society, lawful and unlawful, permissible and impermissible, modern and traditional. At any particular moment in time, the forest operates like a container into which

peoples can be placed or cast out, yet such effects were always contested, fragile and preliminary in their achievement. The boundaries of the forest were always, and continue to be, inchoate – always forming as new critiques and rearticulations are made. As such, state-forest-chiefdom boundaries never mark definite exteriors but distinctions within social orders, yet distinctions that reproduce the governing relationships in between.

Third, a focus on boundaries shifts analytical attention away from state, forest and chiefdom as predefined entities with a fixed set of relations in between, and towards the boundary struggles through which both state and chiefdom exert authority to govern, and through which they emerge as standing separate from each other. Yet, it is not simply that ‘nature’ provides a panorama for the performance of political authority, or a discursive medium through which ideas of cultural difference operate, but also that the physical properties of the landscape – and how they are invoked, maneuvered and spirited – open and foreclose spaces for political action and enactments of difference (cf. Nightingale 2018; Harris 2017). Munyama Forest is a place where political authorities come into being due to their entanglement with socio-natural land. Attending to these dynamics is crucial for broadening our understanding of politics – that an ancestral spirit ‘can rain on government’ is not an empirical oddity, but fundamental for understanding how the forest is struggled over. Failure to attend to these more hidden ecologies means that we risk naturalizing colonial epistemologies, further sidelining the boundary work that underpins claims to rights and belonging.



## 7. Empirical Chapter III: The Survey Beacon

Property becoming otherwise: state, affect and materiality in Mulonga village

### 7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I probed how a material space claimed by both stately and chiefly forms of authority intertwined different forms of rule, both materially and discursively. In this chapter I shift analytical attention to how private property is materialized on customary land. Empirically, the analysis is placed in Mulonga village, about a half day's travel from Munyama Forest (in the dry season). Conceptually, the analysis moves from material space onto material objects to probe how the emplacement of survey beacons and material encounters are fundamentally imbricated in the ways state power is mapped onto the landscape – not as a secure achievement, but as a critical moment of political contestation.

#### *Mulonga village, autumn 2016*

Peter dwells in the eastern bend of Mulonga village. During cropping season, he starts the day at the break of dawn, making the trip to his maize fields to work his land. When the sun approaches its summit, he walks back home to cure his back pains in the shadows of his abode, only to return to the fields when the sun is less daunting to his labor. It was during this time, Peter recounts, that a white pickup truck pulled up, stirring him awake during his midday slumber. He awoke to unfamiliar voices in the homestead, and when he came outside, two men were in the process of mixing cement in a plastic bucket, while a third mounted a tripod by the cooking hut. Confused by the spectacle unfolding in front of him, he inquired who the men were, where they

had come from and what they were doing. The men explained that they were surveyors sent by the Ministry of Lands in Lusaka to demarcate the land. 'We're only following instructions', one of the surveyors said, waving a map in his hand. 'We only put beacons where the map tells us', another surveyor echoed. If Peter wanted to 'complain', the surveyors continued, he had to go elsewhere, to the Ministry of Lands in Lusaka, where the map had been drawn up, embodying the surveyors with an inviolability rooted in their association with a distant, and for Peter, more diffuse, authority of the state. Much like documents, the surveyors signaled the 'double signs of the state's distance and its penetration into the life of the everyday' (Das and Poole 2004: 15). Too uneasy and confused to intervene, Peter simply observed how they put beacon after beacon in his land. One was placed on the doorstep to his sleeping hut, while Peter, without saying a word, stood aside. The contours of a new private property regime were materializing on the land, rendering in *concrete* emergent relations of state authority and new spatialities of exclusion.

In this chapter, I narrate material encounters between people in Mulonga, the white pickup truck, survey beacons and the bureaucratic sites that they are attached to, in order to probe how 'the state' emerges in certain moments and at particular sites, socially, materially and affectively, to write on the ground new relations of rule between state and citizens. The analysis maps onto a growing body of research that probes the intimate relations between property making and state formation (e.g. Bridge 2014; Lund 2016; Sikor and Lund 2009; Vandekerckhove 2011). Yet, while most of these accounts privilege conceptions of state and property as socio-legal constructs, I shall bring the 'stuff of property', cement and rebar, into critical view, probing how it becomes entwined with the expectations and emotions of citizens to produce new forms of defiance, subjugation and alienation. As I will show, if we are to fully understand how private property and authority come into being in particular sites, we must venture beyond the socio-legal relationality of property and probe its actual and conflictual territorialization, to where its very materiality works as a prism of state power.

After the surveyors had departed from Peter's homestead, he called me over, where a few neighbors had already gathered. Chipepo, Peter's neighbor to the south, was quick to propose that the surveyors had been drunk, that someone had seen them drinking by their pickup truck. If they were drunk, someone else commented, maybe they had misplaced the beacons, 'putting them all over'. 'Maybe, but they didn't just put beacons, they followed a

map’, Peter retorted. My initial instinct was to take Peter’s rebuttal to mean that the map was not only a projection of a bureaucratic image of Mulonga but an inscription device that had disembedded the land from lived relations, rendered it abstract and appropriable, and edited Peter out of the landscape (see e.g. Harley 1988; Peluso 1995). However, such insights seem intriguingly fractional once rescaled onto the land where surveyors – the inscriptors of property – encounter people that enact alternative tenurial realities. Here, affective encounters and the arrangement of things are as important as making representations on paper, and this is so, I claim, for one simple reason: on the ground, private property doesn’t preexist its material enactment. Not only did the beacons have an instructive visibility, spatializing this emergent geography of exclusion, but the very fact that we could walk along these lines rendered private property and its grid of exclusion painfully corporeal. Each beacon had a serial number inscribed on the top, E152, E153, E154, allowing us to trace the spatial contours of the property grid. We proceeded from the beacon sitting on the doorstep to the sleeping hut and followed their trail through the garden and out into the fallow lands behind the farmstead. ‘Here’s another one!’, someone called out, and we all gathered to take a closer look at the beacon, E155, trying to decipher the survey lines. Following footprints and tire tracks we found another seven beacons before we gave up. The survey line seemed to be cutting his homestead in half, with the cooking hut and a small storage hut located spatially ‘outside’ the grid formed by the boundary stones. When we were wandering the bush that day, scouting for beacons and tracing survey lines, people and things started to ‘resonate’ (Laszczkowski and Reeves, 2015), as expressed in this conversation between Peter and Chipepo:

- Chipepo: Maybe we can dig them up? ... If you leave them there, the grader will come.
- Peter: Yes, maybe. But if we remove them, the police might come, the Ministry [of Lands] will know it was me...
- Chipepo: How could they come if you remove some stone on your land? You do that before every rain! [jokingly]
- Peter: ... This is not just some stone, it’s a government stone. [not finding Chipepo’s joke amusing]
- Chipepo: It’s still a stone. [followed by silence]
- Peter: It’s soft. [gently pushing his shoe into the wet cement]

While Chipepo's comment trivialized the boundary stones, stirring laughter, Peter's remark was an affirmation of his subjection to them, generating a string of silent hums. Yet both Chipepo and Peter articulate clearly the idea that beacons exert some form of 'stateness', able to rearrange, affect and discipline. Yet the beacons were 'soft': perhaps they could be remolded? The stories that swirled around the beacons, I argue, must be recognized as an element of property under construction. They embody a critique of things as they are as well as a version of things as they could be. My point here is straightforward, if yet interim: if we understand private property as a socio-material achievement, this moment was an interposition in its becoming, entangling materiality, emotion and cultural imageries of authority. As such, surveyors do not simply 'carry' private property over geographical space; rather, we must probe the localized *material encounters* that forge the relations that bring private property into social existence in spaces of everyday life. This chapter shows how the emplacement of beacons, erection of fences and other 'material implements' are fundamentally imbricated in the ways state power is mapped onto the landscape – not as a secure achievement, but as a critical moment of political contestation. In what follows I elaborate a theoretical frame that allows us to do just that.

## 7.2 Conceptual interlude: state, affect, materiality

To date, the materiality of property has remained on the margins of social analysis, with a few notable exceptions exploring how fences and survey lines endow spaces with particular valences and political (im)possibilities that discipline social life (Blomley 2003, 2007, 2010, 2016; Given 2004; Harris 1993; Mitchell 2002). Blomley (2016: 597) illustrates the power exerted by property's materiality with a boundary fence: 'The person who encounters the boundary fence needs not know anything about the person who owns the land behind it ... All he needs to know is that it does not belong to him' (see also Smith 2014; Given 2004). This is what a boundary fence conveys; it exercises power not only by prohibiting movement but also by transforming border crossers into trespassers, subjecting them to property law, upheld by the judiciary, enforced by the police, sanctioned by 'the state' etc. A fence is what it does: it enrolls people in a network of disciplinary power, materially, discursively and affectively. The material making of property is thus an exercise of power in and of itself, in so far as power can



be seen as the ability to ‘police’ (Meehan et al. 2013: 2) the appearance and circulation of bundled objects, connected to institutions of (state) authority, forming a territorialized grid of disciplinary property relations. In his writings on British Columbia, Harris (1993: 67) notes that this grid

...defined where people could go and could not go as well as their rights to land use, and it backed up these rights, as need be, with sovereign power ... the land system itself became powerfully regulative. Survey lines and fences were pervasive forms of disciplinary power backed by a property owner, backed by law, and requiring little official supervision.

Private property here emerges as a socio-material *achievement*, with fences and survey lines constituting the political as a field that is regulating conditions of possibility, conjoining materiality, discursivity and disciplinary rule. The materialities of property carry, in other words, political *potential* (cf. Rose 1994). In this chapter I build on these insights, seeing the material practices of property making as enactments or performances of state power, yet I also wish introduce a conceptual caveat to this thinking, suggesting that the political potential embodied in the materiality of private property is only just that, *a potential* (however *potent* it might be), and that its ‘discharge’ remains crucially contingent upon the emotions and imaginations elicited in the ‘resonances between people and things’ (Laszczkowski and Reeves 2015). The materialities of property, I shall argue, are not simply *outcomes* of property making, happening *elsewhere*, they are not ordained *after*, so as to render visible what is already there *on paper*; rather, they are tangled up in the very becoming of property: private property doesn’t preexist its performance (cf. Blomley 2013), and, as such, can become *otherwise*.

In critical geography, materiality is now taken seriously as a pivot for political inquiry (Ahlborg and Nightingale 2018; Harris 2012, 2017; Meehan, 2014; Nightingale 2018; Shaw and Meehan 2013; Valdivia 2008). ‘Once an object is unleashed in the world’, Shaw and Meehan (2013: 218) write, ‘it produces and reproduces a localised order of appearance that can interrupt, and even master, the very “intentions” humans may have engineered.’ Braun and Whatmore (2010: xxi–xxii) call this a ‘margin of indeterminacy’ that ‘temporalize, opening us to a future that we cannot fully appropriate’, which brings about ‘new assemblages and generates new spatial relations that at once contribute to this charge of indeterminacy and shape what is actualized in any

given moment.’ Things are not just simultaneously material and meaningful; they are also ‘eventful’ (Braun and Whatmore 2010: xxi). That is, what spatial and social relations they engender – what power they exert – remain crucially contingent upon how they are encultured by those who encounter them. The materialization of private property is, in this view, an open political moment, an *attempt* to ‘persuade’, to use Rose’s (1994) terminology.

From here, then, the materialities of property, in this case survey beacons, become visible as much more than spatial markers of property; they must be ‘defined by their affects or their capacity to act and be acted upon’ (Bryant, 2011: 274). In this view, the making of private property is profoundly uncertain; it marks an open political moment, a performance, rather than something adjudicated in advance. This is because the materialities of property are always encountered by particular people in particular contexts, and what power they exert, how they are bundled together, and hence what effects they produce in those contexts are never separable from the contingencies of the encounter. I contend that it is this ‘margin of indeterminacy’ (Braun and Whatmore 2010: xxi–xxii), or what I shall call the ‘possibility of the otherwise’, that makes state formation fundamentally provisional, prompting renewed analytical attention to the *material* making of property as a critical site for state formation and political contestation.

My hope is that ethnographic attention to the looming possibilities of the ‘otherwise’ exposes the political toil – deployments, adjustments, re-deployments, readjustments – that goes into making the stuff of property ‘block the contingencies of the world’ (Meehan 2013: 8) but also the bureaucratic anxiety that the ever-present ‘otherwise’ incites. These are the forms, I will show, that modern land law reform take in the rural fabric of the everyday, offering important insights into how states not only ‘come into being’ through the ‘assertion of control over territory, resources, and people’ (Neumann 2004: 185; see also Scott 1998), but also through subtle dispositions of ‘things’, perfunctory politics and affective encounters.

Within anthropology, work on the state has long accentuated how state rule remains dependent upon the multiple ways that practices of government elicit emotions; indeed, the production and circulation of affect and emotion are key vectors for state power (Stoler 2004; Kapferer 1988; Navaro-Yashin 2007; Nuijten 2004). Gupta (2012), for instance, building on ethnographic work in India, has shown how stories and tales of corruption are saturated with emotion (disgust, anger, frustration, pleasure, joy), discursively

constructing the state amid failed development practice (see also Beyers 2015). That the state produces powerful emotions signals that affect is not epiphenomenal to the political, ‘a smokescreen of rule ... a ruse masking the dispassionate calculations that preoccupy states’ (Stoler 2004: 6); rather, affect is the ‘substance of politics’ (ibid), setting the conditions of possibility for action and critique. In short, without affect in view it is difficult to understand how and why the state ‘should so powerfully shape ... political and moral imaginations’ (Spencer 2007: 99). At the core, understanding affect as a current of state power – and hence a constitutive condition of state formation – places the analysis of the state firmly in embodied, affective ‘resonances’ within and between persons and things (Laszczkowski and Reeves 2015). This conceptual move, Stewart (2007: 2) notes, involves a shift in focus away from social structures, or ‘fixed conditions of possibility’, and toward ‘lines of potential’ (ibid: 11) – an attention to emergent rather than established relations. Holding affect in view thus pushes the ethnographer to find ways to trail the uncertain, never quite realized or only momentarily realized.

Building on the theoretical insights assembled above, I set out to explore survey beacons as state power materialized, territorialized relations of rule, inserted into people’s land and therefore into people’s lives, but also as objects with highly indeterminate, even eventful, abilities to affect and arrange. I wish to stress the ways in which the material and affective force of the state emerges, not in relation to the state’s presence or absence, but rather in relation to the shifting movement between the two. Analytically I conceive of the demarcation of Mulonga as productive of such movements. The land became a space of affective encounters and pervasive uncertainty that transfigured into subordination and upheaval as well as defiance and resistance. As such, my argument ties the embodied and political together, linking localized material practice – the emplacement of boundary stones – and wider geographies of ‘state making’, unveiling seemingly mundane encounters as engendering social change, disciplining citizen life, redefining what is legal and illegal, permissible and impermissible: that is, the very practices and performances that bring private property into being (or not) in particular sites, and therefore simultaneously bring ‘the state’ into political actuality.

Situating the analysis here troubles tales of a passive rural peasantry subjected to sovereign law, revealing instead how an inventive and ingenious citizenry reappropriates and redeploys state materialities, and how an equally

inventive and ingenious bureaucracy struggles to make them perform the political work assigned to them. These iterative moments are foundational for understanding how both state and citizens co-constitute each other's existence and capacities through property making (and unmaking), and how agrarian change positions people and cultivators, as well as administrators, with variable capacities for action within shifting state-citizen relations.

## 7.3 Private property materialized

### 7.3.1 The arrival of the surveyors

I first arrived in Mulonga in 2016 and settled in with Chipepo, Thabo and their two sons, who were living on a small farmstead comprised of a few thatched mud-and-wattle sleeping huts and a larger cooking hut. Mulonga village sits along a dirt road a couple of hours' walk from Chibombo township, in Chibombo District, Central Province. Land use is administered by Headman Wilford and his village council, vested with regulatory powers by Chief Liteta IV of Lenje Chiefdom. Wilford and his council control access to common pastures, subdivide and allocate plots when new families are born out of old ones and settle land disputes in the village court. Rights in land are demarcated with trees, hilltops, rock formations and other environmental imprints.

Yet boundaries between neighbors are not lines of division but sites of interaction, negotiation, and sometimes conflict. Most farmers adjust boundaries before cultivation according to labor power, or lend seed or oxen for tilling across borders in return for labor at the time of harvest. Hedging is not allowed unless communal consensus is reached. Cross-border land use, thus, cultivates both fields and friendships, and social relations of production entangle working subjects, sites of labor and rights in land. Most villagers provide for their own subsistence. The average household has a vegetable garden flowing outward from a few mud-and-wattle huts and a larger maize field located no more than an hour's hike from the homestead. Around most homesteads there are chickens pecking about, and some villagers rear goats and cows for milk and meat. Wood for fuel and construction is cut from the surrounding bush. Mulonga pub, an open hut located next to the village court, is a joint meeting place for people on their way home from the fields in the late afternoon. Here, women sell home-brewed munkoyo – a fermented drink made from pounded munkoyo roots dug out in the bush – over lively

discussions traversing national politics, cultivation practices, labor arrangements and romantic involvements. For those who can afford them, bicycles reduce the time spent traveling between hamlet, maize field and Chibombo township, where people go to purchase salt, sugar, airtime, soap, cooking oil; to charge their cell phones; or to play pool at the local inn. When making this trip, one notices a change in the property landscape; around the township, Euclidian divides, fences, electric wiring, barbed wire and ‘private property – no trespassing!’ signs tell passersby that they have entered the governing grids of State Land.

My stay in Mulonga was founded on an interest in the way the boundary between State Land and chiefly territory was manifest on the landscape and in people’s movements and imaginaries. I had also heard that the township was expanding outward, but little did I know that Mulonga village was to be targeted for government appropriation, even less so that it was being done without the villagers themselves being aware of it. It was about three weeks into my stay when I sighted a tripod standing alone in the bush. When I came closer, I noticed a white pickup truck parked a stone’s throw away. Next to the truck stood five men; two of them unloaded surveying apparatus, a spade, a bag of cement and a plastic bucket from the truck, while the others were laughing and jostling about to the sound of Kalindula music spreading across the landscape, where a handful of curious people stood, watching the men from a distance. I spotted Chipepo among the spectators and made my way over to ask him what was going on. ‘They just came and started to put those beacons in the ground’, he explained. Chipepo followed behind, but at a distance, when I made my way over to the surveyors, where I was greeted by Chief Surveyor Sylvester Nkandu. At first, he was reluctant to tell us about their work, referring to ‘orders’ and ‘instructions’ from ‘Lands’, short for Ministry of Lands in Lusaka. After sedulous inquiry, however, he lowered his voice and said, ‘this whole area has been taken by the government’, but, he added, ‘you have to talk to Lands. I really can’t talk about it ... I’m only hired for beaconing’. How the land for demarcation had been identified, Sylvester didn’t know. ‘I just got the map from Lands this morning’, he averred. Chipepo, who had been quiet up to this point, now spoke: ‘I want to know what land is on that map.’ His request was met with an uncomfortable silence and an awkward goodbye.

News about the arrival of the white pickup truck traveled rapidly across Mulonga. At the pub later that afternoon, people asked themselves who

these people were, where they had come from, and if the government was grabbing their land. ‘What if they return tomorrow? Where will they put those beacons then? ... I don’t like this, we have to keep our eyes open’, Chipepo remarked. ‘Yes, if that vehicle enters into our land, things will be very bad’, someone commented. The white pickup truck entering Mulonga that day came to represent a tangible threat, its movement eliciting suspicion and vigilance, emotion and action. Over the following three weeks or so, the white pickup truck was often seen moving along the main road running through Mulonga. On occasion, villagers spotted it traversing the bush, sightings which they reiterated at the pub in the afternoons. I, too, observed the movement of the truck as it crisscrossed Mulonga, leaving a trail of cement beacons in its wake.

Over the following couple of days, many villagers discovered beacons implanted in fields and farmsteads. Among them was Peter. Peter’s rights in the land are the product of labor, arbitration and collective memorialization, which enmesh the geography of Mulonga within social relations of power and production, patchily manifested in the materiality of rural life: homesteads, fields, fallows, pastures and orchards. Within this landscape, he holds rights in neighbors’ trees and their produce, independent of the land on which they stand, and irrigation rights independent of either. For Peter, these relational spaces now appeared to be overlaid by straight survey lines that delineated Euclidian spaces of private property, producing divisions in the socio-material fabric of neighborly associations that hitherto had brought rights, practices and persons into being in particular ways. As such, the demarcation radically repoliticized practices on the land: seeding, gleaning and grazing over these survey lines would now be construed as squatting, theft and trespass, legal categories put to work to protect bounded property from the beasts and bodies of its spatial outside.

‘So now we can’t grow vegetables here next year’, Peter remarked when the survey lines became legible, ‘and my cattle, where will I find grazing land when people come and settle here? There will be no land for them when they put up their fences.’ Here, Peter spoke of the inherent logic of private property: it produces the very ‘outside’ from which its ‘inside’ then is guaranteed legal protection. It engenders, in other words, the effects that it names (see Blomley 2003, 2007, 2010, 2016 on the divisive effects property). In my reading, it was the production of such effects that Peter had witnessed. Indeed, he had experienced his own repositioning from a rights-

bearing subject to a potential perpetrator of someone else's entitlement, with the beacons being arti-factualized symbols of state appropriation.

Others spoke of a different kind of encounter. Megai first sighted the white pickup truck when it was coming around the bend leading up to her garden. Desperate to defend her rights, she decided to confront the men, but when the surveyors noticed her approach, they began to walk back toward the truck. When she realized that they were trying to get away from her, Megai picked up her pace, and eventually she was running towards them. The surveyors ran, in turn, quickly jumping into the truck, speeding away from her into the bush. After inspecting her land, she found that beacons had been placed in a line, marking what she believed to be a new road leading straight through her garden. When recounting the event, Megai ridiculed the surveyors: 'They were afraid of an old woman like me. Can you believe it? I felt like a grandmother going after the children with a stick', she said laughing. She was proud of her intimidating appearance, scaring off agents of the state 'as little boys', as she put it, demonstrating an embodied joy of material resistance. 'I will not leave my house before that vehicle has left the village', she said firmly.

In both Peter's and Megai's experiences, emotion and materiality had shaped the way privatization incited action and emotion, albeit in different ways. As Müller (2015: 36) writes, 'affect and emotion are the *tertium quid* of the social and the material, making the socio-material hold together or fall apart.' Above all, Peter's and Megai's experiences fit uneasily into narratives of landscapes written into state modernization efforts. 'State making' emerges instead as a much more ambiguous project, with power being inserted into the most intimate spaces of the everyday (Painter 2006), yet irresolute and perfunctory in its effects and affects; the beacons now sitting in their land engendered a form of betweenness, or liminality, an open political moment with 'lines of potential' extending in multiple directions. My interim argument here, then, is that we must probe more carefully how equivocation and renunciation – and not only coercion and assertion – are imbricated in the recursive production of state and property (cf. Bridge 2014). And, subsequently, how these moments contain a 'margin of indeterminacy', 'possibilities of the otherwise': perhaps uprooting the beacons would keep the grader away, as Chipepo had told Peter. Before probing such dynamics in more detail, however, I first trace the survey lines

into the offices of the state administration to map out the bureaucratic field from which the beacons had sprung.

### 7.3.2 Bureaucratic encounters and the politics of negligence

From an administrative optic, the beacons sitting on Peter's and Megai's land were the material crystallization of a procedural arrangement between a host of institutional sites: Headman Wilford, Chief Liteta IV, Chibombo District Council, Kabwe Provincial Government and the Ministry of Lands in Lusaka. The term people used to describe this assemblage of rule was *ubuteko*, literally meaning 'that which governs'. It can be translated variously as 'state' or 'government', thus indicating an expansive notion of state power and government. From what I have understood from numerous conversions, it is best understood as an intimate repository of state power; it can refer to government only, but also to an individual bureaucrat or place of officialdom.

For Peter, the only 'contact zone' (Harris 2012: 29) with *ubuteko* was the lowest level in the statutory administrative hierarchy: the District Council in Chibombo township, two hours' walk to the east. When arriving at the District Council the following morning, however, he was denied a meeting with the council secretary. Without an appointment, it was explained to him, there could be no meeting, and the meeting had to be scheduled by the office clerk, but she was nowhere to be found. Someone in the halls of the District Council asked him if he had any 'papers' verifying his claim to the land that he had found beacons in. Without a documented entitlement, this someone said, he could be 'anybody' (in my understanding, 'anybody' should here be read as 'without legal status'). When he couldn't provide any papers, he was instructed to 'go back home', to be 'patient' and 'wait' for the field officer, a certain Mr. Mulombe. In many ways, Peter's inability to make an appeal seemed to be underwritten by a latent violence of colonialism, which made documented property a prerequisite for effective citizenship. He was, in short, alienated by the very project that the state employs to legitimate its rule.

I also tried to unravel how the beacons ended up on Peter's land. The following morning, I visited both Headman Wilford and Chief Liteta IV. Headman Wilford, a reserved man in his sixties, was on most days to be found at home. As he did every time we met, he offered me a seat under the mango tree next to his house, where his daughter served us tea. While sipping



his brew, Wilford explained that he had been instructed by Chief Liteta IV to ‘release some land for the government’. He had directed the field officer of the District Council, Mr. Mulombe, to a stretch of unallocated land that he believed was suitable for government appropriation. Yet we both knew, from observing the movement of the pickup truck, that beaconing had been done beyond that land; it appeared that Wilford’s presiding had been overruled. Why this was, he didn’t know. Thus, the politico-legal terms of the demarcation were illegible from the very locus of change, even, it appeared, for the village sovereign. When I arrived at Chief Liteta IV’s palace, I was greeted by a drowsy kapaso who had been standing guard at the gate the whole night. These visits were often clothed in courtly conduct, but this time I was shown into the living room, a place reserved for family, where beers and a tray of egg sandwiches awaited us. Chief Liteta IV appeared to be equally confounded by the demarcation:

All I know is that the district has received some land from my headman [i.e. Wilford]; I have instructed him in this so my people can stay where they are, but then I hear my people are chased. ... These people in the district, they don’t respect our rules, if they want something, they just take.

It was not the first time that I heard Chief Liteta IV projecting responsibility onto the District Council. I telephoned Mr. Mulombe, but he did not pick up his phone, so I decided to try my luck at his office, but the guards at the gate told me that he was out and not expected to be back anytime soon. Instead I met with the district secretary who received me in her office. As in all government offices across the country, a framed portrait of President Edgar Lungu ornamented the wall behind the desk, radiating paternal power and authoritative intimacy into the state establishment. She explained that the township could no longer sustain its growing population on its land and that it needed to be expanded ‘into traditional land’. Mulonga was to be ‘opened up’, new roads built and old ones broadened, land subdivided into discrete parcels and sold as plots of private property. With funding and surveying support from the Ministry of Lands, a stretch of land had been identified, but, she was quick to add, ‘we only demarcate land that has been approved by the chief ... he has asked the farmers if they are willing to sell some of their land ... many have agreed, that is the land we are demarcating now’. The conversation continued:

- Me: Could you tell me how the land was identified, the procedures leading up to the point when you had a map over the individual plots to be demarcated?
- DS: That was a negotiation between Mr. Mulombe and the chief ... We have permission from the chief, he even signed a document.
- Me: How were the farmers identified, those who were willing to sell some of their land?
- DS: The headman showed Mr. Mulombe, then he took the information to Ministry of Lands ...
- Me: What kind of information was that? I mean, was it names of people, or was it coordinates, or some kind of map?
- DS: I think coordinates ...
- Me: ... I heard that there's been some problems with the map, that some people that didn't sell any land have found beacons on their land.
- DS: You see, that's not possible, we have very strict procedures ... maybe they complain only to get some money ...
- Me: How do you mean?
- DS: I mean that there are no records of what land belongs to what person in the villages, so all of a sudden, people can say that this and that land belongs to them ... They can invent rights overnight and then claim compensation, no one would know. It's a problem in many places ...
- Me: Ok, but what are those procedures, ensuring that no one is losing part of their land or anything like that?
- DS: Like I said, it was a negotiation, and those who didn't want to sell will not be affected ... It's the chief that decides, and he has approved...

Much could be said about this dialogue, but I would like to stress two points in particular. First, that people 'invented' infringements reflected my experience in Mulonga poorly. What such suggestions do, I claim, is to reproduce a conception of a statutory property regime subjected to obstruction by ungovernable inhabitants at its frontier. As Peter's experience suggests, such conceptions are inscribed in state-citizen encounters; that he was told that he could be 'anybody' when failing to provide any 'papers' signals a suspicion, or at least negligence, toward people outside the circuits of statutory land law. In this way, the property divide between State Land

and chiefly territory continues to structure people's abilities to exercise rights across it in their encounters with 'the state'.

Second, the key to the demarcation seemed to be what the district secretary referred to as a 'negotiation' between Mr. Mulombe and Chief Liteta IV. Chief Liteta IV would later refute the claim that he had been part of any negotiation. Mr. Mulombe, on the other hand, maintained that he had the chief's 'approval', although he adeptly evaded any questions pertaining to its content. In this way, administrative responsibility was persistently displaced onto other institutional sites. Also, the Ministry of Lands, to which Peter had been referred by the surveyors, soon turned out to be a bureaucratic cul-de-sac. My informants within the ministry told me that all 'Lands' had done was to provide 'technical support'. The map had been drawn up by the provincial planner in the regional capital, Kabwe, and not by the Ministry of Lands, which had only 'approved' it, 'confirmed' that there were no overlapping 'legal claims', and later forwarded it to their 'licensed surveyors'.<sup>15</sup> However, when I met with the provincial planner in Kabwe, he explained that his cartographic contribution was merely 'mechanical'. When the coordinates reach his office, all he does is to 'plot them on a map' which he then 'forwards' to 'Lands' for 'approval'. The responsibility to 'confirm that the land is vacant', he told me, lies with the District Council. At this point, he did know that the GPS that Mr. Mulombe had used to pick the coordinates had an error margin of 15 meters. This information was disclosed to me by Mr. Mulombe's successor, displacing responsibility onto technology. Figuratively speaking, as the beacons traveled along the institutional chain, at each link being imbued with political substance, sometimes outside the circuits of legal procedure, their material crystallization in Mulonga no longer mirrored any institutional uniformity, let alone state sovereignty; rather, they carried with them the unruly and largely illegible politics of their making.

Where did the beacons come from? The answer seems to be 'from elsewhere'. What 'the state' came to be was bound up in this ambiguity; while the beacons served as painful reminders of state incursion, the futile efforts to get in contact with the liable bureaucracy produced strong feelings of state negligence. For some, *ubuteko* became synonymous with Mr. Mulombe, who came to embody the responsibility for the demarcation in its entirety, now rumored to be the willful act of a single sovereign officer. That

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<sup>15</sup> An entitlement to customary land is, in this optic, not a 'legal claim'. What the Ministry of Lands had done was, in other words, to edit out Peter from the institutional consciousness of the state apparatus.

was the reason, people in Mulonga speculated, for his ‘disappearance’. Others, however, believed that he didn’t exist, that he was a mirage put up by the District Council in an effort to deflect criticism. When I visited Peter later in the afternoon, he asked me: ‘What am I supposed to do? How can I go to Lands? ... Should I find transport only to get chased from that place also? ... Wherever I go, they say go somewhere else.’ In his experience, *ubuteko* (‘that which governs’) was always somewhere he was not, dissolving itself of any attempt at interaction. These ‘social lives’ (Ssorin-Chaikow 2003) of the state are vital to track, because they structure people’s conditions of possibility in profound ways, open and foreclose spaces of resistance, and shape what is actualized on the ground.

### 7.3.3 Material resistance, elusive politics and changing tactics of government

Three days had passed since the surveyors arrived, and I was having a conversation with Thabo when I received a text message: ‘Bad news. Jacob says beacons have been placed near the well. Going there now. Michael’. Michael dwells not far from Peter and Thandi, separated only by a strip of fallow land where goats roam freely during the bright hours of the day. In the corner of this land sits their well, providing a source of water during the dry season for a small garden where his wife Gloria grows green peppers, okra and tomatoes. When I arrived, a few people had already gathered. As we had done on Peter’s land, we went to inspect his grounds, finding some twenty beacons covering a large part of their maize fields. Adam, Michael’s brother-in-law, was the first to speak up:

Adam: You should uproot them ... this land belongs to you, if you leave them there, someone will come and settle here.

Peter: I think we should wait. We cannot stand against *ubuteko*. If we destroy them, they might bring the police here, and then it’s only more problems for us.

Michael: We can’t just sit here and wait until someone comes and builds a house on my land; then it will be too late.

Peter: I don’t like this, I will go to the district again ... we can go together, all of us. If we start off early tomorrow, maybe we can find Mr. Mulombe.

Michael: Nobody has seen this Mr. Mulombe ... If we wait, it will be too late. Everyone here knows this is our land, it is our right to defend it...

Adam: I think, yes, if we remove them, we can't be chased... How will they know where to build? ... How can we remove them? Those beacons are like stone. Can we dig? Or use the pick?

Michael: I think pick maybe.

As this discussion shows, beacons are not merely outcomes of the making of private property but importantly are implicated in the process that produces social relations around them; they kindled fear, forethought, even paranoia, but also resistance. Indeed, survey beacons are not simply inert relics of Lockean liberalism; they embody, engender and animate the power exercised by those who govern their emplacement (see Harris 1993) in ways that make their meaning and materiality a site of contentious politics. Imagining that uprooting the beacons would undermine any claims made by arriving settlers, Michael collected his pick and hoe and headed toward the field. The concrete scattered as he drove the pick through the beacons. Afraid to face eventual repercussions, Michael instructed his son, Paul, to hoe a deep hole in the bush and bury the concrete therein, covering the disturbed ground with some brushwood. In this way, the land surfaced as a space through which administrators and cultivators acted upon each other.



*Image 2 and 3. Beacon on the path between Michaels's house and his maize fields (left) and outside Pepe's house (right). Photos by the author.*

Insofar as the state is constituted by a networked assemblage of institutions and their practices, Michael had unearthed some of its material nodes. These struggles, I want to stress, were not fought in the courtroom or some other discursive-legal terrain, but in the geography of everyday life. Put differently, Michael's ability to act upon 'the state' was rooted in the very materiality of property, and not in the terms of its legal underpinnings (of which he had no knowledge). Wielding the pick and hoe became, in this context, political work. In fact, they were the only political tools that he had access to, given the impossibility of locating someone who could be held accountable. Still, the force of his strikes was political even in a strictly legal sense, for Zambian land law stipulates that emplacing survey beacons – and maintaining them 'in proper order and repair' – is a legal qualification for private proprietorship in land (The Laws of Zambia, Ch. 188, The Land

Survey Act, Part V). This turns material space into a political turf upon which both land users and law users imprint and enact entitlements to resources. Previous scholarship is of course right in that property is never more certain than its recognition allows (see Lund 2002). What my analysis shows, however, is that property is only as robust as its material construction.

Over the following days I listened to several stories of people across Mulonga who had demolished stonework found in their land. Some had even scooped up wet cement after the surveyors moved out of sight, covertly ‘unmaking’ property (and giving children something to sculpt small figurines with). All shared experiences similar to Peter’s: the District Council was unresponsive when people called or visited and referred them to Mr. Mulombe, who wasn’t in his office and didn’t pick up his phone. I, too, had failed to meet Mr. Mulombe. He had canceled two appointments on me, and when I finally ran into him at the District Council, which I had the habit of visiting when I passed through Chibombo township, he told me that he would not speak to me unless I had an interview sanctioned by the district secretary. I telephoned the secretary who, in turn, telephoned Mr. Mulombe, letting him know that she authorized him to talk to me. Twice I waited outside his office without him showing up to a scheduled meeting. His name kept circulating in odd ways, however. While sitting in a room adjacent to the office of the district secretary one day, I overheard a telephone conversation between the office clerk and someone. This was what I managed to scribble down in my notebook:

... there is no need to worry ... Mr. Mulombe will come and see you any day now, just wait for him ... maybe tomorrow, or the next day ... there is no need to come here, do you have Mr. Mulombe’s number? ... try calling him again ...

I wondered if it was someone from Mulonga calling. The seeming impossibility of pinning down Mr. Mulombe imbued him with a mythicized presence. He had an office with his name on it, but he was rarely in; he had a telephone number, but he rarely picked up when people called; he made promises to come out to Mulonga, but he never showed. The situation in Mulonga came to ‘bear the double signs of the state’s distance and its penetration into the life of the everyday’ (Das and Poole, 2004: 15). The simultaneity of actuality and elusiveness was important for how the state emerged in Mulonga as a shifting movement between state presence and state

avoidance, forms of resistance and changing tactics of government, appeals made but never recognized. I found that, for most people, the decision to demolish stonework was warranted by the inability to act upon anything other than the beacons themselves. Mulilo, a young farmer staying along the main road in Mulonga, explained that ‘we cannot fight ubuteko, but we can remove the stones ... when they come, they will find nothing there. How can they give land with nothing there? They can’t.’

### **Text box 2: Colonial connectivities**

The demolition of survey beacons is not a new occurrence in Zambia. On 3 December 1928, surveyor Mr. J.E.S. Bradford sat down in front of his typewriter to compose a letter to the Survey Department in Livingstone. In his correspondence, he describes his discovery of shattered remains of a seven-and-a-half-inch beacon near the Geodetic Station in Chifukunyu. A few weeks later, he writes, he went to work at a Geodetic station near Chinsali, and also here, he found stonework broken down. ‘It will be a great loss’, he notes, ‘if all trace is lost of some of the stations by the action of the natives in breaking down the beacons’. The Survey Department in Livingstone reacted sharply to Mr. Bradford’s letter. On 18 December 1928, the director of Surveys (whose name is indecipherable) forwarded Bradford’s report to the Department of Native Affairs, with an attached comment: ‘The damaging of beacons ... even when the same have been set in blocks of concrete, is a constant source of trouble and expense to this department, and, unless the delinquents are severely dealt with, the practice will never cease.’ On 27 December, he sent yet another letter, as if to clarify the gravity of the situation: ‘[what is required is] more vigilance by the Police and District Officers, who are in a position to impress upon the native the “Holiness of a Landmark”, and until this is done it is unlikely that improvement will take place’. Referring to the two beacons that Mr. Bradford mentioned in his report, the director of Surveys further noted that ‘it is obvious that the beacons were deliberately broken down, and it is most unlikely that a European would do this’. What needs to be done, he asserted, ‘will be to impress the native with more respect of the age old law “Remove not thy neighbour’s landmark”’.

National Archives of Zambia. RC/1168: Survey beacons, destruction of

Others adopted alternative strategies of resistance. As the form of property that hitherto had regulated people’s access to the land was based on oral agreements and collective memorialization of what tree, hilltop or rock formation marked the boundaries of a usufruct right, the concern revolved around the fact that the beacons, and the property relations they represented, seemed to undercut these current rights. Significant here was the fact that the emergent property grid had been produced by maps, prism poles and cement, rather than through negotiations with Wilford: the two property regimes were



founded upon two different systems of inscription. Instead of destabilizing the emergent property grid, some people, therefore, started to fortify their own claims. This was done not by invoking authority – by backing up their claims with institutional influence – but by more firmly imprinting one’s material presence on the land, thus adopting the performance register of the state law. Lisa, a widowed farmer having a smallholding together with her sister, illustrates this form of resistance quite well. Fresh in the wake of the white pickup truck’s arrival, Lisa hoed a trench near her house. Her son traveled from Kabwe to help her mix mud, clay and straw, turning soil and fiber into molded bricks laid out to dry in the sun. Lisa became a fixture at the site, clearing undergrowth, leveling ground, and assembling bricks. Less important than erecting a brick house, however, was to inscribe her presence on the land, thinking that a brick building would fortify her claim and thereby undermine the new property grid. And Lisa was not alone. Around Mulonga, foundations for brick houses started to appear. Those who could afford to replaced thatched roofs with iron sheets, others transplanted young fruit trees to more strategic locations, rearranging homesteads and landscapes, making calculated claims to certain domains. Put differently, the villagers tried to ‘outperform’ the private property regime.

Government tactics were adjusted accordingly. Sylvester, the chief surveyor, had given me his telephone number, and when I called him a few weeks later, he agreed to meet with me in Lusaka. We talked for a good while before he leaned in and lowered his voice, saying that it is not rare for the ‘Lands’ to ‘keep people uninformed’ to avoid conflict. As reports came in about people uprooting beacons, Sylvester explained, orders had come to ‘plant beacons strategically, so people couldn’t tell the boundaries’. The surveyors started to place only some beacons, essentially making the emerging survey lines unintelligible to the unruly observer. Sylvester suggested, in other words, that rendering visible the intentions of government made it vulnerable to obstruction. Thus, state practice and the resistance it engendered evolved in tandem, with the means of resistance altering the tactics of government. While his disclosure says a great deal about the strategies of government, people in Mulonga were already remarkably aware of this. It was not long before people were speculating about the locations of the beacons, which beacon was connected to the next, and whether they marked a road or allotment, and soon people also speculated that there were gaps in between beacons, reinforcing the imagination of the state as a

cunning agent trying to insert a new social order by surreptitious maneuvers. If anything, this only increased frustration and incited further resistance. Some, especially young men, went out in small groups during night to demolish beacons outlining the new road network. The shattered remains from these beacons were not buried but piled up at the roadside for open display in an act of mockery, redeployed as a communicative counterclaim.

What we see here is that the achievement of private property – however potent and persuasive it might be – remains crucially contingent upon the socio-material relations it becomes embedded within. As Ahlborg and Nightingale (2018: 390) note, objects work as ‘scripts’ which ‘regulate human behavior by encouraging, allowing or forbidding certain types of uses, with social, material and discursive consequences.’ Yet, the script ‘is rewritten as it is played out ... again and again in the ongoing encounters between humans and things’. In Mulonga, the inhabitants reappropriated the space organized by techniques of property production and enacted alternative futures through material practices on the land. Through forms of defiance and makeshift creativity, mimicry and acts of mockery, both villagers and bureaucrats relayed and ruptured the currents of power in ways that changed what was to be actualized on the ground. In this way, both state and citizen co-constituted each other’s existence and capacities through the material artefacts of property.

#### 7.3.4 Encountering Mr. Mulombe and the material imprints of stateness

The beaconing of Mulonga would continue to create new spaces of politics and rearrange the patterns of state-citizen interactions. Alongside the demolition of beacons, Peter continued his efforts to find Mr. Mulombe. His existence still was a subject of debate, but Peter eventually tracked him down to a house on the outskirts of Chibombo township. He assembled a small group of villagers that decided to pay him a visit. They came to his house at daybreak, and Mr. Mulombe answered the door in a robe, newly awakened. Peter stated the purpose of their visit, explaining that he had found beacons in his land, and he wanted them removed. Mr. Mulombe responded with antipathy: ‘What are you doing at my house? ... I will not tolerate you coming here’, Peter recounted him yelling. Then Mr. Mulombe closed the

door and went inside.<sup>16</sup> In my interpretation, Peter had, by entering into Mr. Mulombe's personal space, contested the social boundaries that uphold the distinction between the governed and those who do the governing. The blurring of these boundaries was something that Mr. Mulombe would not 'tolerate' (cf. Gupta 1995). The following day Mr. Mulombe would drive out to Mulonga and inscribe these boundaries in cement.

I couldn't uncover exactly how, but Mr. Mulombe had found out that beacons had been demolished. Rumors had it that the surveyors had discovered pieces of concrete in the bush, which they reported to the Ministry of Lands, which in turn notified Mr. Mulombe. Regardless of how, the destruction of stonework had reverberated through the bureaucracy, producing concern in the state administration, prompting Mr. Mulombe to take action. One of the villagers that he visited was Michael, who had demolished some twenty beacons on his land. Mr. Mulombe was, Michael explained, 'furious', and 'threatening to report' Michael to the police. 'I will not tolerate vandalism and theft', he had yelled, referring to the missing iron pins. When Michael protested, claiming that it was *his* land, Mr. Mulombe had rebutted: 'It doesn't matter, landmarks are sacred ... they are state property'. After this brief exchange of sentiment, Mr. Mulombe jumped into his jeep and drove away. What Mr. Mulombe did here was to imprint in the beacons a sacredness, or a quality of stateness, discursively entrenching their legal location in the private property regime. In this particular context, the beacons needed a discursive readjustment to perform the political work assigned to them. Or so Mr. Mulombe assumed, at least.

Yet again, the beacons emerged as a site of disciplinary politics. Remarkably, Mr. Mulombe had not opposed Michael's objection that it was 'his land'. This, according to Mr. Mulombe, 'didn't matter'. What did matter was rather that 'the state' has exclusive property *in beacons*, which then *enables* private property *in land*. Michael, Mr. Mulombe had asserted, was subordinated to this legalistic logic, and any resistance to this logic signaled violence upon the state, making him liable to punishment, irrespective of what land belonged to whom. In this way, Mr. Mulombe brought Michael into the fold of the legal apparatus of the state, simply by ascribing symbolic-legal meaning to boundary stones. And indeed, the beacons started to perform new political work. Michael was subdued and highly discomforted,

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<sup>16</sup> I was invited to come along, and I followed the group into Chibombo township but decided to wait by the local inn. They narrated the encounter upon their return.

foreseeing his eviction. He even instructed his son to unearth the iron pins that lay buried in his maize fields and return them to Mr. Mulombe. For others, however, the legal imprint exposed a susceptibility to further obstruction. Consequently, people kept uprooting beacons, assembling bricks, rethatching roofs and transplanting trees, strategically positioning themselves in the landscape. In this light, beacons emerge as elastic objects that can serve quite opposing ends.

The demarcation of Mulonga had simultaneously reproduced and blurred the boundaries between the state and its social surround (cf. Mitchell 1991; Gupta 1995). Peter's inability to get in contact with Mr. Mulombe had brought him to his house, and Michael's decision to uproot the beacons had summoned Mr. Mulombe to his farmstead. These emotive encounters – first with an angered and undressed man at his house, and later an infuriated man threatening to report Michael to the police – had profoundly disrupted the usual patterns of bureaucratic interaction and had transformed Mr. Mulombe from a distanced governor to an affective enactment of state rule.

Mr. Mulombe had avoided me since the pickup truck entered Mulonga. Eventually, however, I ran into him at the District Council. He briefly explained that it was the headman that had identified the land for demarcation, and that everyone whose land had been demarcated had given their consent and would receive appropriate compensation. He firmly denied that people had filed any complaints, effectively shutting down our discussion. Eventually we spoke in hypothetical terms:

Me:	What <i>would</i> happen if people removed beacons?
Mr. Mulombe:	Nothing would happen. We would put new ones. They just mark coordinates.

Mr. Mulombe said, in other words, that the property grid had survived the demolition of its material nodes. It's tempting to suggest that remote sensing had vested the state with remote control, 'unleashing a new geography of state power' (Meehan et al. 2013: 4). Yet, it is equally true that the beacons had enabled villagers to provoke state processes from home. Beacons, in this view, are ambiguous objects, producing both subjection to state power and the means to disable that power.

This material elasticity would have lasting effects. It took about three months before the earthmover arrived in Mulonga, clearing lanes in the bush, forming a network of roads so that new property owners could access their

plots by car. But it was not many days before the project came to a staggering halt. The funding from ‘Lands’ had run out, my informant told me. When I returned six months later, the bush had overgrown the roads, demolished beacons lay scattered across Mulonga, and Mr. Mulombe and the district secretary had been transferred (as per routine) to other districts. Their successors are still waiting for additional funds to cover the replacement of the uprooted beacons at the time of writing this. Indeed, private property is not made in government offices, but in the geography of the everyday, where property can become ‘otherwise’, or not at all.

## 7.4 Chapter conclusion

Private property is a major route of state power. Yet this chapter has suggested that private property is a precarious socio-material achievement, its ability to arrange, affect and dispossess crucially bound up in its material architecture: beacons, fences and survey lines. State power travels through these materialities, lending them abilities to perform important political work: to exclude, regulate and discipline. Yet their scripted effects are never certain; once exposed to a creative citizenry they become susceptible to alteration, alternative interpretation and enrolled in a new life of associations that has the potential to subvert, even revert, the conduits of state power. This conceptual move unveils the making of property as an open political moment, a performance, rather than adjudicated in advance.

These processes have been analyzed through a case study of property making in the village of Mulonga, into which a group of surveyors unexpectedly entered to demarcate the land – emplacing cement survey beacons marking the contours of a new private property regime. The villagers discovered these beacons implanted in fields and farmlands, sitting uncomfortably juxtaposed with the landmarks delineating their ‘customary’ rights. Through an ethnography of material encounters, I have shown how villagers reappropriated the land structured by property’s exclusionary logic, effectively reworking its outcome. Demolition of stonework, material mimicry and mockery were all practices that citizens deployed in attempts to subvert the conduits of state power and limit the possibilities for private property to fully materialize on the land. Practices of government were amended accordingly, with redeployments of new matter and perfunctory outbursts of stateness. Through these iterative moments we can better

understand how both state and citizens co-constitute each other's existence and capacities in a material field of politics. So, while property (and 'the state') is only as certain as its recognition, this chapter shows that property is only as robust as its material construction.

As a landscape written into state modernization efforts, Mulonga fits uneasily into grand narratives of state territorialization. State governance, this chapter suggests, is much more ambiguous in its effects and affects. Seemingly 'failed' attempts to govern are not necessarily associated with 'weak' institutional capacity, but rather bound up in how state power is routed and rerouted. Here, a performative/affective understanding of state and property reveals that there are always possibilities of 'things becoming otherwise' (Povinelli 2004); once they enter the world, they can be picked apart, buried, unearthed or 'outperformed'. An empirical shift away from how private property is legally legitimated (which was largely invisible to the inhabitants of Mulonga) and toward a more careful engagement with the materiality of property troubles tales of a passive rural peasantry subjected to sovereign law, revealing instead how an inventive and ingenious citizenry redeploys state materialities, and how an equally inventive and ingenious bureaucracy struggles to make them perform the political work assigned to them. Ethnographic attention to these moments shows that affect becomes inseparable from processes of state formation; property making incites anxiety and despair, but also embodied joys of material resistance, which shape what is actualized on the ground. These processes are foundational for understanding how reforms toward private property position people with variable capacities for action within shifting state-citizen relations. State and property remain entangled but, as Chinua Achebe has noted, sometimes 'things fall apart'.

## 8. Empirical Chapter IV: The Title Deed

Fickle abstractions: the material politics of land titling in Lenje Chieftdom

### 8.1 Introduction

While previous chapters hinted at the many ways that law's boundaries stretch and tear in projects of land's making, I now take this up specifically as the focus of my analysis. There is now a large literature probing the ways that bureaucratic practices – reading, writing, lettering, filing, producing and circulating documents – are constitutive of the state (e.g. Hull 2012; Mathur 2015; Hetherington 2011). What has attracted less attention, however, is how law is taken up and reworked once it escapes the domain of its authors, and consequently how the state becomes reconstituted at the 'limits' of the law. This chapter shows not only how property law is reworked, but also how the materiality of the land to which the law refers becomes the means through which this happens. Moreover, it shows that, contrary to Lockean ideals of land's abstraction from materiality, property law refuses reification of the real. My ambition is to 'mess up' the stringency that is often attributed to state law, revealing instead, in all its murkiness and ambiguity, property law's movement through and beyond the statutory administration, and how it opens up new terrains of struggle and inventive politics once it enters into social situations in particular places on chiefly terrain.

*Kangwa village, Chibombo District, August 2017*

'You see that land there, that was on paper before', headman Kangwa said. 'What do you mean *before*', I asked, considering that there is no provision in the law to 'undo' privatization of customary land. 'Yes, before there was

paper, but we decided to take it away’, he replied. At the time of this conversation, we were looking at a stretch of land located on the outskirts of the village, five hectares, I was told. As we approached, a tomato orchard and a sparsely planted field of maize came into view. ‘So, the land is not private property anymore?’, I asked. ‘Exactly’, Kangwa exclaimed, ‘the person who was there before was not using the land. We took the paper away so many people can use land’. What headman Kanga referred to as ‘took the paper away’ had involved an organized occupation; that is, he had sent a group of young men onto the disputed land with orders to remove all boundary stones and to plant crops and build shelters. He continued: ‘If that person returns, what can he say? The land is already planted, so how could he also plant? ... We allowed that person to go to the government to put the land on paper, and now we don’t allow [it] anymore.’

## 8.2 Land titling in Zambia

Ever since Zambia was proclaimed a protectorate of the United Kingdom, the marginal position of the peasant population has been maintained, and not only through the violence of coercive movement, but also through exclusion from legal privileges, especially the recognition of their landholdings through land titles, or what most farmers simply refer to as ‘paper’. As laid out in the previous chapters, this has created two different sets of property law, which bring with them different political assumptions and ways of relating to the land. On chiefly territory, property is governed by the idea that rights are a progressive result of human labor and habitation, with security of tenure emerging through the spatial integration of practices and resources. On State Land, property rights emerge as an effect of legal recognition according to an abstract code. Of course, different forms of written contracts and legal agreements shape use and access on customary lands as well, ranging from notes jotted down on pages torn from spiral notebooks to more detailed accords transcribed onto documents using a typewriter. Yet the title deed, emblazoned with the official seal of the Republic of Zambia as a symbol of state recognition and enforcement of rights, separates State Land and customary land into two different legal spheres.

With the passing of the Land’s Act of 1995, however, the frontiers of chiefly territory and State Land met up; this is because the Act provides legal



means for the conversion of the former (customary land) into the latter (State Land), with the principle clause in the Act allowing for individual tenants holding customary rights in land to convert their landholdings into private property (State Land). Put somewhat differently, the Act provides for individual landholders to become political agents in a land law reform aimed at incorporating land and land users into the modern body politic (Malambo 2013; Ng'ombe et al. 2014; Sitko et al. 2014). In effect, such conversions create pockets of titled land within areas otherwise governed by chiefly authority and on which the Ministry of Lands will now be in a position to adjudicate ownership rights over land in an enduring relationship (legally recognized as state leaseholds with automatic renewal every 99 years). Machina and Sorensen (2011: 255) have concluded that ever since the Act was passed in Parliament, 'customary land can be said to be treated as a "pool" from which people access land for conversion to leasehold, with tenure rights of customary landholders being inferior to the tenure rights of leaseholders' (see also Brown 2005; Sitko and Jane 2014). But these narratives obscure the ways that titled land is entangled in social, political and material relations within which it becomes embedded. Indeed, the distinction between untitled and titled land, and the conversion of the former into the latter, is charged with contingency and uncertainty, producing amalgams of property and political authority that defy such categorizations.

As land targeted for conversion is transferred from the domain of chiefly authority to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Lands, the applicant first needs the consent of both the headman and the chief, after which the application is forwarded to the District Council, Provincial Government and the Ministry of Lands, in that order (Brown 2005). The conversion process thus entwines different instances of authority, each with its own situated logic, and while the procedures of conversion are carefully codified in law, my research points to how the process is collapsed into myriad personal, political and material relations that create a complex landscape of legal ambiguity on which chiefly power and authority repeatedly trouble bureaucratic attempts to make land law reform work. The title deed is, in short, a powerful 'boundary negotiation artifact' (Lee 2005) that attracts the attention of a plurality of political actors asserting rights in land and authority to govern by acting on and through the title deed.

This chapter offers an anthropological foray into the politics of land titling, tracking the title deed as it wends its way between different sites on

the material and institutional landscape of Lenje Chiefdom and beyond. In the first part of the chapter, I explore the politics of *gaining* a title deed by tracing out how the application for title (and the applicant) travel through headmen's homesteads, the chief's court, district councils and the Ministry of Lands. At each of these sites, I will show how the application escapes its formalized scripts and becomes a site of negotiation and struggle, thereby opening up new spaces for contestation of the very rights that the title deed is meant to define. Subsequently, I explore the politics of *maintaining* a title deed. Once the title deed is finally issued and 'lands' in a particular place within an area that is otherwise controlled by chiefly authority, it becomes subject to new forms of evaluation; here, the title deed is conditional rather than absolute, and in contravention of the tenets of statutory law, it gets tangled up with alternative articulations of rights that, in turn, allow headman to reappropriate this titled land and reincorporate it into the chiefdom. Lastly, I will dwell on the materiality of title deed itself, and in particular on how its paper-y existence opens new arenas for the contestation of the very rights defined in the title deed.

My analysis contributes to grounded readings of state making through land titling, capturing the interplay between abstract rights and the materiality of land and paper and the plurality of political authorities that compete over the right to govern. It reveals, through all its twists and turns, law's movement through and beyond the bureaucratic field, and how its artifacts open up new terrains of struggle and inventive politics. Rather than contributing to some linear change toward land as commodity, I will show that land titling multiplies the arenas through which different authorities can claim rights to govern – despite, beyond and as an effect of government efforts to 'fix' land rights onto 'paper'.

## 8.3 The politics of gaining a title deed

### 8.3.1 The headmen and the chief

Throughout my fieldwork in Lenje Chiefdom, people have referred to the title deed as a symbol of ownership reserved for the elite. It represents wealth and status. For that reason, when I first started interviewing farmers, finding people who had experience with land titling posed a significant challenge. I often heard stories of people who held title, and I paid a visit to almost all of

them. But these stories mostly turned out to be false – I simply had been directed to the most majestic homestead in a particular area on the assumption that grand housing signaled private ownership. I soon learned that most farmers were unaware of the possibility of conversion, and even fewer had the resources required to engage in the process of conversion or the ability to master the conventions of bureaucratic documentation that it required: with each step of the process there are payments to be made and administrative hurdles to overcome.

Over the course of my fieldwork, however, I did manage to interview about twenty farmers across the chiefdom who had attempted to acquire a title deed through conversion (see Appendix 2). Many of their attempts were blocked by a headman or Chief Liteta IV. In Lenje Chiefdom, this can happen either by the headman's own ruling or at the chief's court. An applicant for conversion must first approach his or her headman, who, in turn, makes a decision about whether to call on the chief's land allocation committee, which is assigned to inspect the land in question and talk to neighboring tenants to ensure that there are no contending claims. Depending on the committee's verdict, the case is then dismissed or approved for referral to the chief's court. At the court, a hearing awaits. For the applicant, the objective of the hearing is to attain Chief Liteta IV's signature on what is known as 'Form A' (which the applicant must purchase at the District Council). It is when Form A is signed that the case enters into statutory administration.

Jack, a man I befriended in Kaonde village in Chibombo district, once approached his headman to ask for permission to acquire title through conversion. After a few days, the headman came to Jack's house, telling him that 'if you bring me five head of cattle, I can bring the committee here.' This is not an uncommon story. Mulubwa, in Kapema village, told me that his headman asked for half of Mulubwa's harvest in return for his approval. In many ways, Jack's and Mulubwa's stories mirror previous research that describes how gifts, bribes and other inducements often determine chiefly approval of land conversion, skewing the process toward the rural elite (Brown 2005; Christensen 2011; Sitko and Jane 2014). Still, my fieldwork presented me with a puzzle: many farmers *did* get approval from their headman, despite not offering something in return; and at times, conversions were even *initiated* by headmen. Why was that?

I first started to understand the politics of chiefly approval when I visited Mooya village. The headman, Boyd, took me on a walk across the

village, and while struggling to keep up with his busy stride, he pointed to different homesteads and announced his ruling: ‘This one there, maybe he could get paper ... You see this one, impossible ... That one on the other side there, maybe’. Somewhat confounded, I asked Boyd how he reached his decisions. ‘Easy’, he said, ‘look at the roofs’. The quality of people’s roofs – whether they were thatched or tiled, tarnished or not – headman Boyd reasoned, indicated the amount of labor the tenants had invested in their farmstead. He explained: villagers who invest in their farmsteads demonstrate a ‘moral character’ and a ‘will’ to work for the ‘betterment’ of the village, which he can then ‘award’ with an approval to initiate the process of conversion. Chief Liteta IV echoed Boyd’s explanation: ‘I tell my headmen, if a person wants title, that person should show a will to develop the village, otherwise don’t bother to come [to the chief’s court]’. According to Chief Liteta IV, quality roofing is but one of many such symbols of a ‘will to develop’: size of harvest, number of cattle and garden yield are all products of the application of labor and investment. In the village next to Boyd’s, there is one house connected to the electric grid. The tenant, Curtis, managed, through personal contacts at Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO), to connect his farmstead to the grid, which, Curtis’s headman explained to me, benefitted the village at large, with people being able to charge their cellphones and the like at his house. As a result, the chief awarded Curtis with a signature on Form A. According to Curtis, he did not pay either his headman nor Chief Liteta IV: ‘No, no, it was like a gift of appreciation’, Curtis said. Thus, while wealth often corresponds with chiefly approval, it is not what determines it.

Yet Chief Liteta IV finds himself in a precarious position. He is continuously pushed by district officers to ‘release more land for conversion’, as he put it to me. At the same time, he is wary of the fact that his authority is bound up in the land, and that his continued ability to regulate access to and use of the land are qualifications for the legitimacy of the chieftom as a political body (see Lund 2002 on the relation between property and authority). Chief Liteta IV’s solution to this conundrum is incisive. What is allowed to be put on title, according the Chief Liteta IV, is not the land itself, but the human intervention on the land: clearings, structures, wells and gardens etc. For Chief Liteta IV, thus, a conversion is not regarded as someone transferring from one legal community to another, or ‘entering into’ the legal space of the state: ‘The land stays where it is; it cannot be moved,

you see', he mused in one of our conversations. Yet he acknowledged that the tenant might shift his or her loyalties once the land is converted. In many ways, this is exactly what Chief Liteta IV and his headmen are trying to regulate by evaluating whether a tenant displays what headman Boyd called 'moral character'.

The hearing at the chief's court performs an important function in this regard. A court hearing entails the assembly of agents of the chiefdom on the appointed date and time, in the right place, in appropriate dress and in possession of the correct documents. Central to this performance of officialdom is applicant's demonstration of awareness and respect for the chiefdom, including courtly conduct, proper speech and gesture and appropriate address of the members of the court, such as addressing Chief Liteta IV as His Royal Highness. After passing this initial test, the applicant is asked to account for his or her 'accomplishments' and 'contributions' to the chiefdom, which often revolve around what the applicant has *not* done: 'I have not stolen', 'I have not trespassed' etc. In short, the hearing at the chief's court is part of evaluating the loyalty and moral character of the applicant, and only those who are believed to be devoted to the betterment of their village and chiefdom at large receive a signature on Form A.

More often than not, a signature on Form A corresponds to social and economic status. Indeed, whether someone has attained a signature on Form A often correlates with the conditions of the house in which he or she lives, but not always. There are many cases of wealthier villagers being denied conversion at the chief's court, simply because Chief Liteta IV and his council believe that the tenant has not demonstrated any interest in the 'development' of the village and chiefdom. One of Chief Liteta IV's advisors explained: 'You cannot just show up with money and think you can buy [a signature on Form A] ... Sometimes money is good, it can be used for development, but sometimes it is bad if the person is greedy ... Greedy people should not get title because they see only to themselves.' Thus the line between rich and poor is interlaced with other mechanisms that determine chiefly approval, as reflected in cases of capital-poor farmers being granted the chief's approval. One example is Rosa, in Mooya village, who tutors children whose parents cannot afford to pay for their school fees. Rosa never approached her headman to ask for an approval of conversion. Instead, she was summoned to the chief's court where she was told that a conversion had already been approved by the chief. The next

day, she paid a visit to the District Council to purchase Form A, which the chief signed the following week. ‘See, stamped and everything’, she said, showing me the form.

Rosa has no plans to continue with the conversion process, however: ‘How could I afford [to]? No, I cannot, but this [Form A] is also good ... if someone comes, I can show this because the chief has signed’, she said. Rosa here pointed to how Form A is also a form of ‘paper’, and a quite peculiar one. It is issued by a statutory institution and comes bundled with a quality of stateness, yet it is appropriated by Chief Liteta IV who certainly knows that the signing of these forms rarely materializes in a title deed (see below). In many ways, Form A has a political life of its own: it both reinforces a sense of entitlement on the ground and endows Chief Liteta IV with land-regulating powers, somewhat ironically facilitated by a statutory law aimed at gradually replacing the land-governing authority of chiefs. Indeed, as Lund (2008: 155) writes, ‘laws, regulations and policies do not determine access and use of resources as such, but erect a structure of opportunities for the negotiation of these rights.’ The negotiations around form A take place in an space both inside and outside state law: inside because the form is issued by a statutory institution, allowing people to claim rights with reference to state law, and outside because the form is not recognized as a certification of rights outside chiefly territory. Nevertheless, Form A vests chiefly property rights with a state-like quality (cf. Emmenegger 2020), even if the application of conversation never materializes in a title deed.

Land titling has opened up new political arenas for the negotiation of rights and authority. At the very outset of the conversion process, the title deed is remolded to function as a product of good morals and the application of labor, troubling the distinction between rights reified into abstract contracts and rights as extending from people’s bodies onto the land. Form A sits in between these conceptions, allowing Chief Liteta IV and his headmen to retain control over land and land use. Indeed, Chief Liteta IV and his headmen have appropriated state law and redeployed it in the maintenance of their authority. Thus, while officers at the Ministry of Lands continue to argue that for Zambia to become fully modern it must create institutions that supersede the material and allow for governance to be conducted on the level of nationally recognized representations of ownership rights, on the ground other ways of relating to land and property continue to trouble the processes that are supposed to serve that end.

### 8.3.2 The statutory administration

Chiefly approval is only the first stage in a long and winding conversion process. Once a signature has been obtained from Chief Liteta IV on Form A, the applicant must hire a team of licensed surveyors to draw up a site plan for the lot (a significant cost, for most), rendering the land a cartographic artefact legible also to a remote observer in ways that open up for action and evaluation at a distance (see Blomley 2003; Li 2004). More specifically, the land is brought into the ambit of the District Council which, after receiving the site plan along with Form A, calls the applicant in front of the District Land Planning Committee (DLPC). Once there, the applicant is asked describe the ‘purpose’ of the conversion and lay out his or her ‘development plan’ for the land in question, as a DLPC member of Chibombo District described to me. Here, we also find an element of evaluation of the applicant’s intentions, in effect hindering people from claiming title to land without doing much with it, which often implies some form of commercialization.

At this particular point in the life span of the application, new actors and interests assemble. I shall illustrate this with the story of Mr. Kalaka, an ex-officer at the Chibombo District Council who now works as a ‘private advisor’ to applicants of conversion throughout the chiefdom. Mr. Kalaka installs small business ventures on the applicants’ land – bird traps, brick-burning furnaces, milk plants, woodworking stations and the like – so that the site plan will feature some kind of enterprise, in turn increasing the likelihood that the DLPC will find that there is sufficient reason for the land to be put on title. He makes the land ‘ready for conversion’, as he put it to me. Yet Mr. Kalaka’s involvement does not stop there; he effectively writes himself into the land of those whose names are on the application, regardless of its success. This is done in the form of a separate contract, written so as to make Mr. Kalaka the owner of whatever business venture he sets up — and sometimes the venture becomes profitable, which usually earns the support of the village headman. In Ngala village, for example, he owns a milk plant that sits on a piece of land that used to belong to a man named Edgar, whose application was denied because the size of the lot was too small to merit conversion, according the DLPC. The headman in Ngala applauds the initiative: ‘People come from many villages to leave milk. It is development, everyone wants development’, he said. Mr. Kalaka’s ‘advising’, however, is not uncontroversial. Headman Boyd, who is

familiar with Mr. Kalaka, would never let him into Mooya village because he believes Mr. Kalaka ‘goes around like he is government and tricks people for land.’

Indeed, Mr Kalaka occupies an ambiguous position. He is a private business man, yet as an ex-officer he also maintains some of the trappings of state-like officialdom. Before we were formally introduced, I had encountered him several times. He is often found in or around different District Councils in Lenje Chiefdom, where he maintains a network of business relations. He mingles with visitors, directs people to the right office, delivers messages from those who populate waiting rooms to those who sit behind closed doors – all while distributing his business card, on which he figures under the title of ‘government professional’. While the example of Mr. Kalaka is somewhat anecdotal, it nevertheless points to how the processes of conversion open up local lands to new actors and interests situated in the betweenness of private and public, formal and informal, legal and illegal, state and non-state. Land titling *reproduces* the shadows of the state, a space wherein actors like Mr. Kalaka thrive. As Sud (2019: 17) writes: land ‘spills over, past the formal authority of the state, not as an aberration but because the spilled-over state and spilled-over land co-produce each other’. The title deed, as it wends its way through various institutional sites, reproduces contestation of chiefly land across myriad sites, rather than simply abstracting land from chiefly territory.

Out of the twenty applicants for conversion in Lenje Chiefdom that I interviewed, three passed the hearing in front of the DLPC. For those whose application is approved here, another survey awaits. This time, the District Council sends out its own field officer to the land in question to confirm that the headman and his council have indeed been consulted and to corroborate that ‘other persons’ interests have not been affected by the approval of the application’, as stated in the Lands Act (Cap. 184, Section 4). These findings are then presented to a ‘full council’, a joint meeting with all councilors present, which then approves or rejects the application. If approved, the district secretary refers the case to the Provincial Government in Kabwe, where the provincial land officer reviews the file for errors, with the most common error being that the site plan is not up to standard, which often is a result of it having been drawn up by surveyors lacking a license issued by the Department of Surveys (in such an event, the case is referred back to the District Council where the process starts



over). The provincial land officer then dispatches the file to the Ministry of Lands in Lusaka, an institution to which only the astute and assiduous applicants get their cases forwarded.

One of my informants once told me that ‘going through the headman, chief and council is easy, in one month you can be done, but when it comes to the Ministry of Lands, ay ay ay, you have to push, push, push, otherwise your file is just left sitting in some corner’. While greatly overstating the ease with which one can pass through the more local institutions, he pointed to the commonly known fact that once the application enters into the ambit of the Ministry of Lands, the pace by which paperwork moves slows down considerably. Mr. Mulenga, a farmer that I befriended in Chama village, has had his application sitting at the Ministry of Lands for twenty-two months, and over the past year he has traveled to the Ministry nine times: to sign a document, to provide a receipt for payment made and in efforts to convince an officer to give priority to his application. Mr. Mulenga explained:

You go into the office and you have to tell the person sitting there ‘I know my document has been sitting here for ten months and it’s too long’, and you stand there until he finds them, and look at him when he processes. Here I made a mistake the first time: I left the office without seeing him moving it to the next [office]. So I had to come back and take the document from his office and carry it personally to the next. It’s a joke.

Thus, one needs to know the precise location of the case file, exactly what office to go to in order to push one’s paper-work through, and then be able to master the conventions of bureaucratic engagement so as to not be thrown out by the police stationed on each floor of the Ministry. On two occasions I witnessed visitors agitated to such a degree that police officers had to drag them out of offices. One of those persons told me that his file had been ‘misplaced’. At that time, he had spent what he usually earns in three months on different fees, surveys and travels to the Ministry. When I talked to him, he was on the verge of bursting into tears, telling me how his application had ‘gone missing’ and that no one seemed the least bit interested in trying to find it. How frequently files ‘go missing’ is a question that most officers that I interviewed shy away from. Once during an interview at the Ministry, an office clerk rushed in, telling her senior colleague that a client had requested to increase the acreage and attach a new site plan to his application for title

– the only problem was that the file had gone missing from her cabinet. The senior officer nervously looked in my direction and then hushed the clerk to silence. It was apparent that missing files were not something that I was meant to hear about.

‘After a while, you just give up’, someone told me outside the Ministry one day. ‘Imagine if you come from Kasama and arrive at this place, you can do nothing’, he said. The reference to Kasama was meant to depict a person coming from rural Zambia into the buzzing life of the capital’s Ministry, not knowing how to even start interacting with officers inside. For some, titling is even a test of manhood: ‘You just have to push until people get tired of you. If anything is so tedious that people just give up, it’s titling. But those that actually go through with it, we call them men’ (not surprisingly, said by a man who had recently acquired his title).

The Ministry itself is a place vibrant with life. People from across the country mingle in the waiting rooms, hallways, corridors and in the parking lot outside, where people sit in the shadows cast by large four-wheel drives – all seeking a channel into the machinations of the Ministry. Mr. Mulenga from Lenje Chieftdom usually counts on staying at the Ministry for three days every time he visits: ‘The first day I come in the afternoon so everyone is already very busy ... The second day I go in [to the Ministry] early in the morning to knock on as many doors as possible, and when I have found the right office, I tell the people inside to put my papers on the top ... The third day I go back into that office to make sure that my file is not there [i.e. that the file has been processed].’ Mr. Mulenga, like many others, sleeps on a mattress outside the compound gates at night, in order to be first into the Ministry in the morning.

What I want to draw attention to here, however, is not so much these spectacles of stateness in and of themselves, but how such spectacles create a space for creative politics, and how the pervasive uncertainty around the Ministry opens up space for negotiations of the rights defined in the title deed. For the Ministry, like the District Council, is a place where the boundaries between official and unofficial, public and private, and state and non-state blur. At the Ministry, the myriad encounters that take place are not only between ‘state’ and ‘citizen’, but also among a whole range of ‘go-betweens’. These men (it is always men) sit in makeshift cubicles outside the official compound, with signs that say things like ‘Land titling service’ or ‘We know where your file is’. For a fee, these men locate

missing files, carry paperwork to officers inside, or shuttle files and information from the inside to those waiting outside. Sometimes an applicant for conversion will never see the officials who sit inside government offices; all their interactions with the 'state' happen in through these 'go-betweens' who act as 'essential lubricants' (Berenschot 2011), bridging the distance between the state and the public. Yet they are not 'outside' the state. People call them 'sirs' or 'officers', terms of deference, and in many ways these outsider-insiders who work in the 'shadows' of the state *are* the state (see Sud 2019; cf. Das and Poole 2004; Harris-White 2003). In many cases, it is by the hand of these go-between 'officers' that land entering into the realm of the Ministry of Lands comes out as registered property on the other side; they become part of a 'stretched-out state' (Sud 2019: 18), making state governance work in the everyday.

At the same time, these go-betweens engage in more than mere mediation. A clear example is given by an applicant for conversion from Chafung in eastern Zambia, who brokered a deal with a go-between 'officer' from the same area. In exchange for locating and pushing forward his file, a separate contract was written that allowed the son of the go-between to dig for gravel on the land to which the title referred (the son of the broker ran a gravel trade in Chafung, and he got access to the lands he needed for his venture through his father's talent for pushing paperwork through the Ministry of Lands). As such, the permeable boundaries of state institutions contribute to the shaping of property relations on the ground, making the rights defined in the title deed a site of negotiation also outside the ambit of statutory land law.

The process of land conversion dislodges land from its localized existence, making it subject to new actors and interests. At both the District Council and the Ministry of Lands, the title deed becomes a site of contingency, opportunity and control, drawing different authorities, resources and interests into relations with each other. Far from establishing a more uniform property regime across the nation-space, land titling creates spaces for the renegotiation of rights across scales – despite and beyond its codification in law. State making and land titling are, in this analysis, linked not so much in the sense of creating a popular recognition of state institutions as land regulating authorities (Lund 2002), but more in the sense of land titling creating ambiguous places like the Ministry of Lands where the land

regulating authority of the state is questioned, ridiculed, challenged and taken over by quasi-state and quasi-legal actors.

Still, many seek 'papers' for the land they farm, for approaching a money-lender, and for protection against capricious appropriation by chiefs, headmen or government institutions, which explains the continuous struggles that take place around the Ministry. Yet, contrary to what one might assume, contestations over what the title deed is and what forms of rights it defines continue even after the title deed has been issued. In the following section I discuss how the title deed – once it has been issued – travels back into Lenje Chiefdom, where it becomes re-embedded within the social and material relations of chiefly territory.

#### 8.4 The politics of maintaining a title deed

In Zambia, gaining a title deed is one thing, but maintaining it is quite another. All title deeds are signed personally by the Commissioner of Lands, appointed by the Minister of Lands, symbolically signaling that the land is bestowed upon the title holder by the absolute authority of the state. Yet there is a clause hidden away in the fine print, stating that if the title holder fails to put the land to productive use within thirty months of its issuance, the title is annulled. While I have never heard of a case where this statute has been enforced, it nevertheless signals a peculiar fact: in the subtext of the title deed we find the same logic that underpins customary rights, namely, that people's rights in land remain contingent upon productive use and the application of labor. According to the officers I spoke to, this is to serve as an impediment to land speculation, yet they all submit that there are no resources to control land use once the title deed has been issued. 'It's just a symbol like that, if we would go and chase those people who sit on title but [are] not developing the land, that would be all we did', a senior officer told me. What these officers don't know, however, is that such resources do exist, and they are actively deployed by chiefs and headmen.

According to Chief Liteta IV, as set out above, what is legally put on title is not the land itself, but human intervention on the land: clearings, structures, wells, gardens and the like. Chief Liteta IV and his headmen, thus, retain the right to also adjust usufruct rights on titled land. How idle land can be used for grazing by other villagers, what trees can be harvested by what person, what livestock can pass through where and when – these

are questions not settled by the title deed itself, but ones that continue to be subject to negotiations among neighboring villagers. The transfer, selling or leasing of a titled plot located within a village can also sometimes become a matter of negotiation between the title holder, the headman and his council. For Chief Liteta IV, the title deed is a *privilege* that *the chiefdom* can bestow upon people, not a right accorded by government.<sup>17</sup>

Yet the headmen and Chief Liteta IV all tell of contestations emerging when a title holder opposes collective meddling. Still, because the title holder remains embedded in the spatial and social fabric of the chiefdom, and the fact that it was Chief Liteta IV who originally signed off on the conversion, the title holder often faces different kinds of ostracism if not conforming to village politics. In rare cases the title holder is forced out altogether, or ‘chased’ in the Zambian vernacular, through occupation or squatting on his or her estate. This is most common in cases where someone has converted a stretch of land, but then leaves the land idle for future speculation, letting tilled fields grow over, wells fill in and huts fall apart, which then become signs of ‘false use’, as Chief Liteta IV put it. Occupation or squatting often occurs through a group of men, who move into a disputed plot and begin to build shelters, plant crops, erect a fence or replace the roof on the main building, all to signal ‘better use’ than the person whose name is on the title.<sup>18</sup> Often, the cement survey beacons that mark the perimeters of the titled plot are also removed (see Chapter 7).

Chiefly occupation is a form of strategic illegality, one that *emplaces* claims to property on the land. Following Roy (2017: A4), I use ‘emplacement’ here purposely, drawing together two meanings associated with the term: ‘the process or state of setting something in place’ and ‘a platform or defended position where a gun is placed for firing’. My point, thus, is that the specifically placed and relational nature of occupation as emplacement has the potential to unsettle the dissociative nature of private property, and it can be read as a chiefly critique of the abstraction of rights from their material base (cf. Roy 2017). Headman Kangwa of Kanga village, who features in the introduction to this chapter, explained such an occupation

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<sup>17</sup> Chiefly politics can differ a great deal between chiefdoms. Thus, other chiefs in other chiefdoms may very well have entirely different views on land titling.

<sup>18</sup> People with personal contacts within the state administration can sometimes bypass the chief and acquire a title directly from the Ministry of Lands (see Brown 2005: 102). According to Chief Liteta IV, however, such lands are more often than not reappropriated through occupations orchestrated by his headmen.

as a practice of ‘returning the land’ to the chiefdom. According to Kangwa, there is little a title holder can do once the land has been re-occupied: ‘If that person returns, what can he say? The land is already planted so how could he plant also? ... We allowed that person to go to the government to put the land on paper, and now we don’t allow [it] anymore.’

### **Text box 3: Chief’s land certification**

As I write this, Chief Liteta IV is in the process of crafting his own ‘land certificates’, which are to work as substitutes for the title deed. The development of chiefly certification is still in its infancy, but Chief Liteta IV showed me a rough prototype. It featured a textual description of landmarks marking out an estate, detailing what resources within its boundaries are subject to someone else’s use. It bore the official seal of the chiefdom as well as Chief Liteta IV’s signature. According to Chief Liteta IV, each headman (together with the village council) would be responsible for distributing such certificates within their respective jurisdictional fold, in exchange for a ‘minor administrative fee’. While land acquired through chiefly certification is not subject to cadastral registration, it clearly resembles state-like forms of titling. Yet there are discussions within the chief’s council of hiring surveyors to do GPS mapping, making the certificate ‘more official’, as one of the councilors avowed.

Officials at the Ministry of Lands are aware of that chiefs across the country are exploring various ways of doing land certification. I encountered officials who are writing off chiefly land certification as short-lived peculiarities of a dying system of chiefly control as well as officials who take land certification as a serious concern for state governance, and especially so if the certification includes some form of cadastral mapping by licensed surveyors. ‘We don’t want people coming here with documents like that’, as one officer said, ‘in the end, all land belongs to the president, and we [the Ministry of Lands] administer the land on behalf of the president. Only we can certify ... Those documents [chief’s certificates] are only trouble’. The officer displayed what Gregory (1994) has called ‘cartographic anxiety’: chiefly production and allocation of cadastral sites would ground rights that chiefs have no legal authority to grant. Any official grid of intelligibility that proceeds from outside the Ministry of Lands, the officer reasoned, would unsettle the authority of the state.

At the time of writing this, chiefly certification had not yet been launched in Lenje Chiefdom. Here, however, my point is simply to draw attention to the myriad ways stately and chiefly practices intermingle and permeate each other, and how their intertwinement continues to create new spaces of struggle and authority.

During my fieldwork in Lenje Chiefdom, I was unable to identify any title holder who had been ‘chased’. But Curtis, who connected his house to the electric grid, told me a story about his uncle loosing access to a stretch of

titled land through occupation. The land had lain fallow for some years while he was working in the mines in the north, and when he returned, he found that someone had built a house and planted maize on the lot. In an attempt to reclaim the land, he summoned Chief Liteta IV and the field officer from Chibombo District Council to the estate, but both agreed that if those occupying the land had planted the maize and built a house, his title deed held little traction. Thus when the title is disputed, other signs of property (a fence, a house, a field of maize) can stand in for it, or even override it. The curious fact in Curtis's story is that this seems to apply for agents of both state and chiefdom. In my interviews with state officials, opinions were split on this point. Some submit that the title deed is unconditional; others are far more ambiguous in their attitude, especially at the district level. As an officer at Chisamaba District Council explained:

If someone enters into titled land without the permission of the owner, that's a crime, its squatting, but let's say the owner goes away [and] other people start building and planting and whatnot, why did he get a title in the first place? Can he just call on the police and evict those people? No, you need to evaluate case by case and see what's right.

Thus, while the title deed might be the epitome of a durable claim, it is only as potent as the person working the land to which it refers, and even if bestowed upon people by the president of the republic, as stated in the title deed, it does not hang on the ruling of judges and lawyers in faraway offices, but on the materiality of chiefly lands and the social relations they harbor.

## 8.5 Materiality of paper

An investment of labor is not the only factor determining the durability of the title deed. During my research, I was repeatedly told that the rights defined in the title deed, in and of themselves, meant little, for the paper that those rights were inscribed on could easily be lost or taken away. I interviewed two farmers, for example, who had once held titles but had lost the physical evidence of them, either in fires or break-ins, which they considered the equivalent of losing the titles altogether (cf. Hetherington 2009). One of those is Mr. Kilaka, who lost a title that he had inherited from his late father in a fire in 2014. He told me that he might still hold rights in the form of private property, but he was so uncertain about this

that he didn't even want to ask anyone 'official' for confirmation, for fear that he would be legally reprimanded by the government for failing to protect his title deed from fire. Indeed, getting one's hands on a duplicate is cumbersome. In cases where the title holder loses the physical evidence of the title, he or she must make a written application to the Registrar of Land in Lusaka, including with it a 'detailed account of the circumstances under which the certificate of title was lost or destroyed' and 'corroborative evidence that a diligent search was done without success'. The applicant must also publish a 'notice of intention' to apply for a new copy of the title deed in a newspaper (Lubumbe 2017: 70). When issued, the new title deed will then bear the mark of 'duplicate' on it.

It is not accidental, then, that title deeds are not only achieved with pride but are also maintained with great care. They remain locked away in chests and cabinets, and most people are hesitant to display their title deed openly, not wanting to expose it to the uncertainties of the world outside. John, a title holder who lives an hour's walk from Chibombo township told me that the first thing he did when he got notice that his title had been issued was to replace the roof of his house, from thatch, which burns easily, to iron sheets, which are more resistant to both rain and fire. As he stated matter-of-factly: 'What if there's a fire? Then I lose both my house and the title'. Indeed, title deeds are preserved and protected in the same way as the roof of the house in which it is stored: both are important elements in the production of private property. Thus, to dismiss paper as mere bits of official matter, or its capacity to create 'paper truths' (Tarlo 2000), would be to omit the political work done by paper. In particular, a more careful exploration of 'paper' reverses the tenets of hegemonic conventions in land management. For officers at the Ministry of Lands, the title is an abstract representation that makes private property possible. It is the beginning of private property, and anything less is a feeble form of ownership. For the rural farmer in Lenje Chiefdom, titles are a fragile end point of property, held together by material and social processes that require continuous maintenance.

That the title transfigures to become conditional upon materiality of land and paper creates possibilities for chiefly contestation of the rights defined in the title deed (as shown in the previous section) *and also* new spaces for exclusion of the rural poor. Indeed, poverty here does double duty: it is both what keeps most people from gaining a title, but also what impedes people



from maintaining it. For just as rights in land require investment and an application of labor, so too does the maintenance of physical paper, such as the construction of an iron-sheet roof to make the house less vulnerable to rain and fire.

That the title deed retains elements of being an effect of land use – tilling a field, digging a well, building a house and keeping its roof in good repair – shows just how transitory the notion of private property remains in Lenje Chiefdom. Indeed, land titling does not ‘fix’ certain conceptions of land and property, but intertwines with chiefly authority to create an ambiguous legal space where a plurality of actors and interests coincide. As it wends its way through the chief’s court, District Council, the Ministry of Lands and finally ‘lands’ in a particular place, the title deed continuously creates new terrains of struggle, political opportunities, exclusions and enactment of chiefly and stately authority – with state-chiefdom boundaries being vividly open to the play of contingent politics: good morals, state-like ‘officers’, go-betweens, chiefly occupation and the materiality of things.

## 8.6 Chapter conclusion

In the mid-1990s, at the time of Zambian liberalization, the government avowed its ‘will to improve’ (Li 2007) by pledging to ‘institutionalize a modern ... land law code intended to ensure the fundamental right to private ownership of land’ (cited in Roth et al. 1995: 33) Bureaucrats, land officers and development professionals asserted that for Zambia to become fully modern, it must create institutions that supersede the material and provide for governance to be conducted at the level of nationally recognized representations of ownership rights. Only by improving documentation, it was argued, can Zambian agriculture really flourish. The concomitant opening of the property frontier in 1995 had as its goal the founding of a new modern nation, to be built slowly by providing for farmers to convert their landholdings into titled property. This was a system, they believed, by which people would work their way into the land market and national body politic. Yet despite government attempts to institutionalize land and its use, both ‘nature’ and human institutions continue to trouble the will to govern and improve.

This chapter has situated an anthropological critique of land titling, showing how the bureaucratic practices that go into composing the title deed are charged with contingency and uncertainty. The title deed is not made mechanically despite the oft-repeated machine of the state apparatus, and rather than contributing to some linear change toward land as commodity, the title deed weaves its way through multiple institutions, and at each site takes on new meanings and associations. Exploring state-chiefdom boundaries through the politics of land titling reveals myriad sites where the negotiation of rights and legitimate authority takes place.

In the first instance, the application for title is reworked into an instrument of chiefly control. By rendering chiefly approval a product of ‘good morals’, the application is reappropriated and redeployed in the maintenance of the chieftom as a political body. When the application travels into the statutory administration, it becomes a mechanism by which state-like ‘officers’ write themselves into the land of others, and, once issued, the title deed refuses to disassociate itself from its paper-y existence and the materiality of land. On the ground, the title deed becomes conditional rather than absolute, and in contravention of formalized scripts, becomes entangled with the materiality of things and alternative articulations of rights, which in turn allow headman to reappropriate and reincorporate titled land into the chieftom.

While this chapter necessarily presented localized glimpses of highly diverse processes, these glimpses reveal the multiple ways that stately and chiefly power intertwine. As my analysis showed, land titling is not a question of state authority somehow ‘superseding’ or ‘replacing’ chiefly forms of authority; on the contrary, land titling multiplies the arenas through which various authorities can claim rights to govern – despite, beyond and as an effect of efforts to ‘fix’ land rights on ‘paper’. The ‘failure’ of state governance is, in this regard, as productive of political innovation as its successes, if not more so.

## 9. At the limits of state governance

Appropriations of chiefly lands and reforms toward private property continue across the African continent, demarcating forests and conservation concessions and converting a dizzying array of land tenure, tenancy and shelter claims into parcels of cadastral property legible to the apparatus of government. It would be easy to take these processes as radical reconfigurations of the modality of power and authority, leading to the expungement of local rights and claims to land. It is certainly true that the people are deprived of rights and driven off their land (Andreasson 2006), but it is equally true, as I have shown, that these struggles are messy and do not always play out the way we think. Land's material emplacement usually means that people on the ground have some say, if not through institutional arrangements, then through acts of subversion, alteration, noncompliance or force (Li 2014). My persistent argument has been that we need to take seriously the fissures, failures and unforeseen events of 'state making' so they do not appear as 'noise' or 'irregularities' to otherwise effective performances of government. This is not to suggest that material land is an even playing field; rather, it is to suggest that we need to take seriously the rural poor as political protagonists, fully capable of contestation and debate.

I thus opened this thesis with the question: *What are the 'limits' of state governance in rural Zambia?* The question is deceptively simple, yet it hides a complex relationship between attempts at governing and the everyday resistance of people on the ground – a relationship that has been a central concern for my analysis. I operationalized my inquiry through two sub-questions:

- I. *How are new state territorializations shaped by the materiality of landscapes and the people that inhabit and move across them?*

II. *What political work do artifacts of statutory land governance – survey beacons, official uniforms, title deeds etc. – perform in the opaque reality of the everyday?*

These questions firmly place the analysis in the ‘messy actuality’ of everyday life, where practices of government became enmeshed with insubordinate citizens, unruly lands, and other enactments of being and moving with the land. Through my exploration I wanted to further an understanding of how everyday contingencies shape land struggles and state making in rural Zambia. I adopted a broad theoretical repertoire, reflective of the ‘messy actuality’ of the field, and I crisscrossed between the material-ecological properties of land, a plurality of political authorities, uneven territorial productions and the circulation of bureaucratic artifacts, material performances of officialdom and colonial-historical sediments of racial exclusion. I structured the analysis around four ‘agrarian events’, each centered on a ‘boundary object’ sitting in between stately and chiefly spaces of rule: (I) bodies in imperial space, (II) a forest claimed by both stately and chiefly forms of authority, (III) cement survey beacons as state power materialized, and (IV) the title deed and its paper-y quality. Each of these objects are *analytical locations* that link the empirical and the conceptual, folding the study of state making into concrete places and encounters.

At the foundation of this thinking lies a poststructural reading of boundaries, signaling a ‘methodological readiness’ to explore relations of power, authority, exclusion and control, but also instances of resistance, transgressions, failures and fissures (Butler 1997; Douglas 1966; Povinelli 2014; Foucault 1980; McClintock 1995). Each of my boundary objects draws on a methodology that works to summon up a theoretical imperative to make visible the often hidden, invisible and ‘backstage’ work that continuously thwarts state governance and reinjects elements of eventuality and uncertainty into processes of ‘state making’. Focusing on these contingencies, I argued, offers important clues to how marginalized peoples resist and subvert change, what practices (including the miniscule and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of dispossession and finally, what ‘ways of being’ form the counterpart to the processes that organize the establishment of new agrarian orders.

In this concluding chapter I draw out my contributions and situate them within a wider field of study. In particular, I shall argue for increased analytical attention to the material and historical contingences of state making. This not only serves to recover the agency of marginalized peoples; conceptually, it shows how a focus on resistance and subversion is not a distraction to our understanding of state making, but rather gives important clues to how the state gets made. In short, it is in moments of fracture that the normally invisible operation of state power becomes visible. Each of my case-study chapters provides insights into these dynamics from different scales of analysis, both spatial and temporal. To ground my conclusions, I shall, therefore, first revisit my empirical chapters to pull out what they tell us about how everyday contingencies contribute to an understanding of state making. In the latter half on this chapter, I bring these insights together to think through some of the wider implications and, in particular, what it entails to honor people's localized contestation and critique as meaningful political action.

## 9.1 At the limits of colonial control

The first empirical chapter lends insights into two entwined dynamics important for my argument: (i) how peoples subjected to colonial power continuously resisted, subverted and tested the limits of colonial governance, and (ii) how such practices were not merely distractions to the administrative regime, but were *constitutive* of the (colonial settler) state. These dynamics reappear throughout this thesis, in various dictions and guises, but are perhaps most clearly demonstrated in relation to my analysis of bodies in imperial space. I here want to retrace my steps to ground and underline the wider implications of these insights.

The colonial settler state is often analyzed as a quite rigidly bordered construct, with boundaries separating white from black, civilized from savage, urban modernity from rural domesticity – categories mapped onto discrete geographies policed through everyday administration (Roberts 1976; Gould 1997). Mamdani's (1996) charting of the spatial and cultural schematization of chiefly power inaugurated by the institution of indirect rule, for example, has been pivotal for our understanding of the colonial settler state. This is a powerful template for understanding colonial spatial power, and in many ways, my analysis supports this view, yet at the scale of

the body: from BSAC villagization efforts in the 1910s and the tribalization in the 1920s, to the immigration to mining towns in the 1930s, I showed how colonial territorializations worked through the mapping of colonized bodies as different. Native bodies were cast as ‘dirty’, ‘diseased’ and ‘unmanly’; chiefs’ bodies were fitted into colonial costumes so as to make them distinct from their social surrounds; and women’s bodies were reduced to sites of social reproduction – constructs which tied particular bodies to particular places with particular characteristics. Indirect rule was a project both intimate and geopolitical (cf. Stoler 2010), with the body being an important site on which the boundaries of the settler state was mapped.

On the other hand, my reading of colonial territory points to the limits of an analysis that pivots on ideal templates of space and authority, and especially how it hides from view the creative measures taken by people to disentangle themselves from spatial formations of colonial power. As I showed, the bodies that colonial power produced (the sedentary villager, the tribalized native, the domesticated woman) repeatedly refused or ignored the appellations assigned to them by government and, in doing so, became disorderly bodies (the non-villager, the de-tribalized native, the ‘unattached’ woman). In many ways, these ‘counter-bodies’ are more important for understanding the effects of colonial power than those who remained ‘in place’. For they show how colonial truths and legal decrees deployed to secure boundaries (racial and gendered imaginaries, territorial inscriptions, bodily restrictions) also contained the seeds of their failure to determine what bodies ought to belong and where. In other words, resistance and insubordination to colonial power – which in my analytic flows from people’s bodies onto the landscape and into the body politic – operated *through* (not despite) people’s subject-positions of colonial difference.

Here I also wish to point to another aspect of this argument, namely, how it speaks to scholarship that posits domains of cultural and political life that somehow remained protected from the incursions of colonialism (or modernity) and seeks to find in these spaces resources for anticolonial politics (Scott 1985; Chatterjee 1993). While this work has been important for showing that colonial power is uneven and partial, such studies often assume the existence of separate spaces (public/private, colonial/precolonial, modern/premodern) between which subjects consciously moved, taking on different identities at different sites (cf. Bhabha 1994). My analysis, in contrast, points to how resistance rarely, if ever, gains traction by defending

places somehow sealed off from outside power. Instead, ruptures in colonial power occur in people's entwinements with relations of governance and in people's attempts to outwit them, redeploy them or reappropriate them as their own. Room for resistance emerged *through* (not from outside) spatial modes of colonial power.

The larger contribution made here, thus, is that the making of the colonial state is inseparable from practices of resistance, subversion and insubordination. In conceptual terms, this dynamic is captured if we combine two strands of theory: (i) that the colonial state was contingent upon the construction and displacement of the marginal Other (Mamdani 1996) and (ii) that disorder, as Douglas (1966: 35) insightfully argued, is an inevitable 'by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements'. In this view, then, order and disorder are not competing processes; conceptually we need to think of them as relationally constituting the state and its emergent boundaries. In more empirical terms we see this, for example, in the citemene ban of 1906, which was intended to lead to more orderly settlement patterns. Yet, rather than contributing to sedentarization, the citemene ban reinforced masculinist subjectivities around *practicing* citemene as resistance (see also Moore and Vaughan 1994). In short, room for resistance was not an aberrant outgrowth of an ordering colonial polity but was woven into its very foundation, with a colonial government claiming to produce spatial and social order in the very act through which it reproduced the conditions for the contestation of that ordering (new margins, new positions of resistance).

Ironically, however, my analysis also shows how resistance *reinforced* unequal relations of power. Native bodies that built temporary shelters (*mitanda*) in the forest were cast as different in psyche and phenotype *because* they escaped the confines of the 'proper village'. The 'primitive native', as one officer commented, 'ravages the forests' rather than cultivates enclosed fields. In the forest, 'his already dark skin' turns 'almost grey in the ashes' and takes on 'ghost-like features' (BS1 A 7/7/9 Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs). Likewise, women leaving rural areas to settle in town were branded as prostitutes and forced into kitchens and marital relations *as a result of* their struggles to secure access to town. As such, race and gender were not ready-made rubrics to be written onto the landscape; rather, their particularities materialized through people's involved activity, in the specific relational context of people's practical engagement with their material

surroundings and in their efforts to *move out of* relations of colonial domination (cf. Nightingale 2011). Colonial subjectivities then, need to be conceptualized, at least in part, as products of the ‘failures’ ‘fissures’ and ‘limits’ of colonial power.

What becomes clear here is that failures of government should by no means be taken as ‘state failures’ (see Hagman and Péclard 2010). Quite the opposite. As I have shown throughout this thesis, they are precisely the moments wherein the state is made. Recognizing that such ‘productive’ failures permeate the history of Northern Rhodesia is a testament to how administrative efforts to bring ‘out of place’ bodies ‘into place’ was a central aspect of the *making* of the colonial settler state and subjectivities, with ‘out of place bodies’ continuously testing the limits of colonial rule, in turn provoking new attempts to govern, iteratively reconfiguring practices and rule and the people they sought to contain. These movements are not distractions to our understanding of state making; they *are* state making, a process that intertwines attempts to govern and control, material space and imageries of race, tribe and gender.

## 9.2 At the limits of the state there is... a chiefdom?

Chapter 6 probes another dimension of state making, equally important to an understanding of the limits of state governance as *generative* of struggle and politics – namely, how the materiality of terrain *grounds* struggles over environmental resources and continuously opens up possibilities for subversion and alternative forms of claim-making. This insight emerges from a historical reading of Munyama Forest, a space that sits in between ‘state’ and ‘chiefdom’. By tracing out the ‘layers’ of the forest, I brought into view (some of) the historical and material terrains within which claims to land, legitimate authority and rightful presence are being contested in the forest today. This chapter draws attention to and accentuates the need for critical analysis of material and historical terrain; even if formal-jurisdictional limits of ‘state’ and ‘chiefdom’ are inscribed onto maps and encoded in law, treating them as commonsensical both disguises and reproduces unequal relations of power that are constitutive of, and internalized within, their colonial-historical forms of legibility.

As such, my contribution is principally empirical. Yet my reading of the forest also provided an opportunity to think through the boundaries between



state and chiefdom, and how their relations are reworked amid struggles over environmental resources. In many respects, my analysis is analogous to Africanist work that underlines the ‘creativity’ and ‘reinvention’ of customary authority (e.g. van Binsbergen 1987, 2003) and scholarship that probes the myriad ‘negotiations’ between different bodies of authority through struggles over the legitimate right to control, tax and regulate access to resources (e.g. Hoffmann, Vlassenroot and Marchais 2017). Yet I proposed a broader analytic around a ‘state-forest-chiefdom’ boundary logic to capture how political authorities are relationally variable vis-à-vis a material landscape that continuously opens and forecloses spaces for such ‘negotiations’ (Nightingale 2018). This opened up a space for analytical insights into how ‘nature’ is a powerful terrain not only for the assertion of stately officialdom, but also for resistance, subversion and alternative articulations of rights, territory and authority. Here, I will again retrace my steps to anchor my contributions.

Material and conceptual ‘nature’ has been fundamental for the kind of boundary struggles that delineates who can control and use the forest lands. The conflict started with the discovery of ‘valuable tree species’ in the 1940s – a stately assertion that came bundled with administrative concerns over ‘encroaching tribesmen’. Even amid the displacement, however, Chief Liteta III laid critical groundwork for subsequent struggle by encouraging people to use the forest. People erected temporary shelters that could be easily abandoned and planted the strategic crop cassava, which melds with the forest cover, in efforts to outmaneuver the forest patrols. Chief Liteta III offered shelter to those who were expelled, thereby bolstering his legitimacy. In the postcolonial forestry administration, ecological imaginaries of pristine nature reemerged and formed an epistemology that posited the forest as a place outside modernity, occupied by a primitive people that do not belong – epistemic erasures that evolved into struggles that set civility against barbarity. Following violent clashes, an origin story around the ancestral spirit of Natota – who, in some versions of oral history, was killed by foresters – was rekindled. When eviction troops were deployed, rain conjured by Natota, as the forest inhabitants asserted, cascaded down steep slopes, thwarting the inroad for government vehicles. What emerges from my analysis is how a forest creates the conditions of possibility for chiefly action and critique.

Echoing what I argued in Chapter 5, government ‘failures’ to control nature and citizenry are powerfully *productive* of new forms of politics and enactments of chiefly oppositional authority (cf. Neumann 2004). State and chiefdom are, in this sense, co-extensive with each other and the political ecologies of the forest. Still, just as bodily resistance against colonial control produced gendered and racial stereotypes, the forest works as a terrain for the production of social difference, yet at another scale.

My analysis shows how attempts to govern the forest have, at least since the 1940s, linked up constructs of difference – modern-traditional, nature-culture, primitive-civilized – perpetuated them and, crucially, transformed them into political resources deployed to legitimize certain claims and render others illegitimate. These processes fold colonial relations into the boundaries that posit ‘state’ and ‘chiefdom’ in opposition to each other. It is opposition and competing claims that (re)produce and perpetuate particular qualities of stateness and chiefly-ness, and provide for these categories to take on cultural and political meanings independent of each other (cf. van Binsbergen 1987). In short, state and chiefdom are not predetermined categories with predefined relations and registers of rule; they emerge in and through forest struggles, reshaping who has the authority to govern, who belongs and who are the subjects of exclusion.

In this optic, the struggle over the forest is not some historical zero-sum game between ‘state’ and ‘non-state’ (Barnett 2010). Instead, my analysis resonates with work that emphasizes the importance of distinguishing different authorities by their *practices* rather than by their statutory form: legal/illegal, formal/informal, state/non-state etc. (e.g. Lund 2006; Haggmann and Péclard 2010). Such binaries continue to inform critical work on governance across Africa, but their boundaries are, as my analysis clearly shows, variable and porous. Retaining them conceptually leads to awkward assumptions that obscure how governance works in practice. For example, the forest headmen skillfully navigated the state administration to obtain written endorsements from faraway bureaucrats in order to pressure more local state agents to recognize their settlements. In an effort to bring the forest into the administrative fold of the chiefdom, Chief Liteta III reinvented Munyama as a ‘Chief’s Forest’, mimicking the forestry practices of the statutory administration. Later, he provided the forest headmen with ‘books’ (*ibuku*), introduced by the colonial regime as a measure of control and taxation, turning the tools of colonial power against itself. Later still, this

relationship was reversed, with the district secretary informing Chief Liteta IV to come in plain clothes to an assembly in the forest – echoing indirect rule’s public performance of an orchestrated alliance of chiefly and stately authority – undermining his claims of chiefly independence.

Stately and chiefly symbols of power and political legitimation insinuate themselves into each other, crisscrossing between overt assertions and covert tactics, blurring boundaries of legal/illegal, formal/informal, state/non-state. Indeed, what is governance and what is resistance is here a matter of perspective. Thus, exploring state governance as some expanding frontier of ‘state territory’ into a forestland, resisted in various ways by ‘local communities’, is simply not sufficient (cf. Byrne et al. 2016). Practices of governance and resistance involve the continuous co-production of stately and chiefly authority at a variety of sites and through a range of tactics and territorialization moves, constituting a plurality of political, ecological and spiritual spaces. Where these spaces intersect, struggles over their different boundaries give meaning to the categories of state, forest and chiefdom. It is in this sense that forest struggles are foundational to state making. They reveal the messy and complex practices through which different authorities come into being, how certain peoples are posited in a space ‘outside’ modernity and how rights are asserted and articulated on a highly unstable political landscape – at the scale of the body (Chapter 5) and at the scale of the landscape (Chapter 6).

Making colonial connections is not designed to ‘settle scores’ but rather to recognize that these are unfinished histories. The forest example shows how imageries of nature and the primitive native remain available for joint rediscovery and redeployment in postcolonial space. Yet, rubrics such as ‘colonial legacy’ offer little help; a ‘legacy’ makes no distinction between what holds and what lies dormant, between a weak and a tenacious trace, and thus instills ‘overconfidence in the knowledge that colonial history matters, far more than it animates an analytic vocabulary for deciphering how it does so’ (Stoler 2008: 196). I make no claim to have crafted such vocabulary, by my analysis points to how sediments of previous power remain consequential, how agrarian conflicts pivot on the ways past struggles gain traction, in turn bringing into clear light (some of) the uneven, layered, and contested geographies upon which the ‘modern’ Zambian state takes form. As the provincial planner in Kabwe told me in a conversation about the situation Munyama Forest: ‘It’s always like this in this country.’ While

probably an exaggeration, his statement serves to underline the importance of historical analysis, without which we would be unable to understand the dynamics that drive land struggles in contemporary Zambia.

### 9.3 At the limits of the law: property and its artifacts

Chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis offer yet another set of insights, crucial to my ambition to capture the practices by which people deflect and subvert state projects by means of a multitude of ‘tactics’ articulated in the details of everyday life. Both are centered on the apparatus of private property, and they sit in productive tensions with previous research on the ‘negotiability’ of property and political authority (Lund 2016; Sikor and Lund 2009; Vandekerckhove 2011). While this work has opened up fertile fields of analysis, most of these accounts privilege conceptions of state and property as socio-legal constructs. Instead, I shifted analytical attention to how the insistent materiality of boundary stones, paper and physical environments is continuously recorded in the social and institutional organization around land and property. At its core, by placing analytical attention on the land itself – its location, occupation and material imprints – we see how projects of property making (beaconing and titling) are never contained by statutory regulatory norms. By extension, a new set of insights emerge around how property and its artifacts are continuously deflected, reappropriated and redeployed by people on the ground. If we don’t take seriously these practices, I argue, we limit the possibility for engaging with marginalized peoples as political actors. Revisiting my ethnography drives this point home.

In chapter 7, I proposed a more careful conceptualization of the material field of property politics to understand how both state and citizens co-constitute each other’s existence and capacities through iterative moments of material action and reaction. My analysis showed how villagers picked apart boundary stones and buried them in the bush, or piled them up at the roadside for open spectacle; transplanted fruit trees to more strategic locations; and erected sturdier houses to solidify their material presence on the land. As such, people laid claims to land, not by invoking authority – by backing up their claims with institutional influence – but by acting upon the materiality of land and property. Previous scholarship is of course right in that property is never more stable than its recognition admits (per Lund 2002). But what

is to become, as Porter (2014: 12) asks, of ‘those who cannot prove their worth across the thresholds of recognition?’ The people in Mulonga village who found beacons in their land have no easy ‘ins’ into the ambit of officialdom; any effort to make their voices heard in the corridors of the district council were replete with statist obstructions, doorkeepers and legal deferral, and neither chief nor headman held any institutional leverage. It is not accidental, then, that the material landscape become a field of struggle.

My argument is that a focus on the materiality of property serves to open up a material field of politics through which resistance can be articulated. Recognizing that driving a pick through a beacon is *political work* has important implications; it suggests that if we reduce property to how it is legally legitimated (which was largely invisible to the inhabitants of Mulonga), we limit the possibilities for honoring material action as a meaningful political enactment that destabilizes the state property regime. At its core, my analysis shows how the rural poor are not passive in the face of dispossession, but fully capable of contestation and critique *also in the absence* of an institutional authority that can be drawn upon for political support.

My ambition to open up the debate on property politics continues in Chapter 8, which probes the political work done by the titled deed once it escapes the domain of its solicitors and becomes enmeshed with the land to which it refers. As I showed, the title deed has not ‘fixed’ a certain conception of land rights, nor has it eclipsed or occluded chiefly power. At the very onset of the titling process, Chief Liteta IV and his headmen appropriate the title deed and redeploy it to maintain their authority. Indeed, as the title deed is reworked from being a legal contract in the abstract to being contingent upon the materiality of the land to which it refers, it is no longer contained within liberalism’s compass of property – it escapes the tenets of statutory law. What emerges then, is a reversal of tenets of hegemonic conventions in land management; for neoliberals and other followers of Soto (2000) the title makes private property possible and anything less is a feeble form of tenure (Per Locke). For the farmer in Lenje Chiefdom, the title deed is the end point of property, held together by material and social processes that require continuous maintenance – with local bureaucrats ambiguously in between. In effect, this opens up for chiefly-orchestrated occupation of titled land, reincorporating private estates into the chiefdom – despite there being no ‘legal’ provision to do so. Once

we rescale our analyses onto material ground, we start to see how liberal land law reform crumbles around the edges.

Legal pluralists have charted out the ways that different legal systems overlap and rub up against each other (see von Benda-Beckmann and Turner 2018 for a recent contribution), yet the focus tends to be on ‘the legal’ in the abstract. My analysis shows how conceptions of abstract rights become tangled up in very real materialities (cf. Hetherington 2009). For example, that title holders feel the need to protect the title deed from rain and fire creates a politics around housing and roofing, making the abstract and the material impossible to disentangle. Thus, to restrict oneself to highlighting the capacity of title deeds and other documents to create ‘paper truths’ (Tarlo 2000) would be to underestimate the political work done by paper. This view is further supported in Chapter 6, where I explored how the social position (class, if you will) of a document’s holder is inscribed onto the document in the form of stains, faded writing or torn corners, which in turn can render invalid the entitlement defined in the document – essentially hampering people living under harsh conditions to engage with the state as legal subjects. Material poverty and deprivation spill onto one’s body and into the materiality of home and land, which then are taken as signs of legal inferiority, in turn shaping people’s possibilities of entering into ‘contracts’ with the state. Rights, property and authority, and their attendant exclusions, are not purely social or legal products – their making is inseparable from the insistent materiality of nature, cement and paper, and studying them through abstract relations of recognition is not sufficient.

Taken together, my inquiries into property making ask for a more careful attention to how the materiality of land, property and paper opens up new fields of struggle through which alternative politics can be articulated through physical acts. My point is simply that these acts stretch the analysis of property into a material terrain of politics, and that this terrain, in many cases, is the principal – and sometimes only – political arena available to those for whom state recognition is a luxury, unaffordable or unattainable. Analytical attention to this terrain shows how material practices embody a critique of the placelessness of private property (as well as a version of property as it should be) and often makes such critiques more visceral and palpable than struggles for recognition ever could. Yet the critique is rarely, if ever, aimed at private ownership in and of itself; rather, it is as a critique

of a conception of property rights that excludes the rural poor from the processes of its making.

## 9.4 Conclusion

This thesis has been written in a context of agrarian struggles across the African continent. Practices, institutions and laws that expunge local rights and claims are variously set in motion to create the enabling conditions for the reassertion of state control (Kelly and Peluso 2015). As I laid out in my introductory chapter, some scholars have cautioned against privileging contingency and negotiability, arguing that attention to ‘small acts’ of subversion might conceal structural forms of oppression and inequality and eclipse a more long-term logic of dispossession (Peters 2004; cf. Bhandar 2018). This thesis has presented glimpses of highly diverse, uneven and dynamic processes, yet glimpses, I argue, that point to the importance of recognizing that people on the ground have their own strategies, tactics and tricks to navigate contested lands. Incorporating these everyday navigations into our analyses, I have shown, serves to both throw into relief structural forms of inequality *and* makes visible their failure to close down possibilities for subversion and alternative enactments of rights and authority.

One of the principal contributions of this thesis is having made those connections, so that acts of subversion do not appear as anomalies to some predetermined outcome. In many ways, acts of subversion are what *determines* the outcome: out of place bodies unsettled colonial administration but at the same time created racial and gendered particularities that refracted colonial governance; violent clashes following the enclosure of Munyama engendered a landscape on which spirits ‘rain on government’; the demolition of survey stones and chiefly appropriations of statutory law create new enactments of property and authority. Indeed, engaging with the ‘limits’, ‘failures’ and ‘messy actualities’ of rule in practice is not an appendage to the study of state governance – it is principal to it.

Of course, my analysis rests on observations from particular analytical locations, each contingent upon empirical, methodological and theoretical choices. It is a particular ‘way of seeing’. Yet, I argue, it is precisely from a reading of such located nodes of power, or ‘boundary objects’, that the limits of state governance *and* the creativity of local peoples become visible; such a reading replaces the notion that state governance represents the rationa-

lization of power with a very different picture – one in which the efforts to govern are shot through with contingency. From this perspective we do not lose a sense of the friction that impedes or defers state power.

It is also here that this thesis makes a wider contribution to the debates on agrarian struggles. Much of this thesis has been concerned with situating a critique of a history that rests on the abstraction of land from its particular material and social contexts. As such, I join a choir of critical voices that charts out the array of struggles and exclusions that agrarian change triggers. Yet as Borras and Franco (2013: 1723–24) have noted, in most research on land struggles there is a ‘strong tendency to assume *a priori*, rather than to demonstrate, what the reactions of affected groups of people are or would be.’ I have considered ‘local reactions’ in some detail and, above all, rendered them *political*, and argued why we should take them seriously as such. I shall conclude this thesis with an elaboration on this point.

I shall say, first, that I do not equate resistance and ‘small acts’ (Peters 2014) with some form of ‘weapons of the weak’ deployed by peasants against ‘external’ orderly forces (Scott 1985). Indeed, smallholders do deploy covert tactics, but so do state surveyors, bureaucrats and field officers, ranging from sabotage, feigned ignorance and dissimulation. Once we rescale our analysis of state making onto the ground, we see how both citizens and bureaucrats continually exploit indeterminacies in ways that shape what is actualized on the ground. This is not to suggest that larger-scale politics do not matter. They matter a great deal. Yet by placing the analysis on the ground, we avoid attributing to state governance a coherence that it does not have and, in turn, see how acts of subversion are not anomalies to otherwise effective performances of government, but are themselves decidedly critical political enactments.

Here we must hold two thoughts in view simultaneously. We must both acknowledge historical and structural inequality (per Peters 2014) *and* reject teleological assumptions – inevitable outcomes or foretold futures determined by the past or government visions of the present. Without doing so, we risk wiping out the fact that the land struggles that occur across Africa are not pre-scripted by government strategies or global capital, but can be articulated otherwise. Politics, as Povinelli (2014) writes, is the ‘adventure of the otherwise as it becomes (or does not)’. Indeed, governance *is* the act of acting upon that which retains the possibility of acting otherwise (people moving ‘out of place’, headmen reclaiming forest lands, villagers uprooting



boundary stones etc.). In many ways, the otherwise *is* otherwise because it has been actively produced as ‘other’ *through* practices of state government: villagization, forest enclosure, land privatization etc. If we fail to take seriously the otherwise – however miniscule or quotidian – as a legitimate political claim, we fail to recognize some people as legitimate political protagonists, fully capable of contestation and critique.

Of course, we must not forget that ‘customary lands’ are also entrenched with uneven power relations and ‘inter-group’ inequalities, often working to the disadvantage of women (Chigbu 2019; Whitehead and Tsikata 2017), and the reader must keep these variations in view. In this thesis, however, my primary concern has steered me elsewhere, to the ways people position themselves against ‘outer-group’ processes, and to the ways ‘customary lands’ have always been insecurely held by those rendered ‘outside’ – outside the grid of colonial modernity, outside circuits of statutory land law. On the ground, of course, ‘inter-group’ inequalities interweave with these broader dynamics in ways that make ‘the customary’ and ‘the statutory’ impossible to hold separate. The continued use of the terms ‘customary’ or ‘traditional’ is, rather, a ‘discourse that upholds, rather than undermines, social, economic and political inequality’ (Whitehead and Tsikata 2017: 103). In pure juridical terms, both Mulonga village and Munyama Forest are now located on State Land, yet they are occupied by people who, in a stately administrative view, stand in the way of, rather than contribute to, the promises of the future. Local relations of class and gender entangle with these imageries. In Munyama, for instance, most women rely on ‘open lands’ for their livelihoods (especially for the collection of mushrooms and munkoyo roots), and a privatization of the forest lands would certainly lead to a situation where women would need to fight harder and strategize more carefully to maintain access to land. This strategizing is already underway. At the time of writing this, groups of women are putting pressure on their headmen to set aside land exclusively for the use of women, with the hope that this land will be recorded in the ‘social survey’ that the District Council is to administer in Munyama. In this case, women’s positioning is *enabled* by stately intervention. What I hope has become clear in my analysis, then, is that struggles ‘internal’ to ‘customary lands’ are inseparable from broader cartographies of discursive and legal power; stately and chiefly administrative regimes entangle and become shot through with legal ambiguities,

uncertainties and points of fracture that variously enable and disable contestation and critique across scales.

While I have not spoken to the decolonization literature directly (see Icaza and Vazquez 2017 for a recent intervention), creating hope for more inclusive postcolonial lands makes it all the more urgent to probe how marginalized peoples assert their rights within highly unequal relations of power, and what practices thwart the processes that organize the establishment of new agrarian orders – not because recovering marginalized voices somehow allows people to move out of unequal relations of power, but because it provides a grammar for the articulation of the terms of people’s existence within such relationships. This includes, in my view, an analytical appreciation for the hidden, invisible and ‘more-than-human’ arenas of politics – spirited ecologies, breakable stone and brittle paper – without which we would be unable to understand the myriad ways that land becomes struggled over, and how new exclusions take form (cf. Thierault 2017). Not engaging with them risks reinforcing problematic assumptions about ‘tenure modernization’ as some cure-all template for ‘development’, and in turn writing off various types of resistance as mere diversions toward a pre-defined modernity and further sidelining the dynamics that underpin land struggles. Failure to attend to these artifacts means that we may miss crucial material-ecological relations and management dynamics. More fundamentally still, I contend, engaging with them is crucial for broadening our understandings of land politics.

Political and critical analyses require that we trace people’s practices – citemene cultivation, planting cassava in a forest reserve, uprooting boundary stones, squatting on titled land – back to their political foundations, and articulate them *as political* so they can enter into our frames of analyses as meaningful actions. Without doing so, we risk erasing from land struggles the *politics animated* by the practices of people on the ground, the common sense they disturb and the critique avidly coalesced around them. It is against this background that I read Sennet’s (1970) advice to ‘make use of disorder’, Levin’s (1989) emphasis on ‘productive incoherence’, and Derrida’s (1996: 84) claim that ‘chaos is at once a risk and a chance’:

[C]haos and instability, which is fundamental, founding and irreducible, is at once naturally the worst against which we struggle with law, rules, conventions, politics and provisional hegemony, but at the same time it is a chance to change, a chance to destabilize. If there was continual stability,

there would be no need for politics, and it is to the extent that stability is not natural, essential or substantial, that politics exists ... Chaos is at once a risk and a chance.

Practices of government produce new natures, spaces of control and forms of oppressions, yet they are always 'chaotic' in the sense of providing a 'chance' for alternative articulations of politics. In this thesis, I took an historical-ethnographic stance that enabled me to explore the 'chaos' of state governance in critical encounters and conjunctures where multiple powers coincide, how critical practices emerged, in turn provoking new attempts to govern. It shows how state making and agrarian struggles are intimately linked, with the state emerging as an effect of processes of inclusion and exclusion (per Mitchell 1991), yet an effect constantly destabilized at myriad sites: citemene fields, road checkpoints, spiritual dwellings, chiefly attire, survey beacons, the thresholds to government offices, stamps and signatures, bad roads and heavy rainfall. State power is trafficked through these everyday sites; they provide, in short, critical means for people to engage with the state.

There is a methodological dimension to this argument as well. Boundaries provide a way of thinking about power as a terrain of contending forces that can never achieve a genuine stability – a terrain of evershifting relationships. However stable a boundary seems, there is always some space for contestation, whether this is achieved or articulated. The value of this approach, thus, is that it focuses attention both on the question of how particular power relations are produced and maintained *and* on the points of potential fracture where those structures of dominance are or might be challenged. It allows us to ask critical questions about the effectiveness of state power, without denying the reality of that power. What kind of threat to state authority does a woman chasing surveyors off her land pose, for instance? For me, the study of state power cannot be separated from everyday lived realities. Abstract concepts, such as 'the state', have little meaning outside these realities; here, 'the state' becomes discourse, and discourse always produces its own truth effects, which often hide from view the myriad social and material relations, struggles and injustices on the ground.

The task of productive criticism, in this view, is not about unveiling some historical or ideological force; it is about attending to how lands get inhabited, labored on, struggled over and turned into objects of control. It asks what is gained by this, and, importantly, what is left out, what cultural

and political subjects and ways of relating to land cannot appear within hegemonic frames of policy and politics. It asks in what ways the material and conceptual remaking of land might be complicit in forms of erasure and abjection of Other forms of politics. And it asks how these other forms of politics can be made visible, and what possibilities they hold. On the ground, there are limits to what state governance can achieve, and making visible these limits reminds us of that struggles over land are not determined in advance, but remain open to the play of history, politics and the claims to self-determination that people make every day.

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## Popular science summary

The establishment of political control over land is a central part of state-building. In Zambia, as in most countries in southern Africa, state-building remains an unsettled and contentious process, shaped by histories of colonial conquest, racial discrimination and mass evictions of poor farmers from their land. During colonial rule, white settlers seized control over the most attractive land while the African population was forcibly relocated to ‘native reserves’ on marginal lands. The reserves were administered by what colonial administrators called ‘tribal leaders’ – African chiefs and village headmen – who allocated land rights according to local rules, outside the legal system of the colonial state. More than half a century after independence, Zambia remains divided between areas controlled by state institutions (state land) and areas controlled by local chiefs (so-called customary land), the latter home to the majority of Zambia’s small-scale farmers. At present, the Zambian government is gradually appropriating customary lands in efforts to make rural lands, its users and transactions controllable by state authorities. Yet the extension of state control into rural areas is a deeply politicized process that, in many cases, leads to new evictions of local inhabitants, and ignites land conflicts and power struggles between state authorities, farmers, chiefs and village headmen.

This thesis explores state-led efforts to appropriate land controlled by Lenje Chiefdom in central Zambia with the aim to better understand land struggles and state-building as two intimately related processes that create new political landscapes where state and chiefdom compete for political power and influence, and where farmers struggle to assert their claims to land. By studying local acts of resistance to state control, both past and present, the thesis offers clearer insights into state-building as an uncertain process, shaped by creative farmers, chiefs and village headmen who repeatedly challenge state rule, resist eviction and reoccupy disputed lands. The thesis builds on archival research and long-

term fieldwork in Lenje Chiefdom, and presents four case studies, each contributing to new understandings of the Zambian state, and its colonial history, from different local perspectives.

The first case explores how the colonial regime ‘fixed’ a racialized African population in villages on marginal lands. The analysis shows how the colonial administration was resisted by local inhabitants, and how this resistance is crucial for understanding the colonial state as an uncertain achievement, constantly destabilized by acts of subversion and non-compliance. The second case connects colonial rule and contemporary land politics by investigating a conflict over a forest area, appropriated by the colonial state in the 1940s. By showing how local inhabitants navigate the political and physical landscape to reoccupy the forest after their eviction, this study develops an understanding of how material terrain and colonial histories entwine to create incomplete state control over the forest today. The third case examines the surveying and material demarcation of village land. The analysis follows state surveyors’ placement of boundary stones on village land and villagers’ efforts to discover and demolish these stones, showing how marginalized farmers challenge state authority and resist eviction through material practices on the land. The fourth case explores the process of formal land titling. In theory, land titling means that the national government assumes the right to administer local land ownership, but this analysis shows how the chief and his headmen reinvent the title deed as a political tool for their own control.

Together, these four case studies show how marginalized peoples continually test the limits of state governance on a landscape characterized by historical and political inequalities. Through its grounded analysis, the thesis points to the importance of recognizing that local peoples have their own strategies and tactics to stake claims to home and land, which turn state-building into a conflict-ridden process with insecure and unstable outcomes. Yet it is argued that local resistance against the state should not be seen as contributing to local ‘state failures’. On the contrary, resistance reconstitutes the state in important ways, creating both new forms of exclusion and possibilities for the reinvention of local land rights and political authority, in new combinations of state politics and local practices. The thesis concludes by calling for greater attention to local interests in contemporary land politics, and the necessity to understand acts of resistance as meaningful political actions.



## Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

Att etablera politisk kontroll över mark är en viktig del i statsbildning. Den zambiska statsbildningen, liksom den i många andra länder i södra Afrika, har formats genom en historia av kolonial ockupation, rasdiskriminering och massfördrivningar av fattiga småbrukare från deras mark. Spår av historiska orättvisor finns kvar än i dag, och statliga institutioner och deras legitimitet är fortsatt omstridda i delar av landet. Under koloniseringen av Zambia tog vita bosättare kontrollen över den mest attraktiva marken, medan den afrikanska befolkningen tvångsförflyttades till reservat på perifera marker. Reservaten övervakades av vad koloniala administratörer kallade 'stamledare' – afrikanska kungar och byäldstar – som fördelade markrättigheter enligt lokala regler, utanför kolonialstatens rättssystem. Mer än ett halvt sekel efter självständigheten kvarstår uppdelning mellan de områden som styrs av statliga institutioner (statlig mark) och de områden som styrs av kungar och byäldstar (traditionell mark). En majoritet av Zambias småbrukare bor på traditionell mark. Den zambiska regeringen exproprierar nu gradvis traditionell mark i syfte att öppna upp mer mark för statlig kontroll. Det är en djupt politiserad process som, i många fall, leder till nya tvångsflyttningar av småbrukare, och nya marktvister och maktkamper mellan statliga myndigheter, småbrukare, kungar och byäldstar.

Den här avhandlingen undersöker den statligt ledda exproprieringen av markområden som kontrolleras av kungadömet Lenje i centrala Zambia i syfte att öka förståelsen för hur marktvister och statsbildning är två intimt förknippade processer som skapar nya former av social exkludering och politisk maktutövning. Fram träder nya politiska landskap där stat och kungadöme rivaliserar om politiskt inflytande. Genom att studera lokala motståndshandlingar, både historiska och samtida, bidrar studien till en förståelse för statsbildning som en oviss process, ständigt utmanad av småbrukare, kungar och byäldstar som sätter sig upp mot den statliga kontrollen, motsätter sig avhysning

och återockuperar omtvistade marker. Från ett lokalt perspektiv är statsbildning en osäker process, öppen för alternativa former av social och politisk organisering som ständigt förändrar utfallen av statligt styre.

Avhandlingen bygger på arkivforskning och fältarbete i kungadömet Lenje. Den utgår från fyra fallstudier som alla bidrar till ny förståelse av den Zambiska staten, och dess koloniala historia, från olika lokala perspektiv. Den första fallstudien undersöker hur kolonialmakten 'fixerade' en rasifierad afrikansk befolkning i byar på perifera markområden. Genom att synliggöra hur lokalbefolkningen ständigt trotsade den koloniala regimen skapar den här studien en förståelse för hur motståndshandlingar var en viktig del i bildningen av kolonialstaten och dess maktapparat. Den andra fallstudien knyter samman kolonialt styre och samtida politik genom att undersöka en markkonflikt över ett skogsområde som exproprierades av kolonialmakten på 1940-talet. Fallstudien kartlägger hur koloniala historier av förtryck och den fysiska skogsterrängen bidrar till en bräcklig statlig kontroll över skogen, och visar hur invånarna navigerar både det politiska och fysiska landskapet för att återockupera skogen under efterkolonial tid. Den tredje fallstudien undersöker den statliga uppmätningen av mark som brukas av lokalbefolkningen. Genom att följa hur lantmätare placerar ut nya gränsmarkörer på den aktuella marken, och hur bybor upptäcker och demolerar dem, synliggör analysen hur marginaliserade småbrukare utmanar statlig myndighetsutövning och avvärjer avhysning. Den fjärde fallstudien fokuserar på lanseringen av nationella lagfartsbevis (äganderättshandlingar) för mark som tidigare administrerats genom lokala regler. I teorin innebär detta att den statliga förvaltningen övertar rätten att reglera markägande, men fallstudien visar hur den lokala kungen omtolkar lagfarterna och använder dem som politiska verktyg för sin egen maktutövning.

Sammantaget visar de fyra fallstudierna hur statsbildning i Zambia är en konfliktfylld process vars utfall varken är säkra eller stabila. Genom att analysera statsbildning från flera lokala perspektiv synliggörs komplexiteten i den samtida markpolitiken, och hur marginaliserade invånare och byäldstar återkommande testar gränserna för den statliga kontrollen för att kräva rättigheter till hem och mark. Dessa motståndshandlingar bör inte ses som bidragande till statens lokala 'kollaps', utan leder snarare till att staten omformas och skapar utrymme för nya politiska maktordningar, i nya kombinationer av statlig markpolitik och lokala praktiker. Avhandlingen argumenterar för att lokala motståndshandlingar bör ägnas mer noggrann uppmärksamhet och betraktas som meningsfulla politiska handlingar.

## Appendix 1: Participant observation

### *Samples from the field*

<b>Event</b>	<b>Number of times</b>	<b>People present</b>	<b>Time</b>
Hearings at the Chief's Court (Liteta)	7 hearings in total	Chief Liteta, chief's advisors, court clients	Nov. 2016 (1), Dec. 2016 (1), Feb. 2017 (1), Sept. 2017 (2), May 2018 (2)
Arrival of the survey vehicle in Mulonga, and the subsequent demarcation of village lands	1 occasion (over a three-week period)	Surveyors, villagers	-
'Official Meeting' between Munyama inhabitants and state officials (in Munyama Forest)	1	Provincial Planning Officer, Chisamba District Secretary, Chief Liteta, 10+ headmen, 50+ forest inhabitants	April. 2018
Village meetings	5 Occasions (2 in Mulonga and 3 in Chiwala)	Villagers, headman	Nov. 2016 (2), March 2017 (1), Nov. 2017 (1), April 2018 (1)
Forage walks with a group of women	6 occasions. Munyama Forest (4), Mulonga (2)	Group of women	Dec. 2016 (1), Jan. 2017 (1), March 2017 (2), Oct. 2017 (2)
Preparing citemene field for cultivation (in Munyama and Mulonga)	4 occasions. Munyama (3) and Mulonga (1)	Villagers (mainly men)	-
Partaking in tilling, seeding, ploughing etc. in Munyama and Mulonga	50+ occasions	Villagers	-
Taking produce to local market (Chisamba and Chibombo township)	6 occasion	Villagers (mainly women)	March 2017 (1), April 2018 (3), May 2018 (2)
Playing pool with Mulonga villagers in Chibombo township	4 occasions	Villagers	-
District Land Planning Committee (DLPC) meeting at Chibombo District council	2 sessions in total	Councilors	April 2018 (1), May 2018 (1)
'After work' with officers from the Ministry of Lands, Lusaka	2 occasions	State officials	Jan. 2017 (1), Aug 2017 (1)
Observations at the Ministry of Lands in Lusaka ('step in-and-out ethnography')	Approximately 15 days	State officials, applicants of land conversions, land brokers	-



## Appendix 2: List of interviews

Interviewee(s)	Number of interviews / interviewees	Place	Time
Chief Liteta IV of Lenje Chiefdom	5 interviews, and several casual conversations	Chief's palace, Liteta / Chief's court, Liteta / Chibombo township	Nov. 2016 (1), Feb. 2017 (1), Aug. 2017 (1), May 2018 (2)
Chief Liteta IV's advisor 1	2 interview, and numerous informal conversations	Chief's palace, Liteta / Chief's court, Liteta /	Feb. 2017 (1), April 2018 (1)
Chief Liteta IV's advisor 2	1 interview, and numerous informal conversations	Chibombo township	Sept. 2017
Chief Liteta IV's advisor 3	1 interview, and numerous informal conversations	Chibombo township	Sept. 2017
Chief Liteta IV's advisor 4	1 interview, and numerous informal conversations	Chief's court, Liteta	May 2018
Former advisor to Chief III of Lenje Chiefdom	1 interview	Landless corner / Chisamba	Sept. 2017
Former 'Chief's Forester' (Mr. Kakoma)	2 interview	Chisamba	Aug. 2017 (1), April 2018 (1)
Headman Wilford*	3 interviews, and numerous casual conversations	Mulonga* village	-
Headman Chiwala	3 interviews and numerous casual conversations	Munyama Forest	Dec. 2016 (1), Sept. 2017 (1), May (1)
Headman Kambobe	1 interview and numerous casual conversations	Munyama Forest	Sept. 2017
Headman Boyd	2 interviews	Mooya village	Feb. 2017 (2)
Headman Kangwa*	1 interview	Kangwa* village	Aug. 2017
Unnamed headmen	6 interviews / 6 interviewees	Munyama Forest / Lenje Chiefdom	-
Residents in Munyama Forest (all figuring under pseudonyms except Papilo)	11 in-depth interviews / 11 interviewees (5 women, 6 men)	Munyama Forest	Dec. 2016 (4), Jan 2017 (4) Aug 2017 (2), April 2018 (1)
Residents in Mulonga* village (all figuring under pseudonyms)	9 in-depth interviews / 9 interviewees (4 women, 5 men)	Mulonga* village	-

<b>Interviewee(s)</b>	<b>Number of interviews / interviewees</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Time</b>
Officers at the Department of Lands, Ministry of Lands	9 interviews / 11 interviewees (as well as numerous casual conversations)	Lusaka	Nov. 2016 (4), Feb. 2017 (2), Sept. 2017 (2), May 2018 (3)
Officers at the Department of Forestry, Ministry of Lands	2 interviews / 2 interviewees	Lusaka	May 2018 (2)
Former forestry officials at the Department of Forestry, Ministry of Lands (on civil duty around 1994-1996)	3 interviews / 3 interviewees	Lusaka	May 2018 (3)
Officers at the Chisamba District Council (District Secretary, Field Officers, Planners etc.)	5 interviews / 4 interviewees (as well as numerous casual conversations)	Chisamba township	Jan 2017 (2), Sept 2017 (2), April 2018 (1)
Officers at the Chibombo District Council (District Secretary, Field Officers, Planners etc.)	7 interviews / 5 interviewees (as well as numerous casual conversations)	Chibombo township	Nov. 2016 (2), Jan. 2017 (1), Feb 2017 (1), Aug 2018 (2), May 2018 (1)
Officers at the Provincial Government (Planning Officers, Forestry Officers)	3 interviews / 3 interviewees	Kabwe	Feb 2016. (1) Sept. 2017 (2)
'Private advisor' to applicants of land conversions (Mr. Kalaka*)	1 interview	Chibombo township	May 2018
Applicants of land conversion (unsuccessful)	17 interviews / 17 interviewees	Across Lenje Chiefdom	Jan 2017 (2), Aug 2017 (1), Sept 2017 (2), April 2018 (5), May 2018 (7)
Applicants of conversion (successful)	3 interviews / 4 interviewees	Across Lenje Chiefdom	Aug 2017 (1), April 2018 (1), May 2018 (1)
Title holders (inherited or purchased)	5 interviews / 6 interviewees	Across Lenje Chiefdom	Dec. 2016 (1), Jan. 2017 (1), Sept. 2017 (1), May 2018 (2)
'Land brokers' and 'go-betweenes' at the Ministry of Lands	3 interviews / 3 interviewees	Lusaka	April 2018 (3)

\* = pseudonym

## Appendix 3: Documents from the National Archives of Zambia

Acc. 72/13: Native Courts of the Copperbelt, district's commissioner's office, Mufilira, May 1939

BS1 A 7/7/9 Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Aug. 1910

BS1 A 7/7/12 Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Aug. 1910

BS1 A 9/6/3 Report on housing, Oct. 1906

BS1 B 5/8/3 TR Ndola, Feb. 1908

BS1 C 3/3/3 TR, Kempe, Aug. 1908

BS3 A 8/5/9 West Awemba Division Report, Sept. 1909

BS3 A 2/6/9 TR, Kaoma, June 1909

BS3 A 2/1/14, Memo from the Secretary of Native Affairs, Aug. 1910

CNP 1/5/2: Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Feb. 1934

CNP 1/7/1: Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Sept. 1940

CNP 2/11/2: Official dress for Chiefs, Dec. 1933

CNP 3/11/3: Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Dec. 1933

CNP 4/4/1: Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Dec. 1942

LOC 216: Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Sept. 1931

KSD 4/1, Vol. 2: Indaba at Chilonga, Feb. 1909

ML 1/1/6: Report to Member of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Feb. 1947

ML 1/6/12: Report to Member of Agriculture and Natural Resources, May 1946

ML 3/7/7: Letters to Chief Conservator of Forests, Ndola, June-Sept. 1946

ML 3/7/7: Lenje tribal council meeting, Chibombo, May 1946

ML 4/2/12: Government Notice No. 305 of 1947, The Forest Ordinance vol. III, cap 105, Feb. 1947

ML 5/11/1: Government Notice No. 413: Protected Forest Area No. 62, Sept. 1947

ML 5/11/3: Report to DS Wallace, Member of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Nov. 1947

SEC 2/786 Kasama: TR Nov. 1936

SEC 2/936, Kasempa Tour Reports, Tour Report no. 2, 1927

SEC 4/651, Lenje Tour Reports, Tour Report no. 1, 1931

SEC/1102 NR police inspector, Broken Hill to deputy commissioner of the police,  
Lusaka, Nov. 1941

SEC2/1168: Governors' Conference, June 1933

SEC2/1185: Natives on private estates, May 1932

SEC/1350 NR police inspector, Fort Jameson to deputy commissioner of the police,  
Lusaka, Feb. 1949

ZA 2/4/1 Awemba: TR Nov. 1929

*Other*

The Lands Act. Ch. 184 of The Laws of Zambia

The Land Survey Act. Ch. 188 of The Laws of Zambia

The Chiefs Act. Ch. 287 of The Laws of Zambia

Court Order, Kabwe Central Prison, June 3, 1994

Government memo, Chisamba District Council: Public Response to Munyama  
Squatters, Nov. 4, 2014



ACTA UNIVERSITATIS AGRICULTURAE SUECIAE

DOCTORAL THESIS NO. 2020:67

In southern Africa, state formation remains an unsettled and contentious process. Assertions of state power over territory often authorize exclusions of the rural poor. Through four case studies of state formation in Lenje Chiefdom, Zambia, this thesis shows how marginalized peoples continuously subvert state rule, refuse displacement and rearticulate their claims to land. Acts of resistance to state control, this thesis shows, constitute crucial political enactments that produce new forms of property, territory and authority on highly uneven political landscapes.

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Acta Universitatis Agriculturae Sueciae presents doctoral theses from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU).

SLU generates knowledge for the sustainable use of biological natural resources. Research, education, extension, as well as environmental monitoring and assessment are used to achieve this goal.

Online publication of thesis summary: <http://pub.epsilon.slu.se/>

ISSN 1652-6880

ISBN (print version) 978-91-7760-652-9

ISBN (electronic version) 978-91-7760-653-6