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Race, gender and corporeal resistance: reading settler territory through the scale of the body

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ABSTRACT

The spatial architecture of settler colonialism in Africa has been subject to ample research, in geography and beyond. This paper offers an alternative reading of colonial settler territory at the scale of the body, showing how myriad colonial boundaries were displaced onto people's bodies, and naturalized, negated and negotiated through bodily practice, performance and movement. Using Northern Rhodesia/Zambia as a case, my argument is organized around three sites of colonial spatial power: the 'proper village', the tribal 'homeland' and the colonial township. The analysis builds on historical literatures, archival research and ethnographic work to 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. Bodies – chiefs' bodies, 'ghost-like' bodies, dirty bodies, unmanly bodies, malnourished bodies, reproductive bodies – became important bearers of symbolic value, subjected to racial and sexual regimes and power relations, all of which became sites of territorial inscription through which the construction and contestations of the colonial state and its territorial boundaries took place. The analysis makes visible the political work performed by these bodies, how their movement engendered administrative anxiety and became critical sites around which race, gender and territory were constructed and contested in intimate relation to each other. Through this conceptualization, the paper moves forward debates in geography on territory, showing how territory is not external to the body, not simply bodily experienced, but extend onto and out from the body as a critical site of subjugation and anticolonial resistance.

1. Introduction

The spatial architecture of settler colonialism in Africa has been subject to ample research, in geography and beyond. Most salient is perhaps Mamdani's (1996) 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 (see also Mbembe, 2000; Moore, 2005). Native bodies were subjected to a 'sedentarist metaphysics' (Malkki, 1992) and pinned to place in a racial topography of tribal rule. Classification became a science, that of taxonomy, derived ultimately from Linnaean botany but applied to space and population (Pels, 1997), resulting in a colonial settler state that imagined its territory – containing within it myriad microspaces of exclusion – as a contiguous performance of social difference with bordered and surveilled exits and entrances (wa Thiong'o 1998).

The spatial organization of colonial violence is a powerful narrative of settler territoriality, yet one which pivots on ideal templates of space, identity and power, separating settler from native, civilized from savage and a masculine urban modernity from a feminine rural domesticity (Gould, 1997). Such notions of territory tend to reify the colonial state as a privileged site of producing and governing space and marginalize entangled existence of alternative practices of territorialization (Moore, 2005; Halvorsen, 2019). In this paper I shift analytical attention to the bodies that transgressed boundaries of race and gender, to the bodies that moved outside the bounds of whiteness and made places in unsurveilled geographies in which they rejected the logics of colonial violence that structured the world around them. Rather than treating these bodies as exceptions in an otherwise rigid grid of colonial rule, I pause at the moments when those who were racially marked refused or simply ignored the appellation assigned to them by government, when the rubrics of racial bifurcation failed to work (cf. Stoler, 2010). I think of these 'counter-colonial' bodies as analytical spaces through which we can read colonial territory at the intersection of the corporeal, political and spatial, making visible the political work performed by these bodies, how their movement engendered administrative anxiety and became critical sites around which race, gender and territory were constructed and contested in intimate relation to each other. Probing these processes

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more carefully lends insight into how the colonized body was not only subjected to cultural spatial politics and 'walled in' (Fanon 1967[1952]: 117), but also how the colonized redeployed their bodies to challenge the social truths and legal decrees that secured segregation. Rescaling territorial struggles onto the body offers a counterpoint to narratives of the ordering capacity of the state, showing instead how the boundaries of race, gender and territory were repeatedly challenged and redrawn by the recalcitrance of the very bodies that they defined.

While these dynamics have partly been rendered visible by African historians (Meebelo, 1971; Chipungu, 1992), they are rarely brought into conversation with critical spatial theory. My analysis builds on feminist, postcolonial and Black geographies that foreground bodies as places where discourse and power relations are simultaneously mapped, embodied and resisted (Fanon 1967[1952]); Longhurst, 1997; Nightingale, 2011; Noxolo, 2022; Smith et al., 2016; Evans, 2020). These literatures have shown how bodies are written upon, marked, tagged and scarred, and how these 'scripts' are not only corporeal but extend into spaces of everyday life. Bodies, of course, are not merely passive sites of inscription. Even if deprived of legal rights, bodies have spatial agency in movement and encounter; they carry with them the ability to rework the spaces they occupy (Gieseking, 2016; Nightingale, 2011; Noxolo, 2022). In this analytic, race and gender are not ready-made rubrics to be written onto bodies and landscapes; rather, gendered and racial constructs materialize through people's involved activity, in the relational context of people's practical engagement with their material surroundings. Territory, in extension, is not external to the body, not simply bodily experienced; territory emerges as an extension of and extend onto the body as a site of subjugation and resistance.

As such, my analysis pushes forward geographical theorizing of space as an emergent political category: classified, enclosed and bordered (Storey, 2020; Byrne et al., 2016; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995). While this literature lends important insights into the processes through which power relations become inscribed onto landscapes, my argument brings into sharper view how the political configuration of space remains crucially contingent upon the bodies that inhabit, move through and intermingle with it. This exposes how territory both embodies the contradictions and struggles of society (Baletti, 2012), and how those contradictions and struggles are written onto and extend out from the bodies that populate it.

To develop my argument, I build on archival and ethnographic research in Zambia (previously Northern Rhodesia). Northern Rhodesia was placed under British South Africa Company (BSAC) administration in 1899, and subsequently proclaimed a Protectorate of the United Kingdom in 1924. The colonial government usurped and allotted the most attractive land to white settlers, while Africans were forcibly rounded up in tribal homelands and incorporated into customary regimes of indirect rule (Roberts, 1976). To locate the body as an analytical space, I probe first the political landscape into which the BSAC entered to understand *how* the African body was tangled up in colonial administration. My argument is then organized around three unique but imbricated spatial constructs of colonial power: the 'proper village', the tribal homeland and the colonial township. I will show how the making 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. I argue further that administrative efforts to control 'unruly' bodies were not merely 'extra-ordinary' work, but central to the making of race, gender and territory; simultaneously as bringing 'counter-colonial' bodies 'into place' was paramount for maintaining the imperial body politic, colonial conceptions of race, gender and territory repeatedly took on new meanings and spatial expressions as people struggled to deflect their functioning. Colonial settler territory, I conclude, must be understood as an effect of such iterative struggles.

2. Methods and materials

The analysis brings together seminal works on Zambia/Northern Rhodesia, my own archival studies as well as ethnographic research in Lenje Chiefdom, central Zambia. The archival research was carried out at the National Archives of Zambia over two months (November 2016 and March 2017). In the colonial record, the 'unruliness' of Africans is repeatedly cited from the 1890s to the 1930s, and I use such instants as analytical entry points into study of corporeal politics: what bodies can occupy what spaces and under what conditions. Organizing my analysis around three spaces of colonial power – the 'proper' village, the tribal 'homeland' and the mining township – enable insights into how different spatial constructs were contingent upon the making of the African body as an object politics and administration. The ethnographic work was carried out in Lenje Chiefdom (previously Lenje Native Reserve), central Zambia, over a period of 11 months (December 2016-February 2017; July-October 2017; April-June 2018; and November 2019-January 2020). Field work included assembling oral histories, including seven interviews and numerous illustrative conversations with Chief Liteta of Lenje Chiefdom and his councilors. While focused on a particular Chiefdom, this offered an analytical vantagepoint from which to trace different histories and practices of colonial territorial rule. In the village context, participant observation of everyday life, including work in swidden fields, was the most important research method and how I learned the stories I relate in this paper. In addition, I conducted open-ended life-history interviews with numerous residents across Lenje Chiefdom.

These methods have all aimed to ascertain colonial and counter-colonial productions of space and how the body emerges as a prism of colonial power and anticolonial struggle. This approach is consistent with a theorization of power in which political institutions like the state are examined as an emergent effect of micro-level practices rather than preexisting structures (Foucault, 1991). I follow analyses that view that bodies as inextricable from and constitutive of geopolitical formations (Clark, 2017; Mountz, 2018) through which the body becomes visible as a key vector of power, and embodied practices and the materiality of bodies become inseparable from practices of state territorialization (Wastl-Walter and Staeheli, 2004; Smith et al., 2016). In the following section, I map out these conceptual links in more detail.

3. Territory, body, environment: conceptual elaborations

Territory has no ontological status apart from the practices that constitute its existence. This has become somewhat of a mantra in critical geographical thought, with territory emerging as an array of 'power relations written on the land' (Peluso & Lund, 2011: 673) effectuated through variable practices of controlling or claiming authority over material space (Byrne et al., 2016; Korf, et al., 2015; Storey 2012; Painter, 2010). Territory, in this optic, is a process that stabilizes over time to produce the *effect* of bounded space: nations, protectorates, tribal homelands and settler estates, with their boundaries – or lines of difference – defining who belongs to place and those who are subjected to exclusion from it (Paasi, 1996).

Africanist scholarship has eloquently deconstructed the political configuration of settler territory, showing how apartheid geographies organized around settlement camps and 'homelands' were premised on a settler statecraft that employed both barbed wire and bureaucratic classification to etch racial segregation onto the nation-space (Posel, 2001; Evans 1997). As Moore's (2005) work on colonial Zimbabwe shows, the production of governable populations was based on fixing ethnic identities in 'tribal homelands' *and* a discursive deployment of race, engendering colonial subjects and structuring their material conditions of possibility. As such, colonial territorialization targeted the relation, or imbrication, between subjects and material space, effectively embedding racialized rule in territorial practices. Mamdani (1996: 51) writes: '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'. This was achieved in a functionalist fit between anthropologists and administrators, with 'tribe' and 'tribal homeland' being amongst the most rigid categories that yoked people and place together (Mbembe, 2000; Berry, 1993). 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 Ranger & Hobsbawm 1983; Vail, 1989).

Extrapolating from these literatures, 'colonial territorialization' does not refer to some expansion of imperial power in geographical space, but to the spatial inscription of social difference. In understanding these dynamics, it is not possible to separate out the symbolic effects of colonial power from its spatial and embodied performances. Yet in most work on colonial space, territory sits at a scale that exceeds the body, although it is at the scale of the body that people 'experience, perform and interpret territoriality' (Wastl-Walter and Staeheli, 2004). This resonates with Fanon's phenomenology of racism which describes the colonial world as being 'compartmentalized', yet to lay bare the foundation of colonial spatiality we must 'penetrate its geographical configuration' and reveal its social and cultural dimensions (Fanon, (2004[1963]: 3). 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). The metaphor of sealing alludes, Kipfer (2007: 708) observes, to the 'spatial relationships that, through body language, gestures and physical distance, separate colonizer and colonized as they meet on a street corner or in a queue'. For Fanon, the colonial spatial order was embodied, operating at the intersection of space, race, body and political subjectivity.

Here I draw insights from Fanon, but also feminist geography which challenges understandings of territory that conceal the ways territories are formed at other scales (Gieseking, 2016) by calling attention to how space is constituted out of the social relations that are enacted in and through space (Massey, 2005), and how space become enrolled in processes of creating difference and arenas for (re)producing or contesting oppressive forms of exclusion (Nightingale, 2011). I build, in particular, on work that has explored the body – 'the geography closest in' (Longhurst 1994) – as a place where discourse and power relations are simultaneously mapped, embodied *and* resisted (Grosz, 1993; Nightingale, 2011; Longhurst, 1997; Gatens, 1996). This literature shows how bodies are written upon, marked, tagged and scarred, and how these 'scripts' are not only corporeal but extend into spaces of everyday life. As Nightingale (2011) shows, social difference is not merely symbolic, but is produced and expressed through embodied interactions that are firmly material, so that social difference (race, gender, cast) becomes visible as emerging out of everyday material practices and performances. In short, what certain bodies 'come to mean' 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 (Mollett and Faria, 2018; Longhurst, 2001; Moore et al., 2003). In a feminist analytic, thus, embodied practices and the materiality of bodies are inseparable from the production of territory (Smith et al., 2016). Bodies are spatially contingent; the ways bodies are performed shift in and across space, with readings and understandings of such embodied performances simultaneously varying spatially, so that the body itself changes as it moves across space, and at the same time making space (Massey, 1994). Bodies are not merely passive sites of inscription and imagination, they are lived and 'encultured' through material interactions with the world.

Black and postcolonial geographies extend these arguments, showing how the body is a key modality in the operation of spatial violence and racial segregation through the ways in which the production of space remains tied up with the differential placement of racialized bodies, with centuries of violence rendering Black people lazy, poor, violent, hyper- or de-sexualized – all subjugating the Black body as Other (Fanon 1967[1952]; McClintock, 1995; McKittrick and Woods, 2007; Noxolo, 2022). Critical work on indigeneity lends further credence to how articulations of race entangle body and nation in territorial erasures and practices of racism within settler space (Radcliffe 2017), for example how linking bodies with broader structures of power illuminates environmental racism whereby pollution is deposited in ways and places where 'racially devalued bodies can…function as "sinks"' (Pulido, 2016: 6). Yet the body also acts as a methodology by summoning up a theoretical imperative to make visible the spatial agency of those living in geographies subjected to imperial power. A starting point for reimagining geography as a terrain of struggle has been marronage, with its historical basis in Black people escaping enslavement and inhabiting places beyond the governing grids of racial rule (Winston, 2021). Understanding these multiple dimensions of power requires one to move within the intersection of the symbolic and the material, with attention to how cultural ideas of difference are rescaled onto material bodies, where they are naturalized, negated and negotiated through practice, performance and movement.

Brought together, these literatures open up for an analysis of colonial spatial rule as working through bodily inscriptions of social difference, as well as its contestations through bodily movement, comportment and refusal. As such, it is not a question of racial and gendered difference being codified in law and territorially expressed (Mamdani, 1996), but rather a question of how race and gender emerge as categories of social imagination and political control through various attempts to make space and bodies governable, and become reworked through bodily practices of deflecting the violence of colonial spatial rule. In the remainder of this paper I expand these insights by revisiting colonial Zambia, with a recognition of the body as an important bearer of symbolic value, subjected to institutional regimes, epistemic systems and power relations – all of which become enrolled in the territorialization of colonial power.

4. How bodies came to matter in colonial zambia

To understand how the African body was tangled up in colonial administration, we must understand how colonial territorialization layered over already constituted forms socio-spatial appropriations. Prior to British colonization, Zambian lands were loosely bound up in what anthropologists call 'early African states', later chiefdoms. Historical literatures cite the centrality of food production in both social and political life, with its activities – cultivation in particular – bound up in material and symbolic practices of territorialization (Van Binsbergen 1981; Moore and Vaughan, 1994). Most people practiced *citemene* (from *kutema*, 'to cut down trees'), a form of swidden agriculture where fields are prepared by cutting and burning trees and branches to create a nurturing bed of ashes (Richards 1995[1939]). A citemene field has a lifetime of about five years, after which it is abandoned and only returned to when vegetation has recovered and new brushwood can be cut and burnt. Because of this system most people were grouped in ambulatory hamlets, or *mushi*, moving 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 of Lenje Chiefdom explained to me that it is to such places that *cibanda* (wicked spirits) are expelled, which later can be awakened if you are unfortunate enough to plow a field where such spirits dwell, manifested in a bad harvest, sickness or even death. This ontology is captured in the work of Van Binsbergen (1981: 109):

> …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 land were not only cultural constructs, but also bound up in a wider system of chiefly governance. For example, the perils associated with tilling unbroken land was averted by a spiritual leader (*chinganga*) or a chief with spiritual powers that, as people moved onto unknown lands, first 'cleansed the land', and thereafter emplaced the (matrilineal) spirit of the chief in the land to 'fertilize the soil'. It was through such ritual practices, rather than through legalistic procedure, that chiefs controlled land (Van Binsbergen 1981). One of Chief Liteta'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 continuously redrawn as people moved between sites of citemene cultivation.

Material practice and symbolic authority interlink in several ways. The first tree (*umufungo*) ought to be cut with blessed axe, invoking the succor of ancestral spirits (*ukulubulo lupe*). Customarily it is then the chief who decides on the date of firing (*kuoce fibula)*, symbolically marking the beginning of the agricultural year. A chief's authority was, in short, carried across geographical space by bodies and territorialized by toil and fire, producing social, political and spiritual territory (for analogous observations, see Herbst (2000). As such, 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. The spatiality of chiefly power was, in extension, forever fractional, always in the making, and in some cases eroded to the point of irrelevance thus giving way to new political-territorial formations (Chanock, 1985).

These lands were reached by commissioners of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in late 19th century. Sanctioned to enter into 'agreements' with 'tribal chiefs', these commissioners effectively traded promises of prosperity for rights in 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 (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 were assumed to follow from control over the land these bodies inhibited. To dwell in the territory was to submit to colonial authority; once the colonial state was instituted, consent consisted in residence (Galbraith, 1974: 220, see also Elden, 2013). This rendered the body politically passive, inhabiting a geography already written into possession of a sovereign authority. Control over material space was, in other words, assumed to extend 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 relationship was reversed. Land was not something that could be proprietarily 'held'; rather, control over material space was an effect of the abilities to govern the bodies inhabiting and moving across it (Meebelo, 1971). In this political arrangement, the body is politically active, with its material practices on the land (citemene in particular) reproducing relations of authority, thereby rendering space political.

From an administrative view, the African body was an impediment to centralized control. As the BSAC established control over these lands, the frequent and (from an administrative optic) 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 demanded a known and spatially located population. As expressed by one BSAC officer: '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' (BS32/1/14, Memo from the Secretary of Native Affairs, Aug. 1910). However, when BSAC administrators admonished that chiefs' authority would erode if they allowed their subject population to 'scatter over large tracts of land', chiefs blandly responded that 'the greater the number of villages, the greater the prestige of the chief' (Ranger, 1971: 27). The friction between these different territorial constructs and imaginaries came to define social struggles in early colonial Zambia, at the center of which was the colonial target of folding the African body into a spatial organization of rule that was legible to the apparatus of government.

In this reading, territory is exposed as already created by and consisting of bodily relations and practices: an already-thereness of the body as foundational to territoriality. It is against this background that I explore how the African body was tangled up in colonial administration. My analysis is organized around three key sites of colonial spatial power: the 'proper village', the tribal homeland and the colonial township, all three producing and challenging social differences around race, gender and bodily relations in material space.

5. The 'proper village'

The 'proper village', defined as 20 huts or more, was one of the first administrative spaces bounded by colonial power. It was introduced together with the banning of citemene in 1906, with the intention to recode chiefly territory and to fix African bodies in places wherein the payment of colonial taxes could be more easily enforced (Moore & Vaughan, 1994). The 'proper village' was both an administrative and a discursive construct. The English word 'village' was an approximation of the iciBemba term *mushi,* but their meanings diverge in important ways: while 'village' denotes place and fixity, 'mushi' signals a translocal and ambulatory kinship group with its social boundedness independent of any particular spatial location. Vestiges of this difference linger in today's Zambia, where a 'mushi' can dissolve (as a social unit) whereas 'the village' in which that mushi has homed can remain 'in place' (and vice versa). 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, inhabitants were allotted enclosed fields in the immediate vicinity of their dwellings, affixing land rights to a precise site, and instructed to build houses that were square instead of round. This architectural reordering wrote in material space new sexual and symbolic divisions of labor 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 A9/6/3 Report on housing, Oct. 1906). As the hearth was a symbolic site – a 'domestic shrine' – 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 (Rasing, 2001). New gender boundaries were inscribed in the material spaces that people were meant to occupy.

In an administrative optic, villagization brought people into more legible relations of power and production. The historical literature is relatively consistent in that most chiefs encouraged more permanent settlements, in part because they were promised a share of the taxes in return for their support and in part because it consolidated their realms (Meebelo, 1971). However, the archive tells of administrative problems with 'natives wandering off' (e.g. BS1 C3/3/3 TR, Kempe, Aug. 1908), to settle in the forests beyond the village boundaries where the rugged terrain provided ample opportunity for covert citemene cultivation, as well as spaces for resistance and rebellion. The situation evolved into what Moore and Vaughan (1994: 11) describe as a 'guerilla war between cultivators and administrators', with cultivators resisting sedentarization and administrators burning 'illegal' fields and farmsteads discovered outside their grid of intelligibility. In particular, the now 'illegal' citemene fields often lay at a great distance from the 'proper village' in

which people were registered, where seasonal dwellings, or *mitanda*, allowed people to reside on the citemene site during clearing and cropping. The mitanda emerged as an important 'maroon geography' (Winston 2020) where cultivators mixed their labor with ecology to create spatial arrangements to sustain life when possibilities for survival seemed foreclosed. For BSAC administrators, however, it became impossible to know where people resided; people might be registered in certain villages, but for part of the year lodge in the forest. Mitanda came to represent uncontrollability, a place located outside modern time and space. One BSAC officer commented:

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

In colonial conceptions of mitanda, material place and cultural images of backwardness were yoked together. In many ways, the most significant product of villagization was not the village but its antithetical outside, inhabited by the ungovernable and rebellious native. While the 'guerilla war' (Moore and Vaughan, 1994: 11) 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.

Here it is important to investigate race and gender as constructs emerging out of struggle. In 1909, amidst persistent anticolonial resistance, the citemene ban was modified: citemene was reallowed, but to be confined to the environs of a 'proper village', and no construction of mitanda was to be permitted. 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. Overseers (*kapaso*) were instructed to investigate the men working in the citemene fields. If a kapaso found a man accompanied by a woman in the sakwe, he was to be arrested and fined (KSD4/1, Vol. 2: Indaba at Chilonga, Feb. 1909).

The modification of the citemene did not only entrench 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 man and woman from sleeping together in the mitanda. Historical literatures (Vaughan, 2008; Rasing, 2001) contend that for the farming population, sex, soil and the social body were 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. Rasing (2001: 72) writes that in 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.[1]

If we rely on anthropological accounts of bodily encounters endowing land and bush with social meaning, we should also understand the *mitanda* ban as a form of territorialization that not only introduced gender as a category of rule and spatially fixed sexual divisions of labor, but also rewrote intimate relations of both social and material reproduction.

Yet the colonial construction of the 'proper village' and the policing of its outside did not only create a gendered territorial order and rescale its borders onto bodily relations. Also racial imageries would emerge out of these struggles, with the bodies of men in particular becoming 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 B5/8/3 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 A2/6/9 TR, Kaoma, June 1909). Increasingly, spatial movement and 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 A7/7/9 Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs). Here it becomes clear how territorialization – the writing of power relations on the ground (Peluso & Lund, 2011: 673) – 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 where race was assembled both discursively and materially, bound up in spatial and symbolic practices, and written onto both bodies and landscapes.

Yet, while social particularization was an important resource with which the BSAC constructed the world, conceptions of race, gender and village were repeatedly challenged by the movement, practices and recalcitrance of the very bodies that they defined. 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', it was said to be in 'his nature' to 'swing the axe' (BS1 A7/7/12 Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs). Historians concur that citemene was gendered in particular ways. *Kutema* (to cut down trees) was mostly done by men, while *kuanse fibula* (to collect and pile branches) was mostly done by women (Rasing, 2001), and we might be right to assume that the citemene fields cut out of the forests was an important symbol of male autonomy, as Richards (1995[1939]) maintained. Yet, as skillfully argued by Moore and Vaughan (1994), it was first when citemene was banned that being a man became intertwined with the right to cut tress. As such, citemene acquired new symbols and political meanings in a contested colonized context, so that masculinity was re-inscribed amid struggles over land and symbolic control over territory (cf. Nightingale, 2011). Two conclusions follow. First, 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 were now re-expressed as a material exercise of rights to land and forest. Second, masculinity became a function of territoriality, performed through material practices of cultivation.

Using bodies to think with reveals the intimate frontiers of village contestation: the hamlet, the mitanda, the citemene field. Attending to the ways symbols and material environments become entangled collapses the distinction between intimate and political space, showing how bodies become enrolled in territorializing practices. It also troubles tales of BSAC territorialization as a hegemonic project (Chipungu, 1992), showing instead how 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. In this next section I push these insights a little further through an examination of the tribal 'homeland' by showing how the African body became an important site on which the construction of the emerging colonial settler state took place.

6. The tribal homeland

The 'proper village' never materialized as envisioned by the BSAC. Administrators were too few to enforce the new regulations, and both bailiffs and tax collectors were repeatedly beaten when policing forests and citemene fields (Meebelo, 1971). In 1924 Northern Rhodesia was proclaimed a Protectorate of the United Kingdom, and the administration was taken over by a governor (Sir Herbert Stanley). Stanley had

[1] This symbolism echoes in today's Zambia. In Lenje Chiefdom a mitanda (or sakwe) 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.

previously served in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa, and he firmly believed that Northern Rhodesia should be developed into a 'white man's country' (Roberts, 1976: 183). The most attractive lands were set aside for white settlers, named Crown Land. Separate lands believed to meet to the requirements of the African population was identified and subdivided into Native Reserves. The relocation of Africans into reserves (displacing some 60 000 people) corresponded to the introduction of indirect rule, founded on the principle that the African population could be controlled through a proxy of 'tribal chiefs', each governing a distinct tribe in a distinct space, the tribal 'homeland' (Roberts, 1976: 183). This process is well-rehearsed in Africanist scholarship: administrators and anthropologists chronicled each chief's history, installed origin stories and established tribal-ethnic boundaries, casting assumed inherent tribal traits as a ceremonial recognition by the colonial administration of immemorial principles, thereby imbuing the tribal homeland with territorial authenticity (Chanock, 1985; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). What has received far less attention is how the colonized body was rendered tantamount to place, collapsed into it, making it all the more difficult to move beyond the organizing principles of race. At the same time, race and tribe were never certain achievements, but always open to movement of the bodies that the colonial office defined.

Let us start with the body of the 'tribal chief'. Prior to the 1930 s, 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 took physical form (Crehan, 1997: 48). This changed with the territorialization of tribal belonging. As indirect rule rested upon the recognition of chiefly authority (if the authority of chiefs diminished, the settler state as a whole would be undermined), chiefs needed to be cast as 'men of authority vested with powers not possessed by common people' (Negi, 2011: 214). This included, as Zambian historians have noted, inculcating 'cleanliness, punctuality and personal conduct' to discipline bodily practice (Chipungu, 1992: 59). In addition, 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 stave (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 quite literally stripped of his chiefly apparel.

The archive tells of chiefs clamoring for these artifacts (CNP3/11/3: 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 Nshiki District Office 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 that the Ministry should explore the 'grounds for [Chief Kapwepwe's] decommissioning' if he continued in his 'refusal to represent the tribe' by not wearing the 'official dress given to him' (CNP1/5/2: Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Feb. 1934). In these ways, the political work deployed to entrench the Chief as a legitimate authority – a precondition for the settler state – worked not (only) through the codification of social difference in law (Mamdani, 1996), but through the materiality of his body. 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, in short, interfaces between space and politics, public sites on which the construction of the colonial state and its tribal boundaries took place.

Also the racialized figure of the native body was enrolled in the construction of tribal territory. The archive contains a remarkable number of reports penned by officers and anthropologists touring the reserves and describing the status of each tribe, and most accounts include detailed descriptions of bodily conditions. 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' (ZNA2/936, Kasempa TR no. 2, 1947). Bodies were separated by their different qualities, with tribal particularization leading to conceptions of different bodies being suitable for different work in different places, such as the Lovale people considered to be 'unclean' and therefore suitable as night-soil removers in human settlements (Siegel, 1988; Negi, 2013). Reports like this abound, and they all describe bodies that were reduced to vectors for backwardness: the native body became something that could be studied in efforts to understand the tribe as a whole.

What is being mapped and narrated in these reports are people's bodies as carriers of racial distinction, with poverty and social distress figuring as biological flaws (see McClintock, 1995: 48). Colonial administrators rarely spoke of the fact that it was the relocation of the African population that *produced* bodies as different. We know now that most 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. The construction of 'proper villages' and tribal 'homelands' meant that such movement became severely restricted, and neither soils nor trees were given enough time to regenerate (Roberts, 1976). Thus, what was inscribed onto people's bodies were the effects of poor material-ecological conditions (disease, dirtiness, malnutrition), by colonial officers taken as markers of *social* difference (idleness, backwardness, unmanliness). Living in a reserve geography, surveilled by touring officers, meant being exposed to the risk of the outward environment entering the inside of the body (Noxolo, 2022). From an administrative perspective, 'tribal natives' not only came to wear social difference on the body, they *became* bodies (Fanon 1967[1952). In these ways, the African body was implicated in the production of tribal territory as 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.

Race and territory were produced together, both lacking independent existence as objects of politics and social imagination. Still, bodies territorialized into spatial categories are not pacified bodies, but potent bodies, carrying the ability to unsettle spaces imbued with colonial necessities (Massey, 2005). A starting point for rendering visible Black spatial agency is marronage, the practice of extricating oneself from enslavement and making place outside the cartographies of racial violence (Winston, 2021). In colonial Zambia, a source of continuous administrative concerns revolved around the belief that the authority of the chiefs was eroding, which allowed Africans to simply leave their designated lot by foot to break new land elsewhere. Even though movement between the two domains was regulated, many Africans entered unoccupied Crown Land set aside for white settler – especially in the railway farming belt where rugged terrains provided for covert citemene cultivation – and created autonomous enclaves thereon (SEC2/1185: Natives on private estates, May 1932). For the colonial administration, autonomous Africans posed a significant threat to orderly rule as they challenged the reciprocal exclusivity of Native Reserve and Crown Land, and the racial basis upon which their differentiation rested. This was discussed in some detail during a Governor's Conference in Livingstone in 1933, where the following was concluded:

> 'natives occupying Crown Land are beyond the control of their tribal chief … The dignity of the chief is affected … conditions are not conductive to good order or the maintenance of tribal authority' (SEC2/1168: Governors' Conference, June 1933).

Of particular concern was what administrators labeled 'detribalization', as a 'detribalized native' in the context of indirect rule would quite

literally be an 'ungovernable native'. These territorial struggles were not only rescaled onto the bodies of chiefs as explicated above, but also onto the bodies of those who escaped the confines of the tribal homeland. I shall illustrate this with a story that Thandiwe, a woman I befriended in Chisamba, told me. When she was young, sometime in the 1940s, she was one of those who moved outside the tribal area in which she was registered to settle on a piece of untenanted land along the line of rail. When the taxmen found her, Thandiwe refused to pay them, insisting that 'only villagers' are obliged to pay tax. Thandiwe's assertion was based on the notion that she was outside tribal territory and 'in the forest': for her, tribal boundaries were written on the land, meaning that one could exit tribal territory simply by walking away. Her conception of 'villagers' was not shared by the tax collector. One of the taxmen grabbed a chicken by one of its legs, asserting, Thandiwe recalled, that 'all people are villagers … this chicken will be your tax if you refuse to pay'. Thandiwe got hold of the chicken by its other leg, and even after receiving a blow she did not let go. A tug of war ensued, with the chicken 'going in two pieces', as she put it to me. The tax collectors left without their levy and when I asked her why, she pointed to her eye and replied, 'there was blood coming out of here, they saw suffering.'.

Here, the body itself is the 'geography closest in' to be claimed and administered. At the same time, the body also stretches outward, beyond the body and intimate experience of violence, toward the racial regimes of which this encounter is an effect. Thandiwe's story points to the limits of an understanding of bodies as mere surfaces etched with social message, what Longhurst (2001: 23) call a 'linguistic territory'. 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. Her bleeding marked an unpredictable interstice in the boundary between her body and what lies beyond, and in its seepage lay the danger of contaminating the space of bureaucratic encounter with emotion and abjection (Longhurst, 2001), which Thandiwe interpreted as making the taxmen 'scared', resulting in the tax collectors fleeing the scene. Her body and the material yet permeable boundary between the inside and the outside of her body had become both the 'scripts' of oppression and means of resistance. My intention is not to take Thandiwe's experience as a springboard to theoretical assertion; rather, encounters such as Thandiwe's tell of the complex and multiscalar conditions and interactions through which bodies become tangled up in racial regimes and the material landscape, and how people *embody* territory and carry its symbolic boundaries across geographical space.

Previous theorizing on the reification of chiefly authority in tribal 'homelands' offers limited conceptual resources for understanding the scalar ambiguity of living and moving in tribal geographies. Keeping the body in analytical view shows how 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 (Nightingale, 2011). Yet locating the body in this tribal order reveals not only how tribal rule was upheld though a topography of power operating on racialized bodies (chief's bodies, dirty bodies, unmanly bodies) but also how bodily movement draw alternative lines that extended beyond the corporeal and into administrative regimes and become part of geographies and histories of resistance. I now turn to the colonial 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 migration into towns redrew village boundaries around constructs of gender and linked up the control of bodily movement and sexuality to an administrative anxiety over the health and wealth of the imperial body politic.

7. The township

Both the 'proper village' and the tribal 'homeland' were founded upon a sedentarist cultural politics that fixed bodies in space (Malkki, 1992). Yet, the introduction of hut tax (followed by dog tax, radio tax and wheel tax; the latter evidently introduced to stall disorderly movement) and the eviction of Africans from the most fertile lands deterritorialized farmers from subsistence farming and produced a ready supply of wage labor (Roberts, 1976). Many men sought employment in the mines or on the plantations along the line of rail (Meebelo, 1971), creating a patriarchalism of township territory that further entrenched gendered exclusions. While men ventured into a 'modern' urban space,[2] women remained tied to a rural economy as symbols of social reproduction and rural domesticity, and charged with the duty to uphold 'tradition' in the villages (Parpart, 1986).

At the same time, 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. 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 olds habits and religious checks and become a disintegrating, destructive element (Melland, 1923: 305).

This 'danger' permeates colonial reports from the 1920 s and onwards. As Gould (1997: 156) notes: 'the sudden and massive incidence of migratory labor to towns, mines, and plantations … 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). 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. These accounts mirror the conception of the tribal homeland as an authentic native space, legitimizing the notion that townsmen were simply expected to 'go home', to be reterritorialized into their 'tribal' environment after retirement or termination of contract, inscribing them into temporalities and spatialities that were disjointed to the point of giving the native population the illusion of being territorially separated.

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 Native Authorities introduced laws that permitted a woman to divorce her husband if he had been absent for more than 30 months (Moore & Vaughan, 1994: 166). This law was evidently intended to encourage men to return 'home' quickly to prevent their wives from divorcing them. However, these laws proved to be ineffective, in large 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 husband (Parpart, 1986), but soon reports emerged around a problem known as 'unattached women', sometimes divorced, sometimes unmarried, but always 'unattached' (Moore & 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 (ZA2/4/1 Awemba: TR Nov. 1929)

Fears of the 'detribalized' male mineworker who was a 'menace in town and a liability in his rural village' were paralleled by 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

[2] Yet 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 (SEC2/786 Kasama: TR Nov. 1936).

prevent women from leaving the rural villages. The administration installed roadblocks along the major bus routes to stop women from travelling to town (SEC/1350 NR police inspector, Fort Jameson commissioner of the police, Feb. 1949). 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 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 commissioner of the police, Lusaka, Nov. 1941), altering the frontier of their bodies as symbols for rural domesticity. By deploying one's body as male, the checkpoint became a site where women challenged the boundary between the bodily substrate of sex and wider-scale relations of gender.

The influx of women in towns was a direct threat to the territorial integrity of both village and township, which colonial reports from this time also make apparent. As on 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' (CNP1/7/1: Letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Sept. 1940). Implicit here 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 the matrimony, invented as a political technology to police the relation between men and women. When reaching town, most women took 'husbands', some more than one, to avoid repatriation (Parpart 1968). Initially, for a woman to be recognized as a wife she had to live with a man for one week and cook his food (Spearpoint, 1937: 37).[3] In many ways, women's abilities to stay in town was arbitrated in the kitchen, with cooking and caring for a husband becoming the main strategy for evading rural confinement. Soon, however, legislation was passed that branded a woman who had been married three times a prostitute, giving the mine police legal means to ban her from town (Acc.72/13: Native Courts of the Copperbelt, Mufilira, May 1939). The socio-legal category of the prostitute was thus a product of an administrative effort to protect urban space from dangerous elements (and to protect rural space as a site of social reproduction). As such, both wife and prostitute were instruments of territorial control that bridged the scale 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 – enable key insights into how the township and its boundaries became rescaled into kitchens, marital relations and onto the bodies of women. Yet these processes were not contained within the township itself. For the colonial administration, controlling sexual relations between men and women was paramount for maintaining the order of difference between the modern and traditional, which, in turn, was the foundation upon which the reproduction of the colonial state 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 in ways that posed challenges for the regime that maintained them.

8. Conclusion

In previous scholarship on the spatiality of settler colonialism, of which Mamdani's (1996) is the principal exemplar, structural binaries are seen to separate exclusionary spaces. I have offered an alternative reading of colonial settler territory at the scale of the body, showing how myriad colonial boundaries were rescaled onto people's bodies, and naturalized, negated and negotiated through bodily practice and performance. As my analysis underscores, territory is not external to the body, not simply bodily experienced, but extend onto and out from the body as a site of subjugation and resistance. As such, it offers a counterpoint to narratives of settler territory as an expanding imperial frontier, seeing instead the entangled existence of alternative practices of territorialization and the pervasive ambiguity permeating categories such as the 'proper' village, 'homeland' and township. The construction of each of these spaces (territories) was contingent upon the making of the African body as an object and subject of colonial administration. Bodies – chiefs' bodies, 'ghost-like' bodies, dirty bodies, unmanly bodies, unmarried bodies – became important bearers of symbolic value, subjected to racial and sexual regimes, all of which took on territorial effects in the making of the settler space. In the 1910s cutting trees became part of masculinist performances as a reaction against sedentarization, in the 1920s poor ecological conditions became racial markers once they left their imprints on the human body, and in the 1930s women became tangled up in kitchens and marital relations to secure access to town. Using bodies to think with makes visible how race and gender were not ready-made rubrics to be written onto the landscape; rather, their particularities emerged in the relational context of people's practical engagement with their material surroundings and in their efforts to move out of relations of colonial domination.

Practices of resistance and recalcitrance have certainly been observed and retold in Zambian historiography in ways that decenter the state as a privileged site of producing and governing space (Meebelo, 1971; Mainga, 1973; Chipungu, 1992). In a regional context, work in South Africa show how people transformed spaces of exclusion into spaces of liberation, for example by reconfiguring the boundary of the shantytown as a barrier marking the limits of state power rather than a material and symbolic expression of apartheid repression (Bozzoli 2004). In this scholarship the body animates both closures and opening in settler space. Pirie (1992, for example, show how apartheid transportation infrastructure between 'homeland' and township created bodily fatigue in ways that stifled anticolonial revolt. Jelly-Schapiro (2014), on the other hand, notes how such spaces were inverted into sites of resistance by 'staffriders' who claimed the exterior of trains and busses as a space of aesthetic antiapartheid rebellion. This paper has expanded on such dynamics. In my analysis, the subject-bodies defined by colonial spatial power (the sedentary villager, the tribal native, the rural domesticated woman) refused or ignored the appellation assigned to them by government and instead became counter-colonial bodies (the non-villager, the detribalized native, the unattached urban woman). Administrative efforts to control counter-colonial bodies were not merely 'extra-ordinary' work, but central to the making of race, gender and territory; simultaneously as bringing counter-colonial bodies 'into place' was paramount for maintaining the imperial body politic, colonial conceptions of race, gender and territory were repeatedly challenged by the unruliness of the very bodies that they defined. Keeping 'the geography closest in' (Longhurst, 1997) in analytical view shows, in short, how resistance is not an aberrant outgrowth of an ordering colonial polity, but woven into its foundation, with a colonial government attempting to produce territorial order in the very act through which it creates conditions for the contestation of that ordering. Colonial settler territory – and it racial and gendered boundaries – must be understood as an effect of such iterative struggles.

In a broader optic, this argument speaks to scholarship that posits domains of social and political life that somehow remain protected from the incursions of colonialism and seeks to find in these spaces resources for anticolonial politics (e.g. Scott, 2009). While important for showing that colonial power is uneven in its effects, such studies often assume the existence of separate spaces (public/private, colonial/precolonial, modern/premodern) between which subjects consciously move.

[3] In 1944 that marriage certificates were introduced as instruments of urban control, yet these documents were often forged and traded among women in town (Parpart 1968).

Analyzing intimate geographies, in contrast, show 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. In settler territory, counter-colonial spatial practice – in my analytic flowing from peoples' bodies – operate through (not from outside) spatial modes of colonial power.

As critical geographers mark today the troubled lines on which a decolonized society will be organized, locating the body as a place of struggle makes visible how embattled social spaces contain residues not only of colonial power, but also of anticolonial struggle. These are very much ongoing struggles, in Zambia, South Africa and beyond, and while the paper speaks to history my hope is that situating a critique in colonial history can inform geographical analysis in the colonial present. In this regard, Black and Indigenous scholarship lends considerable credence to how articulations of race and indigeneity span geographical and corporeal topographies in ways that entangle the genome, body and nation in ongoing territorial erasures and practices of racism within settler space (Winston, 2021; Radcliffe 2017). In juxtaposition, this paper has used historical experience to decenter settler territory to the bodily practices and performances that constitute it, but also to open it up to a broader set of political values and subjectivities from a positionality of struggle. From this vantagepoint, my hope is that we can walk backwards into the future to expose the occlusions occasioned by the colonial present and make visible the body as a lively and contested site of both colonial appropriation and anticolonial struggle.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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