How persistent, that tropical blue sky

Poetic verses

Colophon

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Carin Vijfhuizen



In appreciation of a few remarkable women, who resemble Makopa:

Ursula von der Leyen Christiane Amanpour Jitske Kingma

An overview

Introduction

- 1. My homestead
- 2. Families in homesteads in a village
- 3. Valorisation: Getting full value out of the harvest
- 4. Mediation and power: healers, prophets and witches
- 5. Formal and informal governance
- 6. Management of irrigation schemes
- 7. By way of concluding

Summary

Introduction

Unless I emigrated, I couldn't become a livestock farmer, because my parents had no land. I was not selected for a degree in veterinary medicine, so I couldn't be a vet in Africa either. Instead, I studied for a BSc in Economics and Animal Husbandry at the University of Applied Sciences in Leeuwarden (BSc). Then my interest shifted to the people who practise agriculture in the Netherlands, Europe and Africa. I chose to do a Master's in Agricultural Development Sociology (MSc) at the then Agricultural University of Wageningen. Those studies formed the stepping stones towards a sociological and anthropological PhD research project. My published dissertation 'The people you live with' (2002) is about everyday life in an African village in Zimbabwe, where I lived for regular periods between 1994 and 1998.

I have often wondered who reads a dissertation, apart from the supervisors of the PhD thesis, the PhD committee and a few students who are also doing research on that specific theoretical field, theme or country. At the end of 2020 I thought, let me translate my dissertation into poetic verses, in order to make this hidden treasure more accessible. Because although a lot is changing in the world, much remains the same too.

The verses in this collection provide a fascinating picture of everyday life in the village. However, the story transcends the village boundaries. This collection is about the nature of daily life in general: about giving and taking space and about harmony and conflict, symbolised by rain and drought.

List of Shona words used

Ambuya: grandma

Chiutsi: a housewarming party; literally: smoke

Chibuku: locally brewed beer

Danga: last phase of the bridewealth payments; lit-

erally: cattle kraal, a small fenced area where

the cattle are kept during the night

Genitor: the man who provides half of the genes; the

aim is to extend the family, it is not a love re-

lationship

Go go goi: knock knock knock

Humwe: women cook to mobilise labour, a humwe

party

Kumusha: home

Kurova hoko: establishing a homestead; a first stake is

hammered into the ground (a ceremonial act)

Kurova guva: a ritual or ceremony to welcome home the

spirit of the deceased and to beautify the grave, sometimes by erecting a tombstone and/or cementing the grave in case it was not

executed; literally: to hit the grave

Lobola: bridewealth in Southern Africa

Mabvuri: evil spirits that are sent to someone

Madzimambo: paramount chiefs

Madziteteguru: the spirits/ancestors of deceased 'senior

aunts'

Makopa: spirit medium of the Mutema chieftaincy;

Makopa was the tenth deceased paramount

chief

Mambo: paramount chief

Mashavi: spirits consulted by traditional healers or vil-

lage doctors

Madzviti: Shangaan warriors from the past

Mudizimu: family ancestral spirit

Mupfuwhira: love potion with magical powers

Murungu: white person Musha: homestead

Mutape: village head or village chief

Mutema: name of a chieftaincy; literally: a person that

cuts or chops (Mutemi), from the verb kute-

ma: to chop

Musikavanhu: name of a chieftaincy; literally: market (musi-

ka) people (*vanhu*)

Mutorwa: daughter-in-law; literally: a person carried

from outside in(to the family)

N'anga: traditional healer; village doctor

Ndau: one of the five groups of the Shona people in

Zimbabwe

Ngozi a revengeful spirit of a murdered person in

the family

Nhaka: levirate marriage, a brother of a deceased

man marries - inherits the widow

Nzuzu: mermaid

Pfuma: bridewealth among Ndau-Shona

Shavi: a spirit that is consulted by a traditional heal-

er or village doctor

Shiriyedenga: the first paramount chief of the Mutema

chieftaincy; literally: bird of the sky

Shona: the five groups of Shona people in North,

East and Central Zimbabwe; the Ndebele people live in the South West of Zimbabwe

Svikai: come in please

Tawona: irrigation scheme in Manesa's floodplains; lit-

erally: we shall see

Vadzimu: family ancestral sprits

Vatape: village heads

Vatete: aunt (the sister of - the husband or - father (in

law) or - grandfather (in law))

Zvakanaka: it is all right - goodZvipunha: spirits of cropsZvirombo: spirits of animals

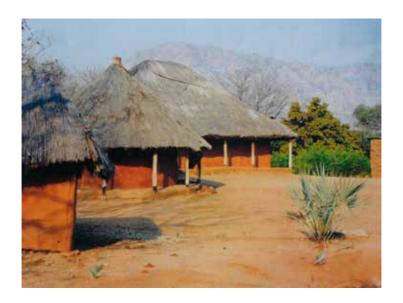
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1. My homestead



Three roofs of grass and a shed of small boulders.