

‘The Invisible Boundaries of the Karanga: Considering Pre-Colonial Shona Territoriality and its meanings in Contemporary Zimbabwe’

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The Karanga who settled in southern Zimbabwe in the early 19th century did so in waves that replaced or reformed the territorial configurations of autochthons. A distinguishing feature of their settlement patterns is the tendency to cluster around mountains and their oral traditions speak of the distribution of mountains rather than land. For these people the idea of a territorial centre was important and ideal for keeping the periphery it controlled as elastic as possible. The boundaries of the Karanga thus remained forever porous and constantly shifting as the various groups moved, fought or accommodated each other. Despite the imposition of rigid borders in the colonial and post-colonial periods these concepts of unbounded land defined by political centres continue to feature in contemporary debates over resettlement and restitution in Zimbabwe. This paper considers the basis of Karanga territoriality in the centre-periphery ideals of the pre-colonial period with a view to investigate the meanings of ‘borders’ and neighbourliness in southern Zimbabwe and how this has shaped history and claims to ownership amongst some chieftainships in the Masvingo district.

1.0 Introduction: Becoming Karanga

This paper discusses the territorial concepts of the Karanga, a subgroup of the Shona-speaking people of Zimbabwe. The term Karanga in itself is old and loaded. It carries both linguistic and ethnic overtones as much as it has acquired different territorial meanings over time. Today it refers to speakers of a dialect of the Shona language concentrated in the south-central parts of Zimbabwe who trace their ancestry to small bands of settlers that occupied this region in phases between the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. Between the 15th and late 18th centuries, literate Portuguese observers made reference to the greater part of the Zimbabwean plateau as ‘Mukaranga’, (the ‘land of the Karanga) and its inhabitants as the ‘VaKaranga.’¹ In this period however, a number of dynamics had shaped the ethnic and territorial configurations of this ‘Mukaranga’ chief amongst them being the demise of Great Zimbabwe from around 1450 which led to the formation of two competing

¹ S.I.G. Mudenge, *A Political History of Munhumutapa* (Zimbabwe Publishing House, Harare, 1988), p. 21.

and contemporaneous states on opposite ends of the plateau. The Mutapa state in the northeast emerged when the migrants from Great Zimbabwe conquered the northern Tavara (Tonga) groups and established a dynasty under Nyatsimba Mutota of the *Zhou/Samanyanga* totem. To the northwest other groups from Great Zimbabwe intermingled with the Kalanga speaking Leopard's Kopje people and established the Torwa dynasty based at Khami. To the Portuguese the Mutapa state was synonymous with 'Mukaranga' and the Khami state with 'Butwa' and these two regions have received a fair amount of coverage in their writings to the extent of overriding other key regions either to the south or east of both.² To a large extent 'Butwa' and 'Mukaranga' became the theatre of activity in which the Karanga identity was born and some historians who have been keen to talk of the 'Karanga empire' have been content to investigate it through the lens of the two zones.³ From the 1680s onwards a significant force inevitably brought these two previously autonomous regions together. A military movement under 'Dombolakonachimwango' or just 'Dombo' emerged within the Mutapa state and expanded westwards into Butwa. It took over the Khami capital, incorporated the Torwa chiefs and spread its tentacles across the entire northern and southern plateau to become the Rozvi 'empire' under Dombo's Changamire dynasty. In this paper, I submit that it is this Rozvi 'system' that gave rise to the contemporary ideal of the Karanga, their identity and spatial behavior. To understand contemporary Karanga territoriality we need a thorough understanding of the Rozvi system. It is a system born out of mobility, religious mysticism and political violence giving rise to the idea of a politico-religious core and a tributary periphery which was replicated in all its provinces. When the Rozvi empire collapsed in the 1840s, the Rozvi system did not die but remained intact and was the political and territorial model adopted by the scattered tributaries that formed the new Karanga identity and their concepts of borders.

2.0 The 'Rozvi System' and Macro Level Centre-Periphery Dynamics

Although in the historical record there were indeed a people who came to be known or described as Rozvi, they were not [and are still not] an ethnic group. They can best be described as a political class composed of four main totemic groups the *Moyo* -Moyondizvo, the Tumbare- Bepe *Moyo*, the Mavhudzi-*Shava* and the *Shoko*-Nerwande who constituted the ruling elite.⁴ There were several other peripheral totemic groups that did not necessarily belong to the main four but still consider themselves vaRozvi to this day.⁵ The Rozvi identity emerged chiefly from a warrior/client class known as the *Nyai*, a term initially used to refer

² E.g. Dande, Chidima, Manyika, Barwe, Sedanda and Venda.

³ See for instance Chigwedere, A., *The Karanga Empire*, Harare, Books For Africa, 1985.

⁴ S.I.G. Mudenge, *A History of the Rozvi Empire*, forthcoming; see also Mudenge, 'An Identification of the Rozvi', *Rhodesian History* vol.5, (1974), p.29. I am grateful to Dr. Mudenge for sharing his vast knowledge on the subject and discussing with me his work in progress.

⁵ Rozvi dynasties of various *Shoko* totems dominate northwestern Zimbabwe in the Deka, Gwai and Zambezi areas, a significant number of them forming the Nambya speaking groups, the Mafungafutsi area of Gokwe is dominated by Rozvi groups of varying *shava* totems such as Chireya. More groups identifying themselves as Rozvi can be found further south between the Tugwi and Runde rivers.

to soldiers of the Mutapa army but was gradually used interchangeably with the term Rozvi itself.⁶ ‘For the Rozvis are Nyais...’, wrote Fr. Francisque Marconnes, ‘...the partially Tebeleized Nyais of Empandeni, in the Mangwe district of Matabeleland, positively assert that the (Ama) Lozwi are identical with the Aba (Nyai). Their own tradition is that the (Ama) Lozwi and the (Ma) Karanga were long ago one people under a great chief who was called Mambo or Monomotapa *sic*’⁷

Dombo certainly did hail from a military background, being one of the commanders of the Mutapa army. He was therefore a *muNyai*. In his conquest of Butwa, he is remembered in the oral traditions of the Kalanga as ‘Nechasike’ the leader of the VaNyai who conquers the powerful magician chief of the Kalanga, Chibundule.⁸ Although he successfully generates the new Rozvi identity under his Changamire dynasty, the Nyai identity was never totally supplanted. Even after the collapse of the Rozvi state former Rozvi territory (particularly to the south) was constantly referred to by Europeans as ‘BaNyailand’, or simply the land of the ‘Makalakas’, a corruption of Karanga. But apart from simply being military people what really constituted Nyai identity and how did Rozvi elitism transform or modify it?

Anthropological studies of the vaNyai locate the origins of Nyai identity in client relationships formed by ‘big men’ and dependent young men through uxori-local marriage arrangements. Under the arrangements known in modern Shona as ‘kutema ugariri’, such wealthy men were able to offer their sisters and daughters as wives to young men in exchange for labour. The young men, in turn, established a dependent relationship with their hosts, expanding their activities to become henchmen, guards, errand runners, spies; and as the sphere of influence of their hosts expand, councillors.⁹ They in turn became ‘big men’ with their own vaNyai and with an enlargement of scale this process gave rise to a universal identity of bondsmen and their families that translated to being a Nyai.

After Dombo’s triumph it was also necessary for him and his ruling clique to shed off the Nyai identity and assume a new one, that of ‘Rozvi’, a fluid identity that could be achieved by anyone regardless of their totem as long as they had achieved the requisite social status. Rozviness was an enlargement of scale of the Nyai identity and it was more elaborate because it now dealt with an empire level administration which appealed to more sophistication. This was achieved through two main strategies; appropriating a religious cult and establishing an elaborate tributary network.

2.1 *The ‘Mwari’ Cult within the ‘Rozvi System’*

There exists no formal knowledge of the functions of the Mwari cult prior to the coming of the Ndebele in the 1830s. Its origins are debatable with some scholars believing that it may have originated at Great Zimbabwe together with the Mhondoro (ancestral spirit) cult but became dominant in the southern parts of the country as an oracular movement that had also

⁶ Posselt, *Fact and Fiction*, (Books of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, 1935) p.135

⁷ F. Marconnes, ‘The Rozvis or Destroyers’ *Native Affairs Department Annual* (1933), p.73.

⁸ P.J. Wentzel, *Nau Dzabakalanga: A History of the Kalanga vol. 1* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 1983), pp. 11-16.

⁹ C.S. Lancaster, ‘Ethnic Identity, History and “Tribe” in the Middle-Zambezi Valley’, *American Ethnologist*, vol. 1 no. 4, 1975, p.718.

incorporated ancestral elements after it moved to the Matopos shrines. The Mhondoro cult achieved more influence in the northern areas. Ngwabi Bhebe's work details the relationship of the Mwari cult with the Ndebele and Ranger's concentrates on its role in the 1896/7 Ndebele/Shona risings.¹⁰ Daneel attempted to use its contemporary structure to extrapolate its functions in the pre-Nguni period but relied principally on the functions of one shrine (Wirirani) out of nearly twelve of them both within and outside the Matopos cult centre. In his analysis however, Daneel explains the centralised nature of the cult as being the main attraction of the cult to the Rozvi kings who exploited and elaborated this for political purposes.¹¹ To him the cult operated like a 'secret service' through its offices of the 'Eye' *ziso*, the 'Ear' *zheve* and the 'Mouth' *muromo*. The 'Eye' was the most important office controlling the external organisation of the cult and it was an office reserved for one of the Rozvi kinsmen. So indeed when the Rozvi empire was at its peak...

...the cult, then in possession of several major shrines in the Matopos, consolidated its wide influence. Its political significance, too, grew as it became increasingly important for affiliated Shona chiefs to demonstrate their loyalty to the Rozvi kings. One of the ways of doing so was by regularly sending messengers *vanyai* to Matonjeni (Matopos) with pleas for rain, to consult *Mwari* on successions to chieftainship and to dedicate *mbongas* [female messengers] and *hossanahs* [male messengers] from the far off districts to the service of this God. In a sense, Mwari now became the *God of the priests and chiefs*. [emphasis in original]¹²

The Mwari cult, as a High God cult worked through but subordinated the tribal spirits of the tributary chieftaincies though not completely silencing them.¹³ The collapse of the Rozvi state under pressures from various Nguni groups did not have a similar effect on the Mwari cult system because the Ndebele who eventually conquered the Rozvi state preserved the cult intact and probably adapted its provincial networks and that of the Rozvi state to their own tributary system.¹⁴

2.2 The Tributary Network

The Rozvi are famed for having brought to life a sophisticated tributary system that was adapted by all their successors including the Ndebele and the British South Africa Company. Again most scholars believe it was linked to their religious mysticism. 'I am inclined to think...' wrote Charles Bullock, an early colonial administrator, '...that this strong influence [of the Rozvi] had a supernatural origin, and that the WaRozwi (sic) dominance with its privileges of appointing the Chiefs of other tribes came not so much from any superiority, military or otherwise, as from their organized institution of the Mwari cult'.¹⁵ Posselt's ideas

¹⁰ N.M.B. Bhebe, 'The Ndebele and Mwari Before 1893: A Religious Conquest of the Conquerors by the Vanguished' in J. M. Schoffeleers (ed.) *The Guardians of the Land: Essays on Central African Territorial Cults* (Mambo Press, Gweru, 1979), T. O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* (Heinemann, London, 1967).

¹¹ M. L. Daneel, *The God of the Matopo Hills: An Essay on the Mwari Cult of Rhodesia* (Mouton, The Hague, 1970), p. 24.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 26.

¹³ M.L. Daneel, *African Earthkeepers Vol. 1 Interfaith Mission in Earth-Care* (Unisa Press, Pretoria 1998), p. 30.

¹⁴ Bhebe, 'The Ndebele and Mwari before 1893'.

¹⁵ Bullock, *The Mashona*, (Juta, Cape Town 1928) p.41.

paid particular emphasis to the manner in which this Rozvi empire was managed, which was principally by way of appointments through the ceremony of *kugadza ushe* (installing chiefs).¹⁶ He also elaborated the administrative system of the Rozvi including the nature of tribute and its collection. Later historians like Mudenge writing in the 1970s found much of the picture painted by Posselt to be plausible and he was able to show that the Rozvi did actually appoint regional ‘governors or representatives’ and that Rozvi soldiers ‘visited’ any vassal chief who did not pay his tribute.¹⁷ Mudenge also expands Bullock’s picture of the Rozvi’s ability to control vassal chiefs through their religious power. He confirms the cohesive role of religion in the Rozvi empire and the superior position of the priesthood in the *Mambo*’s council as well as its active involvement in the investiture of vassal chiefs.¹⁸ The Rozvi did not only have the final say on the appointment of a tributary chief, the chief had to literally travel to the Rozvi capital for official appointment. Each of the chieftaincies had to follow the Rozvi ‘adelphic collateral’ succession system which served as a model for all tributary chiefs. This involved a system where the eldest son succeeded the father after which all the brothers succeeded in a row until the first son of the eldest brother succeeded and the system was repeated over generations. Indeed this system never worked within the nuclear Rozvi state itself as evidenced by the number of succession disputes that ripped apart the state, but it was a principle to be followed in the vassal chieftaincies. Rozvi officers participated directly in the collection of tribute from these chiefs and administered the ‘poison ordeal’ to execute those chiefs who failed to meet their requirements.¹⁹ Again this became an established culture and when the Rozvi state crumbled it continued amongst these tributaries as they scattered around the plateau in a process that created the new Karanga.

The Rozvi concept thus described certainly fits the basic centre-periphery theories explaining spatial behavior universally where core areas become the net consumers of the products of the periphery and are the dominant partners in the network of political relationships while the peripheries are the net providers and the dominated partners.²⁰ The decline of the Rozvi core is however interesting in that although it gives way to a new power (the Ndebele) with their own core, it leaves behind an intact political culture in the periphery that continually uses the models set by the Rozvi on a micro scale and give rise to a new Karanga identity.

3.O. The ‘New’ Karanga and the Micro-Level Concepts of Territory

By the beginning of the 19th century a number of factors contributed to the demise of the once powerful Rozvi state. Chief amongst them were succession disputes that led to several wars that left the state severely weakened. Key groups forming the core of the Rozvi elite began to migrate outside the state’s nuclear area such as the Mutinhima and Jiri houses, equally, there

¹⁶ Posselt, *Fact and Fiction*, p.140.

¹⁷ S.I. Mudenge, ‘The Role of Foreign Trade in the Rozvi Empire: A Reappraisal’, *Journal of African History*, xv, 3 (1974), p. 383.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p382.

¹⁹ See the deposition of the Ngowa chief Kuvhirimara in .M. Hove, ‘Notes on the VaNgowa Tribe’, *NADA*, 20, (1943), pp.41-5.

²⁰ T. C. Champion, ‘Introduction’, in T.C. Champion (ed.) *Centre and Periphery: Comparative Studies in Archaeology* (Unwin Hyman, London, 1989), p. 14.

was an evident fallout between the political leadership and the Mwari cult and soon the final blow came in the four years between 1824 and 1828. In this period, more than four Nguni groups attacked the Rozvi state each leaving the state devastated until the flight and eventual capture of the Rozvi Mambo Chirisamhuru by the Ndebele. This triggered a new wave of migrations by groups who came to be identified as the new Karanga by virtue of their choosing to occupy areas controlled by former key vassals of the Rozvi and organize their political structures along the lines of the Rozvi although on a micro-scale. Most of the groups that settle in the south do so from three main centres Mbire ya Svosve in the northeast, Old Buhera in the central plateau and Kiteve in the south-east. They are identifiable as *Shumba* (Lion), *Mhofu-Shava* (Eland) and the *Moyo* (Heart) groups respectively. The *Shumba* groups all emerged from Mbire ya Sosve near Budjga and split into the Mhari (Nhema, Bere, Rera and Chivi) who settled between the Tugwi and Runde rivers, Charumbira, Jichidza and Nyakunhuwa who settled between the Tugwi and Save rivers. The *Mhofu* group is composed of break-away groups from Mbiru-Nyashanu's vuHera (Buhera) and include Munyaradzi in the Soti-Popoteke river valleys, the Mapanzure settled in the Tugwi- Musuka-Musogwezi waterways and the Matenda across the Ngezi river. Lastly the *Moyo* are largely Duma clans dominating the Mutirikwi, i.e. Murinye, Shumba-Chekai and Mugabe. To this group can also be added Nyajena. They all time their movements to fill in the vacuum created by the Rozvi retreat and the confusion created by continued Nguni presence in the form of the Ndebele in the west and the Gaza in the east. It must be acknowledged that this turmoil actually shapes their attitude to territory and they all formulate their political and territorial cultures around their idea of the *Gadzingo*.

3.1 The Gadzingo

The Karanga polities that emerge in this period were almost all founded by individuals, usually lone hunters that enter 'no man's land' or are invited by a host to help with their skills. After a feat, they are offered land (and/or a wife) to which they invite their kinsmen to settle. After a while, they establish a political authority, either by leading a war of dispossession or by becoming a father figure with many descendants. All these charter myths serve to buttress a single point; the establishment of a political core in which the principle of a sacred chieftainship may obtain. To this extent Igor Kopytoff's Frontier thesis can easily be applied beginning with the frontiersmen or these lone hunters who leave their original clans to found new polities in 'no man's land', invite their kinsmen, establish authority, convert their kinsmen into their subjects and construct a patrimonial model in which their new entity is legitimized by set rules governing succession and recognition. Usually they find their neighbours doing the same and become interdependent by recognizing each other's symbolic elements to which common traits can be identified. In doing so they sought recognition and legitimacy amongst each other as neighbours after which this process became universal and was repeated constantly in a regional context.²¹ Karanga polities constructed their authority around a politico-religious metaphor known as the *gadzingo*. In physical terms it was a

²¹ I. Kopytoff, 'The Internal African Frontier: The Making of an African Political Culture' in I Kopytoff, (ed.) *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1987)

political centre embodying all the traits that gave these polities meaning in their early lives, it was their official headquarters, their burial ground, their place for ancestral veneration and also their place of refuge in the event of an attack by enemies. Chief Zephaniah Charumbira qualified how the Charumbira *gadzingo* emerged around Barapate mountain:

....so when they [Charumbira brothers] stayed at Nhinihuru and they gathered in their numbers and they started distributing land to each other. Bika as the eldest brother was given his ward, Nemazuhwa his ward, Nezvigaro his ward. And Chaina [the founder] chose to live in the *gadzingo*, right here where I am settled. This is called the *gadzingo*, meaning that this is where the mountain Barapate is found. In Barapate, is where each incumbent chief was supposed to stay, because this is where the stronghold *nhare* was found. This is where they hid from the Matabele *madzviti*. When the *madzviti* came they hid their chief in there. In the past they used to say if a chief is defeated so is his clan. There were plenty of caves in there where the chiefs' would hide when the Ndebele had come. There were also sentinels *nharirire* whose job was to watch out for the *pfumo* (invading army/raiding party), they would then fight that *pfumo* while the chief hid in the *nhare*. All the Nhinhi chiefs who died were buried in the *gadzingo* and whoever would have been appointed chief stayed in the Barapate, the *gadzingo*.²²

Sometimes the *gadzingo* could even be a cluster of mountains as in the case of the Mapanzure people. Former acting Chief Mapanzure, Raphael Manyoka described it thus:

What we call the *gadzingo* is when a chief is in his area, for example in our case the Mapanzure *gadzingo* is around the Zhou area. Zhou was the biggest mountain in the area and that is where Muravu lived, then came Mapanzure and Mazorodze this was the place where the chief was supposed to reside and it had a number of mountains including Matiringe, Murove, Chenhora, and Nyandimbobvu including our sacred forest the Rambotemwa all belonged to the *gadzingo* nobody was parceled out this land for personal use...but the incumbent chief and his *machinda* (councilors) as well as other important functionaries of government lived... in the *gadzingo*.²³

The *gadzingo* however need not always be at the centre. The distance between the two *gadzingos* described above is less than five kilometers because Charumbira and Mapanzure are neighbours, yet the two polities' spheres of influence stretch over tens of kilometers in different directions. It is also important to appreciate the Rozvi background in this emergent political culture. First the collapse of the Rozvi tributary structure was not followed by the collapse of the parallel Mwari cult ideology that kept intact. Instead it was transformed from working at supra-territorial level to assume an intra-chieftainship structure that used local ancestral spirits as religious provinces. The *mbonga* and *hosannas* transformed their roles as well to become *manyusa* or messengers concerned more with collecting gifts for Mwari as a rainmaking cult. This way the *gadzingo* as a religious centre gained prominence, receiving the *manyusa* and being the centres where rainmaking ceremonies *mitoro* were conducted. They all invariably constructed sacred forests *marambatemwa* in or around the *gadzingo*. The local ancestors were easily incorporated into the regional network that shared common traits and was even more powerful than it could have been in the heyday of the Rozvi empire. The individual chieftaincies now enjoyed political autonomy and freedom to choose incumbent chiefs without official approval by an authority far away. Although the cult became a socio-religious movement its basis in Rozvi political structures however never faded hence its

²² UZHD Text 184 Vta. Interview with Zephaniah Charumbira October 1975.

²³ Interview with Raphael Manyoka Gwenhamo, Mapanzure Communal Lands, 18th July 2001.

relevance to most of these new Karanga polities. Let us consider the two other variables that shaped Karanga political culture as it emerged at this time; defence and the environment;

3.1.2 Defence

The new Karanga polities as mentioned earlier were sprouting at a turbulent period marked by internal strife within the Rozvi state and invading Nguni armies during the *mfecane* wars. The emergent Karanga 'Big men' who were building up lineages also needed faithful and powerful clients.²⁴ Before the Nguni period resistance to enemy attacks in some areas as amongst the Duma was organised at a confederate level in a top down fashion but with the coming of the Nguni it had to be organised at village level and chiefdom level, going up.²⁵ This was achieved through the system of *Makota* which became much more prevalent at this time. *Gota* literally means a prefect or councillor but in the traditions relating to the 19th century, the term gradually comes to refer to territorial guards.²⁶ Amongst the Duma the *Makota* were territorial councillors not related to the ruling lineage head but occupied the same position as his relations or *Machinda* and this hierarchy went down to the village level.²⁷ Today recollections of pre-colonial land allocations amongst the Mhari have much to do with the role of such *Makota* who were often allocated land on hills bordering the lineage head's territory, usually those in the direction in which the enemy often came.²⁸ They were the first to fight the enemy and to raise alarm. Quite often the *Gota* was given a wife and assumed a vassal status as *Mukuwasha* or son-in law.²⁹ Occupying a similar status as the *Makota* were the *Nharirire* or sentinels. In what Mtetwa terms a revolution in the Duma defensive warfare; during this period a wide range of techniques and devices were introduced including this system or network of watchmen. The watchman or *Nharirire* was stationed on every high hill or refuge place *Nhare* to be on the lookout for the coming of the *Madzviti* and then to warn immediately of the people who were attending to the fields, or herdmen, by blowing the trumpet *hwamanda/mbuvuvu*. When one *nharirire* blew his trumpet, the next *nharirire* did the same and the process went on until a very large area was warned.³⁰ Thus a larger community could benefit even more in terms of security from the services of several lineage *nharirires* who could warn the people in time to give them the opportunity to react. The *gadzingo* as the centre, was usually the most well protected and the least vulnerable composed of *nhare* or strongholds with caves where the chief could be saved from death for to kill the chief was to destroy the whole clan.

3.1.3 Environment

The period in which the Karanga also emerged was a period of scarcity following the famine period of the 1820s to 1830s. The major reasons for movements during this time was

²⁴ See, G.C. Mazarire, 'The Politics of the Womb: Women, Politics and the Environment in Pre-Colonial Chivi c. 1840-1900' *Zambezia* XXV no. ii, 2003, p.5

²⁵ Mtetwa, 'A Social and Political History of the Duma', p.164

²⁶ Interview with Pingirayi Mhosva, and vaNyakurayi 22/10/99, Interview with Johannes Tongoteya, 26/03/97

²⁷ See Mtetwa; 'A Political and Social History of the Duma' p. 57

²⁸ Razaro Hofo, Interview on 13/10/99

²⁹ Interview with Jeremiah Mabhanditi

³⁰ Mtetwa; 'A Political and Economic History of the Duma', pp. 164-5

competition for resource rich areas. The *gadzingo* of the Mhari in Chivi was founded around cluster of hills at Nyaningwe which was not only good defensible area but was a micro-climate with fertile land and enjoyed good relief rainfall. On the contrary, the land just behind it was the complete opposite, a rain shadow, dry and plain known as the *Deve*. As a result the ruling Mhari lineage descendant from Chivi dominated this Nyaningwe area of the *gadzingo* while subordinate groups were confined to the *Deve* and each bad year they relied on the benevolence of their benefactors in the rich *gadzingo*.³¹ Similarly for the Mapanzure, their *gadzingo* in the Zhou zone was not only a cluster of mountains but the source of several rivers in their Chishanga territory. These are principally three or four rivers that form an upside-down triangle as Tugwi (south), Musogwezi-Musuka [Nyamangura] (east) and Ngondo-Mutiwazizi (west-north-west). All these rivers, draw their waters from the central watershed in the highland area of the *gadzingo*, so physically and metaphorically they were one because of the source. Naturally political competition was a struggle to control the source of Chishanga waters and own them, they became a natural core because they controlled the periphery, controlling water meant controlling everyone and confining them to some delimitable authority as far as the water supplies could go.³²

In many ways therefore a number of factors came together in the new Karanga political culture that emulated the Rozvi model but developed interesting local peculiarities that found universal application among the Karanga neighbours. By the mid 19th century Karanga succession system was almost uniform, almost all Karanga had political centres and when they did find reason to move the same principles informing the foundation of a *gadzingo* applied to the new area that was moved to. Several sacred forest *marambatemwa* obtained in different chieftaincies and the Mwari cult messengers operated amongst them in the new refined terms of the Karanga. These overlapping factors defined the new Karanga political geography in which they all co-existed as neighbours. And even as they fought and conquered each other now and then, principles for recognition remained the same if all the variables discussed above had to function in equilibrium. By the end of the 19th century Karanga boundaries were as fluid and porous as ever, they could not be bounded and mapped easily in the typical European tradition that came in the 1890s yet the Karanga themselves understood each other's spheres of influence and how they functioned or were regulated.

4.0 Discussion

Any appreciation of the modern boundary politics of the Karanga of southern Zimbabwe must of necessity consider that they were still in a state of re-organisation by the time the British South Africa Company established rigid boundaries on Rhodesia in 1891. None had been fully concretised by the mid-19th century when they readjusted to the twin factors of Rozvi demise and increasing Nguni presence. Although a political precedent did exist in the form of Rozvi territorial districts and provinces, they were not in themselves concrete

³¹.Mazarire; 'Women, Politics and the Environment,'

³² G.C. Mazarire, 'The Chishanga Waters Have Their Owners: Water, Politics and Development on South-Central Zimbabwe' *Journal of Southern African Studies* vol. 34, no 4 (2008).

demarcations but administrative centres. The Karanga boundary tradition was therefore not old when it was transformed again by the colonial system it was still in a state of change although it had appropriated key principle of Rozvi centralization and was reducing it in scale from a macro to a micro-level that suited the changing circumstances. The *gadzingo* concept was an important first stage that had achieved universal appeal as a Karanga political culture because it embraced most of the facets that had defined previous political structures, it brought together local ancestral presence and the universality of the High God cult, yet in this arrangement it guaranteed individual chiefly autonomy. It broadened the scale of the political core and its periphery by bringing this at a micro-level and turned the supra-territorial concept of the Rozvi with all its inefficiencies upside down. It created a new sense of recognizable neighbourliness based on the same principles and driven by the same ideals with checks and balances in different polities. Although they had stationary administrative centres their spheres of influence overlapped as spiritual or political peripheries which were in constant change as these were often occupied by very mobile adherents or followers. Somehow, control of the periphery was little no more than appointing, or making sure that loyal followers were appointed to positions of responsibility. Their expansion was also based in kinship webs and almost a large number of the Karanga neighbours were related and it was encouraged to offer land as means to form or strengthen kinship relations if a polity's was in anyway keen to expand. There are plenty of examples in these Karanga traditions where nephews are offered land by their maternal uncles and in turn come to dominate it (e.g. the Mhari and the Ngowa). Land was therefore not a constant variable in the new Karanga tradition for it was a commodity of exchange, a gift or a means of rewarding clients, in this way it would not pass for demarcating a 'boundary' in the European sense of the word. This is why Karanga traditions of territory even at this transitional stage did not favour to talk of *miganhu* (borders) but of distributions of mountains because they embodied their political culture built up from more established territorial configurations built under the Rozvi empire. This symbolized a transformation in their conception of political geography which was still changing when European borders were imposed on them. The concept of a boundless territory is illustrative; '*Duma Harina Mughanhu*' (Duma has no boundary) is a Duma song denoting the boundlessness of Duma country, it is also 'gives the extent to which Pfupajena [the founder's] wars were carried and the country which he covered in his travels....Sabi, Nyazvidzi, Tokwe, Limpopo, a vast stretch of country covering the entire half of modern Zimbabwe.³³ To this extent therefore Karanga boundaries remain invisible no matter what demarcations can be erected around them, colonial demarcations did cause conflicts between different Karanga groups such as Nemamwa and Mugabe, Nhema and Chamburukira among others but this is because the colonial government attached chiefly authority to territorial demarcations in the same way that the Rozvi did but on different principles. They thwarted the Mwari Cult that had qualified this principle on the pretext that it had organized the Uprising but failed appreciate the new role it had assumed amongst the Karanga polities that emerged after the demise of the Rozvi. In today's land reform programme this issue of the meaning of land to the Karanga still emerges. Although resettlement attaches value to land as

³³ R.M.G. Mtetwa, 'The Political and Economic History of the Duma People of South-Eastern Rhodesia from the Early 18th Century to 1945', Unpublished DPhil Thesis, University of Rhodesia 1976, pp. 41-42.

surveyed and planned economic units to boost rural production they are still loud clamours for the restitution of lost lands. On closer analysis this is not good agricultural land nor is it even land at all, but mountains, ancestral graves and sacred forests that qualified Karanga political geography for most of the 19th century.