Crooks, Commuters and Chiefs

Perceptions of Place in a Borderzone in Pafuri,
Gaza Province, Mozambique

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Abstract
This paper is concerned with issues of identity and territoriality in Pafuri - a borderzone between South Africa and Mozambique. Tsonga identity, in particular that of the Makuleke clan, who are comprised of both displaced residents in both South Africa and their relatives in Mozambique, will be examined through the lens of cross border movement. Up until the present, analyses of regional identities have been limited to country specific debates concerning the ‘imagined’ status of Tsonga ethnicity, especially during the implementation of the homeland system in South Africa. Through a comparison of events in South Africa and Mozambique, through the lens of displacement and rootlessness (or homelessness), this paper will attempt to create a more dynamic picture of space and place in the borderlands of Pafuri. It will become evident that unlike South African patterns of political domination, leaders in Mozambique have had to revert to complicated patterns of multiple leadership in order to satisfy the demands of labour recruiters, colonialists and their followers simultaneously. In the present, these layers of identity are most evident in the search for economic livelihoods in the region, as people will draw upon different (and conflicting) identities as circumstances see fit.
This paper is concerned with providing an account of the socio-economic and historical patterns of place and identity in the Pafuri triangle (or Crookes corner), in Mozambique. Pafuri is a borderzone in Gaza province that is situated in close proximity to Zimbabwe and the Kruger National Park (KNP) in South Africa and has been populated by people on all three sides of the border. This paper is especially concerned, however, with the Tsonga-speaking communities in the Northern Province of South Africa, in particular the Makuleke, who share clan linkages with kin in Mozambique. For the past 150 years, the shared transborder identities and histories of many communities like the Makuleke have been the subject of numerous historical interpretations. As the paper will point out, these perceptions range from the opinions of various displaced communities in South Africa, as well as frontiersmen, hunters, conservation officials, missionaries, Portuguese colonists and the occasional anthropologist. Most of these images are concerned with the definition and history of ethnicity, in particular that of Tsonga identity.

Debates concerning the regional ethnicity of the Tsonga in South Africa (see Harries 1987, 1989, 1994) have conformed to a typical Marxist analysis of their ‘imagined’ status. During the years of apartheid and the regional planning known as ‘Betterment’, the ethnic groups occupying the old Transvaal province were grouped into various homeland states (or Bantustans) which, for the purposes of apartheid planning, conveniently simplified the complex ties which existed between these groups and created a pool of low cost labour for future use in industrial centres elsewhere in the country. In these Bantustans, ethnic identity was thought to be homogenous, but, as Harries pointed out in the case of the Tsonga, was far more complex and politically motivated. Despite these insights, Harries’ descriptions of the influence of missionary activity, together with the forced removals and processes of social engineering which influenced people like the Makuleke, are essentially limited to a description of Tsonga identity in South Africa.
alone. The challenge of this paper is thus to explore the notion that cross border linkages and ties between groups in South Africa and Mozambique can provide new insights into debates concerning ethnicity in South Africa. Such an exercise compares the differences between the formation of identity and place in Mozambique with that in South Africa.

The two very different (and yet similar) experiences of people in Mozambique and South Africa is a theme that characterises Pafuri as a border area. It is often said that a state is defined by the existence and creation of national boundaries, and that by passing through these boundaries a visitor encounters a completely different set of rules on the ‘other side’. This is particularly true in the treatment of ethnicity by the South African and Mozambican governments, which have conformed to two very different systems of political administration and colonialism. As true as this may be, however, the study of borderzones, in particular from the perspective of anthropology, no longer examines boundaries between countries (or ethnic groups, for that matter) as physical barriers to social action that can be divided into two neat versions of ‘our’ world and ‘theirs’. Rather, the physical permeability of borderzones have resulted in a deeper understanding of the relationship between peoples’ notions of ‘space’, where people find themselves in physical and cultural relation to each other, and ‘place’, the specific political and economic conditions of such a space (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 9-10). This paper examines conceptions of local identity in each country as factors which have been influenced by very different ideas of geographical space, but also as a feature of border life that depends heavily on a shared identity between relatives in South Africa and Mozambique. Pafuri is thus a frontier of social and economic activity, which is fuelled by processes both inside, outside and across its boundaries. The permeability of this borderzone thus calls for a more detailed examination of precisely how larger historical political and economic circumstances (that have often originated outside Mozambique)
have intersected with the local lives of residents in Pafuri. Such larger political machinations are rarely simply ‘externally imposed’ upon unwilling citizens, but are assimilated and incorporated in a variety of guises by inhabitants of borderzones. Likewise, those images and meanings held by visitors to Pafuri, however romanticised they may seem, can be explored together with the experiences of Mozambicans themselves in order to understand precisely how residents in Pafuri have negotiated the physical, and imagined boundaries that surround them.

A short exploration of these ‘imagined boundaries’ that surround Pafuri as a borderzone is necessary. These ideas are similar to those associations in remote borderzones elsewhere, which have mainly referred to areas that are somehow removed from the mainstream laws and regulations of a political state, a zone that is ‘betwixt and between’ all that is familiar and that which is unknown. In the old Transvaal during the nineteenth century, for example, the Pafuri junction was known to be a dangerous port of call for a menagerie of bandits, hunters and illicit traders. Newitt (1995: 293) reports that the region of the Lebombo mountains and the Zoutpansberg was situated on the edge of the area from which the Swazi and Gaza empires drew tribute, a factor which attracted a large number of avid adventurers. These included the Transvaal boers, who could buy slaves and inboekselinge (native children), and groups of professional elephant hunters, who used the dense bush around the confluence of the Limpopo and Levuhu rivers as a central hideout and camping spot. As Stevenson-Hamilton (1937: 96) notes: in 1904, ‘the Pafuri junction was the haunt of a number of what may euphemistically be termed ‘frontiersmen’, containing among them some elements of the former bandits of the Portuguese frontier.’ Soon after the proclamation of the Kruger National Park in 1926, which had extended its borders northward from the Sabie River, the strict regulations regarding the poaching of game in the Park added even more notoriety to the activities of bandits in Crookes Corner.
These images were sustained during Portuguese rule in Mozambique. As one of the more remote outbacks of rural Mozambique, Pafuri was largely free of Portuguese authority. The remoteness to political centres in Mozambique and South Africa, however, provided ample opportunity for the later recruitment of wage labour in the area, as the districts of Gaza province became a virtual goldmine for clandestine labour recruiters who could operate without any imposed rules and obligations. Harries (1987: 97) reports that some sixteen clandestine European labour recruiters were known in the Pafuri triangle during the early 1900s, organising cheap labour for farms and small mines in the Transvaal, Natal and Cape provinces. In 1918, however, the then Witwatersrand Labour Association (WNLA, or Wenela) established a permanent post in Pafuri (as well as in Ressano Garcia) and quickly monopolised and legalised the labour recruiting industry. Wenela was created in 1901, and was the outcome of a barter agreement between South Africa and Mozambique, exchanging labour for guaranteed port and rail traffic. This manoeuvre sealed the fate of the region south of the Save river in Mozambique, effectively dividing the country into four concession areas, dominated by Wenela in the south and the Mozambique and Niassa companies in the north. Gaza province in particular became the primary source of over 65 per cent of all mineworkers in South Africa, and Wenela continued to dominate the lives of residents from 1901 until its closure in 1975.

The interface between the meanings produced by such a variety of historical events, together with the interaction between residents and visitors to the area, leads one to focus on the social constructions of the border. Why do residents of the Pafuri area, as well as people in neighbouring countries, continually view Pafuri, and the larger area of Gaza province in particular, as a space closely connected to their notions of home, or of ancestral belonging? Besides the fact that visitors are only intermittent residents of the area, both visitors
and residents continue to cling to the notion of Mozambique as an ancestral home despite the high levels of rootlessness and upheaval that have characterised the area for decades.

To answer some of these questions, this paper examines patterns of resettlement and traditional leadership in South Africa and Mozambique. It is divided into three sections. The first section considers ideas of 'place' that surround Pafuri and the upper Limpopo valley and examines some of the historical events and images which have shaped the identity of the area, such as the decades of war, repatriation and resettlement which have affected residents in both South Africa and Mozambique. The second section is more concerned with the general phenomenon of rootlessness in Mozambique itself, and how local inhabitants have coped with relocation, continual physical movement and transference across border zones. The last section explores local patterns of leadership and authority and illustrates the ways in which Mozambicans have responded and circumvented the imposition of state power in Mozambique and the economic laws of migrancy in South Africa.

This paper is based upon ongoing research in the Pafuri area of Mozambique, undertaken with the help of the Makuleke community outside the Kruger National Park in South Africa. Some time was spent driving up and down the road hugging the Limpopo river in Mozambique, visiting various homesteads and travelling to various locations. The majority of fieldwork, however, was spent in a small border settlement in Mozambique. This settlement, which has been given the pseudonym of Thobela, has a population of 595 people and is situated on the northern side of the Limpopo river, close to Crookes Corner and within walking distance of both South Africa and Zimbabwe. A household survey was also conducted in this settlement, using the oral testimonies of 29 inhabitants. In addition to this, homesteads, informal cafes and meeting spots...
in other settlements along the main road from Pafuri were regularly visited. In addition to this field research, conversations with government officials in Maputo, as well as use of the library in the department of Anthropology at Eduardo Mondlane University, also proved helpful.

**Perceptions of place and identity in Pafuri**

One of the most important events that link South Africans to Mozambique and to Pafuri is the phenomenon of displacement. The Makuleke community, in particular, which is currently resident outside the Kruger Park in South Africa, is one of the many groups which was removed from a space that was part of a common geographical area spanning the borders of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Originally, during the upheavals associated with the Difeqane and in particular that Soshangane, in the late nineteenth century, members of an original (‘Tonga’) clan (who had not yet assumed the name ‘Maluleke’), had come to inhabit the area south of the Limpopo in the present Mozambique. The Maluleke, like other local groups, were eventually assimilated into the Nguni empire and shared a territory that would later span the borders of Zimbabwe, Mozambique as well as South Africa. However, due to a dispute over succession between two brothers, this ‘original’ clan, which were also known as the Nwanati (see Harries 1987) - or stemmed from an area called Nwanati (according to Maluleke oral testimony) - then split in two. One brother and his followers occupied the eastern side of the present border, in Mozambique, while the other chose the western side of the border, in the present KNP. The one half of this original group, descended from those who settled on the western side of the border in the present KNP, were later given the name of Maluleke.

Although resident outside the borders of what was later defined as the Mozambican state in 1897, the Malulekes were definitely part of the social and cultural life of their clan, and distributed themselves more deeply into the
Limpopo area as well as into Zimbabwe. The Malulekes were eventually forcibly removed from their land in the Punda Maria area of the KNP in 1976, and were resettled in a South African village outside the Park (by the name of Makuleke, or the ‘place of the Maluleke’s’) 200 kilometres south of their original location in Punda Maria (see Harries 1987). Their clan based affiliation, however, lies within the KNP and Mozambique, since most residents south of the Limpopo either stem from the ‘original’, undivided clan grouping, which can be traced back to the years before the sibling feud, or are part of the Maluleke clan (i.e those who were forcibly removed) themselves. In the present day situation, national boundaries have further divided the Malulekes into three countries: South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

The strong linkages that members of Maluleke foster with Mozambique therefore strengthen the image of the upper Limpopo region as an ancestral home of origin. As will be mentioned later, however, these ideals may not always correspond to reality, since many of the idealistic images that outsiders hold about their land of origin conflict with the many historical wars, removals and conquests to which residents of the area have been exposed. Despite this, and as Harries (1987: 111) notes, Maluleke oral history retains a strong set of beliefs about their lives before removal: ‘Their golden age, which is always contrasted with the bleak conditions of their present existence, provides the community with a sustaining and guiding myth’. These myths are cemented by the close affinal and blood ties that most residents south of the Limpopo share with their neighbours in South Africa. Other lineages in Mozambique, including Chauke, who have been displaced to neighbouring Zimbabwe as well as South Africa, are mainly associated with clans north of the Limpopo and also have close alliances with the Maluleke in South Africa. The wide open spaces and mountainous hills of the eastern Zoutpansberg range, as well as an abundance of water and vegetation around the Limpopo, hold special significance for healers and herbalists (or n’angas) in South Africa. Despite
the exorbitant fees of Mozambican *n’angas* and spirit mediums, these individuals are well known for their power and effectiveness, mainly due to some powerful Mozambican medicines that cannot be found in South Africa.

Border commuting assumes many diverse forms. Women from Zimbabwe are regularly seen harvesting reeds and *ilala* wine from riverbanks in Mozambique, and traders often drive up and down the roads in cars or bicycles in search of customers. The origins of these commuters are diverse. Some come as far afield as Malawi, some from Xai Xai while others are of Ndau (or Shona) origin. And like traders, who depend on the mobility of local people to access their produce, local people depend heavily on the linkages that these commuters have with South Africa, which are either accomplished through direct (though distant) employment opportunities in urban or rural areas, or/and the visitation of relatives in South African and Zimbabwean communities. A few men who were interviewed in Pafuri even indicated that they had wives on both sides of the border during the civil war, a practice that still provides them with a safe haven in South Africa. Such movements between South Africa and Mozambique not only perform an economic function, but also serve to cement ties between related clan members in both countries.

Besides these social linkages, the perception of place in Mozambique is strengthened by the seemingly unlimited tracts of uncultivated land in the upper Limpopo valley, which are in stark contrast to the overburdened and concentrated agrarian patterns found in settlement affected by Apartheid in the neighbouring Northern Province. Apart from a notable lack of fauna (due to hunting and poaching), land in this part of Gaza is still relatively untouched, even though residents regularly shift cultivated sites in search of more fertile patches and still make use of the natural environment for part of their daily sustenance. And unlike South Africans, Mozambican communities have not
suffered the disasters of the agricultural ‘betterment’ practices of the 1960s and 1970s, which involved stock culling, land subdivision and forced resettlement, as well as numerous attempts to herd unwilling communities into less fertile patches of land in the more arid parts of the previous homelands of Venda and Gazankulu. In the words of a member of the Maluleke in South Africa, the natural habitat in Mozambique represents a space and freedom of living that the closely resettled communities in the northern Province have permanently lost.

Collectively, these features have proved essential in creating an image to informed outsiders (such as the Maluleke) of the Pafuri frontier as an 'untouched' land, a 'wild' zone outside the control of wildlife and environmental enthusiasts, especially those in the KNP. The Transfrontier Park initiative hosted by South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, in particular, functions as a reminder to conservation officials that land in Gaza is too ‘unproductive’ to function as anything else besides a wildlife sanctuary. Although these opinions may exist without knowledge of the vibrancy of cross border activity in Pafuri, they still help reaffirm the image of Pafuri as a frontier area, the last outpost of governmental influence in Mozambique, and a place that has retained the vestiges of Portuguese colonial authority. These images have proved difficult to eradicate: residents are still subject to the whims of a corrupt border police, and an equally authoritarian chefe do posto (regional administrator). The chaos and disruption of the Mozambican civil war did little to alter the image of Crookes Corner. As Newitt (1995: 575) notes, ‘banditry and warlordism have always become more serious during frequent periods of drought and famine, when...starving people are driven either to become bandits themselves or submit to the domination of...warlords’ (1995: 575).
However, as McGregor (1998: 37) points out, although it may be partially true that Mozambique's international borderlines largely function outside the influence of an inefficient state, where identities may be flexible, loyalties are transient and many unpleasant government demands can be avoided, this appears to be a smokescreen for a much more complex picture of events. In addition, seen from the perspective of dislocated communities in South Africa (such as the Malulekes), the idyllic associations with Mozambique, as well as the notoriety of Pafuri as a borderzone, may also inadvertently serve to obscure complex local dramas and regional dynamics. Pafuri, despite its reputation as a nest of bandits and crooks, removed from mainstream state authority, is after all, a zone that contains diversified economic opportunities for residents due to its close proximity to South Africa and Zimbabwe. Moreover, it is precisely because Pafuri holds so much significance for so many people in Zimbabwe and South Africa that it contains some of the most pervasive ideas of place and identity for local inhabitants themselves. Even without the experience of forced resettlement, as in South Africa, it appears that these ideas of home are not reinforced by a stable residence in an idyllic ‘land of origin’, as most outsiders would have it, but by a similar, if not more intense, experience of removal and rootlessness as is the case in Makuleke. It may be true that Pafuri may contain elements of bribery, corruption, banditry and poaching, but these are far less important than the manner in which residents have used these features of border culture to fashion their own measure of freedom and control over their homes and families. What are some of the features of life in Pafuri which reinforce these ideas of place?

The first of these is that both Mozambicans and South Africans make use of very similar economic networks across their common border; many commuters, traders and transporters pass through the border gate on a daily basis. The proximity of villages in the Pafuri area to the border gate can be considered one of the prime factors in creating economic opportunity, as
border traffic creates space for numerous vendors, transportation schemers and general sociable activity. Other Mozambican towns are simply too far away for easy access, as roads are often impassable and local goods expensive. The nearest clinic and regional governmental offices are located in Chicualacuala (also the birthplace of Eduardo Mondlane) approximately 100km to the north, while Mapai is the same distance along the river to the east. The road from Pafuri to Mapai attracts by far the most residents in the area. Official population figures have not been accessed yet, but a visual approximation from a vehicle on the Limpopo road counted approximately 460 huts in a flat 78 kilometre stretch towards Pafuri, which would mean that there are approximately six huts per flat kilometre of road. Border settlements, however, are by far the most densely settled in the area, the hut count trebling and sometimes quadrupling in some cases. Residents however, avoid situating their homesteads close to the river, due to the danger of flooding.

The second similarity between South Africa and Mozambique is in the appearance of settlements. All local communities in the Pafuri hinterland have experienced displacement due to war, floods, droughts and organised government resettlement programmes. The last inflow of people was in 1994-5, when Mozambicans were repatriated from South African and Zimbabwean refugee camps. Notably, most communities directly along the border are villagised, which differ markedly from the more traditional form of dispersed hamlets found further away from the border zones. As residents themselves commented, these settlements lack a certain freedom of movement and physical space associated with an 'original' form of habitation. Resettled border villages are termed locally as lideyeni (or lidau, in Portuguese) and bear a marked similarity to many betterment villages in South Africa.

The origin of resettled villages can be traced back to Portuguese rule, during which colonial farms (aldeamentos or prazos), typically composed of a master
landlord and peasant tenants, were common practice. Later, upon the advent of socialist rule after 1975, Frelimo transformed many of these endeavours into communal farms, a project that achieved limited success and did not survive much more than a decade after its inception in 1976-1977. Although these farms are common in the northern provinces of Mozambique, both prazos and socialist farms have not been distinguishing features of Pafuri's past. In 1984, the number of socialist villages in Gaza was estimated to be approximately 1500 (Roesch 1992).

Resettled villages in both South Africa and Mozambique are generally characterised by large concentrations of people within a relatively small geographical space, as well as by a dispersal of traditional clan hamlets. Despite the similarities, however, it is clear that lideyeni do not possess the infrastructural advantages of their South African neighbours, as schools, water pumps, and shops are noticeably absent. Most important, however, residents are free to abandon homesteads situated within lideyeni and to move to more spacious sites outside the grid-like housing arrangements within these settlements. This was particularly true of one such settlement near the South African and Zimbabwean border. This village, Thobela, contains many returnees who had either lived in refugee camps or in the homes of relatives in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and is one of the most diverse settlements in the region. According to local oral testimony, the settlement has been composed of a variety of different clans and nationalities (such as Chauke, Maluleke, Baloyi, Mithlavi, Thlowane and Myambu) for a number of generations, stretching well back into the previous century.

The relationships entered into by individuals in resettled border villages are highly complex, and draw on shared ethnic as well as economic and social partnerships with people from South Africa, Zimbabwe and other neighbouring villages in Mozambique. Thobela is a hive of activity for all
those who can cross the border intermittently, especially for attendance at a drinking or a komba dance party. In comparison, other residential (or clan) clusters further down the Pafuri road who have not experienced villagisation, are mainly composed of a related group of individuals from the same clan, reducing (but definitely not eliminating) the number of visitors from neighbours or relatives in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

*Lideyeni* in Pafuri were not large government investments at all, but were instead closely related to intertwined patterns of war, flood and drought, from independence to 1984. Munslow (1984: 211) refers to the creation of communal farms as a form of ‘crisis management’ by Frelimo during times of natural disaster and war. The work of Covane (2001: 54-56) reflects this, and describes how the periodic floods of the Limpopo river accelerated the implementation of communal villages and co-operatives. In February 1977, as well as in 1984, devastating floods in the Limpopo valley caused major infrastructural and crop losses. During 1984, when the civil war was at its height, Frelimo would group villagers together for purposes of defence and survival. Hotspots along the border, such as Thobela, proved especially susceptible to infiltration from neighbouring states, which explains Frelimo’s penchant for villagisation in these sites in the late 1970s. This is not to say that inhabitants of inland settlements along the upper Limpopo valley near Pafuri have not experienced dislocation, but these relocations have not been the results of official state resettlement as is the case with border settlements such as Thobela. These *lideyeni* were re-occupied after repatriation in 1994, but this time residents could freely choose the location of their homes themselves. Invariably, most chose to rebuild homes outside the settlement, since the threat posed by Renamo no longer existed. For example, out of the 28 individuals interviewed in the Thobela survey, eight people had moved out of the village stands, while another ten had indicated that they were busy building houses on the outskirts of the settlement, some in precisely the same places which were
occupied before villagisation. In the Mueda plateau in northern Mozambique, West (1998: 256) reports a similar occurrence - villagers occupied sites closer to their agricultural fields, and could actually indicate the original geographical location of their homes after more than a decade of absence. A Tsonga proverb, reflecting the restlessness and mobility of many inhabitants in Thobela, illustrates the tendency for the continual movement of residential sites: *Munhu langa dya hloko ya mhangelana* (those who eat guineafowl heads move every now and again).

The following case study of a *lideyeni* near Crookes Corner was narrated by an ex-soldier of the district:

Fieldnotes 16/12/1999

While walking to Thobela with Chabane and Norman at sunset, Chabane told us that Thobela had been resettled into a lideyeni when Frelimo came into power after the Portuguese (around 1977-1978). This was mainly done for development, but, he believed that the scheme did not work, since schools, clinics and roads were not built, and because most people had to fight, or flee, due to the civil war anyway. Around 1985-1986 even more people were crowded into the village, apparently by soldiers who feared attacks by Renamo. The people in Thobela eventually fled to refugee camps, mainly in Zimbabwe, and then were repatriated in 1994. They then built new places in the same village, but made sure that they created more space than was previously allocated to them by the government. Chabane, in particular, had made sure that he constructed a home on the outskirts of the settlement, complaining about the lack of space in *lideyeni*.

It is clear from this case, and many like it in Thobela, that physical movement opens up more possibilities for people than does a state of immobility.
Chabane, for example, had sold his home in the *lideyeni* to a newcomer from Chicualacuala, and with his move to the outskirts of the settlement had situated himself closer to his vegetable garden next to the river. Covane (2001: 55) also mentions that many people in the Limpopo Valley had developed their own survival strategies, which included marriages between families from different ecological zones. The freedom of movement that individuals experience within Mozambican border settlements can be extended to other forms of movement – such as movement *across* borders, within South African and Zimbabwean settlements, as well as *between* settlements in Mozambique – which are indicative of what actually attracts people to the idea of Pafuri as their ‘home’. Far from being a frontier that may seem to be ‘out of control’ to many visitors passing through, and being composed of a confusing mixture of border officials, traders, missionaries and anthropologists, Pafuri can rather be viewed from the perspective of a region that offers its residents much of the freedom of movement that they need to be in control of their own lives.

Donnan and Wilson (1999: 50) mention that there are a growing number of studies that seek to ‘redress the imbalance of state centred societies’ and to discover social processes which originate from borderlands themselves along with the effects that these processes have within and beyond borderlands. Thus, residents of Pafuri can be viewed as citizens who are very much aware of the authority of a political state, but who are also free agents who have some control over political processes. In fact, they are residents of a zone that contains diverse opportunities for them to retain control over their lives and make choices that stand apart from those made for them by officials of the state. Freedom of movement – between borders, between settlements and between the physical structures of homes – is thus one of the most important factors that provide the residents of border settlements with some of the reasons to call Pafuri their ‘home’.
Given the centrality of movement to the notion of home in Pafuri, one can examine the phenomenon of rootlessness (or the absence of a home) in more detail, and how resettlement and forced population movements have influenced the measure of control, freedom and economic opportunities present in peoples lives. The next section will examine those factors which have caused the phenomenon of rootlessness in Pafuri and will reveal that resettlement in Mozambique is deeply ingrained in the history of the area, and has formed a character of rootlessness in the region that has been fixed in historical experience.

**The origins of rootlessness**

Settlements along the wide plains of the lower Limpopo valley, in contrast to the upper parts of the river, have been described, notably by Roesch (1992), as being part of the well watered system of alluvial soils common to the Limpopo hinterland. Indeed, it is reported that the agricultural production of maize and cassava in Portuguese *prazos* in Gaza, especially the cultivation of rice along the lower floodplains of the coastal town of Xai Xai, constituted a virtual breadbasket for Mozambique during the 1950s. On the other hand, Roesch places the dry sandy soils, which make up the majority of the land in the Gaza hinterland, in a separate category altogether, since these soil types are totally unsuited for large scale farming methods.

The upper Limpopo valley, or western Gaza (where Pafuri is located), is thus quite different to the fertile lower valley near Xai Xai. Soils are a combination of sandy and loam, especially those that surround the Limpopo banks, and are only fertile in some places, resulting in large pockets of unproductive soil that cannot be consistently cultivated for long periods of time. In addition, although the Limpopo river floods its banks occasionally, which produces some rich mineral deposits as in the lower Limpopo valley, this occurs on a smaller geographical scale in the upper part of the river, leaving less fertile
land for cultivation. Subsistence farmers also find that these floods deposit large patches of sandy soil, resulting in a constant shifting of cultivated sites. Consequently, most communal farms, both in the colonial and post independence eras, have been concentrated in the lower Limpopo valley, leaving the upper Limpopo valley to small scale subsistence farmers. Cattle rearing is also common, though dependent on climatic and environmental factors, such as tsetse.

The most important source of survival for residents around Pafuri, therefore, continues to be the use of the natural environment - the Limpopo river for water and irrigation of vegetable fields in *lideyeni*, seasonal rain for dryland farming and the tapping of the *ilala* palm for wine – activities which often sustain residents in periods of drought. These activities are far more widespread in Mozambique than in South Africa, a fact often lamented by the Maluleke in South Africa, due to the limitations imposed by overused local agricultural land. Other than resettled villages, which have a different pattern of cultivation, most clan hamlets in Mozambique situate their *massimo* (fields) close to the floodplain of the Limpopo, about two to four kilometres from its banks, where groundwater for domestic use is also freely available. These *massimo* are usually followed by wide belts of natural vegetation, ranging from clumps of *ilala* palms and thatching reed, as well as thickets of Mopane, Wild Fig, Natal Mahogany, Ironwood, Fever trees and the odd Baobab. These patterns of vegetation continue until one reaches the homes of residents, which due to the possible threat of flooding, are a good 15 - 20 kilometres away from the *massimo*.

Both livestock rearing and subsistence agriculture have also proved to be an important and immediate source of survival for those who were repatriated from South Africa and Zimbabwe after 1994. During late 1999 and early 2000, for example, it was clear that after a severe drought in 1993-1998, residents in
border communities had secured their first real agricultural surplus since their return to the area around 1994. These successes had seemed to be few and far between in the past, as agricultural and livestock accumulation had been severely affected by war, drought and floods.

Unfortunately, this was a pattern that was repeated during early 2000. In Thobela, residents reported that they had lost most, if not all, or their harvested crops to the floodwater, which meant that they had to rely on neighbourly assistance or food from the veld to sustain them while planting their next crop. Some fields were totally covered with sandy soil, while a select few actually benefited from the increased deposits of silt. Many subsistence farmers were suddenly overwhelmed by the floodwater in Thobela. At least three people had climbed trees to escape the water and were rescued three or four days later by friends in a boat.

The severity of the 2000 flood, compared to previous years, is an event that illustrates the close dependence of dryland farmers upon the availability of rain, and also upon the ebb and flow of the Limpopo river. Being part of a savanna ecosystem, the low lying subtropical regions of southern Africa usually function upon a roughly nine-year cycle of regular seasonal rain, followed by nine years of drought (Tyson 1986: 68-69). During the dry season in winter, coupled with intensified use of water upstream, the Limpopo reverts to a shallow stream. If this is combined with a drought, the river becomes completely dry. In years such as these, residents have no choice but to slaughter their cattle and sacrifice crops, and concentrate on harvesting natural resources, such as ilala, game, fruit and roots.

The advantages of situating massimo, including those of lideyeni, close to the floodplain of the river, is a factor that unfortunately renders villagers open to the seasonal flooding of the Limpopo. These floods are usually quite harmless,
and in good years actually increase the fertility of the soil. However, the seasonal tides of the river have been altered by increased water usage by upstream Zimbabwean and South African farmers, which may worsen an already severe drought in drier years. In rainy years (such as in early 2000), the river is in danger of breaking its banks, due to the release of water upstream. This leaves residents in Mozambique extremely vulnerable to the whims of both the local climate and upstream water use. This can become particularly dangerous in extreme climatic conditions, as experienced in the floods of 1977 and 2000, as well as the drought of 1993-1998.

The helplessness and loss of control that the residents around Pafuri have experienced due to flooding and natural disasters are not the only factors contributing to rootlessness. The Mozambican civil war, and the Zimbabwean war of independence, which spilled over the border to Pafuri, also affected residents, as did their later agricultural losses. With the advent of the Zimbabwean war in 1976, and floods in 1977, many people were forced to break the conditions of their employment contracts in South Africa (Covane 2001: 55), and returned to move their families from Thobela to a settlement further away from the borderzone. Most families stayed here for two or three years, only moving back to Thobela when it was safe to do so. In the early 1980s, Renamo posed a grave threat to the safety of Thobela, and unlike the 1976 population movement, residents proceeded to access much more varied routes to safety, either fleeing to South Africa, Zimbabwe or in a few cases, to Maputo. Most sent cattle to Zimbabwe, due to the lack of border controls, for safekeeping with family or friends, while some experienced a total loss of stock. The case study below illustrates the confusion which was experienced by residents in Thobela:

Interview no. 10. 9/12/2000
Ms. Mthlavi is a widow of 76 who is living alone next to her nephew’s home in Thobela. She has four children who are working, none of whom support her any longer, leaving her dependent on her neighbours and on agricultural produce. Her husband, Mr. Mthlavi, was still alive when the war with Renamo started and they decided to flee to relatives in Zimbabwe. However, when they arrived in Zimbabwe, they were arrested and deported to the Wenela offices in Pafuri. They were then transported to Komatipoort in South Africa, thereafter to Gaza town in Mozambique and lastly to Mapai (a settlement 100 km east of Pafuri). From Mapai, all refugees were ‘officially’ sent to a refugee camp in Zimbabwe. On the day of removal to Zimbabwe, however, Ms Mthlavi lost her husband in the crowd and was separated from him. She and her daughter spent over 13 years in this refugee camp without her husband, until their repatriation to Pafuri in 1995. Upon her return, she learnt that her husband had been sent to a different camp in Zimbabwe, and had passed away there some years ago. She decided not to get married again, as she had four children to take care of her. Her children, however, are nowhere to be seen.

The losses in possessions, income and earning capabilities experienced by residents of Thobela during these wars were diverse. Above all, the loss of control over freedom of movement is clearly noticeable. Instead of being able to access reliable routes of asylum with family and friends in Zimbabwe and South Africa, most residents found themselves tossed about by the decisions made for them by politicians and aid agencies in three different countries. Moreover, in many instances, the new label of ‘refugee’ converted many residents of Thobela into a nameless group of asylum seekers in a foreign country, leading to xenophobic fears by their South African hosts. Others were more fortunate, and fled to family members in Makuleke, finding employment and a second home in the Northern Province of South Africa.
In Thobela, as in surrounding settlements along the border, most residents returned in 1994 or 1995 to the original sites occupied before the war and started ploughing and building their land immediately. Coming back home was not an easy experience, though, as the environment was strange to many people. Bush covered familiar homes and agricultural fields, and landmines dotted the landscape. Covane (2001: 59) mentions that ‘going back home...[was] seen as once again coming into an area as pioneers’. Given the fact that only 67,000 out of an estimated 350,000 Mozambican refugees who were resident in South Africa have been repatriated to their country of origin (de Vletter 2000: 52), it is indeed surprising that Pafuri and particularly Thobela, have had such a high rate of return compared to other regions of Mozambique. From the actions of residents in Thobela, it is clear that the area holds an attraction which draws people despite the political and natural destruction that has occurred during the past century.

In this sense, some of the ideas of home that many people foster in relation to Pafuri and Thobela are closely related to the helplessness and lack of control experienced during physical displacement, both as refugees in neighbouring countries as well as internal refugees in Mozambique. War exposed the residents of Pafuri to a far greater degree of helplessness than experienced during government communalisation and natural disaster in their own country. In the latter case, residents had far more control over their personal movement and space than in a foreign country, where their classification as ‘refugees’ served to alienate them, especially in large refugee camps in Zimbabwe. Despite war, floods and failed government efforts at communalisation, the activity and freedom of movement associated with the Pafuri border zone has drawn residents back to their ancestral land time and again. Such a relationship between physical movement and ‘belonging’ is complex and deserves further exploration, but for the moment it can be said that the
experience of physical displacement by residents in Pafuri has fostered a
definite perception of ‘home’ in Mozambique.

Much of the world’s refugee population is found along international borders,
which as Donnan and Wilson (1999: 113) point out, are often the first regions
to bear the brunt of displacement. Like Pafuri, many of these borderzones are
highly heterogenous, with residents stemming from a variety of locations. In
addition, most of these residents have had numerous experiences of relocation
during man made and natural disasters. The occurrence of relocation over a
number of generations, often reaching back into the previous century, also
means that unlike resettled communities in South Africa, such as the
Makuleke, villagers in the Pafuri hinterlands have been exposed to
geographical dislocation over a far greater period of time.

The experience of physical relocation, as Scudder’s (1993) description of
multiple generation relocatees depicts, means that many individuals have
overcome economic isolation and have managed to access networks that bring
about a measure of relief in difficult circumstances. The borderlands of Pafuri
are, of course, ideal locations for pursuing such links, making it essential for
residents to maintain regular contact with people across the border, using
activities that have numerous economic advantages. The heterogeneity of
these border regions contrasts strongly with the experiences of other relocated
groups elsewhere in Africa. In Zambia, for example, resettled communities of
Gwembe Tonga (see Scudder 1993; Colson 1971) were much more closely
knit groups, and were still relatively geographically isolated from busy urban
and border traffic.

In the case of Pafuri, it appears that the lack of control that residents have
experienced during relocation and return have actually served to strengthen the
ties that people have with their home. These associations of belonging, as well
as freedom, order and control, have served as a motivation for individuals to return to previously occupied land, especially after repatriation and civil war, and have also featured as a strong drawing card for new residents in the area. Many of these ideas of Mozambique as an ancestral home are shared by the Makuleke and Mhinga communities in the Northern Province of South Africa, but are, however, not attached to specific geographical areas. Instead they are extended to include the upper Limpopo valley in general.

Relocation and disruption have thus become part of the cycle of life for most residents in Pafuri. In this sense, the label of ‘refugee’, which has been officially associated with many residents for more than fifteen years, thus becomes a temporary label affixed to a temporary experience. Any permanence attached to a single event of relocation, such as the civil war, for example, may inadvertently obscure the pervasiveness of the experience of dislocation in Pafuri. Makkki (cited in Donnan and Wilson 1999: 114) agrees with this, saying that many anthropological studies of refugees have been criticised for a one-dimensional treatment of the phenomenon of displacement, restricting the description of a ‘refugee’ to an anomaly in the life of an otherwise ‘whole’ person and society. In such restrictive terms, the experience of relocation has a beginning and an end, with none of the intricacies associated with an exploration of a whole context of which relocation is only one part. Thus, displacement, and especially multiple experiences of displacement over time, can be treated as part of an ongoing cycle of historical rootlessness in the area that is closely bound to the permeability of both borderzones and the regional identities of local residents.

Elizabeth Colson has argued that the phenomenon of rootlessness is extraordinarily diverse. Relocation and border movement in Pafuri, ‘involve people who...find themselves in qualitatively different situations and predicaments’ (1999: 4). In Pafuri these predicaments are not only contained
in the actual geographical relocation and return of residents to homes in Mozambique, but also in a historical experience of disruption through time. The overall experience of disruption in Thobela makes the memory of an original place of origin a strong motivation to return to the freedom and control associated with the idea of a home once again. It is within this particular framework of ‘place’ that the multiple relocations experienced by residents in Pafuri have worked in their favour, gradually producing a diversification of income through reliance on cross border traffic, the occurrence of which has provided numerous economic opportunities during times of need. Collectively, these images of place and identity, as well as of movement and dislocation, makes one understand more clearly how a borderzone such as Pafuri has featured in the specific history of a region, and how the idiom of place and origin has featured so strongly in the lives of its residents.

The following section will focus more closely on the expression of local power and control and will draw more strongly upon the changing patterns of both local and state political power in Pafuri. As Donnan and Wilson (1999: 50) have suggested, this will help us to understand how state power features in the everyday lives of people within borderzones, and the ways in which local border politics have been affected by the formation of the present Mozambican state.

**Traditional leadership patterns**

The above mentioned patterns of historical displacement, war, natural disasters and forced removals have revealed that such population movements are not new to the area. However, these patterns also have a close relationship to the formation of a wider Tsonga image and identity in South Africa and Mozambique. This section examines how the authority exercised over Tsonga communities in Pafuri by both the colonial and modern Mozambican
state have had a very different effect on the local populace than did the South African policy of Apartheid in the Bantustan states of the Northern Province. Residents in Mozambique and Pafuri were far less directly affected by forced resettlement, as was the case in South Africa, than by intertwined patterns of war, flood, drought and villagisation. These diverse influences have made leadership roles in Mozambique extremely difficult to decipher, and new leadership roles have subsequently emerged which are closely related to the occurrence of regional disasters. Positions currently occupied by ex-soldiers, as well as those individuals who assumed informal leadership in refugee camps, are some more recent examples.

As Harries (1989, 1994) has pointed out, both the original and invading residents of the eastern half of Southern Africa, who were later collectively classified as Tsonga, were among the most scattered and decentralised groups in southern Africa. As van Warmelo mentions, the Tsonga ‘represent[ed] a large formless population, the make up of which almost defie[d] analysis’ (Harries 1989: 95). During the late nineteenth century, the dispersal of these inhabitants of the old Transvaal lowveld was spurred on by long term changes in land ownership. The South African Republic’s anti-squatting law of 1887, for example, managed to force people off farms and private nature reserves onto land in the Zoutpansberg and Mozambique. At the same time, however, these groups gradually acquired a newly created identity through the classification of various local dialects into a language that was distinctly classified as ‘Tsonga’. At first, this was largely done to encourage the spread of Swiss mission stations in the area through a translation of the Bible into Tsonga, but later, became a useful tool of classification for the ethnological section of the Department of Bantu Affairs. Consequently, large concentrations of landless residents, which later became associated with a distinct Tsonga ‘homeland’, could more easily be given an identity.
In Mozambique, the Portuguese did not exert as focused and powerful a political force as did the South African government, but they still managed to influence native opinion by undermining chiefly authority. In Mozambique this was a far more complicated situation than a simple domination of local inhabitants by a stronger colonial force. The Portuguese did not have the economic and political strength to create chiefdoms where none had existed, and to purchase land for the creation of reserves. Instead, colonial force was exerted more indirectly, through an infiltration of chiefly authority through complicated patterns of patronage and support. As Harries (1989: 92) points out, a Tsonga chief was admitted into a leadership position only as a senior clansman, which did not automatically guarantee him the support associated with such a leadership position. Instead, his authority was determined by practical strategies, the most important of which was the collection of tribute, such as cattle, crops and in later years, cash. In turn, local followers gained protection, leadership and, for those who were seeking out wage labour, access to various linkages to a potential employer (such as Wenela) via their leader.

However, these diverse forms of tribute created a distinctive double role for leaders within these societies in a pattern that has been carried through from the first Nguni invaders, to the Portuguese and lastly to local labour recruiters and Wenela. Village headmen were often used as agents (or intermediaries) for labour recruiters by the Portuguese during the conquest of the Gaza state during the late 1800s and early 1900s, creating a distinct class of government-supported 'régu los' (which later came to be classed as district governors), which gave the Portuguese some control over outlying rural areas such as Pafuri. In turn, régu los were supervised by district governors, or chefes do posto, also appointed by the Portuguese.

While Portuguese colonies were still considered as part of the mother country, the inhabitants of Mozambique were classed as indígena and não-indígena.
The former were not considered ‘civilised’ and were placed under the control of a *régulo* (Newitt 1995: 387). Covane (1996: 106) writes that *régulos* were expected to perform a number of functions: they were expected to recruit labour for a *chefe do posto*, collect hut or poll tax, control the wine trade and could not allow indigenas to leave the country without a pass. Besides these, a *régulo*, who was an official of the colonial government, also received a small payment for every migrant returning from the Witwatersrand. However, these leadership roles were simultaneously combined with that of a traditional leader, as a chief was also expected to care for the families and fields of absent migrants until their eventual return. These roles inevitably clashed with one another, as the actions of traditional chiefs were often perceived by the colonial state to be backward and in direct disagreement with strict government policies. However, the dual roles of *régulos* in some cases actually benefited leaders, as a *régulo* could easily bypass colonial policies by undercounting, or failing to report the return of miners in order to avoid paying their tax (Covane 1996: 109).

Apart from the demands of the Portuguese, a less obvious means of dual leadership was set in place during the late 1800s in the form of labour recruitment. In 1897, the year in which the Witwatersrand Labour Association (Wenela) was formed, the association published a series of regulations for the recruitment of workers in Gaza province (see Covane 1996: 111). These rules made it clear that other independent recruiting companies would not be tolerated by Wenela, and furthermore, also limited the wage payments made to Mozambican workers, providing massed cheap labour for South Africa. Besides this, however, Wenela also set up incentives for traditional leaders to recruit young men for the South African labour market. Covane (1996: 112) reports that due to drought and rinderpest in Mozambique, as well as the restrictions imposed on the supply of local South African labour to goldmines by the Boer war, migrancy in Mozambique boomed during the early 1900s.
The highest immigration to South Africa by Mozambicans amounted to 93,008 in 1910, compared to 50,997 in 1904 (Newitt 1995: 492).

In South Africa, the pattern of labour migration was notably different to that of Gaza, as the close proximity of workers to internal destinations, such as Johannesburg, led to a better balance between family and labour time (see Covane 1996: 98). South African workers could return to their rural homes at least once a year, leading to a far greater (and more consistent) investment in money and labour, a situation which eventually improved the chances of establishing pools of labour in reserve in subsequent years. Mozambican workers, on the other hand, were subject to a restrictive labour agreement in a foreign country, in which labour agencies and mine bosses could determine the duration and location of their service contract. This meant that Mozambican workers only returned home once every few years, and did not send money as regularly as did their South African counterparts. This increased the reliance of rural Mozambican families on agriculture, rather than cash, for food, and strengthened the role of the woman as provider and farmer.

Covane (1996: 146) writes that migrant labour played a revolutionary role in agriculture, leading to the introduction of ploughs and small market products, as well as the development of small communal farms in some areas. In addition, longer term labour contracts also popularised polygyny, which provided a larger and more reliable labour force in the absence of a male provider.

The Portuguese reaction to this boom was far from favourable. The labour market in Mozambique had decreased rapidly, due to the comparatively higher South African wages, leading to a slump in the development of Portuguese settler farms in Gaza. In 1921, the High Commissioner of Mozambique tried unsuccessfully to reduce labour recruitment in Mozambique, but found himself outweighed by South African industrialists (Covane 1996: 170).
Eventually, in order to counter the drain of labour, the Portuguese made provision for a system of forced labour recruitment, known as *Chibalo*. This was made an official government policy in 1928 with the introduction of the ‘*Codigo do trabalho dos indigenas*’ (the conditions of employment in colonies).

According to Covane (1996: 180), these laws allowed the government to forcibly recruit labour for settler agriculture and government projects. At the time of revolution in Portugal in 1920, the demand for cheap labour in Mozambique was so great that extreme measures of coercion were being used by *chefes do postos* to fill requisitions. After 1928, Portuguese colonial policies, as well as colonial attitudes towards indigenes in Mozambique, reflected the need for control over the local labour force. The Colonial Act of 1930, for example, stated that Portuguese laws would henceforth exercise close supervision over colonies through restrictions on property rights, the enforced use of the Portuguese language, and the provision of raw materials from colonies such as Mozambique.

Despite the use of forced labour, Mozambican settler agriculture could not compete with the labour demands of South African mines, the wages of which were far higher than those associated with Portuguese *chibalo*. In addition (Covane 1996: 127), *chibalo* did not make provision for the fining of those who acted as illegal labour recruiters to South Africa. This favoured the development of clandestine labour networks, which functioned independently of Wenela and their recruitment officers. For a number of reasons workers found illegal entry into South Africa a far better option than remaining in their country. Clandestine entry was used by those who wanted to escape *chibalo*, and earn enough money to keep up with steep hut taxes in Mozambique, but also by those who wanted to avoid the authoritative way in which Wenela determined the duration and place of work, as well as the rigid compound
However, many clandestine migrants from Mozambique travelling to the Witwatersrand were induced into low paid labour on Transvaal farms, which was precisely what they had been trying to avoid at home (Katzenellenborgen 1982: 109).

Despite these conditions, clandestine labour remained a valid option for many residents in Gaza Province who were faced with uncompromising demands in Mozambique. However, as a result, régulos found themselves in a rather paradoxical situation (Covane 1996: 165). Some supported organised labour migration to South Africa, due to the tribute that labourers were required to pay upon their return, but at the same time, were under pressure to supply chibalo labourers for chefs do postos and settler farmers. In these circumstances, those leaders who did not choose to support clandestine labour suffered unpopularity amongst their supporters, while those who chose to support Wenela recruitment found themselves under pressure from the Portuguese colonists. The dual demands of organised labour to South Africa and chibalo labour in Mozambique thus increased the divide between traditional and government-supported leadership. Furthermore, since an independent Mozambican government in 1976 refused to recognise traditional leadership and viewed traditional practices in the same backward light as their colonial forebears, the divide between traditional and state supported leaders continues to be difficult to overcome today.

The background of two resettled villages near Pafuri reflects these changing patterns of leadership:

Field notes 17/09/1999

Upon my arrival in Thobela (a resettled village), we had asked for directions to the inkanakana (sub-chief) of the village, and were
informed that the village did not have a traditional leader. Instead, we were hustled towards the home of Chabane Chauke, the son of the deposed leader of the village, who had returned to his village after fighting as a soldier in the war against Renamo. The story of the settlements leadership was given as follows by Chabane.

His father, by the name of Chicarate, had worked in South Africa for many years and had returned to Thobela, only to find that his chieftaincy had been taken over by a Portuguese régulo. This régulo ruled the settlement until his death, upon which his son took over the leadership. However, this régulo was ousted by an independent Frelimo government after 1976, and fled to Chicualacula, over 100 km away. The government secretary of Thobela at the time, by the name of Julius Nwambe (who has since passed away), seemed to be rather unpopular with residents due to his involvement in an illegal land claim which had signed over a portion of arable land to external investors. For this reason villagers expressed more faith in Chabane, as his position as an ex-soldier and son of a traditional leader lent him some leverage over internal matters.

The lideyeni next to Thobela, Mbuli, was in a similar situation, except that the settlement did have a valid traditional leader (or inkanakana) as well as a government secretary. However, in situations of conflict residents preferred to solve matters alone, as a community, as it was too complicated to approach both leaders for constructive advice. Over a beer in the Pafuri café, residents from Mbuli agreed that Thobela was by far the most 'mixed up' settlement in the area.

These notes indicate that the roles assumed by régulos were mostly distrusted by Frelimo after independence in 1976, and that they were quickly replaced by
new government officials, who often stemmed from rival clans and factions. It is also during this period that a Frelimo anti-traditionalist stance came to the fore, party politicians being of the opinion that ‘...not only did illiterate people lack political consciousness, but...were at the mercy of traditional knowledge and practices which condemned them to poverty, made them superstitious and perpetuated the tyranny of customs like lovola, polygamy and initiation’ (Newitt 1995: 547). This stance often proved to be disastrous during the civil war and actually led to victories by Renamo in the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassaland, where traditional leaders would be welcomed with open arms by Renamo, who used them for the purposes of information gathering and protection. The obscurity into which traditional leadership had fallen due to state neglect may have inadvertently also served to obscure local terminology and political practice. Specifically, mention made of an ‘inkanakana’\textsuperscript{10} in the Pafuri area seems to be a phenomenon restricted to the hinterlands of the upper Limpopo river, as the term is not in common usage towards the south of Gaza and in South Africa.

There is no doubt that the position held on traditional leadership has contributed to a marked polarisation of traditional and modern institutions in Mozambique, as Morgan (1990: 613) states. This is also a stance that has apparently been reversed by the present Mozambican administration, particularly though a programme initiated by the Mozambican government in 1994, in order to study the matter of traditional authority more broadly (personal communication, Baptiste-Lundin). However, it appears that traditional authorities have yet to be incorporated into governmental structures in practice. In the more remote hinterlands of Mozambique, for example, many traditional practices, such as polygyny, are still not received very well by officials. Compared to the fame of Mozambican n’angas (herbalists), there is a distinct lack of male initiation ceremonies in Pafuri and its eastern hinterlands, the practice of which had been banned by Portuguese
administrators, a rule which was reinforced by the anti-traditionalist stance of Frelimo after independence. Pitcher (1998: 115) and West (1998) suggest that the current government enquiry into traditional leadership has treated tradition as an overly romanticised, a-historical and generalised category of description, and has failed to noticeably empower those leaders who had been previously marginalised.

However, as McGregor (1998) states, although the gap between traditional and government appointed leaders still appears to be in place, it seems that the roles of such leaders in rural areas may not have been as historically antagonistic and distinct as is commonly perceived. Rather, such a simplistic division of roles downplays local complexities (such as the existence of multiple roles for a single individual) and reifies the distinction between the power of the state and the perceived ‘helplessness’ of remote rural societies. Roesch (1992: 463) also writes that Renamo's relative success in exploiting popular disenchantment with Frelimo through siding with dissatisfied traditional leaders was not a general countrywide phenomenon, but a result of specific socio-historical conditions present in certain provinces. Roesch refers to Nampula province in this regard, but this can certainly be extended to Gaza and to Pafuri in particular. Upon an examination of Pafuri’s complicated past, accompanied by droughts, wars, floods and repatriation, it appears that people’s means of securing a livelihood in unstable economic circumstances ‘was increasingly dependent on contacts and institutions outside of state control’ (McGregor 1998: 47).

The role-flexibility of those seeking to expand economic opportunity is particularly noticeable in Pafuri. Like those of traditional leaders, roles have often been combined during periods of economic crisis, such as during the civil war, during droughts and floods, and after closure of Wenela in 1975. Some residents established links with the former South African Defence Force
and Renamo, and built up reputations as paid informants. Others continued in their role as clandestine labour contractors, which proved especially useful in providing schemes for those who were forced to cross the KNP into safer South African territory. Many found poaching and the sale of skins and ivory to willing buyers a valid option, often combining this with a small trade in essential items. Although clandestine links with the SADF and Renamo have virtually ceased, other schemes have actually expanded due to increased border traffic. Currently, many ex soldiers in the area are recipients of government assistance in rural areas. Consider the following case study of an elderly man residing 50 kilometres from Pafuri:

Old man’s employment record:
1956  Worked in Pafuri for a ‘coloured’ man on his farm - 50c per month
1960 -1964  Worked in Skukuza as cleanup worker - R5.00 per month
  Worked in Crown mines in Johannesburg - R 50.00 per month
  Moved to Modderfontein mine - R80.00 per month
  Then went to Eskom in Van der Bijl Park - R120.00 per month
1965 -present  Returned home and became a
  (i) leopard skin trader cum poacher, as well as a
  (ii) Small dealer and commuter,
  (iii) Labour transporter for Wenela and also
  (iv) A war informer and clandestine assistant to Renamo and the SADF.
  - R500.00 pm

As one can see, the deepening economic crisis in Gaza created new opportunities for residents, some of whom had been marginalised by poorly paid jobs in the past. The varied track record of these people reflects
McGregor's idea that people drew upon different identities as they saw fit - sometimes as a labour recruiter, or as an informer, but at the same time, also as a respected individual or traditional leader. The idea of dual leadership in the Pafuri hinterland, therefore, does not appear as complex a situation as originally envisaged. People have drawn on different statuses as circumstances have demanded, and have just as readily (and temporarily) given these positions up as circumstances demand. These layers of identity may seem complicated to an outsider, but still make economic sense to those who find themselves without any other choice. These strategies of leadership may also explain why West (1998: 143) has chosen to represent traditional leadership as a 'grey' phenomenon, as the complexity of leadership has defied any description in 'black and white'. Similarly, the apparent divide between traditional and government appointed leaders does not make sense in conditions that demand a combination of roles, rather than one.

The variety of positions that traditional leaders in Mozambique have occupied in relation to a colonial state, an independant government or a general economic elite can be compared to many other African states. Sahn and Sarris (1994: 285) have noticed a general neglect of indigenous arrangements by modern African states in a variety of countries, especially Mozambique, Guinea, Malawi and Tanzania. In all of these countries, they note that many inhabitants developed ‘coping mechanisms’ – which included the development of parallel markets, barter and illegal cross border trade - in order to escape restrictions imposed by the state. From 1967 in Tanzania, for example, many people were exposed to forced labour on state communal farms, resulting in a total resettlement of between 5-13 million inhabitants. Although she does not explicitly link resettlement to role diversification, Van Freyhold (1979) hints at the double roles of many traditional leaders in Ujamaa villages, in particular those of the 'bwana-shamba' – a traditional chief who was also a government supporter – which created a similar predicament for appointees in these areas,
as both the demands of the government as well as the complaints of disgruntled villagers had to be accommodated simultaneously. In South Africa, traditional authorities have also been subject to similar conflicting pressures during the Apartheid era. Delius (1996) describes how a ‘profound polarisation’ developed between the supporters of Bantu Authorities and members of populist organisations in Sekhukhuneland (in the Northern Province of South Africa). Both McAllister (1989) in the former Transkei and de Wet (1989) in the former Ciskei (both in the Eastern Cape) mention that traditional leaders were often tricked into accepting resettlement schemes on the pretext that agricultural production and infrastructure would gradually improve. Whether these leaders and supporters managed to successfully combine conflicting roles, as did traditional chiefs in Mozambique, is not explicitly mentioned. However, due to the absence of labour recruiting networks such as those of the Portuguese colonists and Wenela, as well as the conflicting demands that both of these institutions imposed upon leaders, one can conclude that successful role combination in South Africa was not a very common phenomenon. In addition, other factors, such as the development of militancy and the presence of the ANC in many rural areas, may have encouraged polarisation of distinct groups of government supporters vs. government adversaries.

Conclusion
This account of the experiences of the residents of the Pafuri hinterland in Mozambique, as well as the perceptions of home by people in South Africa, has sketched a few images of the area. Many suggest that the upper Limpopo valley is the ‘true’ ancestral home of the Maluleke in South Africa, which is supported by the wide open lands and largely untouched tracts of vegetation in the upper Limpopo valley. These representations are supported by many conservation officials, especially those who are in support of creating a transfrontier park in the Pafuri area. Other images are connected to the idea of
Pafuri as an isolated backwater, home to poachers and corrupt border officials. This paper has shown that these images have been assimilated into the everyday lives of inhabitants through a complex combination of economic and political roleplaying. Residents of the area cannot be classified according to a single role – whether as a refugee or traditional leader – but only in terms of the varied possibilities that are made available by the combination of these roles, and through the degree of their personal freedom of choice. It thus appears that the imagined identity of ‘Tsonganess’, as created by Marxist scholars such as Harries, is (and was) far too generalised a notion to apply to identity creation and manipulation by the Makuleke in South Africa and Mozambique. Such a ‘place focused concept of culture’, which as Hastrup and Olwig (1997: 4) mention, is a perspective which places a limitation on social behaviour and prevents people from playing an active role in constructing their own identity.

Residents and South African kin of the Pafuri hinterland have thus used notions of home that many associate with the area to create a feeling of place; and have used the experience of self motivated physical movement, in contrast to the helplessness associated with forced movement, to create economic manoeuvrability and freedom. The feeling that Mozambique constitutes a ‘home’ to many displaced people can be supported by the commonalities which run through both Mozambican and South African communities, specifically through experiences of rootlessness and displacement. The flux and movement around the borderzones of Pafuri are typically the centres around which the lives of most inhabitants revolve and certainly do not occupy a peripheral place in the generation of a local identity and regional economy.

Given these insights, it is also necessary that displacement in Pafuri be viewed through a slightly wider lens. Displacement is not only about a knowledge of movement through space, but about how generations of people manage
disruptions through time. The end result of historical displacement is a debate about place – how people situate themselves within a particular geographical location and manage their personal experiences of historical displacement, despite years of upheaval. It appears that the strategies of role combination, personal flexibility and political manoeuvrability in Pafuri have occurred precisely because of displacement, and not despite it. Furthermore, these experiences have helped to consolidate the idea that the Pafuri hinterland in Mozambique serves as a home for a variety of displaced persons, which in turn, has provided economic freedom and choice for many of those who pass through the bordergate.

The accompanying history of (multiple) leadership roles in Pafuri may in turn be used to compare experiences of displacement in both countries and understand the very different tactics used by the Portuguese (in comparison to the Apartheid state, for example) to subvert traditional authorities, especially in remote areas where direct means of rule were virtually impossible to administer. Thus, situations of multiple leadership, as well as the accompanying diversification of economic opportunities that occur as a result of these combinations, may point to a far more complex situation than indicated by Mamdani (1996: 61) in his reference to a ‘bifurcated world’. In his terms, many rural inhabitants of African colonial states had been deeply divided by their pasts, producing polarised groups that were (are) regulated by ‘customary law on the one side, and modern law on the other’. Such an analysis is clearly limited and leaves no room for a future understanding of the variety of situations that individuals, especially those who have been repeatedly exposed to resettlement and rootlessness, may use to gain economic leverage, nor does it allow for a deeper investigation into the historical complexities of Crookes Corner during the past century.
The positive possibilities of the associations of place in Pafuri, however, are only one aspect of a complex situation. Role combination in leadership and economic competitiveness also result in manipulative situations, as those who cannot afford to access diverse forms of income are usually marginalised by more powerful individuals. One such category is that of single widows and the elderly, who, as the previous case study of Ms Mthlavi has demonstrated, cannot cope with the long term patterns of migrant labour and displacement of family providers to South Africa. Other situations, however, are illustrated by the following fieldnotes:

Fieldnotes 16/09/99
Chabane showed us his machamba - he had planted cabbage, beans, tomatoes.... and had irrigated his field with the only petrol pump for miles around. It was good to see that it was his first good harvest in two years......Anyway, we then went to see the ilala wine tappers, who seemed to be quite drunk. They showed me their harvesting methods, and I made an ilala hat and drank lots of wine. We then went back to the old shop, where we met another elder and had a sort of a meeting. I told him about Coutada 16 (a hunting reserve and newly conserved area), and he then told me that two Mulungu’s (white men), one of which was an oldish man who was gorda (fat), had arrived in Thobela and told them that a game reserve was to be proclaimed there and that they would have to move. Norman and I got a fright, because this (fat) man was talking shit. We then had a big discussion and everyone poured over my map (they still have it).

Fieldnotes 16/12/99
We walked to Chabane’s place from the river and he told me what had happened with the two mulungus from Pretoria. Apparently they used to come to Thobela regularly and would try and stop people harvesting
They also got the superintendent of the village, as well as the Chef de Post in Pafuri to sign this document that allowed for the creation of a reserve and some kind of chimp sanctuary. What upset Chabane was that some of the vegetable gardens along the river (including his) would have to be moved.

These notes serve to illustrate precisely how historical complexities have directly affected current events in the area. As Myers (1994: 607) has noted, land concessions in Mozambique have been rather haphazardly distributed to a variety of parties during the last five years, an occurrence that has created a new category of landless and marginalised individuals. Furthermore, there is considerable confusion about ‘how people gain rights to land through a formal system, who has authority to distribute land rights and what types of rights are being granted’ (Myers 1994: 612). Myers and West (1996: 29) have also noticed that since structural adjustment policies began in Mozambique in 1987, alienation of land, land grabbing and speculation have grown dramatically. Chabane Chauke, for example, had been granted land on his return from Zimbabwe in 1994, but in 1999 found his original claim being contradicted by an underhanded land concession to unknown outsiders by a corrupt government official. The actions of these officials, as Myers (1994) indicates, may well have been exacerbated by a misunderstanding at the second National Land Conference in Mozambique in 1998, where many expressed the fear that possible land allocations to traditional institutions could revert back to a backward system of ‘tribalism’.

The fears of the current Mozambican land reform programme are obviously unfounded – traditional leadership and institutions are far from simplistic. On the contrary, they exhibit extraordinary complexity and sensitivity to changing circumstances. It is the task of future research on this topic to understand more fully the precise implications of such a complex role combination, and to
search for more ways through which to view the interaction between chiefs, officials, and common residents in Pafuri. Residents in this border zone in Mozambique live in a rapidly changing political and social context – the area contains some of the highest percentages of returnees in Gaza Province. In addition, unlike South Africans, most residents do not have allotted state or personal funds to rebuild homes and lands after recent floods and are increasingly exposed to a series of land claims and political decisions that are seemingly out of their control. Growing pressure from the private sector regarding the sale and lease of land, especially through ventures such as the new Transfrontier Park in South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe (see Bowen 1992: 275-6) have also placed pressure on family farming in Pafuri. In these cases, the crooks, commuters and chiefs of the Pafuri triangle will have to rely even more upon income diversification and cross border movement, and once again will paradoxically make use of precisely the same images which have resulted in their misinterpretation in the first place.

Notes
1  The author would like to thank Norman Maluleke, as well as numerous people from Makuleke, for assisting with fieldwork in Mozambique and providing me with the initial impetus behind this paper.
2  Analysis has been restricted to only South Africa and Mozambique for reasons of access, as fieldwork in two (rather than one) foreign countries proves to be far more difficult to achieve in practice.
3  This term is used to refer to the periodic absence of a space that can be called ‘home’, as is the case with many people in Pafuri, especially during years of flooding and war.
4. The term ‘Makuleke’ refers to a geographical space, while the name ‘Maluleke’ is a name given to clan members. Due to the significance of clan names, pseudonyms have been avoided.

5. Soshangane (or Manucusse) was a Ndwandwe (a far northern Zulu clan) warlord who is credited with the establishment of the Gaza empire in southern Mozambique. This kingdom was a typical Nguni polity, which provided an umbrella of sovereignty over tribute paying subjects (Newitt 1995: 262) such as the Maluleke. The Gaza state reached its height of power during the 1850s and 1860s and then declined with the advent of Portuguese rule in Mozambique.

6. Harries (1989: 85) mentions that the name ‘Tonga’ was a stereotypical term that was applied by Zulu speakers to refer to several chiefdoms in southern Mozambique, or, among others, the original inhabitants of the east coast before the entry of the Zulu. Later, this term was also used by Natal colonists to refer to people living along the coast north of the Zulu border.

7. That is, as far as the eye can see.

8. Villagisation is a term that is applied to refer to residents who have been resettled by a ‘development’ programme in a post-colonial country in a new site. Villagised sites in South Africa are typically characterised by a grid like pattern of streets, a shrinkage in the size of arable land and a displacement in original clan hamlets.

9. Komba parties are regularly hosted by the families of young female initiates. Up to four komba parties may be held at the end of each initiation ceremony, which take place once, or sometimes twice a year.

10. In Pafuri, it was explained that an inkanakana commonly refers to a brother or a close male relative of a regional chief, who controls a smaller district and who is under the supervision of such a chief.

References


West, HG. 1998. ‘This Neighbour is Not My Uncle: Changing Relations of Power and Authority on the Mueda plateau (Mozambique)’. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 1: 141- 176.