

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

International African Institute

Reinterpreting the Rural-Urban Connection: Migration Practices and Socio-Cultural Dispositions of Buhera Workers in Harare

Author(s): Jens A. Andersson

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (2001), pp. 82-112

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#) on behalf of the [International African Institute](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1161482>

Accessed: 28/02/2012 05:25

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Cambridge University Press and International African Institute are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

REINTERPRETING THE RURAL–URBAN CONNECTION: MIGRATION PRACTICES AND SOCIO-CULTURAL DISPOSITIONS OF BUHERA WORKERS IN HARARE

Jens A. Andersson

Urbanisation and town–country relations have received considerable attention in the study of Southern Africa, not least because discussions on these issues are part of wider debates on modernisation (Wilson, 1941–42; Stopforth, 1971; Gargett, 1977: 37; Ferguson, 1990a, b, 1999). This paper on migrants from Buhera district working in Harare offers insights that are familiar in the study of African societies, such as the persistence of rural–urban links and the incidence of chain migrations.¹ Nevertheless, the material presented is used to develop a different perspective on rural–urban relations. Migration practices have often been interpreted in utilitarian terms or as driven by macro-economic forces and state intervention. The case material presented here, however, points to the importance of the socio-cultural dispositions of actors in an understanding of migration practices (Bourdieu, 1990: 52–65; 1998: 79–85). The significance of these dispositions in the structuration² of migration practices may be best introduced against the background of the following observations on everyday life in Buhera district.

At Chinyudze, a small business centre along the dust-road from Buhera to Birchenough Bridge, it is difficult to ignore the suggestion that close ties exist between this rural area and distant urban centres, such as Harare. Like so many of these business centres, Chinyudze consists of a small general dealer selling basic commodities and a bottle store. The latter, Chinyudze Hot-Line, is a popular meeting place for people from the surrounding villages. Every afternoon a number of men and a few women gather here to enjoy a beer. Seated on small benches in front of the two shops, they discuss daily affairs and watch the little traffic that passes by. On this afternoon before the Christmas holiday, however, the traffic is heavier than the two or three vehicles that normally pass by. A number of buses stop at Chinyudze, most of them from Harare. They bring numerous urban migrants who have come to spend their Christmas holidays in their rural home area. Most of the

JENS A. ANDERSSON is a research fellow in the Rural Development Sociology Group at Wageningen Agricultural University in the Netherlands. His fieldwork, on rural–urban relations, was carried out in Zimbabwe from 1995 to 1998.

¹ Chain migration refers to the practice of migrating to a destination where one already has relatives or friends who have migrated and originate from the same local area. See Heer (1996: 539).

² For an explanation of the concept of structuration see Giddens (1984).

travellers are men, but a number of women—often with young children—also get off the bus. The descending passengers carry heavy bags laden with items such as clothes, sugar, salt, soap, meat. Occasionally, a traveller is seen carrying agricultural inputs from town. The bulk of seeds and fertilisers have, however, already been brought from town, before the first rains in November.

For the next few days Chinyudze is a very lively place. Many people visit the bottle store and enjoy themselves in discussion, dancing and consuming large quantities of beer. It is one of those few occasions Chinyudze business centre is indeed busy. After Christmas, life gradually returns to normal. Many urban workers have returned to town while others have (for the moment) adopted their rural relatives' way of life—drinking a beer after working in the fields.

In February, Chinyudze is suddenly a busy place again. The few buses from Harare that stop at Chinyudze again bring urban migrants from Harare. Although they probably did not plan a home visit so soon after the Christmas holidays, these migrant workers have come to attend the funeral of a young schoolteacher. He is the son of a migrant worker whose rural homestead is near Chinyudze. The son, in his early 30s, died in his father's house in Harare, but—as is customary—has been brought to Buhera to be buried in the soil of his home area. Relatives who work in town arranged for a coffin and the transport of the deceased. They borrowed the mini-bus of a fellow migrant worker who originates from a nearby village. The father of the deceased is an ordinary factory worker in town. Yet he is a respected man. Buhera workers in Harare know him as a *mukoma* (elder brother) or *baba* (father) who has helped them in pursuing an urban career. Others recognise his material wealth. He owns a bottle store, has a brick-built house at his homestead, and managed to finance the teacher training of his deceased son. Since the news of the son's death, preparations for the funeral have been made at the father's homestead, for the son had not yet established his own. Many people have gathered at the homestead near Chinyudze. The mourners sit up with the deceased's family for days, leaving only occasionally for a bath at home or a drink at the bottle store.

As the observations at the rural bottle store and a local funeral indicate, urban and rural worlds are, from the actors' perspective, not separable. This contrasts with common perspectives on rural-urban relations as found, for example, in the literature on structural adjustment in Africa, in which the urban and the rural are seen as economic sectors in competition. Trade, price and exchange rate policies are seen as 'urban biased'—i.e. overprotecting urban industry while simultaneously holding back agriculture (Bates, 1988: 346–7; de Haan, 1999: 13). Thus distorted terms of trade between rural and urban sectors became a dominant theme in economic policy debates in the 1980s and 1990s (see World Bank, 1981: 4, 1994). The observations also suggest a different type of link between rural and urban areas than portrayed in current debates on democratisation in Africa that stress the links between urban elites and rural constituencies. In contrast, Buhera

society does not appear to be an instrumental 'periphery' of an urban elite struggling for political power in the centre (cf. Chazan *et al.*, 1992: 122; Nyamnjoh and Rowlands, 1998). Rather than presenting two distinct—but instrumentally and hierarchically linked—social environments, the observations at the bottle store exhibit social situations in which the rural and the urban constitute a single social universe encompassing both rural and urban geographical spaces. Consequently, dichotomies of rural and urban economic sectors, centre and periphery, elite and mass are of little importance. In Buhera district, social life that does not encompass both the rural and the urban seems unthinkable.

Understanding Buhera societies as translocal—i.e. encompassing both rural and urban areas—challenges conventional perspectives on urbanisation in Southern Africa. Building upon a sharp contrast between the rural and the urban, these have often assumed the gradual emergence of stabilised urban and rural populations, and, with this, the development of a distinct urban pattern of behaviour.³ Thus, rural-urban migration is understood as part of what Ferguson (1990, 1999) has typified a 'metanarrative of urbanisation'—i.e. a teleological pattern of change in migration patterns, accompanied by altering forms of domestic organisation, kinship, residence, etc. However, such an assumed pattern of change is contradicted by the realities of persistent population movements between rural and urban areas and the rural-return migration of long-term urban (born) residents (Potts, 1995; Ferguson, 1999). Thus it is increasingly recognised that a commonly used indicator, such as the number of years spent in town, is not 'a reliable index of a person's "urbanisation"' (Van Velsen, 1960: 268). Rather, it is the quality and nature of the social relations connecting town and countryside that count (see also Bourdillon, 1977: 24).

To be sure, rural-urban contrasts have featured prominently in both academic and (colonial) policy discourses, as well as in the daily lives of urban dwellers themselves.⁴ Similarly, state regulation and economic factors have played an important role in the understanding of rural-urban relations. However, such discourses, contrasting rural and urban, are not necessarily reflected in social practice. State regulation and economic factors are significant forces in the formation of such practices that connect rural and urban areas, but they do not determine them. There are different responses to such forces (see Long, 1984).

³ Urbanisation studies in Southern Africa as undertaken by researchers of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute were preoccupied with the analysis of rural-urban population movement and emerging urbanised patterns of behaviour among Africans in town (see, for instance, Mitchell, 1969, 1975, 1987; see also Hannerz, 1980: 119-62; Ferguson, 1999: 86-90).

⁴ See Ferguson (1999), who describes the significance of rural-urban distinctions in the lives of mineworkers on the Zambian Copperbelt in the late 1980s. He found that mineworkers' discussions of rural retirement were often phrased in terms of rural and urban oppositions. Upon retirement mineworkers could even attend formally organised crash courses on 'how to adapt to rural life' (1999: 124). For a discussion of the emergence of a rural-urban divide in colonial administrators' records see Andersson (forthcoming).

Hence this article makes a case for the role of social actors in shaping such practices from below. At this level, economic preferences do, of course, play their role in shaping behaviour. Yet we need to grasp how such economic preferences arise, i.e. how economic decision making is socio-culturally embedded (Granovetter, 1985). Therefore one needs to understand people's socio-cultural dispositions and how these are historically produced in social practices.⁵ This will first be illustrated by a critical discussion of conventional thinking in which urbanisation is often seen as part of a wider process of modernisation regulated by market forces and state intervention. Thereafter the differential ways in which shared socio-cultural dispositions may interact with the political economy of the region are discussed, building upon observations of two chain migrations of Buhera migrants in Harare.⁶

COLONIAL STATE REGULATION, URBANISATION AND CIRCULATORY MIGRATION

It is undeniable that 'economic conditions seem to [have] set the basic conditions for the growth of towns' (Mitchell, 1987: 46). After the Second World War, when industrial growth greatly increased urban employment opportunities, cities like Salisbury (now Harare) expanded rapidly. Since then the African urban population (more than) doubled every decade, but by the mid-1970s still less than 20 per cent of Rhodesia's population lived in urban centres (Smout, 1976; Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1986). The conventional explanation of this relatively low level of urbanisation is not, however, in market terms but in terms of colonial state intervention. Colonial state intervention is perceived as functional to the development of settler capitalism that sought to reduce the cost of wages by localising social reproduction in the rural areas (Wolpe, 1972; for an opposing view see Chauncey, 1981). As in South Africa, the (Southern) Rhodesian government developed a rather sophisticated legal framework favouring the employment of single male migrant workers. Pass laws restricted urban residence to the duration of employment. There was a system of compulsory registration of employed urban Africans and the repatriation of unregistered or unemployed Africans in town. Furthermore, urban housing policies for a long time favoured the accommodation of single men in hostels. These measures aimed to turn the urban life of male Africans into a temporary affair. The economic and legal insecurity of town life forced

⁵ The important point about the concept of socio-cultural dispositions is that it views culture not as a static symbolic structure giving meaning to action but as historically situated practices that produce meaning (see Geertz, 1993: 4-5; Bourdieu, 1998).

⁶ To argue for the importance of understanding migrants' cultural dispositions is not to say that rural-urban relations are important to all categories of urban dwellers. Urban existence may also become disconnected from the 'rural home'—Harare's street children are an example (Bourdillon, 1994)—resulting in patterns of urban social life in which kinship, 'home', etc., are far less important than in the cases described in this article.

African urban workers to maintain links with their rural home areas where the women and children were supposed to remain, working the land. This resulted in circulatory migration movements between town and country. Thus colonial state intervention attempted to slow down African urbanisation and the formation of a permanently urbanised working class (see Gargett, 1977; Mutambirwa and Potts, 1987; Zinyama *et al.*, 1993). Migratory behaviour, then, is understood as a product of social engineering by the colonial state that operates within a framework of economic incentives triggering labour migration.

Given this conventional perspective on urbanisation, Zimbabwe's independence marks a historical divide. As 'restrictions on permanent and family migration to towns were lifted . . . it was to be expected that the nature of rural-urban migration would change' (Potts and Mutambirwa, 1990: 678). The issue to address then becomes 'how far family migration was replacing the "traditional" pattern of single, male migrancy' (Potts and Mutambirwa, 1990: 683).

The conventional perspective on urbanisation, like the historical divide it presupposes, is problematic, however. It has homogenised the colonial state and its approach to urbanisation, viewing urbanisation policy as a consistent package of measures aimed to slow down African urbanisation. However, the Rhodesian government's position on the necessity (or inevitability) of African urbanisation was subject to change, and implemented policies could be inconsistent. For instance, urban influx regulations (pass laws, registration, repatriation) appear contradictory to the Land Husbandry Act of 1950. Whereas the former measures were intended to turn African town life into a temporary affair, the latter Act is generally perceived as an attempt to settle the industrial labour force permanently in towns (Arrighi, 1973: 363; Phimister, 1993: 230; Raftopoulos, 1995: 82). Hence, despite a recurrent ideological emphasis in colonial policy discourse on the migration of single men temporarily working in town, policy practice was often different. In addition, actual rural-urban migration practices under colonialism often defied both policy discourse and practice. For instance, already during the colonial period the average length of stay in town was increasing, while the number of women migrating to town also increased steadily. And although the colonial state often chose to ignore the presence of women in town, the ratio of males to females among urban Africans dropped from 18:1 in 1904 to 3:1 in 1936, and 1.6:1 in 1969.⁷ As many of these women came to town as wives and mothers, the number of families living in town increased. By the 1940s urban family life was already fairly common, and workers' demands were partly inspired by the needs of urban women and children

⁷ The colonial state's policy practice of not including African women 'in the provisions of mandatory pass and identification document legislation until the late 1970s' exemplifies its limited interest in urban women (Barnes, 1999: 107). The figures for 1904 and 1936 are estimates taken from Smout (1976: 87). The 1969 figure is based on an overview of the twelve main urban areas in Rhodesia (CSO, 1976: 54-6).

(Barnes, 1995: 96; see also Scarnecchia, 1996). Rather than a single pattern of rural-urban migration, these findings suggest the coexistence of circulatory migration of single males with other forms of migration to town. Conventional thinking about urbanisation is unable to deal with such diversity in rural-urban migration patterns because of its inherent centrist perspective on social change. Thinking in terms of national urbanisation policies operating within an economic framework of supply and demand for urban labour allows only uniform reactions.

Diversity in rural-urban relations and migratory movements is, however, omnipresent in post-colonial Zimbabwe, which saw the abolition of the restrictive legal framework on urbanisation. To be sure, commonly used demographic indicators, such as sex ratios in urban centres, urban growth rates and the level of urbanisation, suggest an increase in longer-term and family migration to town (Potts and Mutambirwa, 1990; CSO, 1994).⁸ Yet at the same time it is found that—as elsewhere in post-colonial Africa (Ferguson, 1990a, b, 1999; Geschiere and Gugler, 1998)—rural-urban relations continue to be important. Potts and Mutambirwa, for instance, have argued that, despite progressive urbanisation, ‘circular migration [has] remained very significant’ in post-colonial Zimbabwe (1990: 683). Such findings are supported by demographic evidence. Although the sex distribution in urban centres has become more equal, substantial imbalances still exist, in particular in the economically active age groups.⁹ In urban centres such as Harare and Bulawayo men still outnumber women, whereas in many rural districts women still outnumber men (see Fig. 1). Thus, instead of marking a new era in urbanisation, the post-independence period shows a number of continuities with the colonial era.

For Buhera district, the subject of this article, demographic figures also reveal ambiguous developments. In 1992 sex distributions are still highly unbalanced as compared with the national figures. This suggests the continued significance of the circulatory labour migration of males. Yet there are also indications of longer-term out-migration of males. In the over-45 age group, sex distributions became more uneven in the period 1962–92 (from 94.7 to 68.3; see Fig. 2 and Table 1). Furthermore, in the post-colonial period there seems to be a

⁸ Urban population growth amounted to 5.6 per cent for the 1982–92 period, and Zimbabwe’s urban population increased from 24 per cent of the total population in 1982 to 31 per cent in 1992. In Harare, the sex distribution changed from 116.9 males per 100 females in 1982 to 110 in 1992 (CSO, 1987, 1989, 1994).

⁹ The operationalisation of the ‘economically active’ age group is, of course, arbitrary. Here it is defined as 20 to 44 years for the following reasons: (1) since independence secondary education has become widely available, causing youngsters to enter the labour market at an older age, and (2) although there seems to be a tendency to longer-term migration to towns in the post-colonial period, migrants usually do return to rural areas. The 1992 population figures indicate that men start to return to rural areas when they are over 45, yet this process continues up to legal pension age of 65. The figure would have altered only minimally if the working age group were defined as 20 to 64.

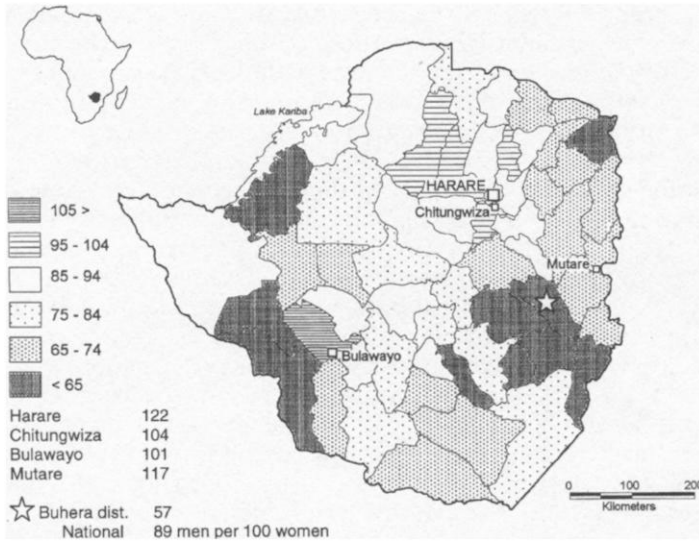


FIGURE 1 Number of men per 100 women in the 20–44 age group, 1992 census. *Data source* Central Statistical Office, Harare, *Provincial profiles*, Harare, 1994

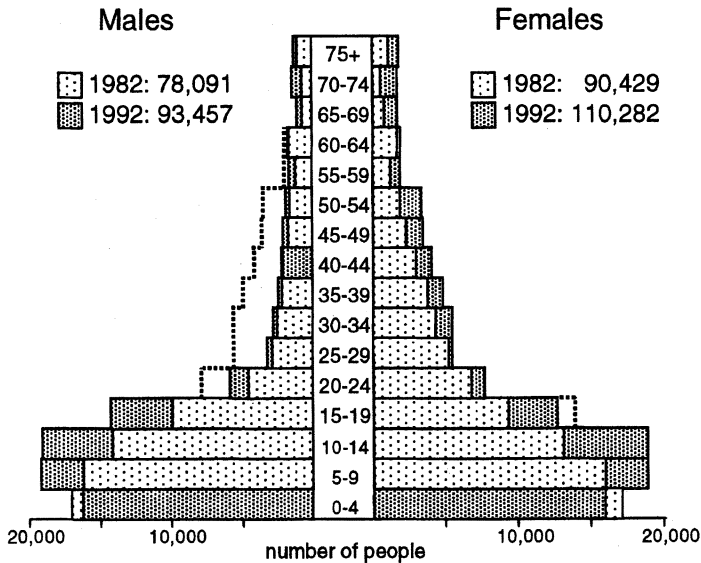


FIGURE 2 Sex distributions, Buhera district, 1982 and 1992. *Note* The dotted line indicates an equal sex distribution

TABLE 1. *Sex distributions (male/female × 100) of specific age groups: Buhera district compared with national figures, 1962-92*

Year	Age group			Total
	0-14	15-44	45+	
1962				
Buhera	100.1	69.8	94.7	88.2
National	101.3	108.9	120.5	106.2
1982				
Buhera	98.9	70.6	80.8	86.4
National	98.3	91.2	111.9	96.8
1992				
Buhera	98.0	73.4	68.3	84.7
National	99.0	91.1	98.0	95.4

NOTE The 1962 figures are based on the following age groups: 0-16.3, 16.3-44.3, 44.3 and over.

SOURCE Central Statistical Office (1962, 1987, 1994).

tendency to out-migration among women in their 20s (20-9 age group) and to the postponement of out-migration among young men.¹⁰

This ambiguity of demographic figures—revealing both a tendency ‘towards a greater degree of urban permanence or stability’ (MacMillan, 1993: 686) and the ‘persistence of substantial imbalances at key points in the demographic pyramid’ (Ferguson, 1994: 637)—points to important weaknesses in the conventional perspective on urbanisation in Southern Africa. Besides its centrist perspective that exposes a far-fetched confidence in the regulatory capacity of the colonial state, its analytical concepts are of limited value. Indicators such as sex ratios, degree of urbanisation, urban growth, duration of urban residence, percentage of urban-born urbanites, are merely elements of a common narrative on urbanisation in Southern Africa. This narrative, while it may be sophisticated enough to distinguish ‘stabilisation’ from ‘urbanisation’,¹¹ and ‘urbanism’—the last referring to ‘the way of life characteristic of towns’ (Mitchell, 1987: 68)—continues to see the urban and the rural as distinct social worlds (see, for instance, Watson, 1958; Ferguson, 1999). Conventional associations between the urban as the site of modernisation, individualisation and change, as opposed to the rural as the locus of tradition, communality and continuity (Ferguson, 1997) tell us very little, however,

¹⁰ The latter trend is likely to be a result of the increased availability of secondary education in rural areas after independence. The number of secondary schools in Buhera district increased from three in 1980 to forty-seven in 1992.

¹¹ The distinction is taken from Mitchell (1987: 68), who defined *stabilisation* as the ‘demographic process whereby people spend longer and longer periods in town before returning to their rural areas’ and *urbanisation* as the proportion of people living in towns.

about the content of rural-urban relations and the specific way in which they are socially organised.

The observations at the Chinyudze bottle store at the start of this article reveal that, from local actors' perspective, urban man and rural man do not necessarily exist as separate entities (although they may sometimes do so in people's narratives). This article therefore analyses urbanisation processes starting from the actual behaviour of migrants and the ways in which migration practices may (or may not) produce specific—urban and rural—localities (Appadurai, 1996: 178–200). It tries to show that specific migration practices—i.e. chain migrations—have to be understood in relation to particular socio-cultural dispositions such as kinship ideology and identification with the land, without *a priori* assumptions as to whether to situate such dispositions spatially—i.e. viewing them as either urban or rural. Hence the present study differs from analyses such as those of Mitchell (1956) and Ferguson (1999) which have focused on the meaning of representations (or images) of rural life within the urban context.¹²

The inseparability of rural and urban that emerges from the ethnographic material presented in this article follows logically from the research methodology used. Whereas migrant behaviour tends to be studied either in an urban or in a rural setting, this study traces migrants from rural Buhera in the urban setting. A three generation perspective is used for a historical reconstruction of the emergence of these chain migrations from Buhera district to Harare (Den Ouden, 1989).

BUHERA MIGRANTS IN HARARE

George Zvarevashe, a Buhera migrant in his early 40s, owns a house built post-independence in a high-density area in the western part of Harare. He is lucky to have this house, George says, for it is difficult to buy a house in town. George bought it in the mid-1980s when a government-financed housing scheme provided small, uniform houses in this area. Nowadays these uniform houses are, however, not so easily seen. Construction is going on all over the place, hiding the original dwellings behind newly erected walls. House owners try to supplement their incomes by extending their small houses in order to rent out the extra rooms. George Zvarevashe's house is no exception—new asbestos roof sheets are stored in the living room, next to the big television and stereo set. He intends to add three new rooms.

George has a permanent job in the chemical factory in which his father, Tinarwo, started to work in the early 1950s. Having previously been responsible for recruitment, George now works in the personnel

¹² For instance, in his discussion of 'cosmopolitan' and 'localist' cultural styles on the Zambian Copperbelt, Ferguson stresses that 'localism was (no less than cosmopolitanism) a specifically *urban* style' (1999: 92). This article does not analyse such representations but, instead, focuses on migrants' practices that encompass rural and urban social situations.

department operating a newly introduced computer system that registers the hours worked by each factory labourer. At 4.30 p.m. he shuts down the computer and locks his office. On his way out he meets the workers who have finished their shift. Since he works in the personnel department, it is not surprising that George knows most of the workers he meets on the way out. Yet he frequently calls workers by their clan names. He knows them well, for they originate from his home area in Buhera district. The workers greet George, who in many cases also recruited them.

Unlike most of the factory labourers, who can walk to their houses on the company's premises, George takes the company bus to town after a day's work. When he arrives at his house, he may decide to have a drink at one of the bottle stores in the nearby shopping centre or, alternatively, go to Harare city council's newly constructed beer hall. While enjoying a bottle of clear Castle beer, George usually meets several of his urban friends. Among them are a few fellow Buherans, although not so many of them live in this part of town. In addition to friends, George's *mwana* (child)—a son of his deceased elder brother (BS)¹³—may also join him for a drink on his return from technical college. George accommodates this *mwana* in his urban house and pays for his education, just as he does for that of his own children, whom he sends to urban schools the moment they are ready for secondary school. When George returns home from the bottle store, his young daughter is busy preparing the evening meal. The dinner table is already laid in the living room for George and his school-going children (*vana*). George's wife and younger children are at George's home (*kumusha*) in Buhera. As it is the planting season, they work in the fields given to George by his father. As soon as the harvest is completed in April they will join George in Harare.

This brief impression of the social life of one Buhera migrant in a post-independence, high-density area contrasts sharply with the situation of Buhera migrants living in Mbare, Harare's oldest African neighbourhood. In Mbare, one of Harare's poorest high-density areas, numerous Buhera migrants live in or near the migrant labour hostels that were built after the Second World War. The hostels are the concrete remains of colonial urbanisation policies that favoured the temporary employment of single male workers. Although some hostel blocks nowadays accommodate families, many remain predominantly occupied by men. Workers from the tobacco processing companies in the nearby industrial area occupy one of these hostel blocks. The

¹³ It is not always possible to find English equivalents for specific Shona kinship terminology. For analytical purposes, kinship relations will therefore be specified in this article using common categories such as B for brother, Z for sister, S for son, D for daughter, F for father, M for mother, H for husband and W for wife. Thus BS denotes brother's son. In this case, where George speaks of his 'child' (*mwana*) he is, in fact, referring to his nephew (a son of his brother). For an elaborate discussion of the patrilineal kinship organisation of the Shona, and the Vahera clan in particular, see Bourdillon (1987: 23-63) and Holleman (1949).

occupants include a number of Buherans. Most of them work as factory labourers in the tobacco industry—jobs that require little formal education—but some do not. In the hostels, three registered tenants share a room. Each tenant has a bed and a lockable iron trunk for his clothes and other personal possessions. In the corners of the rooms one often notices reed mats and additional blankets to accommodate relatives without urban accommodation, visiting family members—wives, children or job seekers. Years of cooking on paraffin stoves has turned walls and ceiling black, and the dirty, cardboard-covered windows prevent any excessive daylight from penetrating these ill-lit rooms.

An experienced man in the network of Buhera migrants residing in these hostels is Chaka Mujiri. He is a supervisor in a nearby tobacco processing company, and a respected man among the Buhera migrants staying in the hostels. Chaka, in his early 60s, returns on foot from work at around 5.00 p.m. Together with other Buhera workers who are currently doing day shift, he sits down on his bed and sends a young worker—a *mwanakomana* ('son')—to buy beer and food. Most of the workers gathered in Chaka's room are related to one another through blood or marriage and originate from the same area in Buhera district. Together they share the two plastic containers of *chibuku* (opaque beer) that arrive a little later. Meanwhile the younger workers in the group have started to prepare food. On an old paraffin stove that produces a lot of smoke they prepare *sadza* (stiff maize porridge) and chicken. Illuminated by a small oil lamp, members of Chaka's patrilineage share the food that is served on a big plate. Other Buhera migrants have, by now, left the room to eat with their own family members who live dispersed in the hostels or nearby houses of Mbare township. Again others have already eaten and are currently at work—they are on night shift. Thus they leave hostel beds vacant for visitors or other urban workers who do not have their own accommodation. Alternating between day shift one week and night shift the next, the Buhera migrants living in the hostels work from April to December—the tobacco processing season—whereafter the elder ones return to Buhera to assist their wives who cultivate the land. Young unmarried workers who have no interest in ploughing may remain in Harare seeking temporary employment until the new tobacco processing season starts.

These observations on Buhera migrants in Harare at first sight seem to replicate conventional divisions between townsmen and tribesmen (see Mayer and Mayer, 1974). Chaka Mujiri and George Zvarevashe appear to represent successive stages of a Smelser-like modernisation process that is characterised by the technological advance, urbanisation and processes of structural differentiation—in the economy, but also within the family—that accompany economic development (see Smelser, 1963: 33–5; also Long, 1977: 10). For instance, whereas the urban life of computer operator George Zvarevashe is characterised by the clear separation of public (work, the beer hall) and private (family house) spheres, in the life of manual labourer Chaka Mujiri such differentiation is non-existent. In the collective housing arrangements of

Mbare hostels, migrants share not only rooms but also the food and (opaque) beer that is brought in containers from the beer hall. Whereas George may seem to have a highly individualised urban existence working in a technologically advanced department of his company, Chaka presents as part of a group of migrant workers originating from Buhera who do largely perform unskilled work in the tobacco processing industry.

Furthermore, the two urban situations described seem to represent different stages in a linear process of urbanisation that is part of this modernisation—i.e. the demographic transition, moving from circulatory labour migration towards the formation of a permanently settled urban working class (see also Ferguson, 1990a, b). Whereas the observations on Buhera migrants residing in the hostels in Mbare township appear typical of a migrant labour phase, with migrants circulating between town and country, the urban life of George Zvarevashe seems to signify a step further in the urbanisation process. Yet, if we look at their sociogenesis, we see that similar socio-cultural dispositions—a kinship ideology and an orientation towards the land—have shaped these different migration trajectories of the Zvarevashes and the Mujiris.

Tinarwo and the Zvarevashe chain migration

George's father, Tinarwo Zvarevashe, was among the first post-World War II Buhera migrants to go to Salisbury. He went in 1947. The year is important, for it was the *gore re nzara* (year of hunger) and, because of the drought, there was little work to do in the fields. Tinarwo's choice of Salisbury was typical for the time and reflects a much wider tendency among Shona migrant workers (see Yoshikuni, 1999: 120). The expansion of industry in Salisbury after the Second World War created a high demand for labour in town. The job opportunities and relatively good wages attracted workers who had previously migrated elsewhere in search of employment. Tinarwo, for instance, had already worked in a number of places in rural Rhodesia, Nyasaland (Malawi) and South Africa before migrating to Salisbury. Colonial records indicate that the Union of South Africa was already a popular destination among Buhera migrant workers in the early 1920s.¹⁴ Then as now, however, migrants often crossed the border illegally, and thus this migration flow has largely escaped official statistics (for estimates see Paton, 1995: 117). South Africa offered good and stable wages, but the boom in Salisbury industry in the late 1940s and early 1950s made Salisbury increasingly popular among Buhera migrants, not least because of its shorter distance from Buhera and the absence of language barriers.

¹⁴ Annual reports of Assistant Native Commissioner (ANC) at Buhera repeatedly mention migrant workers going to the Union in search of work. See: National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ), file S235/501, 503, 505, ANC Buhera annual reports 1923, 1925, 1926 and NAZ S1051 and S2403/2681, NC Buhera annual reports 1948 and 1952.

On arrival in Salisbury, Tinarwo stayed with his maternal uncle (*sekuru*) in one of the single men's hostels in Harari (now Mbare) township. Tinarwo needed little help to find work, as jobs were readily available in the expanding urban economy. He often changed employment in search of better pay and working conditions while regularly visiting his rural home area. After several jobs he joined a construction company in the eastern part of town. Building upon his experience in South Africa—where he also worked in the building industry—he got a permanent job. Tinarwo moved out of the hostels in Harari township as he could participate in the 'tied housing' arrangement of his new employer. This meant that, for the time he was employed, he could stay in a house in Mabvuku township, in the eastern part of town.

Attracted by the employment opportunities and good wages, an increasing number of Buhera migrants came to Salisbury. They were not the only ones. The rapidly increasing urban population caused a chronic shortage of housing. Tinarwo did his share of accommodating newly arrived urban migrants. In the same way as his *sekuru* (MB) had accommodated him, he now provided shelter for relatives and friends from the Murambinda area in Buhera district. Young Buhera men, and occasionally their visiting wives, were thus squeezed into Tinarwo's small township house until they found work and got their own accommodation. The occupational status of Tinarwo's house was, therefore, always highly dynamic. Tinarwo's 'accommodating practices' were common in town and constituted migrant workers' answer to the 'tied housing'—i.e. accommodation linked with employment at a particular company—and the chronic housing shortage in Salisbury in the post-World War II period. The mobilisation of personal networks in finding accommodation made workers flexible because, as a retired urban worker explains, 'there was always someone you could stay with, if you quit a job'.

Tinarwo lost job and house when his employer wanted to transfer him to Que Que (Kwekwe). Tinarwo refused, as he preferred the urban life of Salisbury, where he had many friends, girlfriends and good entertainment. A new employer and company housing were soon found, however, at a nearby chemical factory. Tinarwo became a 'baasboy' (supervisor), supervising a group of some twenty workers. Supervising itself was rather difficult, Tinarwo recalls, for the work groups consisted of workers with very different cultural and linguistic backgrounds¹⁵ who were not very good at *Chilapalapa*—a mixture of languages commonly spoken in labour centres at that time. Therefore supervisors like Tinarwo tried to form monolingual work groups by

¹⁵ Salisbury industry attracted workers not only from Southern Rhodesia but also from Nyasaland (Malawi), Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia).

exchanging labourers to facilitate communication. Recruitment practices in urban industry also contributed to the clustering of workers with similar socio-cultural backgrounds. In times of high labour demand, as in the early 1950s, employers encouraged their workers to bring in friends and relatives. Tinarwo, for instance, was told to bring 'his brothers'. While visiting his family in Buhera, Tinarwo informed relatives and rural friends about the employment opportunities at his company in Salisbury. However, many people in the Murambinda area preferred farming to urban employment¹⁶ and, even if they came to town, they usually resigned voluntarily and returned home after a relatively short period of urban employment. Nevertheless, Tinarwo continued to assist both urban friends and rural relatives by providing shelter and helping them to obtain employment at the chemical factory. New workers often started in his work group, which Tinarwo considered an advantage, for 'they knew me and paid respect to me'.

By the late 1950s introducing new workers was becoming more difficult as urban employment growth declined. Supervisors like Tinarwo, however, retained influence over the recruitment of new workers. Not only could supervisors mobilise their good relations with staff, but the news that additional workers would be recruited at the factory gate was spread through them, enabling them to tell job seekers to be at the gate. The tighter urban labour market did, however, make Tinarwo more selective. He would now mainly assist kin and people from his rural home area.

Tinarwo was in his late 40s when his father, Tazviwana, died in 1968. Being the eldest in the family, Tinarwo felt obliged to return home to take over the leadership of his family as well as the village. The Tazviwana family had been given a village to rule in 1960, when the implementation of the Native Land Husbandry Act saw the creation of a number of new villages in the Murambinda area. When Tinarwo left urban employment the company offered his second son a position, his first son having already been in the company's employ since the early 1960s. Tinarwo, as his son George was later to do, had sent his sons to urban schools, as the opportunities for education in the less developed Buhera district were limited. He and his working sons paid the younger ones' school fees. George was able to finish Standard 6 education in 1974, an uncommon achievement for Buhera people at the time. The limited education opportunities for Africans in (Southern) Rhodesia during the colonial period gave those with diplomas a great advantage on the urban job market as it gradually became less racially segmented. Tinarwo's second son was soon promoted to supervisor, while George

¹⁶ This preference may relate to the relatively good rainfall during this decade. In the 1950s yearly rainfall at Buhera station was predominantly above average, as opposed to the 1940s and 1960s.

was employed as a clerk in the personnel department. Hence Tinarwo's sons could consolidate and expand the position he had built in the company. They have come to play an important role in the recruitment of new personnel, as is reflected in the large number of workers from Buhera who work or have worked for the company. In the 1990s, characterised by high urban unemployment, recruitment and accommodating practices like those of Tinarwo have become crucial for Buhera migrants, as their large representation in the chemical company exemplifies. In 1997 more than sixty permanent workers originated from the Murambinda area, while the total number of Buherans in the company's work force of some 400–500 workers probably exceeds 200.

Chaka Mujiri and the 'Mbare network'

Chaka Mujiri, the hub of the network of Buhera migrants residing in and around the Mbare hostels, occupies a very different position in the migrant network from someone like Tinarwo Zvarevashe. Whereas the Zvarevashe network is centralised, as its emergence results primarily from Zvarevashe family influence on recruitment at the company, the Mbare network is far less centred on one Buhera family. Chaka Mujiri, although a supervisor, is far less able to assist job seekers in finding employment at his company. Other differences between Tinarwo Zvarevashe and Chaka Mujiri can be found in their respective positions in rural Buhera. Whereas Tinarwo is the descendant of a relatively poor immigrant from Chirumanzu district, Chaka Mujiri is a member of an influential Vahera¹⁷ lineage in Buhera district. Chaka's father was a wealthy man with a substantial herd of cattle. Like Chaka's paternal uncles, he was also a *sabhuku* (village leader), a position that Chaka's elder brother (B) inherited. At present Chaka's lineage controls four villages¹⁸ (*mabhuku*) in the Murambinda area.

More than ten years younger than Tinarwo Zvarevashe, Chaka first ventured out to look for work in the early 1950s. At that time, his elder brother, Fambirai, was still working in South Africa, but the promise of good wages 'near by' made Chaka decide to go Salisbury instead. As he knew no members of his patrikin in town, he relied on his *muzukuru* (ZS, i.e. nephew), a son of his sister, who was married in a village some 20 km from Mujiri village. Chaka's *muzukuru* was staying in the Matapi hostel in Mbare township, and it was from there that Chaka initiated his job hunting. Finding work was not difficult in the early 1950s, and Chaka was employed at a transport company. This meant travelling a

¹⁷ Buhera district derives its name from the Vahera clan that ruled the area when white settlers colonised Zimbabwe in the late nineteenth century.

¹⁸ In Buhera district a village is known as *bhuku* (literally book), which refers to the (colonial) tax register that had to be administered by the village leader, who is popularly called the *sabhuku* (literally holder of the book).

lot in the Southern African region, which Chaka did not like very much. Towards the end of the year he returned home to take up ploughing and be with his young wife and family.

After a few years Chaka returned to Salisbury, this time accompanied by his younger brother, Kwirirai, who had just failed to get a place in a mission school in Gutu district. The two brothers, both with little formal education, again had to rely on a *muzukuru* for accommodation in town. This time they went to Tinarwo Zvarevashe, who is only distantly related to the Mujiri brothers (FFFBDSS) but originates from a neighbouring village in the Murambinda area. *Muzukuru* Tinarwo was staying in Mabvuku township, on the eastern side of town. Tinarwo also helped them find their first job. They were both employed by the same company as Tinarwo. Both Kwirirai and Chaka changed employment and accommodation after some time. During the agricultural season they usually interrupted their urban careers in order to assist their Buhera wives who worked the land at home. Through contact with other Buhera migrants in town it was relatively easy to be such a mobile worker. For instance, Kwirirai went to work at the same company as his *mukuwasha* (ZH, i.e. brother-in-law) and was accommodated by him. Chaka got his own hostel accommodation (meaning a bed in a hostel) in Harari township in the early 1960s as part of an employment package. He was the first person from the Murambinda area to get a job with the company, a factory processing tobacco. Chaka became a seasonal worker, as tobacco is processed between April and December. To Chaka this was a reasonably good compromise between ploughing at home and working in town. He could participate in the late planting of crops at home while being assured of paid employment on his return to town. Chaka worked for a number of years in this way—as a mobile worker oscillating between town and rural Buhera—whereafter he left his urban job in the mid 1960s, only to return to Salisbury in the early 1970s.

After the industrial boom of the early 1950s, finding urban employment gradually became more difficult, particularly for Buhera migrants who changed jobs regularly and who had little formal education because of the limited schooling opportunities in their district. Chaka's brother, Kwirirai, could not find a job and had left Salisbury disillusioned by the end of the 1950s.

Chaka, on the other hand, managed to mobilise the urban contacts he had established earlier and again obtained employment at the same tobacco processing company. Without an impressive educational background he made it to supervisor, a favourable position as regards the recruitment of new workers. Chaka was now able to help rural kin and other people from his home area in securing employment at the company. Such recruitment practices were widespread and, because employment was tied to accommodation in the hostels, a number of Buhera migrants became registered hostel dwellers in Harari township. A random survey among 150 hostel dwellers in 1975 conducted by Møller (1978: 144) confirms this trend towards concentration. She

found that 8 per cent—i.e. twelve out of 150—of the *formal* residents originated from Buhera district. Ranking districts by the number of migrants originating from each, she found Buhera to be among the four most represented districts.¹⁹

In the late 1990s one can still find a concentration of Buhera migrants in the hostels. They are either officially registered occupants, or unofficially sharing rooms (and a bed) with registered workers. Although it was not intended as permanent housing for urban workers, Chaka Mujiri has now lived in the hostel accommodation for over twenty years in total. Still he does not consider himself an urban dweller. For this reason he declined the opportunity to get his own urban accommodation through a company-supported housing scheme just after independence in 1980. Chaka's aim was to build a good house in Buhera, not to have one in town. Nowadays he regrets the decision. Although he succeeded in constructing a small house on his *musha* (homestead) in Buhera, he now realises that an *imba* (house) in town is an asset.²⁰ Rental income could have supplemented the 'inflation-prone' pension for which he will soon be eligible.

DIFFERENT MIGRATION TRAJECTORIES, SIMILAR SOCIO-CULTURAL DISPOSITIONS

The two migration trajectories outlined above make it difficult to talk of urban migrants 'maintaining rural links' in merely economic terms. Migrants' involvement²¹ in rural affairs is not simply a question of support for rural family members in return for safeguarding a claim to land as some sort of social security arrangement, for, as Van Velsen (1960: 275) has argued:

a person's right to land cannot be isolated from his relationships involving other rights and obligations in the community. . . . a member of this society

¹⁹ The other districts were Mrewa, Makoni and Gutu, represented in the hostels with respectively fourteen, thirteen and thirteen formal residents (i.e. 9.3 per cent, 8.7 per cent and 8.7 per cent). In 1969 these labour-exporting districts had African populations of respectively: 137,940 (Mrewa), 158,480 (Makoni), 151,540 (Gutu) and 128,170 (Buhera). Sex ratios were respectively: 0.85 (Mrewa), 0.93 (Makoni), 0.88 (Gutu) and 0.89 (Buhera) as compared with 1.0 in Rhodesia as a whole and 0.95 among Rhodesian Africans (Central Statistical Office, 1976).

²⁰ The difference in the use of the Shona words *imba* (house) and (*ku-*)*musha* (home) is indicative of Buhera workers' perception. Whereas *imba* indicates a house in town or a similar construction on a rural homestead, (*ku-*)*musha* invariably refers to the rural locality, meaning home or rural homestead.

²¹ 'Involvement' and 'commitment' are terms frequently used in the study of labour migration and urbanisation. Mostly they have been used in urban contexts, indicating the extent to which an individual has built social relations in town (urban involvement) and the cognitive aspect of such involvement (urban commitment); see Mitchell (1987: 68).

who wants to maintain his status cannot do so only in relation to one aspect of life—he is inevitably drawn into the total life of the community.²²

Although economic necessity and social security are important aspects of the migrant networks described above, land constitutes the focal point of Buhera migrants' social security rather than being the source of it. Migration to town and the subsequent maintenance of rural connections are inseparable. Rural connections are presupposed in *starting* an urban career. As the cases of both the Zvarevashes and the Mujiris have shown, social security has to be situated in migrants' networks; in recruitment and accommodating practices in town; and, as the ultimate goal, in having one's own house in the city. As in other countries in Southern Africa where 'urban housing is short in supply and prices are skyrocketing, absentee [house] ownership is an important hedge against inflation' (Hansen, 1997: 105). Hence, upon retirement, urban house owners retain their house in town, often putting a relative in charge of rent collection. The urban houses of migrants are usually not sold but remain within the family after the initial owner has died.

Not only do social security arrangements have to be situated in migrants' networks, but those networks themselves cannot be reduced to a set of economically motivated links among migrants. Although the relations among Buhera migrants are instrumental to an individual migrant's career, economic and social security considerations do not determine the behaviour of these urban migrants or the organisation of their networks. The difference in migrants' dealings with housing in town as opposed to the rural area is illustrative. In contrast to houses in town, Buhera migrants' efforts to establish a homestead (*musha*) in the rural area, and to construct a house on it, cannot be understood from an economic perspective. Similar to Eades's (1993) observations on Yoruba migrants in the Gold Coast whose success in trading served to build houses in their poor rural home area, Buhera migrants' investment in housing in the rural home area has to be understood in relation to their socio-cultural disposition—it reflects a strong sense of belonging (see also De Vletter, 1998: 20; Bourdillon, 1977: 7). In rural Buhera a brick-built house plastered with cement and roofed with asbestos or iron sheets reflects urban success. Besides the round cooking hut with grass-thatched roof that characterises any Shona homestead, successful urban migrants usually develop their homestead by constructing a brick house. A survey in the Murambinda area in

²² This is also reflected in the way in which migrant workers are involved in land issues at home. Migrants show a keen interest in local struggles over land, although these are hardly motivated by (their own) economic interests. In the Murambinda area of Buhera district, land disputes are predominantly political struggles in which migrants may get involved as mobilisers of legal assistance in town (Andersson, 1999: 556). The idea of maintaining rural links in order to safeguard a claim to agricultural land is also contradicted by evidence on urban women in Masvingo who generally had no access to rural land but still maintained their rural links (Muzvidziwa, 1997: 107).

1997 found that 84 per cent of the homesteads that had such a brick house were owned by (returned) migrant workers or their widows.²³ To construct such a house in the interior of the Murambinda ward, kilometres away from any major road, requires substantial capital and considerable effort—building materials are often bought in and transported from Harare. While such investment may seem irrational from an economic point of view, it is not if one acknowledges Buhera migrants' valuation of belonging to a rural home area.

Migrant networks: rural orientation, marriage relations and kinship

To understand better the socio-cultural embeddedness of Buhera migrants' economic behaviour, the case of Tinarwo Zvarevashe's second son, Daniel, is most illuminating. Like his younger brother George, Daniel at first sight seems to represent the modern individualised urban migrant whose rural ties appear to be driven by economic interests. Yet, despite living in town for most of his life and his urban career being a success, Daniel is highly involved in Buhera social life. He went to school in town while his father was living in one of the workers' houses on the company's premises. On completion of his studies he was offered a job in return for his father's loyal service when the latter left the company in 1968.²⁴

Daniel, who has a supervisory position and a reasonable wage, stays in the company house his father used to occupy, but he also has his own house in a township on the northern side of Harare. This house he rents out (to fellow Buherans). In Buhera his wealth is manifested in his *musha* (homestead), which is among the most developed in the area—a brick-built house and nicely thatched huts, all painted in the same colours. Yet neither Daniel nor his wife and children spend much time at the rural home (*kumusha*). Daniel's (second) wife is a nurse in Murambinda hospital (some 10 km away), and his children work in town or attend urban schools. Like his father and younger brother George, Daniel invests a lot in the education of his children by sending them to urban or boarding schools that are generally better than anything available in rural Buhera. To take care of his homestead, he employs two young workers from southern Buhera. Daniel pays them to work his fields and graze the cattle when it is his turn in the village's herding arrangement. Furthermore, these workers assist in ploughing Tinarwo's fields, as well as the fields Daniel has rented from fellow villagers in an attempt to grow sorghum commercially.²⁵

²³ A survey of four villages (*mabhuku*, sing. *bhuku*) in the Murambinda area found that, of the 105 homesteads in these villages, forty-four had at least one brick house roofed with iron or asbestos sheets; thirty-seven (84 per cent) of these brick houses were owned by (ex-) migrant workers or their widows.

²⁴ This recruitment practice, in which jobs are handed down from generation to generation—thus contributing to the emergence of chain migrations—is common in Southern African industry as a whole; see Cheater (1986: 44) and De Vletter (1998: 13).

²⁵ In contrast to southern Buhera, sorghum is not widely grown in the Murambinda area. Major crops in the Murambinda area are hybrid maize, groundnuts, bullrush millet (*mhunga*) and finger millet (*rukweza*), only the first two of which can be labelled as cash crops.

Daniel's involvement in both urban and rural life—i.e. his investments in urban housing, the careers of his children, his rural homestead, cattle and agriculture—is not simply a matter of economic calculation, however, and, despite having spent most of his life in town—in school and employment—neither does he represent a modern, individualised type of urban worker. Daniel's career has to be understood as part of an emerging migrant network that is not confined to the urban space. His adherence to a specific marital custom exemplifies this. He married a daughter of Chiminya, a lineage ruling a village neighbouring his father's in the Murambinda area. When this wife died the Zvarevashe family accepted a daughter offered by the in-laws to replace the deceased wife. His adherence to this custom, known as *chimutsamapfihwa* ('to [re-]install the cooking stones'), signifies that for Daniel—as in this migrant society as a whole—marriage is more than a transaction between individuals. Rather, as the genealogy of Figure 3 also shows, marriage relationships involve *families* (see Holleman, 1952: 190), who are often related to one another in a number of ways—as rural neighbours, fellow migrants, and so on.

Marriage relations, rural social relations and an orientation towards the rural home area are equally important dispositions structuring the migration practices of the 'Mbare cluster' of Buhera migrants. Although less centred on one family in the Zvarevashe chain migration, in the

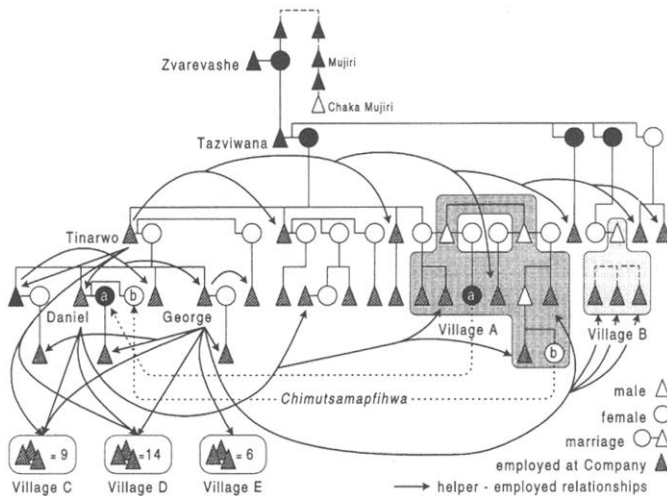


FIGURE 3 The Zvarevashe chain migration: kinship, marriage and urban employment. *Note* Not all members of the Zvarevashe family (or in-married women) are included in this genealogy. The diagram indicates only a few of the numerous recruitment links between the Zvarevashes and members of other Buhera families. The women indicated by the letters a and b appear twice in the genealogy. The villages A to E are all located near Tazviwana village, in the Murambinda area of Buhera district. (Not all marked individuals are still working for the company)

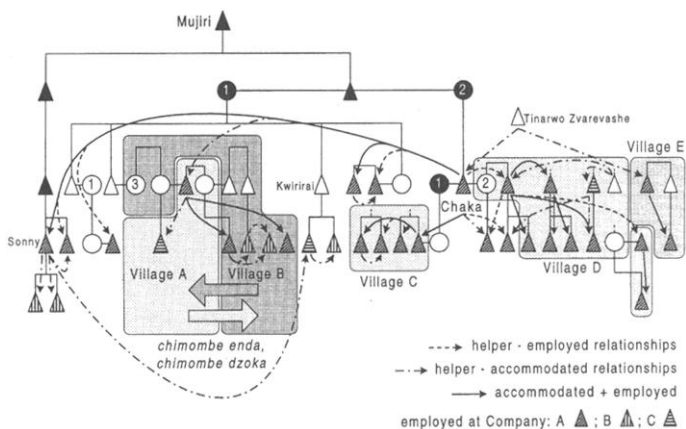


FIGURE 4 The Mujiri family in the 'Mbare network': kinship, marriage, urban accommodation and employment. *Note* Not all members of the Mujiri family (or in-married women) are included in this genealogy. The diagram indicates only a few of the numerous accommodation and recruitment links among Buhera families in the Mbare neighbourhood of Harare. Not all marked individuals are still working for the companies indicated. The villages A to E are all near Mujiri village, in the Murambinda area of Buhera district. The numbers 1 to 3 refer to a man's first, second or third wife respectively

Mbare case one also finds multi-stranded relations among migrants who share their rural background. Relations between helper and newly employed or accommodated urban workers coincide with close ties between families and village communities in the rural area, as is exemplified by the 'exchange' marriage (referred to as *chimombe enda*, *chimombe dzoka*) visualised in Fig. 4.²⁶

Although it is long established that young men leave Buhera in search of work before they are married, marriages in which both husband and wife originate from Buhera remain common. While migrants' sexual relations in town may result in undesired pregnancies and financial commitments to the raising of extra-marital children, the marriage patterns of migrants reveal a preference for women originating from the rural home area in Buhera. The Zvarevashe and the Mujiris, who represent different types of urban careers, hardly differ from one another in this respect. If we compare the marriage patterns of the Mujiri and Zvarevashe families, it is found that, of the marriages of 'brothers and sisters' of Chaka Mujiri and Tinarwo Zvarevashe, the

²⁶ *Chimombe enda*, *chimombe dzoka* (literally 'The cow goes, the cow returns') refers to the payment of *roora* (bride wealth) by the husband's family to the wife's family. In the case of an exchange marriage (*kutenganiswa*, to barter) the marrying daughter replaces the payment of bride wealth (see Holleman, 1952: 195-6). In contrast to Holleman, I did not find that people disapprove of these kinds of marriage arrangements.

majority brought together partners who both originate from within Buhera district. As members of the long-established Vahera clan, the Mujiris maintain marriage relations with many non-Vahera families (including the Zvarevashe; see Fig. 3) in the Murambinda area.²⁷ Customary definitions of blood ties do, of course, somewhat restrict new marriage alliances between these families. Nevertheless, some 42 per cent of Chaka Mujiri's married 'brothers and sisters' ($n = 24$) engaged in marriages with partners originating from the Murambinda area, while another 46 per cent married partners from within Buhera district. Of the Zvarevashe family ($n = 24$), which does not originate from the area, 50 per cent of Tinarwo's generation married a partner originating from the Murambinda area, while another 17 per cent married a partner from within Buhera district. In this way, marriages contributed to the establishment of the family in the Murambinda area. The preference for marrying someone 'from a family you already know' is commonly shared, even by the generation of George and Daniel Zvarevashe (see Fig. 3) and Sonny Mujiri (see Fig. 4).²⁸

Migrants predominantly use kinship terminology when talking about their—multi-stranded—mutual social relations. Yet these relations may be very distant—as in the case of Chaka's kinship relation with Tinarwo (see Fig. 3) and in some cases based merely on shared or related clan membership. A survey²⁹ of eighty-seven migrants who returned to Buhera for the Christmas holidays will illuminate this. When asked by whom they were accommodated when they first went to town, respondents almost invariably described the relations in kinship terms rather than referring to a common Buhera origin (see Table 2).

Table 2 reflects the strong patrilineal orientation of Shona society—most first-time migrants relied on patrikin for their initial accommodation in town. However, it would be a mistake to label kinship as a determinant of the social organisation of migrant networks in town. Kinship and clan membership should be understood primarily as an idiom that Buhera migrants adopt to express their mutual relationships. Both constitute an institutionalised feature of migration practices that is both the medium and the outcome of those practices.³⁰ After all,

²⁷ Shona marriages are exogamous (see Holleman, 1952; Bourdillon, 1987).

²⁸ 'Brothers' and 'sisters' (B, FBS, FFBSS, Z, FBD, FFBDD) of George and Daniel ($n = 29$) predominantly married partners from within Buhera district (65 per cent Murambinda area, 21 per cent Buhera district, 14 per cent outside the district). For the Mujiri family ($n = 53$) the figures were, respectively, 19 per cent Murambinda area, 37 per cent Buhera district, 21 per cent outside Buhera district. (Note: unmarried members of the families are not included in these figures.)

²⁹ The survey was conducted in the Murambinda area of Buhera district in December 1995 and January 1996. The vast majority of respondents were men (96.6 per cent). On average the respondents were in their early 30s, 69 per cent of them being married. The partners of 88.4 per cent of the married migrants stay (at least part of the year) in Buhera district. Migrants were asked to name the person they stayed with when they first went to seek work. They were also asked to mention the relation (in Shona) and to describe this relation (this was done because Shona kinship terms often denote different kinship relations; see Holleman, 1952; Bourdillon, 1987).

³⁰ See Giddens (1984) on structuration and the structural properties of social systems.

TABLE 2. *Buhera migrants in Harare: Social relations mobilised in finding initial accommodation*

<i>Social relations</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Members of the patrilineage	60	69
(a) 'Father' (F, FB, FFBS, FFBSS)	22	25.3
(b) 'Brother' (B, FBS, FFBSS)	33	37.9
(c) Another member of the patrilineage (Z, FZ, S)	5	5.7
Matrilateral kin	10	12
(d) 'Uncle' (MB, MFBS, MBS, MFBSS, MF)		
Relations through marriage	8	9
(e) 'Nephew' (ZS, FBDS)	3	2.3
(f) 'Cousin' (FZS, FFBDS)	4	4.6
(g) Other (WFBS)	1	1.1
Non-related persons	6	7
Unknown/not answered	3	3
Total	87	100

NOTES $n = 87$. The kinship categories between quotation marks under (a) to (f), respectively, refer to the following Shona classifications of kin: (a) *baba*, *babamukuru*, *babamuninini*; (b) *mukoma*, *munin'ina*; (c) *handzvadzi*, *vatete*, *mwanakomana*; (d) *sekuru*; (e) *muzukuru*; (f) *muzukuru*; (g) *tezvara*.

kinship relations—and relations through marriage in particular—are not only mobilised by Buhera migrants: relationships among Buhera migrants in town may also result in marriage relations between them. Moreover, as indicated before, kin and clan membership relations among migrants often overlap with other types of relations, such as a common origin in a particular village (*bhuku*) or ward³¹ (*dunhu*). Asking Buhera migrants who their friends are reveals this as well: friends are often relatives or people (you know) from home in Buhera. Hence urban-based social relations do not replace migrants' rural-based social relations but, rather, the former are 'added to' migrants' social relations that span both urban and rural spaces.

In the genealogies of both the Zvarevashe and the Mujiri families the overlapping of different types of social relations is evident as well. Many workers in the chemical factory who were recruited by Tinarwo Zvarevashe and his sons originate from villages in the vicinity of Tazviwana village (headed by Tinarwo). Similarly, the Mbare network draws Buhera migrants from a number of villages in the Murambinda

³¹ A ward (*dunhu*) comprises a number of villages (*mabhuku*) and is headed by a headman, who is known in Shona as *sadunhu*. However, in the Murambinda area of Buhera district the headman of a ward is generally referred to as *ishe*.

area. Hence similar socio-cultural dispositions regulating Buhera migrants' behaviour—such as an orientation towards the rural home and a kinship ideology—may give rise to different urban trajectories: one rather decentralised, the Mbare network, and the other more centralised, focused upon the Zvarevashe family. Such differences need to be understood in relation to the distinct features of the Mbare location and the position of Buhera migrants in the industries in which they work. In contrast to the timely education of the Zvarevashe family—George and Daniel had completed secondary education before the post-independence upsurge of diplomas—the migrant workers in Mbare have not this advantage and thus have not been able to acquire staff positions in their companies. As a result their influence on recruitment is limited. Although staff members may tell supervisors like Chaka Mujiri when new labourers are to be recruited at the factory gate, even then the chance that Chaka's relatives will be selected is small. Unlike the Zvarevashe's chemical factory, which is situated away from any major residential area (except for its own company housing in which workers live with their—sometimes job-seeking—relatives) in the eastern part of Harare, the tobacco industry is within walking distance of the large Mbare township. Competition for work is more fierce here, as there are numerous job seekers roaming around the industrial area in search of work.

Therefore, rather than representing successive phases, a process of progressive urbanisation and individualisation, the two migration histories exemplify different urban trajectories that share a common cultural orientation. A conception of the rural home plays a pivotal role in both migrations, albeit that the rural positions of the Mujiris and the Zvarevashe differ considerably. Whereas Chaka Mujiri is a member of a well-established lineage in the Murambinda area, the migration practices of Tinarwo and his sons—providing accommodation and assisting in recruitment—depict the story of a poor immigrant family that becomes established in the Murambinda area. From being a rather marginal figure in the area, Tinarwo has become *sabhuku* (village headman), controlling land and people in a village that bears the name of his father. Hence the urban success of the Zvarevashe family has yielded them a respectable position in rural Buhera. It seems that, as a consequence, neighbouring villages do not enter into open conflict over land with the Zvarevashe's village. Yet such conflicts are common in the Murambinda area (see Andersson, 1999), and the Zvarevashe, like other villages, have established homesteads in grazing areas that are claimed by other villages. For instance, George Zvarevashe's homestead is in an area claimed by a village controlled by the Mujiris, who are members of the ruling Vahera lineage. The migration history of Tinarwo Zvarevashe and his sons may therefore also be regarded as an alternative trajectory whereby positions of high status can be attained (see also Garbett, 1967).

Rural identification: burial practices

Returning to the observations on the funeral of a migrant in the

introduction to this article directs us to yet another strong socio-cultural force among urban migrants from Buhera—i.e. the wish to be buried *kumusha* (at home, on the homestead), among one's own people and ancestors.

Even after a lifetime of urban employment and urban family life, people want to be buried at their rural homestead. Thus we can also understand a migrant worker's effort to establish a rural homestead (*musha*) at some stage in his urban career. Although he may stay with wife and children in town and has no economic need to supplement urban income with agricultural production, a 'traditional' round cooking hut has to be constructed.³² It is possible, therefore, to see homesteads that are occupied by family members of absent migrant workers who leave their fields uncultivated or, as in the case of Daniel Zvarevashe, hire people to work the land for them. Building a homestead on a plot of some few acres is an expression of a migrant worker's membership of the rural community and, subsequently, of the naturalness of being buried there.³³

Burial societies constitute the—originally urban-based³⁴—organisational expression of the desire to be buried in the rural home area. Burial societies assist in the transport and funeral of a deceased member or his family member. Through regular contributions to the society's fund, its members raise the substantial capital that is needed to transport the body of the deceased from town to the rural home area to be buried. Not surprisingly, these burial societies in town are organised on the basis of a common rural background.

CONCLUSION

Questions of labour migration and town-country relations have been pertinent in the study of Southern Africa for a long time. Conventionally, these issues have been framed in terms of a classic set of (ideal typical) dichotomies—modernisation-tradition, individualisation-com-

³² The round cooking hut or kitchen is also important during the funeral process itself. Before the burial it is customary to lay the deceased out for an evening and night in this rondavel, accompanied by female family members and in-laws.

³³ The funeral process itself is another example of migrant workers' continued involvement in rural affairs. Migrants not only contribute substantially to the cost, they also finance visits to traditional healers (*n'anga*) or prophets—a common practice that aims to establish the cause of death. Moreover, they return home to attend funerals and rituals relating to succession in the family structure and the inheritance of property and wife/wives (*kugara nhaka*).

³⁴ Burial societies were among the first associations set up among Shona migrants in town. Initially their activities remained largely anonymous (see Yoshikuni, 1999: 115). However, in 1942 the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) requested the Labour Commissioner in Lusaka to inform him about the constitutions of functioning burial societies in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), where there was more experience of such institutions on the urbanised Copperbelt. Registrations of burial societies in Salisbury in the 1950s suggest that these societies were organised along lines of rural background. Heads of the societies could be registered as representative of a particular chief (*mambo*), or the names of the societies might refer to specific geographical areas. See: NAZ S2791/11.

munality, change-continuity, and so on—of which ‘the urban’ and ‘the rural’ constitute the geographically traceable headings. Urbanisation, in this perspective, easily becomes tied into a narrative that deals with a wider process of social change—i.e. modernisation—that encompasses urbanisation, individualisation and technological advancement. State intervention and market forces generally have been regarded as the forces regulating the movement of people from countryside to town, thus institutionalising a migrant labour system that characterises the political economy of the Southern African region as a whole.

This article has not denied the influence of the wider political economy on the organisation of rural-urban relations. Literature on the Southern African migrant labour system convincingly shows the importance of such forces (O’Laughlin, 1998; De Vletter, 1998; Yoshikuni, 1999). Rather, this study aimed to show how actors mediate from below and transform such external forces. For instance, Buhera migrants’ networks—encompassing rural and urban localities—(to some degree) mediate the adverse economic circumstances imposed upon them by structural adjustment policies, high urban unemployment and the rising cost of living. These networks constitute devices to secure urban employment. This may lead to excesses, such as nepotism, in formal recruitment systems as reported in the Zimbabwean press.³⁵ Simultaneously, however, because of a lack of formal employment opportunities, these networks gain significance in the social organisation of informal-sector activities such as rural-urban and cross-border trade (see Muzvidziwa, 1997). The role of migrant networks in shaping the particular pattern of urbanisation in Zimbabwe thus challenges common perspectives on rural-urban relations. These have assumed that, in migrant societies such as in Zimbabwe, people’s social security is *spatially* situated—in agricultural production in rural areas—whereas, in practice, such security is *socially* situated—in the rural-urban network. These common perspectives also underpin economic policies, such as the adjustment programmes promoted by the World Bank. Seeking to redress structural imbalances at the level of rural and urban economic sectors, these programmes ignore the complex nature and the persistence of rural-urban relations in Zimbabwe, thus overestimating their *structural* effects.

Despite their importance in mediating external forces, the networks of Buhera migrants linking Harare and home cannot be understood adequately if seen only as a strategic reaction to the ‘volatile nature of the capitalist economy’ (Alderson-Smith, 1984: 217, 229). Although strategic action plays a role, participation in these migrant networks or ‘confederations of households’ (Alderson-Smith, 1984) is not a matter

³⁵ See, for instance, newspaper cartoonist T. Namate in Beach (1994: 190). In addition, the increased dependence on social relations based on kinship and similar rural backgrounds in times of high urban unemployment may contribute to ethnic tensions in industry and government institutions.

of choice or calculation. Buhera migrants cannot escape them. As the cases presented in this article have shown, the networks of Buhera migrants are foremost an expression of a socio-cultural pattern. The specific ways in which Buhera migrants have organised these networks that span urban and rural localities should be understood primarily in relation to the socio-cultural dispositions of people in this migrant labour society. Viewing migration practices in this way—i.e. as observable outcomes of actors' socio-cultural dispositions—enables one to understand better the preferences that motivate economic behaviour.

Shared socio-cultural dispositions do not imply a singular pattern of urbanisation or modernisation: they may give rise to different urban trajectories. Implicit in the behaviour of all Buhera migrants discussed in this article, however—not necessarily in their narrative on migration—is that you cannot turn a relative away. Alternatively, one may capture this adage by borrowing a song line from the Zimbabwean singer Thomas Mapfumo: 'A person without relatives is to die in the [urban] forest' and 'will be eaten by jackals.'³⁶

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research for this article was funded by the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (Wotro). Fieldwork was conducted in Buhera district and Harare from July 1995 to March 1997 and November 1997 to April 1998.

REFERENCES

- Alderson-Smith, G. 1984. 'Confederations of households: extended domestic enterprises in city and country', in Norman Long and Bryan Roberts (eds), *Miners, Peasants and Entrepreneurs*, pp. 217–34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Andersson, J. A. 1999. 'The politics of land scarcity: land disputes in Save Communal Area, Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25 (4), 553–78.
- (forthcoming). 'Administrators' knowledge and state control in colonial Zimbabwe: the invention of the rural-urban divide in Buhera district, 1912–80', *Journal of African History*.
- Appadurai, A. 1996. *Modernity at Large: cultural dimensions of globalisation*. Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Arrighi, G. 1973. 'The political economy of Rhodesia', in Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul (eds), *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa*, pp. 336–77. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
- Barnes, T. 1995. '"So that a labourer could live with his family": overlooked factors in social and economic strife in urban colonial Zimbabwe, 1945–52', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21 (1), 95–113.
- 1999. '"We are afraid to command our children": responses to the

³⁶ Thomas Mapfumo, 'Chigwindiri wauya, munhu asina hama' (Chigwindiri has come, a person without relatives), from the album *Varombo kuvarombo* (From the poor to the poor).

- urbanisation of African women in colonial Zimbabwe, 1930-44', in B. Raftopoulos and T. Yoshikuni (eds), *Sites of Struggle: essays in Zimbabwe's urban history*, pp. 95-112. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Bates, R. H. 1988. 'Governments and agricultural markets in Africa', in R. H. Bates (ed.), *Toward a Political Economy of Development: a rational choice perspective*, pp. 331-58. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.
- Beach, D. 1994. *The Shona and their neighbours*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bourdieu, P. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- 1998. *Practical Reason: on the theory of action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdillon, M. F. C. 1977. 'Labour migrants from Korekore country', *Zambezia* 5 (1), 1-29.
- 1987. *The Shona Peoples: an ethnography of the contemporary Shona, with special reference to their religion*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- 1994. 'Street children in Harare', *Africa* 64 (4), 516-32.
- Central Statistical Office. 1976. *Census of Population 1969*. Salisbury: Central Statistical Office.
- 1987. *District Population Sheets: Mashonaland—East*. Harare: Central Statistical Office.
- 1989. *Zimbabwe in Maps: a census atlas*. Harare: Central Statistical Office.
- 1994. *Census 1992: national report*. Harare: Central Statistical Office.
- Chauncey, G. 1981. 'The locus of reproduction: women's labour on the Zambian Copperbelt, 1927-53', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 7 (2), 135-64.
- Chazan, N., Mortimer, R., Ravenhill, J., and Rothchild, D. 1992. *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*. Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Cheater, A. P. 1986. *The Politics of Factory Organization*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- De Haan, A. 1999. 'Livelihoods and poverty: the role of migration—a critical review of the migration literature', *Journal of Development Studies* 36 (2), 1-47.
- De Vletter, F. 1998. *Sons of Mozambique: Mozambican miners and post-apartheid South Africa*. Cape Town: Southern African Migration Project.
- Den Ouden, J. H. B. 1989. *A Three-generation Perspective: its importance for ethnographic research in development studies*. Wageningen: Wageningen Agricultural University.
- Eades, J. S. 1993. *Strangers and Traders: Yoruba migrants, markets and the state in northern Ghana*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute.
- Ferguson, J. 1990a. 'Mobile workers, modernist narratives: a critique of the historiography of transition on the Zambian Copperbelt' I, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16 (3), 385-412.
- 1990b. 'Mobile workers, modernist narratives: a critique of the historiography of transition on the Zambian Copperbelt' II, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16 (4), 603-21.
- 1994. 'Modernist narratives, conventional wisdoms and colonial liberalism: reply to a straw man', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20 (4), 633-40.
- 1997. 'Country and city on the Copperbelt', in Anil Gupta and James Ferguson (eds), *Culture, Power, Place: explorations in critical anthropology*, pp. 137-54. Durham NC: Duke University Press.
- 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.
- Garbett, G. K. 1967. 'Prestige, status and power in a valley Korekore chiefdom, Rhodesia', *Africa* 37 (3), 307-26.

- Gargett, E. 1977. *The Administration of Transition*. Gwelo: Mambo Press.
- Geertz, C. 1993. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. London: Fontana Press.
- Geschiere, P., and Gugler, J. 1998. 'The urban-rural connection: changing issues of belonging and identification', *Africa* 68 (3), 309-19.
- Giddens, A. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: outline of the theory of structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Granovetter, M. 1985. 'Economic action and social structure: the problem of embeddedness', *American Journal of Sociology* 91, 481-510.
- Hannerz, U. 1980. *Exploring the City: inquiries toward an urban anthropology*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hansen, K. T. 1997. *Keeping House in Lusaka*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Heer, D. M. 1996. 'Migration', in A. Kuper and J. Kuper (eds), *The Social Science Encyclopaedia*. London: Routledge.
- Holleman, J. F. 1949. *The Pattern of Hera Kinship*. London: Oxford University Press for the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute.
- 1952. *Shona Customary Law: with reference to kinship, marriage, the family and the estate*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Long, N. 1977. *An Introduction to the Sociology of Rural Development*. London: Tavistock.
- 1984. 'Creating space for change: a perspective on the sociology of development'. Inaugural lecture, Wageningen: Wageningen Agricultural University.
- MacMillan, H. 1993. 'The historiography of transition on the Zambian Copperbelt: another view', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19 (4), 681-712.
- Mayer, P., and Mayer, I. 1974. *Townsmen and Tribesmen: conservatism and the process of urbanization in a South African city*. Second edition, Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Mitchell, J. C. 1956. *The Kalela Dance: aspects of social relationships among urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press for the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute.
- 1969. 'Structural plurality, urbanization and labour circulation in Southern Rhodesia', in J. A. Jackson (ed.), *Migration*, pp. 156-80. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1975. 'Factors in rural male absenteeism in Rhodesia', in D. Parkin (ed.), *Town and Country in Central and Eastern Africa*, pp. 93-112. London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute.
- 1987. *Cities, Society, and Social Perception: a Central African perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Møller, V. 1978. *Urban Commitment and Involvement among Black Rhodesians: a comparative study of migration and urbanisation in three Salisbury townships*. Durban: CASS/University of Natal.
- Mutambirwa, C. C., and Potts, D. H. 1987. 'Changing patterns of African rural-urban migration and urbanization in Zimbabwe', *Eastern and Southern Africa Geographical Journal* 1 (1), 26-39.
- Mutizwa-Mangiza, N. D. 1986. 'Urban centres in Zimbabwe: intercensal changes, 1962-82', *Geography* 71 (2), 148-50.
- Muzvidziwa, V. 1997. 'Rural-urban linkages: Masvingo's double-rooted female heads of households', *Zambezia* 24 (2), 97-123.
- Nyamnjoh, F., and Rowlands, M. 1998. 'Elite associations and the politics of belonging in Cameroon', *Africa* 68 (3), 320-37.
- O'Laughlin, B. 1998. 'Missing men? The debate over rural poverty and

- women-headed households in Southern Africa', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 25 (2), 1-48.
- Paton, B. 1995. *Labour Export Policy in the Development of Southern Africa*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publishers.
- Phimister, I. 1993. 'Rethinking the reserves: Southern Rhodesia's Land Husbandry Act reviewed', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19 (2), 225-39.
- Potts, D. H. 1995. 'Shall we go home? Increasing urban poverty in African cities and migration processes', *Geographical Journal* 161 (3), 245-64.
- Potts, D. H., and Mutambirwa, C. C. 1990. 'Rural-urban linkages in contemporary Harare: why migrants need their land', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16 (4), 677-98.
- Raftopoulos, B. 1995. 'Nationalism and labour in Salisbury, 1953-65', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21 (1), 79-93.
- Rhodesia. 1971. *1969 Population Census: interim report II, The African population*. Salisbury: Government Printer.
- Scarnecchia, T. 1996. 'Poor women and nationalist politics: alliances and fissures in the formation of a nationalist political movement in Salisbury, Rhodesia, 1950-56', *Journal of African History* 37 (2), 283-310.
- Smelser, N. J. 1963. 'Mechanisms of change and adjustment to change', in B. F. Hoselitz and W. E. Moore (eds), *Industrialization and society*, pp. 32-54. The Hague: Mouton/UNESCO.
- Smout, M. A. H. 1976. 'Urbanisation of the Rhodesian population', *Zambezia* 4 (2), 79-91.
- Stopforth, P. 1971. *Survey of Highfield African Township*. Occasional paper 6, Salisbury: Department of Sociology, University of Rhodesia.
- Van Velsen, J. 1960. 'Labour migration as a positive factor in the continuity of Tonga tribal society', *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 8 (3), 265-78.
- Watson, W. 1958. *Tribal Cohesion in a Money Economy: a study of the Mambwe people of Zambia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Wilson, G. 1941-42. *An Essay on the Economics of Detribalization in Northern Rhodesia I-II*. Manchester: Manchester University Press for the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute.
- Wolpe, H. 1972. 'Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid', *Economy and Society* 1 (4), 425-54.
- World Bank. 1981. *Accelerated Development in sub-Saharan Africa: an agenda for action*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- 1994. *Adjustment in Africa: reforms, results, and the road ahead*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yoshikuni, T. 1999. 'Notes on the influence of town-country relations on African urban history, before 1957: experiences of Salisbury and Bulawayo', in B. Raftopoulos and T. Yoshikuni (eds), *Sites of Struggle: essays in Zimbabwe's urban history*, pp. 113-28. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Zinyama, L., Tevera, D., and Cumming, S. (eds). 1993. *Harare: the growth and problems of the city*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publishers.

ABSTRACT

In the academic debate on labour migration and urbanisation in Southern Africa the persistence of links between urban workers and people in rural areas has proved a pertinent issue. As is implied by the term *labour migration*, economic forces have always been regarded as a major determinant of migratory behaviour. State-centred perspectives have dominated studies of

rural-urban migration in Zimbabwe, where a restrictive legal framework regulated migration to urban centres during the colonial era in an attempt to prevent large numbers of Africans becoming permanent town dwellers. This ethnographic study of labour migrants in Harare originating from the Buhera district, however, shifts away from perspectives that reduce migratory behaviour to an effect of state intervention and/or economic forces. Such external forces are mediated by migrants' networks that encompass both rural and urban localities. Rather than being only economically motivated, individual migrants' participation in these networks has to be understood as an expression of a socio-cultural pattern in which rural identification and kinship ideology are of major importance. Viewing migration practices in this way—i.e. as observable outcomes of migrants' socio-cultural dispositions—not only helps us to understand better the preferences that motivate economic behaviour but also challenges conventional perspectives in which the rural and urban are often viewed as distinct social worlds and the urbanisation process as part of a wider evolutionary development or transition towards a modern class society.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans le débat académique sur la migration de la main-d'œuvre et l'urbanisation en Afrique australe, la persistance des liens entre les travailleurs urbains et les habitants de zones rurales s'est avérée être une question pertinente. Comme l'implique le terme «migration de la main-d'œuvre», les forces économiques ont toujours été considérées comme un élément déterminant majeur du comportement migratoire. Les perspectives centrées sur l'État ont dominé les études sur la migration rurale-urbaine au Zimbabwe, où un cadre juridique restrictif régulait la migration vers les centres urbains au cours de la période coloniale pour tenter d'empêcher un nombre important d'Africains de devenir des citoyens permanents. Cette étude ethnographique d'ouvriers originaires du district de Buhera immigrés à Harare s'éloigne cependant des perspectives qui réduisent le comportement migratoire à un effet de l'intervention étatique et/ou des forces économiques. Ces forces extérieures sont canalisées par des réseaux de migrants qui englobent à la fois des localités rurales et des localités urbaines. Il faut comprendre la participation des migrants individuels à ces réseaux non pas seulement comme une démarche dont les motivations sont économiques, mais comme l'expression d'un modèle socioculturel dans lequel l'identification rurale et l'idéologie de la parenté ont une importance majeure. Cette façon de voir les pratiques migratoires, autrement dit comme des résultats observables des inclinations socioculturelles des migrants, non seulement aide à mieux comprendre les préférences qui motivent le comportement économique, mais aussi remet en question les perspectives conventionnelles dans lesquelles le rural et l'urbain sont souvent considérés comme des mondes sociaux distincts et le processus d'urbanisation comme faisant partie d'une évolution ou transition plus large vers une société de classe moderne.