

How persistent, that tropical blue sky

Poetic verses

Colophon

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Carin Vijfhuizen



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

Ursula von der Leyen
Christiane Amanpour
Jitske Kingma

An overview

Introduction

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

Summary

Introduction

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

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

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

List of Shona words used

<i>Ambuya:</i>	grandma
<i>Chiutsi:</i>	a housewarming party; literally: smoke
<i>Chibuku:</i>	locally brewed beer
<i>Danga:</i>	last phase of the bridewealth payments; literally: cattle kraal, a small fenced area where the cattle are kept during the night
<i>Genitor:</i>	the man who provides half of the genes; the aim is to extend the family, it is not a love relationship
<i>Go go goi:</i>	knock knock knock
<i>Humwe:</i>	women cook to mobilise labour, a humwe party
<i>Kumusha:</i>	home
<i>Kurova hoko:</i>	establishing a homestead; a first stake is hammered into the ground (a ceremonial act)
<i>Kurova guva:</i>	a ritual or ceremony to welcome home the spirit of the deceased and to beautify the grave, sometimes by erecting a tombstone and/or cementing the grave in case it was not executed; literally: to hit the grave
<i>Lobola:</i>	bridewealth in Southern Africa
<i>Mabvuri:</i>	evil spirits that are sent to someone
<i>Madzimambo:</i>	paramount chiefs
<i>Madziteteguru:</i>	the spirits/ancestors of deceased 'senior aunts'
<i>Makopa:</i>	spirit medium of the Mutema chieftaincy; Makopa was the tenth deceased paramount chief
<i>Mambo:</i>	paramount chief

<i>Mashavi:</i>	spirits consulted by traditional healers or village doctors
<i>Madzviti:</i>	Shangaan warriors from the past
<i>Mudzimu:</i>	family ancestral spirit
<i>Mupfuwhira:</i>	love potion with magical powers
<i>Murungu:</i>	white person
<i>Musha:</i>	homestead
<i>Mutape:</i>	village head or village chief
<i>Mutema:</i>	name of a chieftaincy; literally: a person that cuts or chops (Mutemi), from the verb kute-ma: to chop
<i>Musikavanhu:</i>	name of a chieftaincy; literally: market (<i>musika</i>) people (<i>vanhu</i>)
<i>Mutorwa:</i>	daughter-in-law; literally: a person carried from outside in(to the family)
<i>N'anga:</i>	traditional healer; village doctor
<i>Ndau:</i>	one of the five groups of the Shona people in Zimbabwe
<i>Ngozi</i>	a revengeful spirit of a murdered person in the family
<i>Nhaka:</i>	levirate marriage, a brother of a deceased man marries - inherits the widow
<i>Nzuzu:</i>	mermaid
<i>Pfuma:</i>	bridewealth among Ndau-Shona
<i>Shavi:</i>	a spirit that is consulted by a traditional healer or village doctor
<i>Shiriyedenga:</i>	the first paramount chief of the <i>Mutema</i> chieftaincy; literally: bird of the sky
<i>Shona:</i>	the five groups of Shona people in North, East and Central Zimbabwe; the Ndebele people live in the South West of Zimbabwe
<i>Svikai:</i>	come in please

<i>Tawona:</i>	irrigation scheme in Manesa's floodplains; literally: we shall see
<i>Vadzimu:</i>	family ancestral spirits
<i>Vatape:</i>	village heads
<i>Vatete:</i>	aunt (the sister of - the husband or - father (in law) or - grandfather (in law))
<i>Zvakanaka:</i>	it is all right - good
<i>Zvipunha:</i>	spirits of crops
<i>Zvirombo:</i>	spirits of animals

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1. My homestead



Three roofs of grass and a shed of small boulders.

