

ICGC BROWN BAG SERIES

"I want bread, not stones...I will not leave this land": Of Racialized Dispossessions and Boundary Contestations in colonial Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands, the 1950s-1970s

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537 Heller Hall (ICGC)

Live Stream Available @www.icgc.umn.edu

This talk is about Africans' colonial encounters of racialized land dispossession, forced removals, migrations, and localized resistances in colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia). Drawing from oral histories co-created in Zimbabwe's Inyanga and Honde Valley areas, and colonial archives, I argue that Africans' forced removals from their nyika (indigenous ancestral lands) involved various contestations, vulnerabilities, and everyday forms of resistance that created various administrative problems for the Rhodesian colonial state. In the struggles to defend their nyika from settlers and colonial officials who were displacing them, indigenous Manyika leaders and their communities invoked discourses of indigenous sovereignty, exploited colonial courts, and sometimes openly resisted the orders of the colonial officials to leave their homelands. While some communities gallantly resisted dispossessions, thousands of families were evicted between 1948 and 1969. During these years, local chiefs, elders, spirit mediums, and hunters became knowledge experts on their ancestral lands, their boundaries, and the paths to evade the pressures of colonial displacements. Others used their vast knowledge of travel traditions, becoming migration experts who guided their families and communities to cross the Southern Rhodesia-Mozambique border. By the end of the 1970s, many Manyika homelands had become frontiers of war and contested borderscapes.



Tangwena land issue 1969. Police using dogs to move the Tangwena tribesmen
Source: National Archives of Zimbabwe

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