

Entangled Borderlands: Effects of the 1977–1992 Mozambican Civil War on Border Communities in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Borders and borderlands occupy a contested space in the shared history of Mozambique and Zimbabwe because they are central to our understanding of everyday lives, mobility, conflict, and resistance. This chapter seeks to understand the ways in which borderland communities in both Zimbabwe and Mozambique were affected by the 1977–1992 Mozambican civil war and how conflict reconfigured the borderlands during the long years of strife. The specific focus is on communities in the Chipinge, Chiredzi, Chimanimani, Mutare, and Nyanga areas of Zimbabwe as well as specific communities in Mozambique. Findings show that the Mozambique civil war left traumatic marks on borderland communities, with tales of unbearable violence and atrocities. What is particularly striking, as part of a longer history of the border, was the unregulated movement across the border during the war, in both directions, by both armed fighters and civilians. The traversing of the border during times of both peace and war means that the idea of a border as strictly fixed needs to be revised to allow for a more dynamic and fluid understanding of borders and of the entangled and mobile lives of borderland communities.

Keywords: Borderlands, Armed conflict, Marginalisation, Mozambique, Zimbabwe