

Land Use of Angolan Immigrants in Western Zambia: Rethinking the Autonomy and Coexistence of Self-settled Refugee Communities in Host Countries

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ABSTRACT When studying self-settled refugees in Africa, driven by war from rural villages into a host country and losing property in the process, there has been an assumption that after achieving self-sufficiency, the livelihood of these groups is stable. Though there are attempts to refer their livelihoods to identify solutions of refugee problems, this assumption has not been examined comprehensively in the light of political change at the macro level. The present study examines actual land use and livelihoods among self-settled refugee Angolan immigrants in western Zambia in order to comprehensively clarify the dynamics involved in their reestablishment of an autonomous livelihood. The economy of this group depends on shifting cultivation in the woodlands of the Kalahari uplands and subsequent sale of crops. Because land use is limited by the traditional political system of Lozi people, who is the host in western Zambia, integrated into the Zambian government's Land Act, these immigrants have opened shifting cultivation fields from the western edge of the woodlands to the east. Land transactions have therefore followed prior occupation, with a tacit understanding that primary forests have been left as patches among the fields. The immigrants' strong desire to open the dispersed primary forests has been a source of intra-group competition. The autonomous land use of these self-settled refugees that shows new methods of land acquisition which reinforce practical units of common social organization, has demonstrated the dynamics of reestablished livelihood in a flexible and practical manner, allowing them to coexist in a politically marginalized situation in the host country. [*land use, self-settled refugees, Angolan immigrants, autonomy, shifting cultivation*]

INTRODUCTION

African countries have been constantly plagued with war, political struggle, and violence. Across the continent, war has forced 'self-settled refugees' (defined as those living in rural villages rather than in camps and settlements (Hansen 1977)) to flee their homes to a host country. Having achieved self-sufficiency in terms of food production without aid from either their host country or international agencies (Backwell 1999; Glooba-Mutebi 2006), self-settled refugees are regarded as having an autonomous livelihood and the ability to coexist in their host society and are seen as successful examples to help identify solutions for refugee problems (Glooba-Mutebi 2006; Backwell 1999). For self-settled refugees, government assistance that falls short of sustaining basic human needs is not the second disaster (Hansen 1982). The rural village socio-economic structure in which self-settled refugees reside is therefore seen not only as a conservative tactic by which refugees minimize socio-economic losses and anxiety, but also as a factor reinforcing the refugees' desirability.

Previous studies on the livelihood of self-settled refugee groups have focused mainly on the process of establishing self-sufficiency (ex. Hansen 1977). Hansen's examination of the Luvale people, self-settled refugees and shifting cultivators in northwestern Zambia, shows that this group

recovered its livelihood immediately with reciprocal land distribution from the family community in the host country. Also, African peasant studies of rural areas have analysed land use systems, focusing on land distribution after fallow periods through traditional political systems, including family-based communities (Suchara 1990), and random land acquisition based on previous occupation and a sustainable shifting cultivation system (Ankei 1981; Kakeya and Sugiyama 1987; Oyama 2007). Thus, land use by shifting cultivators in a rural village context, including economically self-sufficient, self-settled refugees, was understood to be essentially stable and reasonable.

On the other hand, in protracted conflict situations, self-settled refugees living in the same manner as their hosts in a rural village undergo political transformations and must adjust to the political administration and land law of the host country. It is therefore important to examine the dynamics of such groups' land use comprehensively and over the long term, focussing on individual and daily land acquisition in the context of macro-political changes.

In this paper, I clarify the land use of Angolan immigrants who are self-settled refugees, in the context of the administrative and political reforms conducted as part of Zambia's nation-building process. My research focuses on

the actual land acquisition process of individuals in order to examine the dynamics of autonomous self-settled refugees' livelihood. The Angolan immigrants in Zambia are a group of shifting cultivators resident in western Zambia for more than 60 years. They have successfully reconstructed their previous livelihood, and they cultivate large amounts of cassava in the woodlands, their only land resource and one that is restricted by their host community under Zambian law. After the gradual population influx from Angola after the 1960s, which included those displaced by the Angolan struggle, land fragmentation occurred in the settlements adjacent to these woodlands, causing competition among Angolan immigrants in this area.

In the following sections, I first describe the political and social backgrounds of the livelihoods of these Angolan immigrants and the restrictions on land use imposed by the host country. Then, I clarify the shifting cultivation system to understand the factors that constrain land use by this group. Finally, I discuss the role played by intra-group competition in situations of valuable cultivable land.

SETTING OF THE WESTERN PROVINCE IN ZAMBIA

In western Zambia, the Zambezi River, which is the fourth longest river in Africa, flows from north to south (Figure 1). The Zambezi floodplain spreads on both sides of the river, 50 km wide, and occupies 20% of the total area of the Western Province, which is characterized by two types of vegetation: grassland on the Zambezi floodplain and Kalahari woodland on the uplands. Although the soil of the floodplain is fertile, the fertility of the Kalahari woodland is poor because of sandy soil. There are two seasons: rainy season from October to March and dry season for the remainder of the year. The mean temperature is higher in the rainy season. Flooding of the Zambezi River occurs from February to June, and the annual rainfall is about 800 mm (statistics from Senanga Meteorological Station 2002).

Mongu, the capital of the Western Province, is located about 600 km west of Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. The population of the province was 765,088 in 2000 (Central Statistics Office 2001), accounting for about 7.7% of the country's total population 9,885,591, and is concentrated in and around urban areas such as Mongu. The population density in the Western Province is the second lowest in Zambia, as of 1997, at 6 persons/km².

Many villages in the Western Province are located along the main road on the uplands from Lusaka. The social and economic infrastructures, such as schools, hospitals, local markets, and the supermarket chains of the South African capital, are also sited on the upland. Most of these villages are composed of various ethnic groups, including the Lozi, who were historically the initial habitants in the Western Province. The Lozi own most of the natural resources of Western Province and distribute them to residents, including non-Lozi immigrants, such as the Angolan immigrants and Tonga people from the Southern Province.

In the eighteenth century, the Lozi developed their kingdom in the Zambezi floodplain area and, under strong administrative and judicial systems, subsisted by practicing agriculture, fishing, herding cattle, and paying tribute to the king (Gluckman 1941). Although the Lozi escaped every year from the Zambezi floodplain because of the flooding and lived on the upland in the rainy season, they did not regard the upland as crucial to cultivate and so instead used the floodplain, a practice that differentiates land use patterns between the Lozi and Angolan immigrants in the Western Province today.

After British colonial rule started in 1924, the colonial authority demarcated customary communal land under chiefs' customary tenure. The colonial regime granted chiefs, including Lozi authorities, a great deal of control over land use and allocation of land and natural resources in their domains,

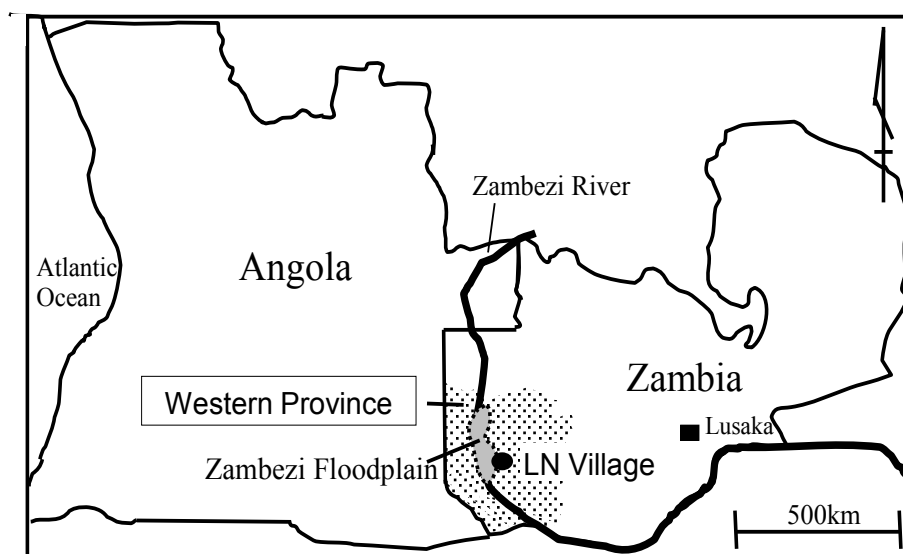


FIGURE 1. Research area.

and treated customary land tenure and judicial processes as fixed in precedent and practice (Brown 2005). British colonial rule ensured, especially, the authority of the Lozi kingdom over its land for mining copper, and named the area Barotseland. After Zambia gained independence in 1964, the new Zambian government integrated the political system of the Lozi kingdom. Although the Lozi signed the Barotse Agreement with the Zambian government just before independence, it soon disintegrated because of a new government, the United National Independence Party (UNIP). Barotseland was officially renamed the Western Province of Zambia. The land was nominally nationalized after independence, and the government theoretically stripped chiefs, including the Lozi king, of their power and attempted to legislate concerning property rights and to develop machinery for land allocation. As a result, until today, in most parts of the country, though no recent statistics are available, chiefs grant occupancy and use rights to customary land, despite the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), through with the government advanced privatization and capitalism after 1991, with funding from donors. According to the recent Land Act of Zambia, the president of Zambia is the *de jure* owner of Zambia's land, which is divided into two categories: national land under the government's control and customary land under the traditional chiefs' control (GRZ 2000), which includes the Western Province. Under this law, chiefs still have strong legal power over their customary land (Brown 2005). In this sense, the land and chiefs in the Western Province have been attached to the state structure and nation building.

Although different ethnic groups live in the Western Province, access to land is controlled by the Lozi traditional authority. Today the fields are segregated; the Lozi have fields in the Zambezi floodplain, whereas the immigrants have been pushed into the Kalahari woodland because the Lozi have claimed the floodplain as their own and do not want immigrants to cultivate there.

An intensive survey was conducted from 2001 to 2007 in LN village, located 150 km south of Mongu, the provincial capital of Western Province, and 10 km north of the district capital, Senanga. The survey involved doing interviews and measuring fields around the village.

ANGOLAN IMMIGRANTS AND LN VILLAGE

LN village was founded in 1947, during a time in which immigrants got permission from the chief of traditional authority of the Lozi kingdom to use the place where, today, they live and cultivate. Thus, through the Lozi traditional authority, the immigrants attached to the colonial structure, and later, to the state.

In 2004, the population of this village was 277 persons in 79 households. Of those villagers, 77% are Mbunda, 15%

are Luchazhi, 2% are Luvale, 2% are Chokwe, and 2% are Kalenga. The remaining 2% are Lozi who married immigrants. One-quarter of the villagers are considered the first generation of the immigrants, and the remaining three-quarters are in the second or third generation. Among the 43 first-generation immigrants, 60% of them are those who fled from the Angolan war to LN village.

The Angolan immigrants discussed here comprise the Mbunda, Luchazhi, Luvale, and Chokwe. These peoples are included in the Bantu-speaking peoples living mainly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, eastern Angola, and western Zambia (von Oppen 1996). Previous studies have pointed out their similarities in cultural and social customs. They are organized into social groups, each called *limbo* (pl. *membo*), of three to four generations of matrilineal kin who reside together. A *limbo* is traditionally a political and reciprocal unit that has a headman. According to the Angolan immigrants in Angola, the headman of a *limbo* distributed and decided the area where they would cultivate. They lived along small rivers and engaged in agriculture in shifting cultivation fields and wetlands near a river. At that time, each *limbo* was sited 1 to 2 km apart from the others, so they did not compete over land in woodlands with others. Today, although immigrants can get access to land for cultivation by being members of any *membo*, 23 *membo* have been set up within 100 m.

A common feature of immigrant societies is the frequent inflow and outflow of the population. As shown in Table 1, the LN village total population increased from 277 in 2004 to 313 in 2007. Though the main reason for this increase is an increase in birth rate, an outflow of 112 people and an inflow of 109 people occurred during that time. The reasons for outflow are marriage or divorce (78%), visiting relatives (7%), schooling (6%), voluntary repatriation to Angola (6%), and relocation to the district capital for business (3%), and reasons for inflow are marriage or divorce (82%), visiting relatives (10%), and schooling (8%). These inflows and outflows relate to today's negotiations over land as shown later.

Today, the people of LN village subsist by fishing and gathering, poultry husbandry, and forestry in the primary forests, but, above all, by agriculture (Murao 2012). Since they are excluded from the Zambezi floodplain, as mentioned previously, they perform shifting cultivation in the upland fields and small-scale cultivation in their kitchen gardens at their residences. Cassava produced by shifting cultivation is very important to the villagers, not only as a staple, but also as a cash crop, because it is available year-round and can be harvested in adequate amounts in poor woodland areas. Selling cassava became the new livelihood activity after the national government implemented economic policies to liberalize the market under the structural adjustment program in the 1990s.

TABLE 1. Demographic movement from 2004 to 2007 in LN village.

	population in 2004	decline			increase			population in 2007
		death	move-out	total	birth	move-in	total	
a	26	0	6	6	1	4	5	25
b	9	0	0	0	2	2	4	13
c	12	0	2	2	0	6	6	16
d	18	1	10	11	0	8	8	15
e	10	0	1	1	0	6	6	15
f	17	0	15	15	0	5	5	7
g	5	0	2	2	2	3	5	8
h	18	0	6	6	0	20	20	32
i	3	0	3	3	0	0	0	0
j	9	0	2	2	0	0	0	7
k	6	0	0	0	1	4	5	11
l	27	1	3	4	2	3	5	28
m	12	0	2	2	2	0	2	12
n	26	0	10	10	0	16	16	32
o	22	1	15	16	0	12	12	18
p	12	0	12	12	0	0	0	0
q	11	0	1	1	5	0	5	15
r	14	0	7	7	1	1	2	9
s	7	0	0	0	2	11	13	20
t	26	0	8	8	2	7	9	27
u	6	0	6	6	0	0	0	0
h	3	0	1	1	0	1	1	3
i	12	0	0	0	8	4	12	24
j	12	0	2	2	0	6	6	16
k	0	0	1	1	4	9	13	13
l	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	3
total	323	3	112	115	20	109	129	313

At that time, they needed much cash because of inflation and charges for education and medical services. They could not find any work to get cash except selling cassava from shifting cultivated fields in the Western Province, a new dependence that deepened the importance of woodlands as their essential land resource.

FRAGMENTATION OF FIELDS IN THE WOODLANDS

The farming system of the Angolan immigrants consists of managing their fields both as individuals and as households. Male labour is necessary to cut down trees for cultivation. Female landowners may ask men to cut trees for free if they belong to the same *limbo*, or for cash if they are members of a different *limbo*. The immigrants start to harvest tubers of cassava one and a half years after planting, and they harvest them all. Then they replant the stems of the harvested cassava plants in the same field and continue to cultivate the field for a total of 12 to 16 years. Because production of cassava decreases in old fields of low fertility, the immigrants abandon these old fields. At the same time, they open new fields continuously and expand into the fertile primary forest. Since each villager normally cultivates more than three plots, a vast cultivated area per person is needed. According to an area calculation by means of GPS in 2004, the total cultivated area of the members belonging to *limbo* t, which is average for size and economic condition in the village, as shown in Figure 2, is 31.19 ha, 4.46

ha for each household in the *limbo* and 1.04 ha per person with cultivated fields. This farming system comprises cultivated fields and abandoned fields in the woodland (Figure 3). Figure 3-1 is an air photo from 1973, and Figure 3-2 is a satellite image (Landsat 7: path 175, row 7) from 2000, combined with GPS information collected by the author. As we can see from these Figures, LN village is sited between the Zambezi floodplain and the woodland, neighbouring the N, LY, and LU villages. Gray patches shown in the woodland represent both cultivated and abandoned fields. The frontline of the east side in the woodland shows the frontier of cultivation by the people, avoiding places restricted for cultivation, such as the place along the stream and the National Forest reserve set in 1983, where no one can live or use the resources.

When the Angolan immigrants started cultivation in the woodland in 1947, members of the same *limbo* usually opened their fields side by side. However this custom has changed. One reason for this change was the increase in the number of *membo* in LN village. From 1947 to 2007, the number of *membo* increased from 2 to 23. According to the interview, the first 2 *membo* of settlers came to this village for the vast uncultivated woodlands, 7 *membo* because of squabbles in former places from the 1950s to 2007, though 6 of those were born by separation from those 2 initial *membo*. In the 1960s and 1970s, 14 *membo* were set up by displaced people who fled from the Angolan war. On the other hand, there were 3 *membo*

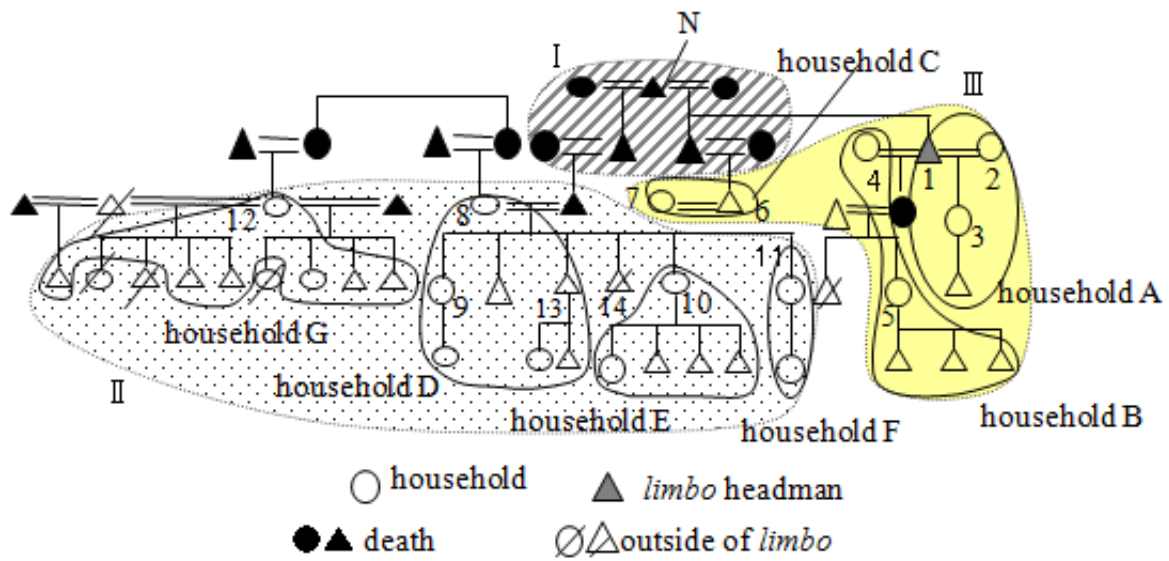
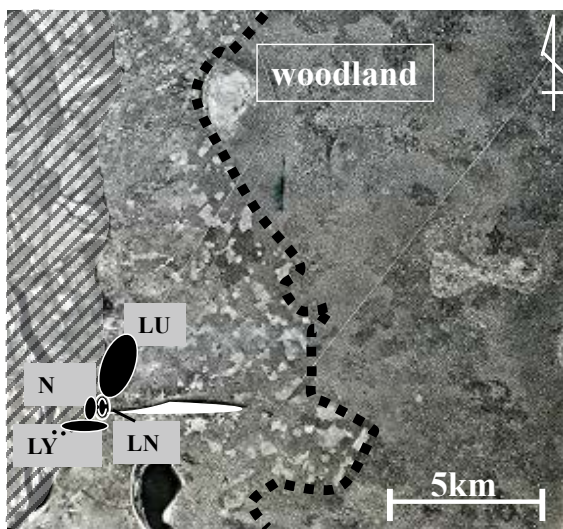


FIGURE 2. Family tree of limbo t (2004).

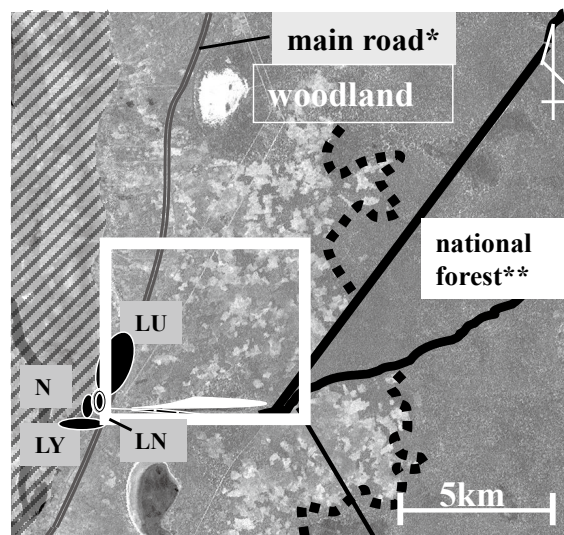
Group I to III and personal numbers show who cultivated in the place of I to III in Figure 4 and the person in case 1 to 3.

3-1 (1973: 26years after settled)



Government of Republic of Zambia (1973. July)

3-2 (2000: 53years after settled)



Landsat 7 (2000. November)

- *set in 1985
- **set in 1983
- village
- ▨ Zambezi floodplain
- Frontline of cultivated field

□ stream

expanded in figure 4

FIGURE 3. Frontier of fields in woodland.

that moved out. The number of *membo* increased gradually each time.

The gradual increase of the number of *membo* prompted people to open their fields near their own houses in LN village. I explain the case of *limbo t*, shown in Figure 4, as a typical example. *Limbo t* is composed of a family group that includes from household A in 1949 to household C in Figure 2, addressing who cultivated places I–III, shown in Figure 4. As seen in Figure 4, today the fields of *limbo t* are divided; however, in the past (in 1947, for example), all members of *limbo t* cultivated close together. Then, in the 1960s, many displaced people fled from the Angolan struggle into LN village and began cultivating the primary forest close to the field of *limbo t*. For this reason, the primary forest close to place I decreased, and some members of *limbo t* moved eastward toward the primary forest. Group II of Figure 2 moved 2 km from place I, the former place in 1969. Group III of Figure 2 moved from place I to place III in 1979, 4 km from the former place. Some villagers belonging to the other *limbo* had started to cultivate and left some areas of the primary forest for *limbo t*.

Thus, affected by the farming system as well as the establishment of many *membo* after 1947, the people in LN village extended their fields diffusely into the vast primary

forests eastward, as shown in Figure 4. Following is a discussion of the features of the acquisition and allocation of the land for shifting cultivation to the woodland. After Angolan immigrants settled, they were not exposed to direct intervention on land distribution in the woodland by Lozi chiefs.

NEGOTIATION AND ACQUIREMENT OF LAND

In this section, I discuss cases of negotiation and arrangement of land use in the dispersed primary forest, focusing on *limbo t*, which is a typical example. Case 1, for example, shows that the members of *limbo t* negotiate over the land of the dispersed primary forest.

Case 1: Negotiation of land in primary forest left among both cultivated and abandoned fields

No. 10, the second daughter of No. 8 of *limbo t* (see Figure 2), returned from another district after she divorced. No. 10 was cultivating the fields abandoned by her sister and brother for a while and started considering open fields somewhere in the primary forest. One day, No. 11, a younger sister of No. 10 (and third daughter of No. 8), also came back after she divorced and asked No. 8 to allow her to use the abandoned field that No. 8 had previously cultivated; she was granted permission. After that, No. 10, aiming for self-sufficiency, asked No. 8 again to give her a new field in the primary forest. Then No. 10 opened her new field in the primary forest. Around the fields that No.

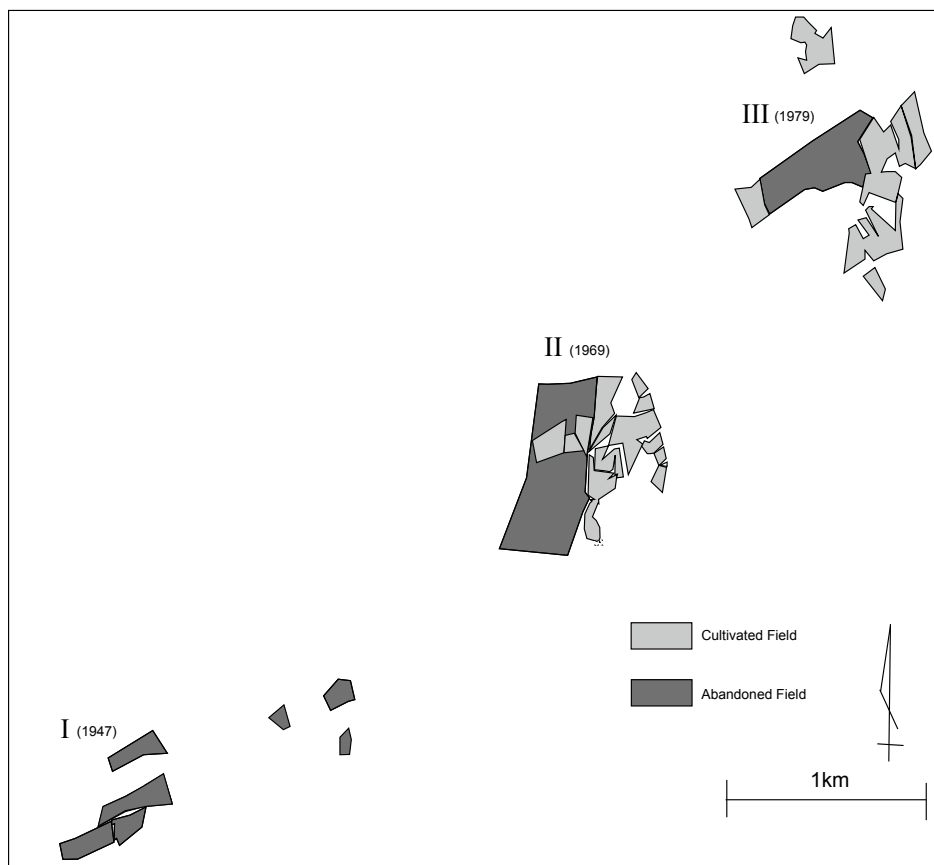


FIGURE 4. Cultivated fields and abandoned fields of *limbo t*.

- 1) The years that *limbo t* member started to cultivate westends in I - III places were provided in parentheses.
- 2) Among cultivated fields and abandoned fields of *limbo t*, primary forest patches are left randomly dispersed.

8 and her daughters cultivated, however, the area of primary forest for those women of *limbo t* was becoming small because the women had extended their fields in the area and other *limbo* members already cultivated the surrounding area. The dispersed primary forest was the arranged place for *limbo t*, with *limbo e* starting to cultivate an area near *limbo t*. No. 8, No. 10, and No. 11 were planning to cultivate the primary forest. No. 11 decided to open the primary forest next to the new field of No. 10 and line out as No. 11's an area where No. 10 wanted to extend. No. 8 was surprised and angry with the behaviour of No. 11 because she knew of No. 10's intention to open that place. Immediately, No. 8 marked out this line, bawling out No. 11. Finally, No. 10 got the land after she employed a man to clear the place.

As shown in case 1, a tacit understanding exists among relevant people about who should cultivate fields close to the primary forest. In general, everyone agrees it is the person who has occupied the plot in the primary forest, the person who cultivates fields closest to the plot. When the dispersed primary forest is decreased, the *limbo* members must open primary forests at an eastern frontier site, as did the woman in case 2.

Case 2: Negotiation of land of primary forest for younger female cousin

No. 8 in *limbo t* cultivated vast fields. Her younger female cousin, No. 12, came to stay with her from the Southern Province because maize did not have a good harvest there. No. 12 was allowed to use the field that the fourth daughter of No. 8 cultivated. Then No. 12 found the dispersed primary forest that was the arranged place for *limbo t*, as mentioned in case 1. Although she found the land near No. 8's fields, she was afraid of a competitive situation among the members of *limbo t* because sometimes a newcomer, like herself, who did not have strong social ties with others, was driven out by members of the same *limbo* if the person competed with them. Therefore, she asked No. 8, who had been there for a long time and had strong networks with others, to negotiate with those who cultivated near the place where No. 12 wanted to open fields, around the frontline shown in Figure 3. After that, No. 8 negotiated the land of the primary forest for No. 12, negotiating with the people who cultivate near the frontline. No. 8 visited *limbo g* and asked the headman to allow No. 12 to cultivate northwest of the fields, but he refused and said to cultivate on the east side of their fields because some people of *limbo g* wanted to extend northwestward. No. 8 agreed to this and informed No. 12, after which No. 12 opened the east side of the fields for *limbo g*.

Around the frontier of the primary forest in the east woodland side, other LN villagers expand fields for cultivation. Though they do not fence or mark the boundary of their occupied area, they share the sense that they have priority and extend fields further into the primary forest. Because everyone concedes the occupation rights of the people who first cultivated, those who come later must seek other places for cultivation when they begin cultivation at the frontier line.

Case 3: Negotiation of the land of primary forest between limbo t and limbo e

The fields of *limbo e* are located next to the fields of No. 8 and her daughters of *limbo t*. People of *limbo e* reclaimed one of the dispersed primary forests located northeastward, avoiding other primary forests located southwest of where the people of *limbo t* are extending. One afternoon, a man of *limbo e* approached the headman of *limbo t* and said that he and his wife wanted to reclaim the forest of *limbo t* because the forest of *limbo e* was too small to distribute among all of *limbo e*, while there still seemed to be enough land left in the forest for *limbo t*, which was near their current fields. But the headman of *limbo t* said that it would be impossible because there was not enough space to cultivate even in their forest. When the man of *limbo e* asked the headman again, the headman called No. 8 and her daughters, who occupied the fields next to those of the man of *limbo e*, and asked whether they would grant his request. As a result, No. 8 and her daughters rejected this request because of the small size of remaining land in their primary forest.

As shown in cases 2 and 3, the person who comes later to cultivate in the primary forest where other *limbo* members had started cultivation nearby must meet with the headman of the initial *limbo* to arrange and negotiate for land in the primary forest, though such persons did not have to do that in Angola. Today, as shown by these three cases, land use follows tacit understanding and occupation by the first cultivators. Though the land use of shifting cultivators was shown in previous studies (Ankei 1981; Kakeya and Sugiyama 1987; Oyama 2007), that of Angolan immigrants, especially, is marked by what have become factors resulting in the need for a *limbo* as a common social practice unit among the people who cultivate to negotiate over valuable places in dispersed primary forests.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined dynamic patterns of autonomous livelihood among self-settled refugees, focusing on actual land use of Angolan immigrants in western Zambia. New land use patterns have developed in the context of Zambian nation building, which has integrated all villages and their residents into government-run administrative and land-management systems. Immigrants' autonomous livelihoods are restricted by Lozi traditional organizations, a facet of the Zambian state, and immigrants are still excluded from playing a role in the authorities that regulate land use in the region. Angolan immigrants were not among those receiving aid in refugee camps; but through Lozi traditional organization, the immigrants group has been deeply involved in state political reforms aimed at increasing solidarity and democracy. That indicates the African nation building has brought self-settled refugees into a new marginalized situation connected to their daily livelihoods.

In this context, the actual land transactions of Angolan immigrants show that they are often driven into ad hoc initiatives to acquire dispersed primary forests, seeking

approval for such prior occupation through tacit understanding. It indicates different land use from previous studies, sharing salient cultural traits such as adherence to norms of subsistence ethics and reciprocity within the family community (Hansen 1977) and is directly affected by political change. Especially in competitive situations of land acquisition, the practical members that cultivate an area refer to the *limbo* for their frame of negotiation, involving the headman to legitimise and approve transactions. This demonstrates that they have created a process of land acquisition, reinforcing practical land use members' common social factors. This is a secure method of obtaining land in woodlands where primary forest has been decreased and dispersed patchily, as opposed to opening new shifting cultivation fields at random (Ankei 1981; Kakeya and Sugiyama 1987; Oyama 2007) or redistributing land through traditional political systems and family communities (Suehara 1990).

As previous studies on self-settled refugees have shown (Hansen 1982; Backwell 1999), for self-settled refugees of LN village in western Zambia, government intervention as refugee assistance that falls short of sustaining basic human needs was not a second disaster. The marginalized situation under nation building that forced refugees to cultivate in woodlands has kept them struggling to acquire resources. This article has demonstrated that self-settled Angolan refugee communities established a new autonomous livelihood, in a flexible and practical manner, allowing them to coexist in a politically marginalized situation in the host country.

NOTES

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