

Clapperton Mavhunga

Incoming Technology and African Innovation

During his period of residency at RCC, Clapperton will be revising chapters developed out of his doctoral thesis, “The Mobile Workshop: Mobility, Technology, and Human-Animal Interaction in Gonarezhou (National Park), 1850-Present,” and will be conceptualizing and expanding them into two monographs.

One book (for MIT Press), entitled *Incoming Technology and African Innovation: Guns as State-crafting Tools in Zimbabwe since 1500* (forthcoming), will focus on African use of guns to engineer nation-states. Clapperton hopes to benefit from colleagues and reading resources at the RCC to frame this process of engineering nations through war as one that takes place and is, in fact, co-produced with(in)–and of–the environment. The book focuses on pre-colonial “warriors,” colonial “native soldiers,” African “guerrillas,” and postcolonial “war vets,” and “party militias” as human instruments in the production of political power. It departs from previous renditions of armed conflicts, firearms, and dictatorships in its focus on the interactions between technology, environment, and mobility (the kinetics of making political power).

The second project (still searching for a publisher) is entitled “Guns as Environmental Engineering Tools: The Role of African Hunters and Indigenous Knowledge of Wildlife in Zimbabwe.” It is an ethnography of the hunt, as told through the narratives of and written archives on *magocha* (men who barbeque), the name given to hunters the colonial state in Rhodesia employed to slaughter wildlife to clear the country of tsetse fly and problem animals. The book carries over into the war of national liberation, examining how *magocha* became a valuable resource for guerrillas of Robert Mugabe fighting from Mozambique: as butchers supplying meat to freedom fighters. After independence, another transformation occurred: *magocha* became vilified by the new guerrilla government as “poachers,” on one hand, and as foot soldiers of externally-based ivory and rhino-poaching syndicates, on the other, in one of Zimbabwe’s darkest periods of poaching. Clapperton’s narrative is not one of vilifying or praising *magocha*, but examining them fairly as environmental engineers using indigenous knowledge and guns to innovate the wildlife of the transLimpopo into livelihoods. The project has the goal of working with these “poachers” to develop a grassroots-driven initiative of biodiversity conservation based on African culture and utilizing *magocha* as a skills base.