A History of Zimbabwe, 1890-2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001-2008

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By

Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo

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To Kelebogile Clara and Ruvimbo Heather

And to the memory of Eddison.

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PREFACE

The extant literature on the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history of Zimbabwe is enormous. This work covers the history of Zimbabwe from the advent of British settlers in 1890 to 2000; it is a political, social and economic history. It combines in one volume the period from 1890 to 2000 including women's rights and human rights. I hope it will make a significant contribution to the history of Zimbabwe.

SUMMARY

In this work, I have studied the history of Zimbabwe from the advent of British settlers in 1890 to 2000. The study begins with the background of the country: its size, geography, climate and the natural resources; the African people of Zimbabwe and their past.

The major contours of this study comprise of the occupation of Mashonaland and Manicaland by the British settlers (1890); the conquest of the Ndebele kingdom (1893); the administration of Mashonaland (1890-1895) and of Matabeleland (1893-1895); the Ndebele and Shona risings (1896-1897) and their aftermath (1897-1898); the road to the granting of Responsible Government to the white settlers (1898-1923); from Responsible Government to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1923-1953); the rise and fall of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953-1963); Southern Rhodesia: From the Launching of the Federation to the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (1953-1965); Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain (1965); the struggle for majority rule in Rhodesia (1966-1972); the Pearce Commission (1972); the developments in Mozambique and their impact on Rhodesia (1972-1976); the shuttle diplomacy of the United States Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger, in southern Africa (1976); the Geneva conference on Rhodesia (1976); the road to Rhodesia's internal settlement (1977-1978) and its aftermath (1978-1979); the decisive phase of the liberation war (1972-1979); the Commonwealth summit in Lusaka (Zambia); the Lancaster House conference (1979); the campaign for the Independence election (January-February, 1980) and its aftermath (March-April, 1980); the vicissitudes of the Government of National Unity (1980-1982); the problem of 'dissidents' in Matabeleland and the Government's response (1982-1984); the road to the Unity Accord between ZANU (PF) and ZAPU (1985-1987); the land problem (1980-1998); the developments leading to the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (1992-1998); the launching of the MDC (1999); the June, 2000 general election and its aftermath (June-December, 2000); women's rights (1980-2000) and human rights in Zimbabwe (1984-2000); the overall summary and conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Size and Borders

Zimbabwe, a land-locked country of nearly 400, 000 square kilometers (154, 446 square miles) or about the size of California, is located in south-central Africa. The Zambezi River demarcates its northern border with Zambia while the Limpopo River forms the country's southern border with South Africa. Zimbabwe's other neighbours are Botswana in the West and South West and Mozambique in the East. (See map on wild life heritage).

Geography

About a quarter of Zimbabwe consists of the Highveld or central ridge, an upland plateau which runs diagonally across the country from the South-West to the Nyanga Mountains to the North-East. The Highveld on which Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, (see photo) is situated, rises some 1, 500 meters (4, 921 feet) above sea level and is the country's principal watershed. It consists of a geophysical feature known as the Great Dyke, 515 kilometers (320 miles) long and at its narrowest, 11 kilometers (7 miles) wide. The Great Dyke's ancient rocks contain vast deposits of minerals including gold and nickel. The Middleveld on either side of the Highveld and accounting for two fifths of Zimbabwe, and with an altitude of 600-1, 200 meters (1, 968-3,937 feet), descends to the narrow strip of the Zambezi valley on one side and more gradually, to the hot, dry flat lands of the Kalahari basin and the south-eastern Lowveld on the other. The Nyanga-Chimanimani massif and the Vumba uplands, mark the country's eastern border with Mozambique. In the wide valleys, farmers grow tea, coffee and fruit.

Climate

Although Zimbabwe lies to the north of the Tropic of Capricorn, it has a temperate climate with the summer heat moderated by altitude in all but the lowest-lying areas. The weather is characterized by dry winters of warm, sunny days and chilly, often bitter nights especially on the Highveld. June and July are the coldest months while summer from November to January, is the wet season; the rainfall regime is much higher in the north and north-east than in the sandy, semi-arid areas of the south and southeast.

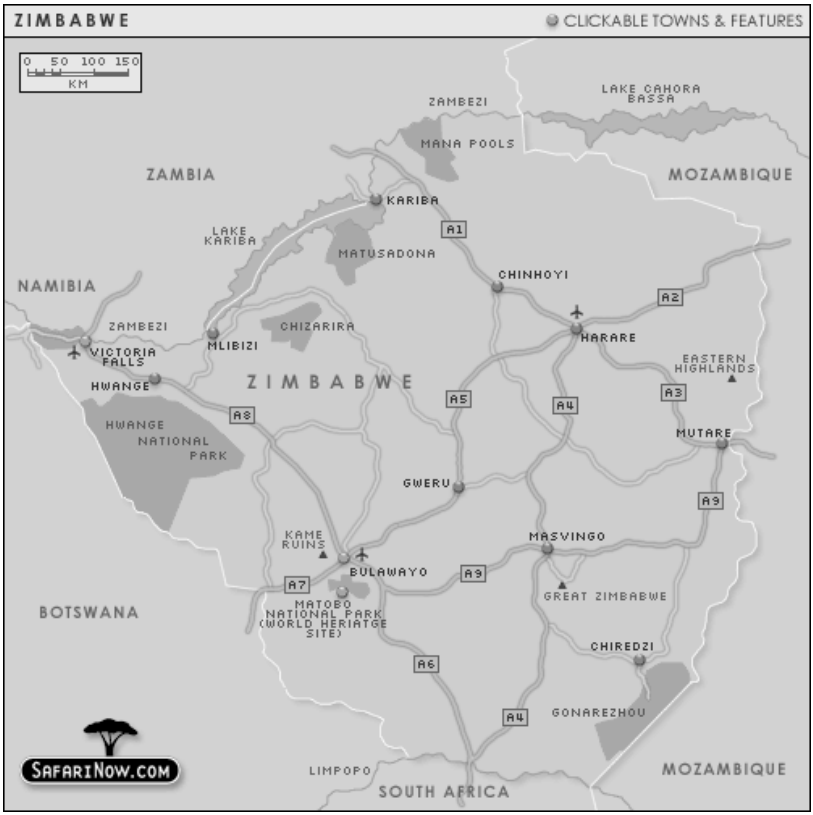
The Victoria Falls and Lake Kariba

At the Victoria Falls, the Zambezi River, Africa's fourth longest river (3, 540 kilometers or 2, 200 miles), plunges a hundred meters (328 feet) down into a maze of narrow, precipitous gorges in a series of gigantic cataracts, the tumultuous descent producing a rising cloud of spray which can be seen from about 40 kilometers (25 miles) away. (See photo). One hundred kilometers (93 miles) downstream is Lake Kariba, one of the largest man-made lakes in the world: 280 kilometers (174 miles) long and 40 kilometers (25 miles) wide. (see photo).

Wild Life Heritage

In addition to its enormous mineral deposits, Zimbabwe is blessed with a tremendous wild life heritage located in several national parks (see map below), the largest of which is the Hwange National Park which occupies 15, 000 square kilometers (5, 792 square miles); the Park's wild life includes the lion, elephant, buffalo, leopard, cheetah, rhino, giraffe, zebra, wildebeest and 16 species of antelope.[1]

[1] *Zimbabwe The Beautiful*, (Cape Town, Struick Publishers, 1996), 8, 11, 14, 16.



See the Centrefold for this image in colour.

The People of Zimbabwe

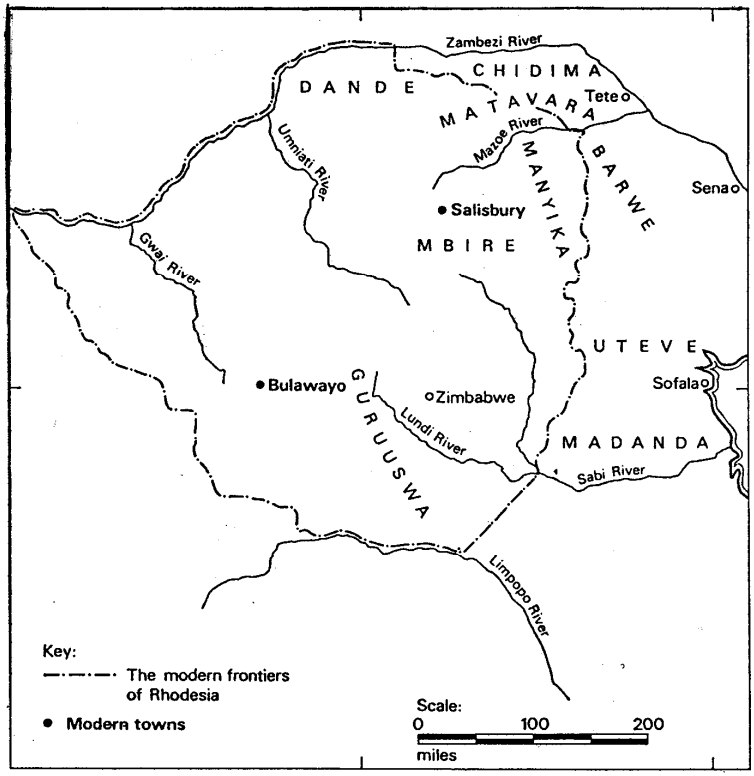
Zimbabwe has a population of about 12 million of whom 70 per cent are Shona and 16 per cent are Ndebele. The rest of the population consists of several minority groups including the Tonga of the Zambezi valley, the Venda in the south and people of European descent. The Shona and Ndebele and African minority groups in Zimbabwe, are part of a wider group of the Bantu people of southern Africa. In this introduction, we shall summarize the history and pre-colonial economy of the Shona and Ndebele.

The Shona

An outstanding achievement of the Shona people is the monument at Great Zimbabwe after which the country is named. The word 'Zimbabwe' derives from the Shona *dzimba dza mabwe* (houses of stone). Great Zimbabwe was the residence of a powerful ruler in the south-eastern interior of Africa, surrounded by the houses of his family, of the families of his tributary rulers and the officials of his court. The walls of Great Zimbabwe were not designed as a fortification; they were built primarily to display the power of the state and symbolized the achievements of the ruling class. [2] (See photo of Outer Wall surrounding the Great Enclosure).

Modern archaeologists tell us that the Shona built and inhabited Great Zimbabwe between 1, 000 and 1, 500 A. D. According to oral tradition, the Shona migrated from their homeland called Mbire in the vicinity of Lake Tanganyika. After crossing the Zambezi River, they first settled in north-central Zimbabwe and gradually moved southwards until they established themselves at what became Great Zimbabwe and introduced the worship of *Mwari*, the Shona Supreme God.[3] According to the same traditions, the Mbire kingdom became afflicted by a shortage of salt. The first Mwene Mutapa, Nyatsimba Mutota, therefore sent emissaries in search of it. Eventually they found it in the Dande area of the middle Zambezi valley whereupon Mutota and his people moved north from Great Zimbabwe, conquered the people of the Zambezi valley and settled in Dande. This was the first of a series of campaigns in which Mutota and his son and successor, Matope, carved out an empire stretching from the Kalahari Desert to the Indian Ocean between the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers. The new empire consisted of Mbire on the southern plateau of Mashonaland, Guruhuswa in the rich grasslands and goldfields of the South West, Manyika in the Eastern Highlands and Uteve and Madanda on the coastal lowlands between Manyika and the Indian Ocean. (See map below):

[2] Peter Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, (Zimbabwe Publishing House, Harare, 1982), 13.
[3] Peter Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, (Stein and Day Publishers, New York, 1973), 174.



6. The Provinces of the Mwene Mutapa Confederacy at its height c.1500 A.D.

Source: T. O. Ranger, (ed.), *Aspects of Central African History*.

The appointment of two relatives by Mukombero Nyahuma, son and successor of Matope, to rule his southern provinces, Mbire and Guruhuswa, inadvertently led to the emergence of the Togwa and Changamire dynasties. Within a few years, Changamire succeeded in wresting power from the Togwa dynasty thereby establishing an enlarged Rozvi kingdom that was to pose a formidable challenge to the Mutapa dynasty in the north.[4] Thus the Rozvi kingdom grew directly out of the early Mwene

[4] D. P. Abraham, 'ETHNO-HISTORY OF THE EMPIRE OF MWENE MUTAPA', in J. Vansina, R. Mauny and L. V. Thomas, (eds.), *The Historian in Tropical Africa*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1964), 109.

Mutapa state, shared the same roots and retained a great deal of its customs and practices. The Rozvi ruler or Mambo, like the Mwene Mutapa, was a military and religious leader, an intercessor with *Mwari*.[5]

The Economic Base of the Mutapa State.

The economic base of the Mutapa state lay in agriculture, pastoral activities, mining, hunting, small-scale industries and trade but the dominant economic activity of the people was agriculture followed by pastoralism, especially cattle.[6] The people of the Mutapa state grew rice, wheat, sugar cane, coconuts, taro, oranges, lemons, figs, vines and kept fowls, pigs and goats.[7] They also traded among themselves; peripatetic professional traders (*vashambadzi)* hawked and sold their goods to their customers. In areas like iron-working, wood-carving, basketry, weaving and pottery, specialists or *nyanzv*i produced goods for the market. [8]

In addition to agriculture, the Shona mined several minerals including gold and copper. Mining was undertaken as a community enterprise by entire villages early in the wet season when the rivers provided water for washing the ore and before a rising water table flooded the mines.[9] From the twelfth to the nineteenth century, gold constituted the most important single export from the Zimbabwe Plateau.[10] Copper was used both for export and for internal consumption in the making of bracelets and bangles.[11] Apart from mining, the people of the Mutapa state hunted elephants for food and ivory especially after the state had lost much of its gold-and cattle-producing areas to the Rozvi in the late seventeenth century.[12] Most of the ivory obtained in the Zambezi valley and on the coastal lowlands, was exported.[13] They also grew cotton; the weavers of the Zimbabwe Plateau and the Zambezi valley wove cotton into both coarse and fine cloth.[14]

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[5] Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, (1973), 179-180.
[6] S. I. G. Mudenge, *A Political History of Munhumutapa., c. 1400-1902*, (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1988), 161-166.
[7] David Chanaiwa, 'POLITICS AND LONG-DISTANCE TRADE IN THE MWENE MUTAPA EMPIRE DURING THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY', in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, V, 3, (1972), 430.
[8] Mudenge, *A Political History*, 188.
[9] Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, (1973), 177.
[10] D. N. Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe, 900-1850*, (London, Heinemann, 1980), 25-26.
[11] Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, (1973), 177.
[12] Mudenge, *A Political History*, 177.
[13] Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, (1973), 177.
[14] Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe*, 32.

In addition to trading among themselves, the people of the Mutapa state also engaged in external trade first with the Swahili traders from the East African Coast and later with the Portuguese. Although the trade with the Portuguese was quite extensive, it largely benefited a small wealthy class which had developed an appetite for luxury goods such as fine- dyed and embroidered cotton, silks and glass beads; the peasant farmers still depended on subsistence agriculture for their livelihood.[15] To the majority of the peasants, external trade was peripheral to their economic activities.[16]

The Decline of the Zimbabwe State

Great Zimbabwe began to decline about the middle of the fifteenth century. At the height of its power, Great Zimbabwe's population was somewhere between 1,000 and 2, 500 adults.[17] It has been suggested that Great Zimbabwe simply grew too large to be supported by its environment; the presence of so many people at one spot would have seriously affected its ability to supply crops, firewood, game, grazing and other necessities of life.[18] From about 1830 onwards, Nguni invaders from the south and in particular the Ngoni under Zwangendaba destroyed the Rozvi kingdom.

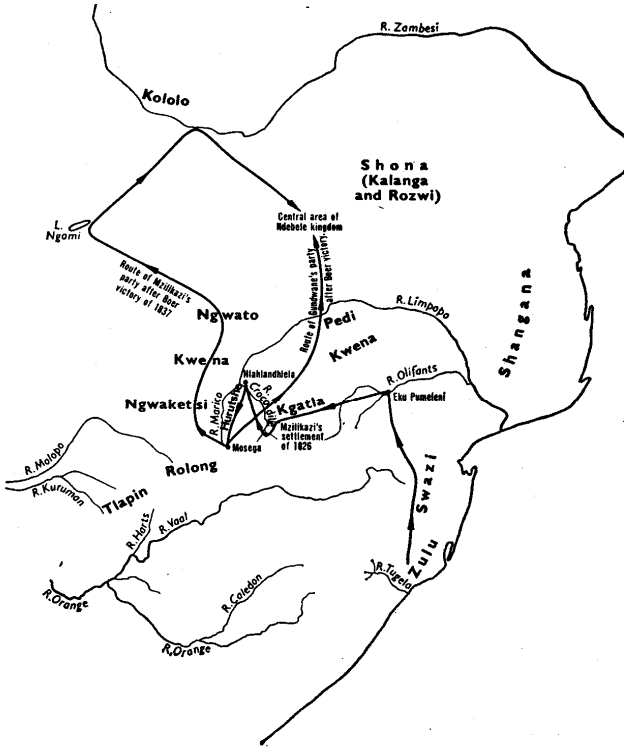
History of the Ndebele

The epic of Ndebele migrations from Zululand in 1821 until they settled in Western Zimbabwe in 1837 has been studied, among others, by Peter Becker[19], J. D. Omer-Cooper [20] and by Julian Cobbing [21] and no further elaboration is called for except to say that the Khumalos, a small Nguni-speaking tribe under the leadership of Mzilikazi, had voluntarily joined the Zulus when Shaka began to build the Zulu kingdom in 1817. In Mzilikazi's case Shaka made an exception to his usual practice of entrusting military command to commoners by appointing Mzilikazi a regimental commander. Furthermore, the regiment commanded by

[15] Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, (1973), 178, 197; Chanaiwa, 'POLITICS', 430.
[16] Mudenge, *A Political History*, 186-187.
[17] Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, (1973), 195.
[18] Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe*, 50-51.
[19] Peter Becker, *The Path of Blood*, (London, Longmans, Green and Company, 1962).
[20] J. D. Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath*, (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1966).
[21] Julian Cobbing, 'The Ndebele Under the Khumalos, 1820-1896', (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Lancaster, 1976).

Mzilikazi apparently consisted largely of members of his own tribe. This arrangement produced a serious weakness in the Zulu kingdom for Mzilikazi could command the loyalty of his followers not only as a commander appointed by Shaka but also by virtue of his hereditary position. The possibility of secession was inherent in the situation; about 1821 a rupture took place.

See map below:



Approximate route of the Ndebele under Mzilikazi

Source: J. D. Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath*, 132.

Shaka had sent Mzilikazi to conduct a raid against a Sotho tribe to the north-west of Zululand; Mzilikazi returned with a large booty of cattle but instead of despatching them to his overlord, he kept them for himself. Shaka sent messengers to demand the cattle but Mzilikazi refused and made a bid for independence. The Zulu regiments at once marched against Mzilikazi. The Ndebele beat off the first assault but in a second assault,

Mzilikazi's defensive position was stormed. Mzilikazi and his followers fled across the escarpment onto the interior plateau where they encountered numerous Sotho-speaking tribes. In spite of their small numbers, the military discipline and fighting tactics they had learned from the Zulus enabled the Ndebele to smash all opposition to their path. About 1824 they reached the upper Oliphant River where they rested and built a temporary settlement appropriately called Eku Pumuleni (the resting place). From this headquarters Mzilikazi sent his regiments far and wide capturing cattle, destroying towns and returning with captured men to reinforce his fighting force. Because it proved unsuitable, Mzilikazi and his followers abandoned the temporary settlement and moved westward into the central Transvaal. (See map above). Between 1825 and 1834 the Ndebele regiments devastated the central and northern Transvaal, burned captured towns, butchered the inhabitants and seized large herds of cattle to increase their vast stock.[22]

But no sooner had the Ndebele defeated various chiefdoms in the Transvaal than they encountered the Boers of the Great Trek [23] who fought on horse back and used firearms. Consisting largely of settlers of Dutch descent, the Boers had been emigrating from Cape Colony from 1834 onwards to escape British rule; like the Israelites of old, they were looking for the Promised Land on which to settle.

In 1836 several Boer trekking parties including one led by Henrik Potgieter, crossed the Vaal River and entered Ndebele territory. As the intruders came unannounced, the Ndebele regiments descended on them. On a hill later known as Vegkop, the first major clash between the Ndebele and the Boers took place. In close formation, the Ndebele regiments charged the Boer wagons but were unable dislodge the defenders and the Ndebele were forced to withdraw taking Boer cattle with them. On 2 January, 1837 a Boer commando under Potgieter, fell on the Ndebele settlement at Mosega and routed the Ndebele completely and the Ndebele population fled northwards. In October, 1837 Potgieter set out with a strong commando of over 300 men for a decisive attack on the Ndebele. After seven days of fighting, the Boers captured and destroyed Mzilikazi's two remaining military towns and the Ndebele population streamed out of the Marico valley to the north.[24] In the wake of his defeat by the Boers, Mzilikazi decided to move his people to a new site far to the north. After an arduous journey, the Ndebele finally settled in Western

[22] Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath*, 131-134.
[23] For details, see Eric A. Walker, *The Great Trek*, (London, A. C. Black, Ltd, 1934).
[24] J. D. Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath*, Chapter 9, 144-146.

Zimbabwe and established their capital at Bulawayo. Because the Rozvi kingdom had been largely destroyed by the Ngoni under Zvangendaba, the Rozvi were unable to offer serious resistance to the Ndebele or to dislodge the interlopers from their new settlement.

The Ndebele Economy

Although the Ndebele were largely a pastoral community whose large herds of livestock, particularly cattle, were captured from defeated tribes, they also engaged in agriculture and other peaceful pursuits. Thomas Morgan Thomas who evangelized among the Ndebele on behalf of the London Missionary Society in the nineteenth century, tells us that the Ndebele grew corn, ground nuts, peas, beans, pumpkins, calabash, maize, sweet cane and water melon. The men hunted and trapped game including the elephant, rhinoceros, giraffe, zebra, hippopotamus, buffalo; several species of antelope including the eland, impala, black, gray and red bucks; the gnu, tsetsebe, wild boar, guinea fowl, pheasants, ostrich, wild turkey, partridges and quails. They also caught several species of fish including trout. The women wove various kinds of mats and baskets while the men were engaged in tailoring, sandal-making and carpentry. With their small axe and knives, they made wooden vessels. They wove baskets of various kinds. From smelted iron, the Ndebele made a variety of iron bangles and other ornaments; they also forged spears, axes, knives and picks. They tanned the skins of the wild animals they hunted and killed and joining one to the other with long needles, they made beautiful karosses. They wove cotton into threads and wove it into useful garments.[25] It is clear that in spite of the predatory character of their kingdom, the Ndebele were not averse to peaceful pursuits such as agriculture, hunting game and the making of various crafts.

[25] Thomas Morgan Thomas, *Eleven Years in Central South Africa*, Second Edition, (London, Frank Cass, 1971).

CHAPTER ONE

FROM THE OCCUPATION OF MASHONALAND TO THE NDEBELE AND SHONA RISINGS, 1890-1898

Introduction

It was on the Shona and Ndebele people of Zimbabwe described in the *Introduction* that British colonialism intruded in 1890 and in 1893 respectively. This Chapter examines the major contours in the history of Zimbabwe from 1890 to 1898 including the major developments which preceded the establishment of British colonial rule in Zimbabwe (1884 - 1889) and in particular the Moffat Treaty, the Rudd Concession, the Charter of the British South Africa Company; the march of the 'pioneers' to, and the occupation of, Mashonaland (June- September, 1890); the occupation of Manicaland (1890); the early life of the settlers in Mashonaland; the administration of Mashonaland (1891-1895); the planting of Christianity in Mashonaland and Manicaland (1891-1895); the conquest of Matabeleland (1893) and the administration of Matabeleland (1893-1895); the Ndebele and Shona risings (1896-1897) and their aftermath (1897-1898).

Major Developments, 1884-1889

The saga preceding the establishment of British colonial rule in Zimbabwe must be understood in the broader context of the struggle for control of Central Africa by Britain, Germany, Portugal and the South African Republic (Transvaal) which, in the wake of the discovery of vast deposits of gold on its territory in 1886, had become a serious competitor in the scramble for Matabeleland. When in April, 1884 Germany declared a Protectorate over South West Africa (now Namibia), Rhodes was worried that an eastward expansion of the new German Protectorate and a

westward expansion of the South African Republic would block British expansion northwards.[1] To forestall this possibility, the British Governor of Cape Colony, Sir Hercules Robinson, who doubled as British High Commissioner for South Africa, declared a Protectorate over Bechuanaland (now Botswana) in 1885. When a representative of the South African Republic, Pieter Johannes Grobler, signed a treaty of peace and friendship with the Ndebele King, Lobengula, on 30 July, 1887, British officials feared that this treaty might be a prelude to the expansion of the South African Republic into Matabeleland.

The putative founder of Rhodesia and the leading spirit behind British colonialism in Zimbabwe, Cecil John Rhodes (see photo) had made a vast fortune for himself in the diamond industry at Kimberley in the Orange Free State and in the gold industry at the Witwatersrand in the South African Republic. An imperialist par excellence and the subject of several biographies[2], Rhodes was concerned that the South African Republic on the basis of the Grobler Treaty might thwart British expansion northwards and was prepared to harness his enormous wealth to advance British imperialism into Central Africa especially in light of a persistent tradition handed down from remote antiquity of the existence of vast deposits of gold in Mashonaland and Matabeleland. Because this region was reputed to be as rich in gold as the Witwatersrand, it suddenly became a cockpit for rival powers: Britain, Germany, Portugal and the South African Republic.[3] The key to northward expansion was Matabeleland.

The British Administrator for Bechuanaland, Sir Sidney Shippard, assigned the task of negotiating with the Ndebele King, Lobengula, to his Assistant, Mr. John Smith Moffat, the son of the Reverend Robert Moffat, the great friend of Lobengula's father, Mzilikazi, who had permitted the London Missionary Society to open its first mission station at Inyati in 1859. Lobengula signed the Moffat Treaty on 11 February, 1888.

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[1] Robert Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1988), 169.

[2] See for example, Sir Lewis Mitchell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Cecil J. Rhodes, 1853-1902*, (London, Edward Arnold, 1910); Basil Williams, *Cecil Rhodes*, (New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1921); William Plomer, *Cecil Rhodes*, (New York, Appleton and Company, 1933); Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Cecil Rhodes*, (New York and London, Harper and Brothers Publishers,1933); J. G. Lockhart and C. M. Woodhouse, *Cecil Rhodes*, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1963); Robert Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power*, (Oxford University Press, 1988).

[3] R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1961), 221.