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HISTORIANS AND THE SHONA EMPIRES, PART I.

By

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The Later Iron Age in South Central Africa is dominated by the history of the Shona people. When they took Sofala in 1505 the Portugese discovered that the land south of the Zambezi was largely under the control of Shona-speaking dynasties, who even ruled some other peoples such as the Lower Zambezi and the Inhambane Tonga. They came into contact with two major Shona dynasties, the Mwene Mutapas and the Changamires, and this contact lasted until the Changamire dynasty finally succumbed to the invaders from the south in the nineteenth century.[1] The discovery by Europeans in the nineteenth century of the large numbers of stone structures in the same area focussed attention on its history, and led to a relatively early beginning in the study of the archaeology and of the traditional and documentary history of the region.

Archaeological work began in 1891 under J.T.Bent,[2] while in 1893 G.M.Theal commenced his publication of Portugese documents relevant to the subject,[3] and in the same year the Native Department of the British South Africa Company's Matabeleland administration ordered the first systematic collection of oral historical material.[4] But this early effort was not maintained for long. Apart from two further oral historical surveys carried out in 1903-6,[5] and the realistic archaeological work of D. Randall-MacIver in 1905,[6] the study of the subject languished, ethno-historical work being left in the hands of part-time researchers of varying ability while archaeology became

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1. 'Shona' was a word used in the nineteenth century to describe peoples who, although sharing a common basic language and culture, had no single term to describe themselves. 'Shona' is here used in the broadest sense permissible, and thus includes among others the speakers of the Rozvi dialect. By 'empire' is meant any large-scale confederacy of peoples.
2. J.T.Bent, The Ruined Cities of Mashonaland (London: Longmans, 1892).
3. Records of South Eastern Africa, ed.G. M. Theal, (Cape Town : Cape Government, 9 vds. 1878-1903).
4. National Archives of Rhodesia, NB 6/1/1, Annual Reports of Native Commissioners for year ending 31st March, 1893.
5. National Archives of Rhodesia, N 3/33/8, History of the Mashona Tribes (1903-4), and A 3/18/28, History of the Matabele Tribes (1906).
6. D.R. MacIver, Mediaeval Rhodesia (London: Macmillan, 1906).

largely the victim of the 'Zimbabwe myth' and its devotees.[1] It was not until the 1950s that the prospect improved noticeably. In the field of archaeology the work of Miss Gertrude Caton-Thompson in 1929 had been a notable exception to the lack of progress made,[2] and in the late 1940s various archaeologists, notably Mr.K.R. Robinson and Mr.R. Summers, began a concentrated effort that has been maintained ever since.[3] By the 1950s the study of traditional history was reviving as Dr.Harald von Sicard published a steady stream of articles based on his part-time studies, and Mr. D.P.Abraham began the full-time task of reconstructing the history of the Mwene Mutapa state. Finally, in 1962 the systematic publication of Portuguese documents was resumed.[4]

At the same time as this surge of activity began to be felt, African history began to be seen as a subject distinct from colonial history, and the histories of African societies rather than the activities of colonizing European powers in Africa began to occupy historians' attention. The South Central African Iron Age was no exception, and African historians noted with interest the discoveries of the archaeologists and especially, with reference to the Shona empires, the work of Abraham. Unfortunately the limited number of trained archaeologists in the field meant that progress in the dating and classification of the Iron Age societies was steady, but slow, while Abraham's 'unfortunate silence' since 1963 has reduced the supply of fresh data on the tradtional histories of the Shona empires to a

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1. The origin and development of the 'Zimbabwe myth' are described by R.Summers in Zimbabwe, a Rhodesian mystery. (Johannesburg: Nelson,1963) 17-29. The myth reached its height with H.Clarkson Fletcher's Psychic Episodes of Great Zimbabwe, (Johannesburg: CNA 1941) and enjoyed a brief revival in 1970, when the Rhodesian Front Government attempted to put pressure on archaeologists to play down the African character of Zimbabwe. P.S. Garlake, 'The Zimbabwe Ruins Re-examined', Rhodesian History, 1 (1970) 29. Fortunately this fit of historico-archaeological insanity died away, and in 1971 Dr.T.N.Huffman was able to give an hour-long television broadcast on the subject without arousing the same controversy.

2. G.Caton-Thompson, The Zimbabwe Culture, Ruins and Reactions, (Oxford - Clarendon 1931).

3. R. Summers, Inyanga (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1958) K.R. Robinson, Khami Ruins, (Cambridge: Cambridge 1959), R. Summers, K.R.Robinson and A. Whitty, 'Zimbabwe Excavations, 1958', Occasional Papers of the National Museums of Southern Rhodesia, 3, 23A, (1961).

4. Documentos sobre os Portugueses em Mocambique e na Africa Central,1497-1840. ed. A da Silva Rego and T.W. Baxter (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 7 vols. to date, 1962-1971).

Changamire empires has left historians in a difficult position. While reluctant to leave the histories of these states alone until the publication of Abraham's work, and conscious of the importance of these empires to later Shona history, the most prominent writers on the African history of South Central Africa have not been able to carry out detailed research themselves, and have therefore had to rel largely on the primary information that has been made available so far.[2] Again unfortunately, the revealed archaeology and traditional history of the Shona have altered and developed during the decade since Abraham's last important publication, and a great deal of confusion has occurred. Moreover, although much of the basic material is not available, historians have, naturally enough, attempted to fit the known facts into their overall view of African history, especially those facts relating to the contact and conflict between the Shona and the Portuguese, and to the nature of the Shona empires. In fact, it could almost be said that the Shona empires possess a historiography, but no history.

Lately, however, fresh material has become available. The works of Drs.S.I. Mudenge, G.J.Liesegang, J.K.Rennie, H.H.K.Bhila, Allen Isaacman, M.D.D.Newitt, the writer and many others touch upon the problem, and it is to be hoped that the 'doldrums' period of the mid-1960s is now over. This paper proposes to discuss the progress made so far and to comment upon the changes in thinking that have occurred since 1958, and to discuss and comment on the history of the Mwene Mutapa and Changamire empires, outlining the basis of our current knowledge, illustrating some of the attitudes of historians to different problems, and suggesting some fresh ideas based on the writer's own research

1. D.P.Abraham. 'The Principality of Maungwe', NADA, 28(1951); Abraham's most important work appears to fall into three main periods; and in each case the date of original production, not of final publication, is important. The first period went upto 1961, and included;
'The Monomotapa Dynasty', NADA, 8, 36, (1959); 'The Early Political History of the Kingdom of Mwene Mutapa, (850-1589)', in Historians in Tropical Africa, Proceedings of the Leverhulme Inter-Collegiate History Conference, September 1960, ed. E.Stokes (Salisbury: U.C.R.N., 1962); 'Maramuca: an exercise in the combined use of Portuguese records and traditions'. The Journal of African History, 2, 1, (1961). The second period extended up to the 1963 and included 'Ethno-History of the Empire of Mutapa. Problems and Methods', in The History in Tropical Africa. Studies presented and discussed at the Fourth International African Seminar at the University of Dakar, Senegal 1961. ed.J.Vansina, R.Mauny and L.V.Thomas (London-Oxford, 1964); 'Porcelain from Hill Ruin, Khami', South African Archaeological Bulletin, 16, 63(1962); 'The political role of Chaminuka and the Mhondoro cult in Shona history' and 'Tasks in the field of early history', in History of Central African Peoples Conference, Lusaka: Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 28 May-1 June, 1963. 'Chamimuka' was published as 'The Roles of "Chaminuka" and the Mhondoro cults in Shona Political History', in The Zambesian Past, ed.E.Stokes and R.Brown (Manchester: Manchester, 1966). The third period includes one reference to the Mutapa dynasty in 'Chamimuka', a review of Summers, Zimbabwe and A.J.Bruwer Zimbabwe: Rhodesia's Ancient Greatness in Africa, 36, 1, (1966), lectures and personal communications since 1963.

2. Examples of general syntheses of available information include B.M.Fagan, Southern Africa during the Iron Age, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965); E.A. Alpers, 'The Mutapa and Malawi political systems to the time of the Ngoni invasions' and T.O.Ranger, 'The nineteenth century in Southern Rhodesia', in Aspects of Central African History, ed.T.O.Ranger (London: Heinemann, 1968); T.O.Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-7 (London: Heinemann, 1967) chapter 1; B.Davidson, Africa in History, Themes and Activities, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 131-5.

1. Archaeologists, Historians and the Zimbabwe Culture.

Although MacIver and Caton-Thompson not only demonstrated the falsity of the 'Zimbabwe myth' but also provided approximate datings by means of imported articles,[1] the greatest single breakthrough in the study of the Zimbabwe culture occurred in 1958. When Summers, Robinson and Whitty carried out a major excavation in both parts of Zimbabwe, they had at their disposal a method of dating superior to any so far discovered. Although radio-carbon dating has many pitfalls and its dates are not nearly as precise as those historians are accustomed to using, properly applied it gives a reasonably accurate scientific limit to hypotheses.[2] By digging in an unexcavated part of the Acropolis at Zimbabwe, and by studying the different types of walling and daga present all over the ruins, Summers, et al suggested the following sequence, backed by radio-carbon dates: until some time after 1085 ± 150 an agricultural, cattle-keeping 'period II' people lived on the Acropolis. They had a limited trade with the coast, but built no stone structures. At some time after 1085 ± 150, but before 1450 ± 150, a major change occurred. A new 'period III' people, making better huts and pottery and trading more often with the coast, occupied the area. They began to build in stone in a style labelled 'P' at first on the Acropolis and later in the valley.[3] After 1450 ± 150, Summers et al saw a change in the culture that suggested a new intrusive group of 'period IV' people who superimposed themselves upon the 'period III' folk, producing superior artifacts and, especially, superior 'Q-style' stonework which culminated in the outer wall of the Great Enclosure. Long-distance trade and consequent wealth were much in evidence. Apparently because this was the latest possible date, the archaeologists gave the 1830s and the period of the Mfecane as the termination of Zimbabwe as a culture.[4] In 1959 Robinson published the findings of his research on Khami, the biggest of the complex of stone structures in Matabeleland. He showed that it was the work of a single people, conclusively identified as the Rozvi section of the Shona, who had occupied the site - and others in Matabeleland - until the Mfecane.[5] Robinson suggested a date of c.1700 for the beginning of the Rozvi occupation of Khami.[6]

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1. MacIver, Mediaeval Rhodesia, 85-6 suggested a floruit period for Zimbabwe of between c.1300 to c.1600. Caton-Thompson, Zimbabwe Culture, 186-7 suggested a period from c.900 to c.1600.
2. Harold Barker, 'The accuracy of radiocarbon dates', J.Afr.Hist. 13,2 (1972).
3. Summers, Robinson and Whitty, 'Zimbabwe Excavations', 327.
4. Ibid., 328.
5. Robinson, Khami Ruins, 108-121.
6. Ibid., 121.

Meanwhile, Abraham had been exploring Shona oral traditions. Most Shona informants' genealogies rarely extend earlier than the 17th Century, but as early as 1904 H.C.K. Fynn had collected a genealogy that went back twelve generations to the famous Mutota and his son Nyanhehwe, in the Matope polity near Mount Darwin.[1] In the late 1950s Abraham worked in the same area, exploiting the talents of spirit mediums as holders of oral tradition, and in early 1959 he published a composite account of the history of the Mwene Mutapa dynasty, as given by his informants, that ran to fourteen generations, from 1902.[2] Had the genealogy been the only means of dating the history of the dynasty, a date for Mutota's life of c.1480 might have been inferred from an arbitrary average of c.30 years for a generation, but fortunately Alcaçova, writing in 1506, named 'Mocomba' and 'Quesarimgo' as Mwene Mutapas for the period c.1490–1506,[3] and these could be identified as Nyahuma Mukombero and Chikuyo Chisamarengu and the chronology extended backwards from then to give Mutota a reign of c.1420–1445.[4] Abraham's informants, describing the movement of Mutota from the region of Zimbabwe - Guruuswa, Gunuvutwa or 'Butua' - were vague as to his precise political status there,[5] but Abraham, in a detailed study of the Mwene Mutapa empire up to c.1589, suggested that Mutota and his ancestors had in fact been the rulers at Zimbabwe.[6]

It was difficult to explain the reasons for a dynasty's abandonment of the impressive site of Zimbabwe, which according to the Summers, et al chronology prospered until c.1833, for the apparently less inviting Dande country in the Zambezi valley. Korekore tradition consistently claimed that a shortage of salt in Guruuswa led to the move,[7] but Abraham, originally a researcher in the Middle East, suggested that 'Arab' traders encouraged Mutota to move so as to protect their trade routes.[8] Alpers, arguing from the standpoint of African history, wrote that 'this interpretation leaves an unsatisfactory picture of Mutota as a passive character' and suggested personal ambition as a more probable reason.[9] Either way, it was difficult to explain the sudden

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1. H.C.K. Fynn, 'Matopi tribe', in N.A.R. N3/33/8, History of Mashona Tribes, 1903-4.
2. Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 66.
3. Diogo do Alcaçova to the King, Cachin, 20 Nov. 1506. Documentos, 1, 393.
4. Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 66.
5. Ibid., 60-1.
6. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 62, and 'Maramuca', 212.
7. Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 60. J.D.White, 'Some notes on the History and Customs of the Urungwe District, NADA 10,3 (1971), 37-8.
8. Abraham, 'Maramuca', 212.
9. Alpers, 'Mutapa and Malawi', 9-10.

expansion of a well-established state. Once the move of Mutota's dynasty to the Dande was achieved, however, it was easy to trace the subsequent expansion of the Mutapa empire under Nyanhehwe Matope, and its subsequent relations with the Portuguese, from Abraham's informants' accounts, and published Portuguese documents.

The fate of Zimbabwe and the Guruuswa area was apparently explained by Abraham's informants, who described how relatives of Mutota, Changamire and Torwa or Togwa, revolted and kept Guruuswa for themselves,[1] a breakaway dated by Alcaçova to c.1490-4.[2] Since the Changamire rulers, next referred to in 1696 by Conceição as the conquerors who drove the Mutapa dynasty and the Portuguese from the Rhodesian highveld in 1693-5,[3] subsequently ruled much of Rhodesia from the Matabeleland stone capitals of Khami and Dhlodhlo, it was inferred that they ruled the south from c.1494 onwards, although it was never made clear what part Zimbabwe played during this period.

Having outlined the histories of the Mwene Mutapa and Changamire dynasties - although not in detail after c.1589 - Abraham turned his attention to the history of the Shona before Mutota's migration in the early 15th century. In 1961 he took the traditional history of one Chikurawadyambeu, which had been published in a distorted form as early as 1935,[4] and, linking it to traditions of the Nembire dynasty and the original Mutota Churuchamutapa, produced a sequence in which the nuclear 'Karanga', arriving in Rhodesia about 1325, took over the Zimbabwe region to produce, by c.1400, the 'period IV' of Summers, Robinson and Whitty's chronology.[5] This put the change between Zimbabwe Periods III and IV about a century earlier than the median date of 1450 ± 150, but well within the tolerable variations of a radio-carbon date.

It appeared that the basic outline history of the Shona people had been discovered, and in 1965 Dr.Brian Fagan and in 1967 Dr.Edward Alpers produced archaeological and historical accounts for students.[6] In general, they agreed on the sequence. Both saw a 'Shona' culture extant over much of Rhodesia and extending to Mapungubwe in the Northern Transvaal, equivalent to Summers, et al's Zimbabwe 'Period III' culture.[7] Both, following Summers, et al's division between 'Period III' and 'Period IV' at 1450 ± 150, saw a 'Rozvi' culture super-

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1. Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 52.
2. Alcaçova, 393.
3. Antonio da Conceição, 'Tratado dos Rios de Cuama', in Chronista de Tissuary, ed. J.H.da Rivara Cunha, 14 (1867) 39-45, 63-9, 84-92,105-111.
4. F.W.T.Posselt, Fact and Fiction, (Bulawayo: Rhod.Pub.and Print., 1935) 141-3.
5. Abraham, 'Ethno-history', 106-8.
6. Fagan, Southern Africa, Alpers, 'Mutapa and Malawi', Alpers' chapter was originally produced for the 1967 Conference of Dar-es-Salaam.
7. Fagan, Southern Africa, 108-111, 116-119. Alpers 'Mutapa and Malawi', 4-7.

imposed upon the 'Shona' culture and lasting until c.1833, but whereas Fagan identified 'Mwene Mutapa' with 'Periods III' and 'IV' and, relying on Abraham's pre-1961 writings, saw the 'Rozvi' emerging from the 'Shona',[1] Alpers recognised that the 'Mwene Mutapa' empire was not identical with 'Period III', and used Abraham's post-1961 material on Nembire and Chikurawadyambeu to suggest that the 'Rozvi' of 'Period IV' arose out of a crisis in the 'Period III' 'Shona' society.[2] Both, thereafter, agreed that the Mutapa dynasty moved its centre of power to the north, that the Changamire and Togwa dynasties revolted, seizing Guruuswa and the south, and that thereafter their separate histories continued until the Mutapas, weakened by contact with the Portuguese, were driven from the highveld by the Changamire dynasty, which itself succumbed to the mfecane in the 19th century.

Unfortunately for the student of thesubject,hardly had this general concensus been reached when it was upset by fresh work. In 1968 Mr.P.S. Garlake published an article that showed that, on the basis of previous archaeological finds at Zimbabwe compared with those recovered from Portugese sites in Mashonaland whose dates were known, as well as those of East African sites, there 'is no imported object from Zimbabwe that has been certainly dated to later than the fourteenth century' that 'it seems safe to assume, from the trade pattern on the coast,that the Zimbabwe imports as a wholecan be considered to be no later than the mid-fifteenth century', and that this 'is therefore a very strong indication that Zimbabwe was of no economic importance, if not abandoned entirely', from the late sixteenth century onwards.[3] This article was crucial, for it shortened the whole chronology of Zimbabwe by at least two centuries, and disposed of the idea, implicit in the old Summers et al chronology, that Zimbabwe's 'Period IV' and 'Q-type' walling existed at the same time as the Khami culture with its far more elaborate pottery and walling. Dr.T.N.Huffman, following up Garlake's work, substantiated Garlake's conclusion by his discovery that in an undisturbed area above 'Period IV' deposits, there was no later material.[4] In other words, Zimbabwe was indeed virtually abandoned. Various reasons have been put forward for this abandonment. Garlake abandoned his original suggestion that the Portuguese severed the trade routes on which Zimbabwe's wealth depended,[5] and suggested that the large static population of Zimbabwe so strained the natural

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1. Fagan, Southern Africa, 120-124.

2. Alpers, 'Mutapa and Malawi', 7-10. Most confusingly, Abraham used different terms for 'Periods III' and 'IV'. He had used 'Rozvi' in the first instance to refer to, approximately, Zimbabwe'Period III people and their ancestors from the south-west of Rhodesia -this argument being based on a rather tenuous linguistic theory - and 'nuclear Karanga' or 'nuclear Mashona' to refer to the 'Period IV'people. In the second instance,he used 'Rozvi'to refer to Changamire's and Torwa's dynasties. Abraham, 'Ethno-history', 107-9.

3. P.S.Garlake, 'The value of imported ceramics in the dating and interpretation of the Rhodesian Iron Age', J.Afr.Hist.9,1(1968) 27.

4. T.N.Huffman, 'The rise and fall of Zimbabwe', J.Afr.Hist. 13,3(1972).

5. Garlake, 'Imported ceramics', 30.

resources of the region in terms of timber, grazing, game and soil that a minor crop or climatic failure could lead to an ecological collapse that forced people to abandon the site.[1] Abraham suggested that the expansion of the Mwene Mutapa empire, hostile to the rulers at Zimbabwe, cut the trade routes.[2] The writer, noting Garlake's calculation that Zimbabwe's population need not necessarily have been large, since under optimum conditions the Outer Wall of the Great Enclosure could have been built by 200 workers in four years,[3] and that whatever the Mwene Mutapa dynasty or the Portuguese did to the trade routes, the Khami culture contrived to grow as Zimbabwe declined, suggests a third theory. The labour force at Zimbabwe need not have been large, perhaps, but the technique of exfoliating granite in order to make walls must have required prodigious amounts of firewood. If the final phase of elaborate building at Zimbabwe took a relatively short time, the building as well as the people may have consumed all the local firewood to produce the ecological collapse Garlake postulates. In short, the building of Zimbabwe's finest walls may itself have doomed the place as a cultural centre.

Garlake's next major contribution was his relation of Zimbabwe to all the Iron Age structures that had been examined, and his re-examination of the - now shortened - chronological sequence. He found that the distinction made by Summers et al between 'Periods III' and IV' 'was of relatively minor importance,' representing 'only a range of variation and gradual growth normal to any single Iron Age society', and was not the result of any ethnic change, direct external influence or internal upheaval.[4] At some sites away from Zimbabwe, stonework 'Styles P and Q' were introduced by the same occupants. Moreover, a re-examination of the original radio-carbon date of 1085 ± 150 that preceded any building in stone at Zimbabwe suggested that a date of 1210 ± 150 was possible in view of the difference between radio-carbon and calendar dating.[5] In short, the Zimbabwe culture was the work of a single people who flourished over much of Rhodesia between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Garlake also pointed out that the Khami culture was not simply a local variant of the Zimbabwe culture, as Robinson had suggested,[6] but was in fact a successor in dating and in building tradition to the earlier culture.[7] Subsequently, Huffman proved conclusively that the Khami culture was a natural outgrowth of Zimbabwe's society. His examination of the development from Zimbabwe to Khami pottery

1. P.S.Garlake, 'Rhodesian ruins - a preliminary assessment of their styles and chronology', J.Afr.Hist. 12, 4(1970), 507-8.
2. Abraham, personal communication, 29 June, 1971.
3. Garlake, 'Zimbabwe ruins re-examined', 26-27.
4. Garlake, 'Rhodesian ruins', 504.
5. Garlake, 'Zimbabwe ruins re-examined', 21.
6. K.R.Robinson, 'The archaeology of the Rozvi', in The Zambesian Past, ed. E.Stokes and R.Brown, (Manchester: Manchester, 1966), 20-21.
7. Garlake, 'Rhodesian ruins', 505.

assumed that a gradual change is a normal development in a ceramic tradition, rather than that change must necessarily have resulted from the arrival of a new people.[1] Moreover, an examination of the Chamabvefva ruins near Shabani showed not only pottery but also stonework that was transitional between Zimbabwe and Khami.[2]

Modifications were also made to the archaeological view of the origins of the Zimbabwe-Khami culture.[3] By 1972, it could be stated that the Zimbabwe culture originally developed as a social or hierarchial strata arising out of a basic later Iron Age peasant culture,[4] while the beginning of the Later Iron Age as a whole - including the 'Period II' of Summers et al - was advanced from the eighth to the tenth century.[5]

Meanwhile, developments had been taking place in the field of traditional history. Abraham had never been very satisfied either with Robinson's date of 1700 for the beginning of Khami, or with Summers' suggestion that the finest building phase of Zimbabwe lasted into the 18th century. In 1962 he suggested that Khami's beginning could be dated by imports to - at least - the late 16th century,[6] and in 1966 his review of Summers' Zimbabwe, a Rhodesian Mystery pointed out that Barros' account of 1552, which was more accurate than had been supposed, indicated that Zimbabwe was complete and 'antigo' by that date.[7] He must, therefore, have welcomed Garlake's revision of the time-scale of Zimbabwe in 1968. At the beginning of that year, however, when he lectured students of the University College of Rhodesia on the subject, he does not appear to have incorporated Garlake's findings in his work, which appeared to have arrived at a rather similar conclusion to Garlake's by different methods.[8] For obvious reasons, no details of these lectures can be given, but it can be stated that, in general, Abraham retained his chronology of his post-1961 writings, with an early fourteenth-century arrival of the 'Nembire' dynasty in the northern part of Rhodesia and a subsequent construction of elaborate stone walling. In short, it appears that he still accepted Summers et al 's division between 'Periods III and IV'. This is, however, of minor importance. The most

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1. Huffman, 'Rise and fall of Zimbabwe'.
2. T.N.Huffman, 'Excavations at Chamabvefva (Nyamabvefva)', in
3. Garlake, 'Zimbabwe ruins re-examined', 24.
4. T.N.Huffman, 'A Guide to the Iron Age of Mashonaland', Occ.Papers, Nat.Mus Rhod. A4(1) 1971, 40.
5. Huffman, 'Rise and Fall of Zimbabwe'.
6. Abraham, 'Porcelain from Hill Ruin, Khami', 32-4.
7. Abraham, Review of R.Summers, Zimbabwe:a Rhodesian Mystery, 101.
8. D.P.Abraham, lectures given at University College of Rhodesia, 1 Apr. to 2 May, 1968. Two separate sets of notes have been consulted.

significant single feature of his lectures had already been mentioned, but not explained, in 1963 when he referred to 'the breakaway Mutapa Dynasty' which 'established itself in the Zambezi valley' - 'probably early in the 15th century'.[1] Alpers noted this reference, but was unable to account for it satisfactorily,[2] and was forced to continue with the older hypothesis that the Mwene Mutapa dynasty had latterly ruled at Zimbabwe, and then moved its centre of power to the Zambezi valley in search of salt, security for 'Arab' trade-routes or personal glory.[3] Abraham's 1968 lectures clarified the position by claiming that, in fact the Mutapa dynasty had possessed only part of the political power of the Zimbabwe culture, and that the actual heirs to Chikurawadyambeu and the Zimbabwe state were the Togwa dynasty. Abraham's reasons for this interpretation were not given, but it is apparently true that the Mwene Mutapa-oriented informants of both Alcaçova in 1506 and Abraham in 1958-9 were biased in favour of their own dynasty, and that it is quite possible that they should represent a senior or rival Togwa dynasty as being junior to their own. Certainly this theory is attractive, for whereas a move of the centre of a dynasty's power from Zimbabwe to the Zambezi valley, rather than to Khami, was difficult to account for satisfactorily, if the Mwene Mutapa dynasty was merely a smaller section of the culture breaking away to found a successor state on the periphery of the old state, there would be little mystery about the whole affair, since such breakaways are common enough in history. Moreover, this theory would leave the Togwa at Zimbabwe to begin the process of migration and cultural change westwards, as traced by Garlake and Huffman, to the Khami culture area, where Abraham had already located them.[4] In 1971 Abraham apparently still held to this theory, suggesting that the Mwene Mutapa empire's conquests along the coast to the Sabi cut off the trade routes which its Togwa rival's centre depended, leading to the decline of Zimbabwe.[5] But the idea of a political split of people northwards and westwards is still compatible with the ecological-collapse theory, for an ecological collapse may very well have led to political tensions.

The most recent developments in the archaeology of the Iron Age relate to the origins of Zimbabwe itself. Huffman pointed out that there were two possible explanations, either a 'religious hypothesis' which 'proposes that Bantu-speaking migrants with a special religious superiority established a kingdom prior to any external trade connections' and that 'only later did Arabs on the coast hear of a wealthy nation and develop commercial contacts with it', or a 'trade hypothesis' which 'maintains that Zimbabwe was a result of surplus wealth from the East African gold trade.'[6] Abraham and Fagan[7] were cited as

1. Abraham, 'Chaminuka', 36.
2. Alpers, 'Mutapa and Malawi', 8.
3. Ibid., 9-10.
4. Abraham, 'Porcelain from Hill Ruin, Khami', 32-3.
5. Abraham, personal communication to T.N.Huffman and self, 29 June 1971.
6. Huffman, 'Rise and fall of Zimbabwe'.
7. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 61-2. Fagan, Southern Africa .

supporters of the former theory, and Caton-Thompson, Jaffey and Summers[1] as supporters of the latter. Abraham's post-1961 writings, however, stress the importance of Islamic traders in the country before the arrival of the Mbire and their Mwari and mhondoro cults.[2] Huffman, relating the Zimbabwe culture to general theories of state - formation, to the period of gold-mining in Rhodesia and to the growth of the prosperity of the East African city-states, showed that the gold trade predated the construction of Zimbabwe and presumably led to it. He agreed that religion might be a medium by which this stimulus from trade might be translated into stone construction, and added that once a tradition of stone building had been started, it was unnecessary to postulate independent origins for other smaller sites of the Zimbabwe culture or for the Khami phase itself.[3]

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1. Caton-Thompson, Zimbabwe Culture, 196-9, A.J.E.Jaffey, 'A reappraisal of the history of the Rhodesian Iron Age up to the fifteenth century', J.Afr.Hist. 7,2(1966) 193-4, R.Summers, 'Ancient Mining in Rhodesia', Natn. Mus.Rhod.Mem. 3(1969) 218.
2. Abraham, 'Ethno-History', 106-7.
3. Huffman, 'Rise and Fall of Zimbabwe'.

2. Historians and the Mwene Mutapa Empire.

The Shona empires in general were based upon certain social and economic factors. Firstly, all were basically agricultural communities, in that the most important activity of the greatest number of their people was the production and collection of food by growing crops, gathering, hunting game and herding domestic animals. All other activities, including mining, manufacturing, building, trade, politics and religion, were secondary to this, and could not have been carried on without it. Whenever relations between the Mwene Mutapa and Changamire empires and the Portuguese are discussed, it must be borne in mind that the Shona were primarily agriculturalists, not traders or soldiers.

Notwithstanding this, a relatively sophisticated trade system had been superimposed upon this agricultural foundation. A dangerous but effective method of elephant-hunting produced ivory in quantity,[1] while efficient prospecting and rather less efficient mining produced gold and copper. Mining, except in Manyika, was a part-time occupation carried out in the dry season when the water table fell, which coincidentally was the time of least agricultural activity.[2] It was, therefore, second in importance to agriculture, and one suspects that the limit of gold output had already been reached bythe thirteenth century, in that an agricultural population could not be coerced into producing more gold without affecting the time available for agriculture, which would have been liable to cause rural revolts against a coercing power. Moreover, the mining techniques of the Shona had their limitations, especially in a geological environment that defied the efforts of far more efficient miners to make a quick profit in the 1890s. This lack of potential of Shona mining should be considered when Mwene Mutapa mining concessions to the Portuguese are discussed.

Gold had a certain value for ornaments made by local craftsmen, but its chief value in the eyes of the Shona was as a commodity in inter-continental trade. Shona rulers taxed the gold output heavily - in one kingdom, half the output was taken by the ruler[3] - but evidently a sufficient profit-margin remained to make mining worthwhile, for there is no reference to forced labour on the mines. The part of the gold taken by the ruler could finance the growth of a super-polity as well as prestige building,[4] but neither ruler nor commoner could use the bulk of the gold directly, but had to translate it into other commodities. Beads in quantity and a limited amount of imported ceramics were considered to be of value, but easily the most important import was cloth. The local climate made clothing highly desirable, and the Shona and their neighbours, having acquired an excellent but time-consuming spinning and weaving technique by the late thirteenth century, devoted a great deal of

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1. Fr.André Fernandes to Br.Luis Fróis, £5 June,1560, Documentos, 7,483.
2. Summers, 'Ancient Mining'.
3. Gaspar Veloso to the King, 1512, Documentos, 3,183.
4. Huffman, 'Rise and Fall of Zimbabwe.'

valuable time and effort to making cloth.[1] Even so, local production could not supply the demands of Shona society, and so a situation arose where Shona-produced gold was exchanged for - principally - Indian cloth. Cloth dominated the economy of the Shona empires to such an extent that the greatness of a Shona polity depended upon its cloth supply.

Shona traders travelled to the coastal ports,[2] while from those ports Muslim traders went into the interior.[3] The degrees of change in political power, economic influence, culture, race and religion of the Muslim traders from the East African cities to the Shona goldfields were many and subtly varie From stone-built Kilwa, where an Afro-Islamic state existed,[4] political and economic power extended south to the subordinate Sheikhdoms around Sofala, which nevertheless became independent of Kilwa in 1505-6.[5] The Muslims of Sofala, however, 'black men, some olive [who] use the tongue of the land which is that the Gentiles,'[6] were also subject to the overlordship of the Mwene Mutapa,[7] and all Muslims in the interior appear to have been fully politically subordinate to the Shona rulers. Immigrant communities of outsiders have been common in Shona political history, and have been readily accepted as vatorwa provided that they accepted the political superiority of the local ruler, who would delegate authority to their own head man.[8] In the case of the Mwene Mutapa, the second wife of the ruler was responsible for relations with the Muslim torwa community

An important social factor involved the Shona succession system - or lack of one. A general survey of Shona political systems suggests that neither succession from father to son, nor from brother to brother nor from house to house predominated, but rather that the method varied from dynasty to dynasty and within each dynasty.[10] It is difficult to say whether any succession

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1. T.N.Huffman, 'Cloth from the Iron Age in Rhodesia', Arnoldia, 5, 14 (1971).
2. Pero de Anhaia to the King's Treasurers, 19 May 1506, Documentos, 1, 507.
3. The Portuguese word mouro (Moroccan) referred to religion, not to race, and was used to describe Muslims from Morocco to the Phillipines. It is thus incorrect to interpret the documents' 'Moors' as 'Arabs'.
4. G.Mathew, 'The East Africa coast until the coming of the Portuguese', in History of East Africa, ed. R. Oliver and G.Mathew (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 1, 123.
5. Alcaçova, 399.
6. Duarte Barbosa, 'Description ... of some places in Africa', c.1518. Documentos, 5, 359.
7. Alcaçova, 391.
8. Muterwa (pl.vatorwa) a stranger, means in the widest sense any non-agnate, but in this context it refers to subordinate groups of non-agnates in a political unit.
9. Antonio Bocarre, 'Decade', 1631-49, in Theal, 3, 358.
10. For example, Professor Holleman retained his conept of succession between houses as a basic rule in Shona succession, while admitting of exceptions and historical factors based upon power. J.F.Holleman, Chief, Council and Commissioner, (London, O.U.P., 1969), 93-6.

system that is basic to so many centuries of irregularity in this matter can be deduced by sociological means, and the historian, noting the inability of the sociologist dos Santos to determine a succession system in Teve as early as the 1590s[1], finds it safer to retreat to an empirical position for the time being, and attempt to explain succession crises in terms of more immediate factors. One common factor to Shona political succession up to the present day, however, was the speed with which a dynastic house could grow in numbers. Mwene Mutapa Nyahuma Mukombero, for example, had 24 sons in a littleover sixteen years. Had he lived into his fifties, he might well have had as many as sixty.[2] Such a large number of men, with their sons, in-laws and friends, could easily form a considerable political force close to thethrone. The danger of civil war caused by the ambitious was great.

Shona dynasties,therefore, developed a tendency to debar politically important lineages from the succession. One method was to declare a man and his house ineligible because of a physical defect, a failure tocarry out some ritual or some similar debarment; this ,however, had to be accepted by the house involved. Thus Mutapa Mukombero's son, Munyore Karembera, was ineligible for the title because of his leprosy.[3] Another method of stabilizing politics was to give the house excluded from the succession either a tract of land to be held in perpetuity, or an important ritual position which would compensate the excluded house for their loss of power. Thus Tasiva declined(?) the Chivero title, to be awarded the Mutibvu-Chingwere title, his house retaining important political functions.[4] In Mutambara, the four brothers of Mutambara Fuha received land, and their houses were excluded from the succession.[5] In Charumbira, the Bika house acquired and retained both a ritual position and a separate area as a corollary to its exclusion from the succession.[6]

This phenomenon was also found in the Shona dynasties in earlier times. Thus the son of Mutapa Neshangwe Munembire, Nyandoro,refused the title of Mutapa, to become the Mukomohasha, hereditary 'Captain-General' of the Mutapa's forces and ruler of the territory of 'Condesaca'.[7] Although the concept of exchanging the succession tothe title for an hereditary post and territory was not a rigid rule - Mukomohasha Nyandoro did stipulate that his son should become Mutapa on the death of Mutapa Negomo Mupunzagutu - it seems possible that this action was connected with this feature of Shona politics. It is in this light that one should look at the long list of subordinate rulers and officers under the Mutapa given by Bocarro in the early seventeenth century.

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1. Fr.João dos Santos, 'Ethiopia Oriental', 1609, in Theal, 7, 191-4.
2. Alcaçova, 395; Abraham, 'Early Political History', 67.
3. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 65.
4. Delineation Report on the Chivero Chiefdom, 1964.
5. M.Deyo, 'History of the Mutambara Tribe', NADA, 32(1955), 55-6.
6. Sr.Mary Aquina, OP, 'The Tribes in Victoria Reserve',NADA, 9,2(1965) 12-13.

[illegible] Political History', 66. Bocarro, 356.

Some of these rulers, such as Makoni of Maungwe, Chikanga of Manyika and Makombe of Barwe, were defacto independent by then, but others, such as Mukomohasha, Mbokorume, 'Antova' and Nyakanemba, were either relations of the Mutapa by blood or by marriage. Besides ruling subordinate territories, some of these held ritual positions, part of the larger group of such officials associated with the Mutapa. Thus the Mukomohasa was 'Captain-general', and ruler of 'Condesaca', 'Antova' was the Mutapa's uncle and ruler of 'Macurube', Mbokorume was the Mutapa's son-or brother-in-law, ruler of 'Chiruvia' and Nyakanemba the Mutapa's senior wife, ruled 'Mungassy', while Nengomasha, the King's cousin, was 'Governor', second person in the State and ruler of 'Daburia'. Other holders of ritual offices included Ambuya, the 'chief major-domo', the chief musician - a 'great lord', the captain of the vanguard, the chief 'wizard', the chief 'apothecary' and the chief 'doorkeeper'.[1] It seems probable that some at least of these officials were relatives of the Mutapa, allocated offices and lands as Mukomohasha and Nengomasha had been, and that even apparently humble posts were extremely important. Thus 'Ambuya' the 'chief major-domo' was responsible for nominating the important post of Mazarira, which dealt - amongst other things - with Shona-Portuguese relations.[2] One such post - originally - appears to have been that of Changamire, son of Mutapa Nyanhehwe Matope,[3] who was a most powerful 'chief justice ...amyr or ...governor' as described by Alcaçova in 1506,[4] but who was called a cattle-herder by Mello e Castro in 1763,[5] and tradition.[6] It should be stressed, in view of the nature of the Iron-Age Shona agricultural society and the fact that in a relatively egalitarian society where such important tasks as iron-working would be undertaken by rulers,[7] it is quite possible that these important political figures did undertake some of the work implied by their titles.

Once these economic and social factors in the Shona empires are understood, it is possible to look at the history of the Mwene Mutapa empire in such a way that its relations with the Portuguese can be put in perspective when compared with the internal problems of the dynasty.

The latest archaeological and traditional historical writings on the origins of the Mwene Mutapa empire have been summarized above, and it can now be seen that Abraham's latest thesis of a 'breakaway' Mutapa dynasty in the early fifteenth century accords well with the archaeologists' picture of a Zimbabwe culture on the verge of decline. Abraham's description of the early history of

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1. Becarro, 355-8; Abraham, 'Early Political History', 71.
2. Ibid., 357-8.
3. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 64.
4. Alcaçova, 393.
5. D. de Mello e Castro, 'Notícia de Império Marave e dos Rios de Sena,' Anais 9,1 (1954), 133.
6. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 64, 81.
7. W.Montagu Kerr, The Far Interior, (London-Sampson, 1887), 1, 144.

the Mwene Mutapa dynasty at the time when it established itself in the north necessarily relies heavily upon thetestimony of his informants, notably the spirit mediums of such mhondoro as Mutota and Chingoo. Their accounts included Biblical elements of - possibly - recent origin, such as Nyamhita Nehanda's emulation of Moses in dividing the Zambezi's waters,[1] and their statements about the relation of the Changamire and Togwa dynasties in the fifteenth century to the Changamire empire known to have flourished in the south-west in the eighteenth century should be treated with caution. Thus Changamire was variously seen as a contemporary of Mwene Mutapa Mutota,[2] and as a son or son-in-law of his son Mutapa Nyanhehwe Matope.[3] The description given by Abraham's informants of a major Karanga migration led by Mutapa Mutota and a division of an original agnatic group into several totem-clans in order to allow marriages within the original group[4] reads very much like a "creation-legend" seeking to explain the historical situation as the informants knew it, similar to other such attempts in Shona historiography.[5]

With the death of the leader of themigration, Mutota, in c.1425,[6] and the accession of his son, Mwene Mutapa Nyanhehwe Matope and the foundation of the Mwene Mutapa empire, one comes into the realm of authentic history, with a logical and convincing traditional description of the expansion of a confederacy, which corresponds closely with the situation recorded by Portuguese documents from 1505 onwards. At the time of Mutota's death, the Karanga in the north occupied the Dande, the country between the Angwa-Hunyani and Musengezi-Mukumbura rivers north of the Zambezi escarpment. His son Matope conquered the land east as far as the Mazoe-Ruenya, land occupied largely by Tavara-speaking peoples. In most cases the original dynasties were left in control, the Mutapa contenting himself with tribute,[7] and it seems probable that his position as overlord of the confederacy was always somewhat insecure in spite of the extent of his conquests. For example, the Tavara resisted him at first under the Dzwagiru mhondoro cult, which had been driven out of the Dande into the Choma territory to the east, but continued to fight on until its leader was killed.[8] The Mutapa empire expanded in an uneven fashion that looks odd to historians accustomed to compact, symmetrical Western-style states, but which is probably characteristic of Shona politics.

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1. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 64.
2. Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 61-2.
3. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 64.; 'Ethno-history', 108.
4. Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 61-2. Abraham modified this picture slightly in his 'Early Political History', 62-3. The closer contact between Shona people - especially mhondoro - in this century may have led to attempts to link up dynasties for their mutual glory. On the other hand, changes of totem are so frequently referred to as a whole that one assumes that they have some basis in fact.
5. e.g.Native Teacher Marodzi and F.[W.T.?] P.[osselt ?] ,'The Barozwi', NADA 2,(1924), 88; K.R.Robinson, 'A History of the Bikita District', NADA 34,(1957), 75-7.

Thus, to the west of the Dande 'metropolitan' area, little progress was made across the Angwa. The evidence tends to contradict any conquest of the area in Muteta's or Matope's reigns, or even later,[1] and even Abraham, who in 1959-60 was inclined to suggest a very powerful nuclear Mutapa state, noted that only 'minor campaigns' occurred in Matope's reign, leading to a treaty.[2] To the east, however, Matope's conquests were rapid and extensive, although, characteristically, some 'difficult' areas were ignored andothers were delegated to relatives to conquer. Thus Matope conquered as far down as the sea and then south to a point just north of the Pungwe, but apparently left the Hondosaka area between the Ruya and Mazoe rivers to be secured in the middle of the next century, while the conquest of Barwe was left to his brother-in-law's house, which founded the Makombe dynasty.[3] It seems, in fact, that the extension of Matope's power to the coastline above the Pungwe marked the limit of the nuclear Mwene Mutapa empire's power. Subsequent extensions, such as the conquest of Manyika by a son of Makombe I of Barwe,[4] or the conquest of Teve and Donda by a junior line of the Mutapa dynasty with Changamire's aid,[5] were offshoots of the main empire, and only nominally subject to it. The southern frontier of the empire is most difficult to define, and will be dealt with in the second of these two papers when the origins of the Changamire empire will be discussed. In the light of the realisation that Zimbabwe was declining at about the time that the Mutapa empire was itself a breakaway state, however, one can only say that, on the basis of the relationship between the Mutapa empire and the Portuguese in the seventeenth century, that the empire probably included the modern Lomagundi, Mazoe and Mtoko districts, and laid claim to Maungwe and Manyika, although in view of thevirtual independence of the eastern kingdoms the Maungwe claim is doubtful. The resulting boundary is most irregular but not unlike some other African frontiers.

The death of Mutapa Matope in c.1480 brought his son Mavura Maombwe to the throne, but his reign ended after only a month or two when his brother Nyahuma Mukombero - perhaps deliberately - abandoned him to be killed in a battle against rebels in the Dande, where Matope's elder sons who had been excluded from the succession lived.[6] Mwene Mutapa Mukombero's reign saw the

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1. White, 37-8.
2. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 64.
3. Ibid., 65, 68.
4. Ibid.,
5. Ibid.,
6. Ibid., 65. Earlier, Abraham's informants had stated that another son of Matope, Kadembro Nyautando, was murdered by Nyahuma Mukombero. 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 65.

most serious internal threat it had yet encountered. Changamire, described by Alcaçova in 1506 as 'a favourite of the King who was a great lord in his kingdom and who ruled the whole kingdom exiling beheading and acting in all things as king ... the king's chief justice ...[who] owned many towns and villages in the kingdom given him by the king ... and in this way acquired many people',[1] and by tradition and later Portuguese writers as a (ritual?) cattle-herder, was apparently a younger brother of the Mutapa.[2] Suspected by the Mutapa of planning a coup d'état, he found himself forced to carry it out in reality, and seized power in c.1490. Four years later Mukombero's son, Chikuyo Chisamarengu avenged his father, and became Mutapa in his turn, but Changamire's son and his relative Torwa continued the fight for many years.[3] The exact location of the 'rebel' area is not known, but since the Changamire polity continued until its conquests in the late seventeenth century and yet remained outside the aegis of subsequent Portuguese operations, it must have been on the southern frontier. This question will be discussed in the second paper.

Some writers might imply that the seizure of Sofala in 1505 by the Portuguese opened a decisive period in the Mwene Mutapa empire's history.[4] It is difficult to see why. For many years the Portuguese were confined to the periphery of the empire, and it was not until 1629 that those within its borders ceased to be subject to the Mutapa's rule. The Portuguese themselves were much concerned with the wars and disturbances in the hinterland of Sofala, firstly with the troubled politics of the Muslim politices in that area, and secondly with the wars between the Mwene Mutapa and his outlying 'dependencies', whose subjection to his overlordship was obviously more theoretical than real. The wars against Changamire and Torwa appear to have lasted from c.1494 to 1512,[5] and even then their territory of Butua was not tributary.[6] Nevertheless, a brief peace lasted until 1515, when Nyamunda of the Teve-Donda house of the Mutapa dynasty raised his outlying kingdom in revolt,[7] and continued to fight the Mutapa and his relations in Manyika until 1527,[8] with only a brief truce in 1518-9.[9] In c.1538-9 the revolt of the coastal Shona began again, and lasted until at least 1541.[10]

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1. Alcaçova, 393.
2. See notes 91,92.
3. Alcaçova, 393-5.
4. This is implicit in L.H.Gann, A History of Southern Rhodesia, (London:Chatto and Winders, 1965), 7-28 and P.E.N.Tindall, A History of Central Africa, (London:Longmans, 1968), 29-51, who tend to paint a static picture of life in the Mutapa empire, followed by a section devoted to Portuguese colonialism. The space given to the Portuguese compared with the Mutapa after 1500 is disproportionate.
5. Pero Vaz Soares to the King, 30 June 1513, Documentos, 3, 459.
6. Gaspar Veloso to the King, 1512, Documentos, 3, 185.
7. João Vaz de Almada to the King, 26 June 1516, Documentos, 4, 277.
8. D.Lopo de Almeida to the King, 27 August 1527, Documentos, 6, 277.
9. Cristóvão de Távora to the King, c.1518-9 and Francisco de Brito to the King, 8 August 1519, Documentos, 6, 5-7, 11-13.

The Portuguese saw these wars largely as a threat to the trade routes that served Sofala, but from the Mutapa's point of view they were a political, not an economic danger. The Teve-Danda rulers, such as Nyamunda, were descended from Manyenganyura the - elder? - brother of Mutapa Chikuyo Chisamarengu, and thus had a claim to the throne as good as the reigning Mutapa's or that of Changamire's line.[1] Consequently they were a constant political threat, but their control of the Sofala trade routes was of little consequence to the Mutapa empire, because there was a convenient Muslim trade route from the Dande and Chidima down the Zambezi to a Romwe kingdom and the port of Quelimane.[2] The Portuguese discovering this, eventually came to control the river route by occupying Quelimane and Sena, but this had no immediate effect on the Mutapa empire.[3]

Surprisingly, after the initial crusading fanaticism of the Portuguese, the Muslims and Portuguese of Sofala came to co-operate with each other, after the Muslims eventually found that they needed imported cloth rather than makeshift blends of imported and local material,[4] and the Portuguese came to appreciate the value of Muslim expertise in the interior. By the 1540s the Muslim and Portuguese consulted each other on matters of policy,[5] Muslim traders acted for Portuguese merchants,[6] while as late as the 1590s the Sheikh of Sofala was the intermediary between the Sachiteve and the Captain of Sofala.[7] It is possible, however, that hostility between the Portuguese and the Muslims of the Zambezi trade-route lingered.

Shona society was well fitted to receive and absorb those Portuguese who were willing to acknowledge the authority of Shona rulers. As early as 1518, Nyamunda of Teve-Danda had employed Portuguese mercenaries,[8] and as vatorwa, Portuguese were accepted into Shona politics. One such was Rodrigo Lobo who in the 1590s was granted land near Sofala by the Sachiteve, as well as a title that established his subjection to the Shona.[9] Other Portuguese entered the

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1. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 65.
2. Velose, 187; Almada, 287.
3. Gençalo Pinto de Araújo to the King, 15 November 1545, Documentos, 7,151.
4. Barbosa, 359.
5. Sepúlveda, 137.
6. João Velho to the King, c.1547, Documentos, 7, 169.
7. Dos Santos, 221.
8. D.António da Silveira to the King, after 18 July 1518, Documentos, 5, 571.
9. Dos Santos, 225. There is little evidence that the Shona placed any particular value on the whiteness of the Portuguese. In view of the limited Portuguese knowledge of the interior in 1516, it seems probable that the statement that the Shona worshipped Antonio Fernandez 'like a God' (Almada, 283) derived from Fernandez himself, while it is difficult to agree with Abraham's suggestion ('Early Political History', 66) that Mutapa Chisamarengu was 'probably flattered by the visit of the white man', in view of the inability of the Portuguese to open the trade routes before or after his visit.

Mutapa empire, and increased in numbers to the extent that in 1541 the Mwene Mutapa sent four of them with an ambassador to Sofala to ask for a Portuguese to be nominated as permanent intermediary between the Mutapa and the Portuguese. Fernão de Proença went, to become the first 'Captain of the Gates' - Samasuwo? - a post filled by a Portuguese nominee who became a subordinate of the Mutapa and, effectively, the leader of the Portuguese torwa community in the empire.[1]

The Portuguese of Sofala strengthened the position of the Mutapa - entirely for their own ends - in c.1547, when they apparently crushed the power of Changamire. To advance the cause of his Muslim protégé, Mafamede Joane, presumably by altering the political and economic situation in the interior in his favour, the Captain of Sofala, against official policy, sent a Portuguese force to join some Shona rulers who, after a fierce battle, defeated Changamire. It is not certain which lands Changamire was 'thrown out of' by this alliance, but it is certain that, no matter where he was on the long trade-route between the gold-fields and Sofala, he suffered such a defeat that he was never able to affect the trade routes, as the Portuguese feared he would 'if he again comes to rule'.[2]

In short, it appears that relations between the Mwene Mutapa and the Portuguese were reasonably friendly in the sixteenth century, perhaps because the ambitions of the local Portuguese were easily contained by the position given to immigrant vatorwa who conformed to the moves of Shona society. Even when the death of Fr.Gonçalo Silveira attracted the attention of the ambitious in Portugal, the diplomatic skill of Mwene Mutapa Negomo not only kept the threat outside the empire proper, but diverted it to deal with an even more serious threat, effectively neutralizing both.

The killing of Silveira, an impetuous man who had made hundreds of hasty, impromptu 'conversions' on the coast,[3] followed similar apparent successes at the court of the Mwene Mutapa, including the conversion of the Mutapa and his mother.[4] Antonio Caiado, a trader present at the Mutapa's capital, and a friend of the ruler, described how the 'engangas - (n'anga) the principal wizards of the country - who used the four divining tablets - hakata - influenced the Mutapa to kill him, arguing with a shrewd knowledge of the fears of a Mutapa of Chikuyo's line that Silveira was an agent of Chipute, ruler of the rival house of Tove-Danda and that he was a muroyi or witch.[5] Caiado, however, tacked the word 'Moorish' to the n'anga and their action,[6] and Fr.Luis Fróis built Caiado's account and those of other unknown Portuguese

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1. Sepúlveda, 137-9; Dos Santos, 271.
2. Velho, 171-3.
3. Fr.D.Gonçalo to the Society of Jesus in Goa, 9 August 1560, Documentos 7,503.
4. Luis Fróis, 'Of the Voyage of the Father Dom Gonçalo', 15 December 1561, 2, 121.
5. António Caiado to a friend, c.1561, Theal, 2, 102; Abraham, 'Early Political History', 69; Fróis, 123.
6. Caiado, 102.

into a moving account of how the devil, in the person of one Mafamede Mingame, religious leader of the Muslims at the Mutapa's court, sought to hinder Christianity by killing Silveira.[1] Unless the Muslims in the Shona country had adopted Shona religious techniques such as the use of hakata, however, Caiado's account sounds like that of a traditional religious reaction to Christianity used by him to implicate his Muslim trade rivals, and certainly, the Muslims caused Silveira's death for religious or economic motives, Caiado and his fellow-Portuguese were curiously immune from the consequences: the Mutapa kindly advised Caiado to move his trade-goods from the scene of the impending violence, the Portuguese community later went to lecture the ruler on his bad behaviour without consequence to them, and there was no attempt to levy an mupeto upon them.[2] It is possible that Caiado and Fróis accused the Muslims unjustly.

Silveira's death led ultimately to a reaction from the crusading court of King Sebastião, and in 1572 the expedition of Francesco Barreto arrived on the Zambezi, prepared to emulate Cortez and Pizarro in Africa.[3] However, here and afterwards a clear distinction should be made between 'colonial' history, in the shape of what the Portuguese would have liked to do, and 'African' history, in the shape of what actually happened to the Mwene Mutapa empire. For, although the Portuguese lawyers produced an elaborate justification for a conquest,[4] in the end the empire was hardly affected. Relations between the Portuguese on the coast had not been particularly unfriendly in the years before Barreto arrived, and from both that point of view and that of the empire a far more serious threat was the revolt of Samungazi's Tonga against the Mutapa in the years before 1572. The Tonga cut the trade route to Sena, and thus it was in the interest of both parties that their revolt should be put down. Mutapa Negomo carried on a very clever diplomatic campaign, and by the agreements of c.1572-3, the Portuguese put down the Tonga revolt on behalf of the Mutapa, and received in return those lands on the lower Zambezi which the empire had proved itself unable to hold - thus the Mutapa enhanced his power in Shona politics by acquiring a powerful ally, and ceded only an area of marginal importance. The main force of Portuguese under Homem was diverted to Teve and Manyika, where it dealt a blow to the prestige of the rival Teve-Danda house of the dynasty by destroying its capital, and arrived in Manyika as the Mutapa's ally. Concessions of mineral rights, promises to expel the Muslims and to receive missionaries meant little in practice.[5] As Homen found in Manyika,

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1. Fróis, 117-127.

2. Caiado, 102-4; Fróis, 127; Mupeto (spelt empata by the Portuguese) means an obligatory contribution, and is derived from Kupeta, to pay tax. If the traditional qurban or curva payment of cloth to the Mutapa was not forthcoming from each newly-arrived Captain of Moçambique, the Mutapa was legally empowered to seize the goods of all traders in the interior as mupeto. Dos Santos, 272. I am indebted to Mr. D.P. Abraham for the origin of the word curva.

3. Fr. Monclaro, 'Account ...', 1569, Theal, 3, 223.

4. 'Decision of the lawyers', 23 January 1569, Theal, 3, 153-4.

5. Monclaro, 236-53; Diogo de Couto, 'Da Asia', ante 1616, Theal, 6, 357-390.

Shona mines did not offer quick profits, and did not justify a full-time mining venture; consequently, as in the next century, mineral concessions were of little value, and the traditional method of trading with agriculturalists who carried out part-time mining work prevailed. The expulsion of the Muslims was not particularly important to the empire as long as the Portuguese could undertake to supply the vital cloth needed as currency, while promises to admit missionaries did not necessarily endanger the Mutapa's position.

In short, the Portuguese had very little effect on the Mutapa' empire's history in the sixteenth century, and by far the most important developments then and until 1629 were of a purely African nature, either relating to the internal politics of the empire, or to its relations with other African powers. The most significant event, which ultimately led to the disastrous treaty of 1629, was first revealed by Abraham in 1960, when by interviewing Chief Mukomohasha he discovered that there had not been - as previously supposed - a single Mwene Mutapa succession from father to son in the sixteenth century. This threw a new light on the history of the empire, and permitted a new interpretation. Briefly, on the death of Mutapa Chikuyo in c.1530, the succession did not go to his son Chivere Nyasoro but to Neshangwe Munembire, the son of his elder brother, Karembera, who had been debarred from the succession in c.1494 because of his leprosy.[1] In view of the nature of Shona dynastic politics, as described above,[2] it can perhaps be inferred that although Karembera himself may have been unable to rule, and although it was Chikuyo who drove out Changamire, their brother, Karembera's house may have been sufficiently powerful to make their exclusion from power impossible; so that Neshangwe became Mutapa. For the same reasons, presumably, when he died in c.1550, Chikuyo's son Chivere became Mutapa. When Chivere died in c.1560, however, this pattern was broken. Neshangwe's son Mukomohasha, according to tradition, declined the throne and accepted the post of 'Captain-general', his name becoming the title. As was noted above, this kind of ritual position usually went with the exclusion of the holder's line from the succession to the title, but in this case Mukomohasha stipulated that on the death of Chivere's son Negomo, one of his own sons should become Mutapa. This in fact occurred when Gatsi Rusere became Mwene Mutapa in c.1589, and Negomo's son Mavura did not succeed.[3] This dynastic question is simple, but explains the background to early seventeenth-century politics.

In the lineage of Gatsi Rusere the supreme title of Mwene Mutapa and the military one of Mukomohasha were combined,[4] and perhaps this was fortunate in view of the military pressures that were to be put upon the empire during his reign. Unfortunately, however, Mutapa Gatsi Rusere was given to making

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1. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 67.
2. See above, pp.13-15.
3. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 74.
4. The Mukomohasha title continued to function, perhaps held by a relative of the Mutapa. Bocarro, 363.

decisions that endangered the state, and many of his misfortunes were of his own making.[1] The stresses in the area north of the Zambezi that led to the so-called 'Zimba' migrations affected the Mwene Mutapa empire, when in 1597 two groups of these people entered the country. One, under Chikanda, having established itself in a strong position, accepted the Mutapa's overlordship and became a torwa community, but the other was defeated and expelled by Nengomasha, an influential relative of Gatsi Rusere, holder of a ritual title and ruler of a subordinate kingdom. On the inadequate grounds that he had not followed up his victory, the Mutapa had him executed. Not unnaturally, Nengomasha's house revolted against the ruler, first under Chiraramuro and then under 'Matuzianhe', who like Changamire had had the title of 'herdsman', but who was probably also an influential relative of the Mutapa, in view of the fact that he was widely supported in his claim to the Mwene Mutapa title. To make matters worse, Chikanda's community revolted.[2] Faced with these pressures, Mutapa Gatsi Rusere called on the Portuguese who, as vatorwa in his lands, were bound to help him and, in any case, as traders suffered from the disorder. After a long campaign, made longer by Gatsi Rusere's futile attempt to conquer the defacto independent policy of Barwe and by his irrational execution of the Samungazi of the Tonga, the Mutapa and the Portuguese finally achieved peace in 1609.

In the course of this war, Gatsi Rusere was compelled to rely on the Portuguese of the Zambezi and their African armies far more than was safe, and he even had to permit them to bring guns into the centre of the country. The most prominent Portuguese was Diogo Simões Madeira, and it seems that the Mutapa saw him as a most valuable torwa subordinate. On 1 August 1607, in return for the military assistance which the Portuguese had recently withheld after making a local truce with one of the rebels, Gatsi Rusere ceded all the mines of the empire to Madeira, who immediately made them over to the King of Portugal.[3] In the light of the difficulty of extracting ore, of controlling the subordinate rulers in whose lands the mines lay, and the lack of development of the concession made to Homem by Mutapa Negomo, this was not such a sweeping concession as it might appear. Its consequences, however, included an economic war that, coupled to the internal, dynastic factor, led to the 1629 treaty.

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1. If the insults of his enemies are to be believed, Gatsi Rusere was a heavy user of cannabis-mbanje, taken by the Shona at that time through the stomach membrane, Bocarro, 378, Dos Santos, 210. According to oral evidence collected in Salisbury, 1969-72, excessive use of cannabis can lead to irrational suspicion of his associates on the part of the user. This might account for Gatsi Rusere's treatment of Nengomasha, and Samungazi. No doubt Rhodesia's propaganda organisation could prove that this was part of the Great Communist Plot against the country.

2. Bocarro, 361-5.

3. Ibid., 364-383.

Professor Eric Axelson has provided a detailed study of the Portuguese government's reaction to the concession, and the intrigues and inefficiencies of the Portuguese on the Zambezi. From the point of view of the Mutapa empire the most significant consequence of the concession was that a succession of incompetent or greedy Captains of Moçambique, led by Estêvão de Ataíde, failed to pay the Mwene Mutapa the curva, due to him by custom, which provided the ruler with the vitally necessary supply of cloth on which his rule depended so much. Matters were complicated by the inadequacy of the mines, which failed to live up to the Portuguese expectations, and the question of the rights of the local rulers of the mines vis-a-vis the Mutapa-Gatsi Rusere resorted to an mupeto in 1611, but this move, although legal led to further hostility and was in any case damaging to the vital trade system. Events continued in this fashion, occasionally reaching the point of war, but for the Mutapa the salient point was that, although additional payments were made by local Portuguese from time to time, no curva was paid to him until November 1628, over twenty years after the concession to Madeira.[1] In view of the importance of the curva to the government of the Mutapa, this was a most serious matter, and even its eventual payment did not save Jeronimo de Barres from death on the orders of the Mutapa when he delivered it. Until then, a small number of Portuguese had continued to live in the Mutapa empire, in spite of the hostility between the ruler and the Captains of Moçambique, but now a mupeto was declared, and full war broke out between the Mutapa and all the Portuguese.[2]

At this point, the dynastic politics of the preceding century played a decisive part in the history of the empire. Mutapa Gatsi Rusere, who died in 1623, had succeeded, it will be recalled, as a consequence of a special agreement made in c.1560 when Gatsi Rusere's father Mukomohasha of Karembera's house declined the succession to take the title of 'Captain-general', on condition that his son succeeded to the throne on the death of the next Mutapa of Chikuyo's house, Negomo. In the sixteenth century, power - and consequentl the succession - seems to have been shared equally between the houses of Chikuyo and of Karembera, and it is most unlikely that it was intended that Mukomohasha's descendants should keep the title and its power for ever. But when Gatsi Rusere died after a long reign of c.25 years, the succession went to his son Nyambo Kapararidze.[3]

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1. E.Axelson, Portuguese in South-East Africa, 1600-1700 (Johannesburg: W.V.P.,1960), 34-69.

2. Pedro Barreto de Rezende and António Bocarro, 'Of the State of India', 1634, Theal, 2, 415; Axelson, 69. The curva as then payable annually so the loss to the empire over twenty years was at least trebled. King of Portugal to Viceroy of India, 10 March, 1622, Theal, 4, 184.

3. Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 67.

For the leading descendant of Chikuyo's house, Mavura the son of Mwene Mutapa Negomo, the situation was critical. Since c.1494 his house had provided three Mutapas who had ruled with some success for c.75 years, acquiring a good deal of power in the process. But by 1628 Karembera's house had ruled continuously for thirty years and two generations, and there was a danger that the title and the power it brought would remain in their hands permanently. Obviously, though, Mavura would need help from some major power such as the Portuguese, to assert his rights, and the war of 1628 gave him his chance. Mavura must have been a clever politician, for he was not the only claimant to the title - back in 1624 Mutapa Kapararidze's brothers had revolted against him,[1] and in 1628 other claimants were getting Portuguese support.[2] With a shrewd appreciation of the workings of Portuguese politics, Mavura had allied himself to the Dominicans, and with their help he won Portuguese support for Chikuyo's house of the Mutapa dynasty.[3] By May, 1629, an Afro-Portuguese army from Tete, Sena and the nascent prazos nearby had inflicted a defeat on Mutapa Kapararidze, killing so many of his 'grandees of the empire' that 'the remainder made Mavura their emperor in place of the former one, who, according to the laws of the country, for certain excesses he had committed in the flight, could no longer reign'.[4] In short, Chikuyo's house had reasserted itself, but Karembera's house refused to surrender, and a civil war dragged on into the 1650s.[5] Kapararidze won many successes, notably in 1631, but he was not a rebel in spite of Portuguese accusations, and his resistance until 1652 should be seen as part of a dynastic civil war as much as a resistance to colonial rule.[6]

Nevertheless, Mavura paid a high price for his accession to the title. In the treaty of 24 May 1629, which Mavura signed in return for military aid, some clauses, such as those exempting the Portuguese from court etiquette, or allowing missionaries free passage through the kingdom, were innocuous:[7] Portuguese and Muslims had been exempt from court etiquette since the 1550s,[8] while Shona religion had shown itself quite able to survive what Christian missionary efforts had been made since the 1560s. But other clauses dealt a deadly blow to the empire: the Mwene Mutapa became tributary to the King of Portugal, local authority being invested in the Captain of the Gates, and the entire Portuguese community was placed above the law of the empire, while the Mutapa and his subordinates lost most of the revenue from the dues they had traditionally exacted. By removing the Portugues community from their

1. Axelson, 56,67.
2. Fr.Luis, OP, to the Provincial, 3 February 1630, Theal, 2, 427-8.
3. Barreto de Resende and Bocarro, 415.
4. 'Advices fr Goa of 1630. Monomotapa', Theal, 2, 429.
5. 'Testimony of baptism of Monomotapa', Theal, 2, 445.
6. Ranger, 'Revolt', 345-6.
7. João Coelho, 'Copy of the treaty ...', 1629, Theal, 5, 290-1.
8. Barros, 270.

previous subject status as vatorwa and placing them in a privileged position beyond the control of the Mutapa - and, for that matter, the Captain of Moçambique - the treaty created a situation in the civil war-ridden empire similar to that of China and Japan in the nineteenth century, and is the main reason for historians judging the Mwene Mutapa dynasty in general and Mavura in particular as 'puppets',[1] and to see the seventeenth century in the Shona country as a period of colonial rule.

Such a view, however, must be modified to allow for certain factors. Firstly, Mavura as the representative of the Chikuyo line was pursuing his own policy rather than that of the Portuguese. Secondly, the Portuguese presence must be seen in the light of the growing Afro-Portuguese society of the prazos da coroa of the Zambezi rather than the nineteenth-century 'scramble' for Africa. Thirdly, to write off the Mutapas as 'puppets' is to underrate their intelligence and the skill with which they extricated themselves from a difficult position, making use of natural disasters and Portuguese weaknesses.

At first, Mutapa Mavura's reign was dominated by the civil war. In 1631 Mutapa Kapararidze joined with the rulers of Manyika and the Romwe around Quelimane, and some 300-400 Portuguese and 6,000 of their African vassals were killed, and all the Portuguese centres from Masapa to Quelimane were besieged, but in the following year the situation was reversed, and Kapararidze was defeated by Mavura's Malawian mercenaries and the Portuguese, who also defeated a subsequent army led by Kapararidze's Mukomohasha.[2] After this, Mutapa Mavura retained a hold on at least some of the country, but the disastrous effects of the treaty began to show. As usual, the mines defeated Portuguese attempts at exploitation and settlement schemes based upon them,[3] but even so the Afro-Portuguese of the Zambezi prazos entered the land, and used the 1629 treaty to set up their own prazos as basis for trade. Exempt from the common law of the empire, they were not under the control of any responsible Portuguese authority, and they fought wars with each other and the Shona, becoming 'more powerful than the king of Mokaranga himself! The avarice of these Portuguese discouraged trade and mining, and according to Barretto the rulers of the lands they 'bought' from the Mutapa became dispossessed labourers.[4]

Such a judgment needs to be taken with caution, however. It appears that the normal Portuguese land-holding in the interior of the Mutapa empire was based on the prazo system evolving on the Zambezi. As Professor Allen Isaacman

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1. Alpers, 'Mutapa and Malawi', 15; R.Oliver and J.D.Fage, A Short History of Africa (London-Penguin, 1966, 2nd edition), 133.
2. Diogo de Sousa de Menezes to the King, 17 February 1635, Theal, 4,277; Fr.Luis Cacegas and Fr.Luiz de Sousa, 'History of the Order of St. Dominic', 1767, Theal, 1, 397-400.
3. Axelson, 112-4.
4. Manoel Barretto, 'Report upon the State and Conquest of the Rivers of Cuama', 1667, Theal, 3, 483-4.

has pointed out, the prazero did not so much supercede the tradtional ruler as superimpose himself on the local society. The prazo system , though open to many abuses, did create a kind of symbiosis between the 'Portuguese' and 'African' societies in which both received some benefits, and in which the 'Portuguese' element became submerged in the 'African'.[1] From what little we know, and in theshort time they existed, the Portuguese holdings in the interior of the Mutapa empire followed this pattern. For xample, in the territories of Rimuka and Chisvâpi, Antonio Roiz de Lima and Simão Gomez held the monopoly of the trade and appeared to have been prazeros. When the Mutapa granted these lands - quite illegally, as far as is known - to one Gonçalo João, Roiz de Lima and Gomez added the incumbent rulers, Ngezi and Chivero, in expelling the intruder. Negezi and Chivero remained as rulers of the territory.[2]

Even though these prazeros could be assimilated into Shona society in time, in the short run they were a danger to the empire. When Mutapa Mavura died on 25 May 1652, his weak and indecisive son Siti Kazurukumusapa succeeded. The weak position he held from the outset and the presence of an ambitious, murderous younger brother Mukombwe and of the unruly prazeros did not help him, and in 1663 the prazeros marched against him. Before it came to a battle, Mutapa Siti's nobles assassinated him and - coincidentally? - Mukombwe became the next Mutapa, with the approval of the Portuguese. Mutapa Mukombwe, however, was regarded then and now as crafty, cunning and ambitious,[3] and the Portuguese were to learn in due course that it was far easier to install 'puny puppets' than to make sure that they remained puppet-like.

Even before Mutapa Kapararidze's counter-blow of 1631, Mutapa Mavura had shown signs of independence,[4] but as long as Kapararidze's house was active, he still needed Portuguese help. After Mavura's death in 1652, however, Kapararidze's house faded from the historian's notice. Mutapa Siti, although weak and indecisive, appears to have seen the possibilities of using Christianity to his own advantage. His father Mavura had used the Dominicans to secure Portuguese support for himself - although this was not incompatible with Christian devotion - and on Siti's accession he too became a Christian. It is interesting to note that he apparently made the baptism of his court along with him a test of political loyalty, personally exhorting reluctant nobles and deciding the oder

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1. This statement is based upon A.Isaacman, 'The Prazos da Coroa 1752-1830, A Functional Analysis of the Political System', STUDIA 26(1969). For a more detailed and advanced account, see A.Isaacman, Mozambique, The Africanisation of a European Institution, The Zambezi Prazos,1750-1902, (Wisconsin, London), 1972.
2. Abraham, 'Maramuca', 218-225.
3. Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 67; Barretto, 483. Mukombwe had killed his elder brother Musinyari prior to 1652.
4. Axelson, 745.

of procedure in the baptismal procession in which the most powerful men in the empire took part.[1]

Mutapa Mukombwe also began with Dominican help, and began to assert his independence.[2] According to Barretto, he - and perhaps his two predecessors of the Chikuyo house - had already accomplished by 1667 what Gatsi Rusere had been unable to do, and secured the homage of Barwe, Manyika, and part of the Tonga country under the Portuguese.[3] In the end, the position of the Mwene Mutapa vis-a-vis the Portuguese improved, as their avarice damaged trade to the extent that it ceased to attract them to the country. To this process, plagues contributed, and by 1680 there were only sixteen Portuguese in the Mutapa's dominions, and only six in the interior.[4] In the end the Portuguese crown itself, decided matters by ordering the prazeros to surrender their lands in the Mutapa's territory.[5] Mwene Mutapa Mukombwe is remembered in tradition as 'a strong ruler, and knew how to make himself respected'.[6] Slowly he made use of the depressed circumstances to restore his position. In 1675 he was regarded with distrust by the Portuguese,[7] and in 1678 he had pointedly failed to acknowledge his vassalage, and referred to the Portuguese monarch as a 'brother-in-arms'.[8] By 1682 the lands around Sena were in danger from 'the menaces of the king of Monomotapa, who is constantly threatening to rise in rebellion'.[9]

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1. Testimony of Mutapa Siti Doningos, 14 August 1652, Theal,2,445-7. Although these examples,and the tendency to send-potentially ambitious?-relatives to Tete, Sena or Goa for religious education, suggest that the Christianity of the Mutapas had a political motive, Fr.W.F.Rea may have under-rated the Christian factor in the Mutapa empire. (W.F.Rea, 'Agony on the Zambezi, the first Christian Mission to Southern Africa and its failure, 1580-1759', Zambezia, 1, 2 (1970).Allowing for the lack of devotion in most Christian societies, the inadequacy of many Dominicans and Jesuit missions and the emphasis on the Portuguese community,there is evidence for some Christian progress,especially among the Mutapa's relatives, who as potential midzimu and mhondoro were not obvious candidates for conversion. Some of the Mutapa's family - for example, one who became a theologian in Goa - became Christians, as did some Africans with a considerable wealth of Rozvi-type ornaments who received burial at Dambarare Church. P.S.Garlake, 'Excavations at the Seventeenth-Century Portuguese site of Dambarare, Rhodesia', Proc.and Trans.of Rhod.Scient. Assn., 54, 1(1969).
2. Axelson, 136-7. According to Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 67-9, The 'Dom Alfonso' of 1663 and the 'youth .....who could speak Portuguese' are the same, Mukombwe.
3. Barretto, 482.
4. Axelson, 151, 154.
5. 'Report of the Council in Lisbon', 8 February 1684, Theal, 4, 423.
6. Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 69.
7. Prince Regent to Viceroy, 3 April 1675, Theal, 4, 375.
8. Axelson, 151-2.
9. 'Report of the Council in Lisbon', 8 February 1684, Theal, 4, 423.

So independent had Mutapa Mukombwe become, in fact, that he assumed an aggressive role. In spite of the unfortunate state of Portuguese role in the Shona country, the momentary success of Sisnando Dias Bayão, who had penetrated Gurauswa in the 1640s, had not been forgotten.[1] Barretto talked of the possibility of a conquest of Gurauswa and the neighbouring territory of Maungwe,[2] and in 1684 a Portuguese force under Caetano de Mello e Castro invaded Maungwe, which was then and later under the Makoni dynasty. There he was met by Changamire's army, and defeated.[3] Mutapa Mukombwe, seeking to attack Changamire's territory in his absence, moved an army south, only to be defeated with great loss by Changamire, who had moved his forces back from Maungwe.[4] Mukombwe, in fact, had fully recovered his capacity for independent action, if he had not met with success, and the role of the Mutapa dynasty in the wars of the 1690s forces one to modify the image of 'puppets' given it by historians.

Historians' accounts of the wars of the 1690s tend to exaggerate the power and effectiveness of Changamire, and to emphasise the weakness of the Portuguese and, by implication, the Mutapa dynasty. It is true that both the Portuguese and the Mutapa dynasty were in the end driven from the high plateau, but this was the result of a gradual process, not of any Changamire blitzkrieg in 1693-6, and up to 1696 the Mutapa dynasty displayed a resilience that might have enabled the Portuguese to return, had they had the drive and organisation to do so. On the death of Mutapa Mukombwe, some time between 1684 and 1693, the Portuguese had a son of his groomed for the throne, 'Dom Pedro' (Nyamaende Mhande?).[5] However, an uncle, Nyakunembire, succeeded instead, and the Portuguese acquiesced in this, ignoring the claims of 'Dom Pedro'. For this reason, since he was accepted by both the Portuguese authorities a reasonable part, and of his people, it is inaccurate to call him a usurper.[6] The Captain of the Gates, however, was hostile to Mutapa Nyakunembire, and considered killing him.[7] It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Mutapa called for help from the powerful and famous Changamire to attack the Portuguese.

The result of this was a surprise raid on Dambarare, in which the Portuguese present were killed,[8] although archaeology shows that the more horrific stories recorded by Conceição were untrue.[9] Changamire's forces halted halfway between Dambarare and the Zimbabwe (near Mount Darwin?) and consequently there was no

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1. 'Viagem que fez o Padre Antonio Gomes ...', 2 January 1648, STUDIA 3, 1959, 197-8.
2. Barretto, 467.
3. Conceição, 105-6.
4. Axelson; Conceição, 106.
5. Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 69.
6. Conceição, 67.
7. Ibid., 107.
8. Ibid., 106.
9. Garlake, 'Dambarare', 51.

threat to Tete from him - if the Portuguese as far away as the Angwa river abandoned their trading-stations it was not because they were in any particular danger, as the immunity of the party that fled to Tete showed. Indeed, Changamire soon lost all interest in the Mutapa empire, withdrawing all but eight or nine men to resume his campaigns in Manyika and Maungwe.[1]

If the reputation of Changamire impressed the Porguguese and their African slaves, it did not deter 'Dom Pedro', who had been in exile in the territory of his in-laws of the nguruve-totem Chikanga dynasty in Manyika. With his brother Chirimbe he gathered a force and travelled to the Zambezi. Although he failed at first to gain Portuguese support, and almost lost heart in the face of famine conditions, in the end he secured the aid of a friendly prazera, recruited followers, gained some Portuguese help and drove south to seize the throne, without a battle. Nyakunembire fled east to Maungwe, but failed to gain the aid of Changamire, who was by then attacking Manyika.[2] After the feiras of Manyika fell - again, without the wholesale destruction often implied[3] - the nguruve-totem dynasty of Chikangas was driven out,[4] and as Dr.Hoyini Bhila's work suggested, Nyakunembire became the first of a new line of tembo-totem Chikangas, installed in the first instance by Changamire.[5] Changamire's campaigns stopped at Barwe with his reported death and the defeat of his forces in 1696,[6] and with his death this paper on the Mutapa empire must end for lack of detailed evidence.

This long discussion of the Zimbabwe culture and Mutapa empire does not pretend to be more than a reassessment of the facts as available in printed works, mostly in English. No personal field-work or study of Portuguese manuscrupts has been made, and for a definitive study one must await the forthcoming work of Mr.Abraham. Because few English sources on the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Mwene Mutapa empire are available, no attempt has been made to discuss this period. In any case, several researchers, including Drs.Stanley Mudenge and Allen Isaacman, have worked on this period, and their publications are awaited with impatience. Also, field-work on eighteenth and nineteenth-century traditions is not as difficult as on earlier periods. What this paper seeks to do is to compare and classify the writings of archaeologists and historians, and to examine the historical basis of some widespread assumptions.

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1. Conceição, 106-110.
2. Conceição, 107-110.
3. H.H.K.Bhila, 'The Manyika and the Portuguese, 1575-1863', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London, 1971, 54, citing Andrade de Freire's excavations at Macequece, in Moçambique, 46(1946), 5-54.
4. Abraham, 'Early Political History', 83n. 44.
5. Bhila, 49-55; R.H.Baker, 'The Mutapa and Makoni Dynasties', NADA 2, (1924), 85. The minor totem of the Mwene Mutapa dynasty was tembo, Abraham, 'Monomotapa Dynasty', 61.
6. Conceição, 111; Bhila, 52.

The first section of this paper seeks to show that most publications on the Zimbabwe culture and the Mwene Mutapa empire have been based upon the assumption that the Zimbabwe culture continued to flourish past c.1500, and that Mwene Mutapa empire had originally ruled from Zimbabwe and moved its centre pf power to the Zambezi valley to form a huge empire from the Kalahari and Limpopo to the sea, only to lose its southern half to a 'Rozvi' revolt in the late fifteenth century. This interpretation rests upon the archaeological time-scale of Summers, Robinson and Whitty, coupled to the early writings of Abraham, whose tendency in those days was not to contradict the archaeolpgists. After 1968 the archaeologists produced an entirely new picture, not only of a Zimbabwe culture that ended around the sixteenth century, but of a Khami culture that was its direct heir, not a local variant. From what little is known of Abraham's thinking after he announced the 'breakaway' Mutapa dynasty in 1963, it seems that his theories have evolved towards those of the archaeologists. In short, the rise of the Mwene Mutapa empire in the fifteenth century was the inception of a new state, not the expansion of an old one.

The second section deals with historians' attitudes to the Mutapa empire, although these attitudes are not always explicitly named. Esssentially, I feel that the natural bias of the Portuguese chronicles has led historians into seeing the history of the empire as primarily a conflict between European colonialism and an African State which, in collaborating, becomes a 'puppet' and is eventually virtually destroyed by an uncompromisingly 'resistant' state, that of Changamire. I would argue that, firstly, the Mutapa dynasty handled theproblem of the Portuguese up to c.1600 with consummate skill, absorbing Portuguese elements into a Shona society that was well able to take them; consequently, the most important feature of the sixteenth century was an internal one, the nascent conflict between the Chikuyo and Karembera houses. Secondly, the rashness of the later Mutapas of the Karembera house, c.1589-1628, did much to weaken the empire. Thirdly, the Mutapas of the Chikuyo house from 1629 onwards did start in the position of 'puppets', but for one reason or another, they emerged from this role to resume, under Mukombwe and 'Dom Pedro' a vigorous policy that was quite independent of the Portuguese. In view of the very limited extent and nature of Changamire's campaigns in the Mutapa empire proper - in fact there was only one - one must conclude that whatever degree of dominance was exercised by Changamire over the Mutapa empire after 1696 must have been the result of a far more complex and protracted political process than the 1693-6 wars. It should be added, finally, that at least some eighteenth-century evidence contradicts the view that the eighteenth-century Mutapas were Portuguese 'puppets', that the Changamires were constantly anti-Portuguese or that the Mutapas were already declining to extinction as a political force by 1800. In 1772 Mwene Mutapa Ganhambazi blockaded the Portuguese in Zumbo, 'and was only driven away with help from the reigning

Changamire.[1] According to Allen Isaacman's researches, it was a reviving Mutapa empire that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries began a decline of Portuguese power in the Zambezi valley that preceded the mfecane.[2] In short, a re-examination of the post-1700 Mutapas is needed, as well.

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1. E.A.Alpers, 'Dynasties of the Mutapa Rozwi complex', The Journal of African History, 11, 2(1970), 207-8.

2. Isaacman, personal communication, 9-8-72.