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Chimurenga: the organisation of the Shona rising

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In October, 1898 H.M. Hole, the Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate for Salisbury in the British South Africa Company’s administration attempted to explain to his superiors how the great rising of the central Shona, which had begun in June of that year and which was still in progress, had come about. Hole’s report dodged the entire issue of Company maladministration and placed the blame squarely upon the ingratitude of the Shona themselves. “With true Kaffir deceit they have beguiled the Administration into the idea that they were content with the government of the country... but at a given signal they cast all pretense aside and simultaneously set in motion the whole of the machinery which they had been preparing.” (1) Although Hole conceded that the Shona had shown more ability to organize than he had thought possible, he could not credit the Shona rulers themselves to set in motion the whole of the machinery. He claimed that, although the Ndebele who were in rebellion in Matabeleland had played a part, the prime mover of the rising was Mkwati, “the high priest of the M’Limo” who sought to offset his defeats in the southwest by bringing in the evil influence of the “Mondoro” or local witchdoctors. (2) Hole’s report was to be elaborated upon in the months and years that followed, as arguments about Company misrule flourished and more evidence about such other leaders as the medium of the Kaguvi mhondoro spirit became available (3) but one part of his argument became entrenched in local historiography. This was the suggestion that in the politically divided Shona countryside a preconceived and co-ordinated plan of resistance had been agreed upon by the people and kept secret for weeks or months until the signal came for a simultaneous assault upon the Europeans. Hole gave a vivid and imaginative description of this in 1897: “In almost every kraal the natives, even the women and children, put on the black beads, which were the badge of the Mondoro, while their fighting men, with Kaffir cunning, waited quietly for the signal to strike down the whites at one blow. So cleverly was their secret kept, and so well laid the plans of the witchdoctors, that when the time came the rising was almost simultaneous and in five days over one hundred white men, women and children were massacred in the outlying districts of Mashonaland.” (4)

This picture of a ‘night of the long knives’ (5) became part of the stock-in-trade not only of popular novelists and journalists but of historians as well. It is not difficult to see why. In the first place, it was one of the nightmares of white Rhodesians even before the Shona rising and it remained so afterwards. (6) In the second place, in the regimented existence of the African people under Rhodesian rule after 1897 it became increasingly difficult to think of radical change other than in terms of conspiracy, and as time passed this attitude began to affect the way in which the people thought about the 1896 risings. (7) Consequently the ‘night of the long knives’ became a matter of horrified or delighted memory and anticipation, depending upon the point of view assumed. Yet for the historian of the Shona in the 1890s it posed some peculiar problems. The rising of the Ndebele in March, 1896 was much easier to under-
stand in terms of such organization, for the Ndebele had had their own state in the southwest since the 1840s and, as has recently been convincingly shown, that state had not been destroyed in 1893-4 and was still very much alive in 1896. (8) The Shona outside the Ndebele state, however, had enjoyed no such political unity since the 1840s or, it seems, before then. (9) How, then, had they achieved such a feat of political organization in June 1896?

The first serious attempt to explain this was made at the Lusaka history conference in 1903 by Professor T.0. Ranger, whose Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7 was published in 1907. (10) His work remains the standard book on the risings and has led to a considerable body of 'resistance' writing. (11) Since the rest of this paper relates to it, Ranger's arguments must be made clear in summary. His view of the Shona past before 1896 was as different from that of Hole as could be imagined, (12) and a devastating, well-documented account of Rhodesian misrule of the Shona gave ample explanation of why they should have risen, (13) but in his account of how they did so there were some curious resemblances to Hole's report, though very different conclusions were drawn. In the first place, Ranger agreed with Hole that the rising was a 'sudden and co-ordinated attack' (14) a 'co-ordinated force of arms' (15), 'concerted action' (16), 'almost simultaneous' (17) and preceded by a 'period of apparent calm' in which, in early 1896, preparations for revolt were being made. (18) The way in which it came about was, in Ranger's view, on the following lines - lines that must be described in some detail in order to make the dramatic persona and Ranger's argument clear:

Although there had been localised resistance to individual Europeans and to Company rule from 1891 to 1896, and the resistance of Nyandoro in the east of the Salisbury district in April 1896 'was in fact the first intimation of the Shona rising' (19) the real initiative came from the area of the Ndebele rising which had broken out in late March. There, the effective leader of the Ndebele was Mkwati, a Leya ex-slave and priest of the Mwari religious cult. Assisted by the women Tenkela-Wampong and Siginyamatshe, he had forged an alliance of the kingless Ndebele and their Shona subjects against the Europeans. (20) After limited Rhodesian successes in early April, 'Mkwati's counterstroke, on the other hand, was very much more effective. The Shona rising, in the planning of which he was deeply involved' fo llowed his initiative. (21) In April he sent Tshihwa, a Rozvi Mwari-cult officer from Madwaleni in the Gwelo district to contact Bonda, another Rozvi Mwari-cult officer who lived under the Rozvi ruler Musarurwa in the Charter district, and Mashayamombe, a ruler on the Umfuli river in the Hartley district. Bonda and Mashayamombe's representatives went back with Tshihwa to Mkwati's headquarters at the old Rozvi centre of Taba zika Mambo in the Inyati district, this being before 24 May. There, they were encouraged to spread the rising into the central Shona country. (22) Tshihwa and Bonda stayed at Taba zika Mambo for the time being, but Mashayamombe's men went back to their ruler, who promptly - still in April - contacted Gumboreshumba, the medium of the Kaguvhi mhondoro spirit. Gumboreshumba, who was related to the Chivero dynasty of the Eartley district and possibly to Pasipamire (the great medium of the Charimuka mhondoro spirit who had been killed in 1863 while co-ordinating Shona resistance to the Ndebele), was then living in the eastern Salisbury district in the territory of the Chikwakwa ruler, near the Chinamhora, Rusike and Nyandoro rulers. His spirit Kaguvhi had
been of little importance before 1896, but under the pressures of the times it was to assume superiority over other mhondoro, such as the famous Nehanda of the Mazoe district. (25) The Kaguvu medium had been chosen by Mashayamombe 'when there was need for a man to link the planned rising in the west/ Hartley and Charter /with the paramounts of central Mashonaland,' (24) and he fulfilled this role by moving to Mashayamombe's, which became practically a 'powerhouse of the Shona rising' from then on. (25)

At the end of May or the beginning of June 1896 the Kagubi medium summoned representatives of the central Shona paramounts to his new headquarters, using the same pretext as Mashiangombe had advanced of seeking anti-locust medicine for sending his messengers to Mkwati... It was a distinguished assembly, or rather series of assemblies. The central Shona chiefs sent trusted headmen or close relatives, in many cases their sons, Chief Chiquaqu, for instance, sent Zhanta, his best warrior and commander of his impis before 1890 and again after the outbreak of the rising; chief Zwimba sent his son; chief M'sonthi sent his younger brother; chief Garamombo sent his son. These we know to have been there; others, in view of their later close collaboration with Kagubi we may guess to have been there: men like Panashe, bandit son of chief Kunzwi-Nyandoro, or Mchemwa, son of Mangwende, or the turbulent sons of Makoni.

'At these meetings the progress of the Ndebele rising was given; at this time, it will be remembered, Mkwati was bringing his picked impis back to the Umguza. Assurances of the support of Mkwati and his Ndebele allies were also given and the Kagubi medium urged the central Shona peoples to join the west in a movement against the whites. Plans for an outbreak as simultaneous as possible were laid; it was to wait until the arrival at Mashiangombe's of Bonda and Tshiwa with the Ndebele warriors; and once it had begun the news was to be carried to central Mashonaland by messengers and passed from hill to hill by the signal fires... ' (26)

These conferences held by the Kaguvu medium influenced the Hartley, Lomagundi, Mazoe, Umvukwe, Marandellas and Gutu districts - a spread covering virtually the whole area of the Shona rebellion' (27) and were reinforced by most of the local mhondoro mediums; including Nehanda in Mazoe and Goronga in Lomagundi. (28) Finally, Tshihwa, Bonda and the Ndebele arrived from Mkwati's headquarters in June, and the signal for the rising was given. (29) Tshihwa went south to raise the Selukwe district, (30) and Bonda went back to Charter. (31) Ranger suggests that, apart from personal contacts made by these two and others (32) with the rulers in these areas - the Charter district was the 'nursery of the Mashona rebellion' (33) - we may legitimately draw upon some later evidence from 1913-5, when 'chain-letter' messages of the Mwari cult were passed from village to village. (34) In the rest of the area of the rising, the signal was given by messengers from the mhondoro mediums and rulers, and by pre-arranged signal fires. (35)

Once the rising had begun, Ranger points out, a feature of the religious organizers was their ability to react and re-plan their strategy in response to the changing military situation. Bonda became a liaison officer for the headquarters at Mashayamombe's and 'we catch constant glimpses of him in the next few months /after June 7/ carrying messages, raiding loyalists and generally playing a most significant rôle. (36) Mkwati, forced
out of the Ndebele area arrived at Mashayamombe's with Wamponga determined to carry on the fight and reinforced the Shona headquarters. (37) At the end of 1896 a new strategy was planned: not only had the Kaguvi medium persuaded the eastern Salisbury rulers not to surrender, (38) but he and Mkwati prepared to move into that area — over the protests of Mashayamombe who objected to their departure (39) — as part of their plan to revive the Rozvi Empire. (40) This plan miscarried on the arrest of the Rozvi Mambo-elect, but it led to a strengthening of the power of the religious authorities northeast of Salisbury: the Kaguvi medium was able to appoint a new Seke ruler, (41) and the mhondoro mediums of the Budya of the Mtoko district achieved a 'triumph of the pan-Shona teachings... over the raiding policy of a chief' of the Budya, Guru-pira, when on his death they persuaded the Budya to turn against Native Commissioner Armstrong's patrol and force it to flee to Umtali, almost starving to death in the process. (42) In the end, however, the rising was gradually worn down by the superior force of the Europeans.

This, in brief, was Ranger's picture of the organization of the Shona rising. This supra-paramountcy co-ordination was not achieved through the paramounts alone. We have to (43) look once again to the traditional religious authorities of the Shona to understand the co-ordination of the rising above the paramountcy level — and also to understand the commitment of the people to the rising at the paramountcy level, a commitment so complete and even fanatical that it cannot be explained simply in terms of loyalty to the paramount chief. (44) This picture, and Ranger's view of the 'new society', of which more later, remained substantially unmodified for ten years. My own thesis of 1971 dealt with the Hartley, Charter and southern Shona districts. It added to Ranger's picture of Shona society before 1896 and the nature of Company rule, and pointed out the existence of important Shona groups that fought on the Company's side in 1896 for various reasons. It also pointed out that the actual areas in which the Mwari-cult officers and the Kaguvi medium operated were much more limited than Ranger suggested. Nevertheless, it did not seriously question the Hole-Ranger view of the 'night of the long knives' and the organization that led to it. It did, however, look back into Shona politics in an attempt to seek a political explanation for the unity of the central Shona in 1890, since the influence of the Mwari-cult officers and the Kaguvi medium did not extend far enough in terms of territory. It found the political factor in the growing resistance of the central Shona to the Ndebele in the 1880s, and especially in the Shona-Portuguese treaties of 1889, in which an unprecedented number of central Shona rulers committed themselves to an anti-Ndebele stance. This commitment was not tested against the Ndebele because the BSA Company arrived in 1890, but it served to give the central Shona the degree of unity they needed in 1896, with the religious organizations as a reinforcing factor. (45)

Since 1971 the main published revision of the historical picture of 1896 has been J.R.D. Cobbing's re-examination of the Ndebele rising, in which the influence of the religious factor was shown to have been far less than Ranger stated, and in which the prime mover behind the organization of the rising was shown to have been that of the old Ndebele state, substantially unaffected by its defeat in 1893. (46)

This paper seeks to summarize my own gradual reconsideration of the evidence on 1896, made during the years since 1971 when my own attention was primarily on pre-1850 Shona history. Essentially, it argues that all analyses of the rising made since 1896 including my own thesis, were wrong on two important points: the
rising was not 'simultaneous' or 'almost simultaneous' even within the limitations of Shona communications and technology, and it had not been premeditated and co-ordinated in the way that had been previously assumed. Consequently, the need for a 'religious' or 'political' overall organization falls away, and our understanding of the social and political situation among the central Shona in 1896 must undergo a sharp revision. This paper relies upon the same basic documents used by Ranger, with some support from fieldwork carried out in Hartley and Charter in 1969-70, and involves a close examination of the picture given by Ranger, giving an alternative chronological account of the rising with the differences from Ranger's picture being pointed out inter alia. First, however, it is necessary to re-examine the background to the rising and to re-define the nature of Shona resistance to the economy and rule of the Europeans.

In the first place, no analysis of nineteenth-century Shona history can be complete or accurate without a consideration of the workings of the Shona economy. This has been described and analysed elsewhere, (47) and can be very briefly summarized as follows: the Shona had an economy with an agricultural base, with supporting branches of production based on herding, hunting/gathering, manufacturing and mining. By the late nineteenth century the manufacturing and mining branches and external trade were in most areas in a depressed state relative to earlier centuries, though a certain amount of peasant production in agriculture and migrant labour had emerged as a response to the rise of capitalism in southern Africa after c.1870. The agricultural base remained of paramount importance. It depended upon the preparation of fields and the sowing of grain crops at the beginning of summer — October through to December — and their reaping at the onset of winter, approximately from March to June. Problems of storage restricted the amount of food available at any one time, and consequently the maintenance of the crop cycle from year to year was vital. The danger of shangwa, disaster due to drought or locusts, was ever-present. These factors were intimately linked to the 1896 rising in almost every significant way - its causes, timing, organization and its ultimate defeat.

The remarkable success of the Shona in extracting most of the upper-level gold from the reef mines between c.950-1800 accelerated the impact of colonial rule because the BSA Company, unable to make money from mining, encouraged and organized forced labour for very low wages, legitimized stock-raiding in the name of taxation and allowed oppressive methods of labour control, though obviously these were implicit in the South African brand of capitalism that it imported. Space forbids detailing these here, but the scale of colonial operations can be divided into two periods. From 1890 to 1894 these operations were at a relatively low level, essentially because Company activities were focussed on the vain hope of finding payable upper reefs in different parts of the Shona country and, ultimately, in the Ndebele state. There was a tendency for the emphasis on mining to shift from area to area, and although cases of forced labour certainly occurred the scale of mining activity was well below that of the period 1894-6, so that the impact of labour enforcement upon the Shona was partly cushioned by the Shona and foreign migrant labour sector. Moreover, there was no permanent labour-coercion force during this period. Taxation was planned, but not implemented until 1894, and European farming activity was at a low level. After 1894 mining activity increased sharply, European farming settlements increased in some areas and a Native Department was created in order to coerce labour and collect tax. Consisting of one or two European officers and a body of African 'police' in each district, it rendered the Shona much more liable to labour
and tax exactions. Often labour coercion took place during the agricultural work-season, and tax exactions involved the removal of valuable livestock accumulated and preserved as an insurance against crop failure. (46)

Apart from the relatively lower level of pressure upon the Shona by 1894, there were other reasons why no rising took place before that date. There seems to be little doubt that during this period many Shona believed that the European presence was temporary, like that of the Portuguese between 1629 and 1693—a presence whose duration was underestimated in Shona tradition. (49) Secondly, many Shona rulers had found the Europeans useful in local politics, as it is remarkable how many of the clashes between the Europeans and the Shona in 1890-4 were engineered by other Shona groups to their own advantage. (50) From 1894 onwards resistance to Company rule became more noticeable, but it took the form of isolated and unconnected incidents. One of the reasons why there was no major rising in 1894-5 was probably the number and location of the police force being assembled by the Company for the attack upon the Transvaal; they were placed in small groups across the country, probably to escape interested observers, and provided a police presence to back up the Native Department. From October, 1895 they were gradually concentrated upon Bulawayo, leaving only the Native Department, a much reduced police force and the part-time Volunteers. (51) October, however, was the beginning of the intensive agricultural season, which in many areas was the more important because 1895 had been a bad year for locusts. (52) When the main Shona rising did break out in June 1896 it was at an optimum time from an agricultural point of view.

Nevertheless, the armed resistance carried out by the Shona before June 1896 is of crucial importance if the 1896-7 rising is to be understood. Shona resistance to colonial rule in the 1890s took a number of forms, including desertion from underpaid labour, abandonment of settlements in the face of tax and labour demands, theft (53), cattle-maiming and other responses, but here we are concerned with actual violence. This took place across the country at different times in 1894-5, but the remarkable feature it showed when compared with the 1896-7 hondo (war) was its restricted nature. In every case, it was limited to the enforcers of labour or tax collection—the police or the Native Department—or to actual employers of labour, (54) and did not develop into a general attack upon all local Europeans, who were allowed to carry on prospecting, mining, farming, trading and transporting. This contrasts strongly with the 1896-7 hondo when, once a Shona group had decided to rise, the attack was extended to almost all Europeans and foreign Africans and included travellers, women and small children who could have had no direct connection with local grievances. Moreover, after this 'preliminary resistance' had taken place, the districts reverted to normal and even the Native Department was allowed to function as usual, whereas in the full hondo resistance was more or less continuous up to the moment of defeat.

Examples of this can be seen in many districts. In the Charter district in February 1895 Native Department police collecting tax were fired upon and sjambekked by the Njanja, and in July a farmer near Enkeldoorn was murdered. (55) In Lomagundi district in August 1894 a policeman collecting labour was killed, (56) and in May 1896 a miner was murdered in his own mine. (57) In the Mtoko district NC Armstrong was threatened by the Budya in April 1895, two of his police were shot at February 1896, his patrols were fired upon by Mkota's Tonga shortly afterwards, NC Ruping's patrol was attacked in late May by the Budya, fighting occurred again on 7 June and the district remained tense until the news of the main Shona rising arrived. (58) In the Umtali district in April 1896 Marange turned
out an armed force to recover his cattle, taken by the Native Department. In 1894 an African policeman was killed at Makoni's and on 9 June 1896 Makoni held a meeting to propose the recovery of his tax cattle from ex-Hut Tax Collector O'Reilly's farm and the killing of the Native Department personnel. On 16 June this was proposed again, and the cattle-recovery began, but as late as the 18th, a Native Department policeman was allowed to bring a message to Makoni and to depart alive. In September 1894 in the Salisbury district Nyandoro's men pursued policeman who were trying to arrest his son Panashe, in October 1895 police were fired upon by the same people, and in April 1896 Nyandoro openly threatened the police and local Europeans as well.

In the Marandellas district Gezi's people attacked police in December 1895 and March 1896. It is clear that those cases of preliminary resistance that occurred before the outbreak of the Ndebele rising of March 1896 were not part of any general Shona rising, and although Ranger saw Nyandoro's threats in April 1896 as 'the first intimation of the Shona rising' the fact remains that in those Shona areas that resisted between March and the spread of the main hondo in June the resistance corresponded to that of before March: even in Mtoke those prospectors outside the NC's camp were not touched until 25 June when news of the main rising reached the local Bvuma, while in Nyandoro's Makoni's and Marange's areas the same was true. Nyandoro did not start fighting until 20 June, nor Makoni until some time after 23 June, while Marange remained neutral.

There is however a danger in drawing too neat a line between this preliminary resistance and the full hondo of June: whereas such rulers as Makoni did confine themselves to preliminary resistance until a relatively late date, and whereas it will be shown that there was no widespread concerted planning of the main rising in advance of its outbreak, it is equally clear that between March and June the central Shona country was in an exceptionally tense state, and that the possibility of a full war was being discussed by the more militant personalities in several areas, independently of each other. Nyandoro's threat to attack all local Europeans was significant even if it was not carried out, and some time between 14 and 24 May a similar plan to kill the police and local traders and to attack Hartley had been considered by Mshayamombe's people and rejected - for the time being.

In Marandellas district Mangwende's son Muchemwa had been considering a rising for some time, and although NC Edwards later connected such hints as a pair of sandals laid at his door and talk of a bird from 'Mwari' with a deep-laid plot involving all the Shona, they more probably reflected the discussions held by Muchemwa on his own initiative. It seems highly likely that even if there had not been interaction between the Ndebele rising and the Shona of Hartley and Charter, in such an environment a major rising would have broken out somewhere else and spread, producing a very different pattern of resistance but a similar effect.

Another important distinction that must be made is between the different activities of the Shona during the rising itself: not all activities were related to the rising, even though in many cases they were made possible by the Company's preoccupation with the Shona hondo. Normal Shona politics continued, for example, and sometimes involved violence: in April 1896 longstanding political tensions in the Mutasa dynasty led to the emigration of the Chimbadzwa house to Barwe, while in November the Pako people allied themselves with the Ngowa and took advantage of the situation to try to recover their ancestral hill Chirogwe from Chivi's Mhari who had seized it earlier in the century. Neither Chimbadzwa nor the Pako appear to have acted as part of any overall commitment to the risings. Similarly, not all clashes between the Europeans and the Shona indicated Shona commitment to the rising, though
the Europeans often thought that they did: in April 1896 a rumour that Mutasa was going to attack Umtali led to armed men parading the streets threatening to kill him, and another rumour occurred in November: in fact, Mutasa eventually joined the Company. (68) In October 1896 an attack was made upon Negovano of the Duma by the Victoria forces as the result of a rumour fabricated by a Cape African rapist and thief: again, the Duma were at no time in the rising. (69) Thefts from deserted stores took place in otherwise neutral areas, (70) and several attacks upon Europeans and foreign Africans appear to have been made by groups which did not intend at that time to join the rising or which did not do so, and which were simply taking advantage of the times to carry out robbery. Thus, Chingoma's people attacked Carruthers south of Belingwe, but did not join the rising, (71) while Chipiriro's people killed their ruler's son-in-law Box, Box's brother and also some migrant labourers from the Zambezi. (72) In each case the motive was apparently robbery. Another similar case involved Matowa of Mbava's Rozvi, whose pregnant daughter was taken from him by the trader Basson, who caused her to abort her baby. While guiding Basson to safety on Mbava's orders, Matowa decided to take revenge and killed him. (73) Such actions could have varying results: the village that attacked Carruthers was destroyed later by Laing's column, (74) Chipiriro was largely unaffected by the rising after the killing of the Box brothers until the defeated leaders of the Shona rising reached his territory in late 1897 and he advised them to surrender. (75) Mbava's people, on the other hand, remained isolated until late 1897, but then seem to have assumed that Basson's death had implicated all of them and so fled over the Sabi to escape the police. (76) This "peripheral violence" demonstrates that contemporary European assessments of Shona activity were not always correct, a fact of relevance to the so-called revival of the "Rozvi empire" of 1896-7.

We now come to the central point of this paper, the reconstruction of the exact sequence of events that brought the central Shona country into a state of war. The Ndebele rose in the last half of March 1896 and most of the Shona members of their state joined them. On the edges of the southeastern lowveld and across the southern Shona territory the Matibi, Chivi, Chirimuwanzu, Gutu and Zimuto dynasties blocked the spread of the rising by joining in on the side of the Company, as they had in 1893, basically because they feared an Ndebele victory in spite of the fact that they had suffered severely from Company misrule. The implications of their collaboration have been discussed elsewhere. (77) On the northeastern frontiers of the old Ndebele state, beyond the collaborating dynasty of Chirimuwanzu and the resisting territories of Wozhere, Gambiza dziva and Chiwundura shava, was a relatively thinly-populated zone comprising most of the Umniati and Sebakwe valleys. (78) Although the few Shona in these areas did not join the rising, Ndebele patrols reached as far as the Umfuli, (79) and in May some Ndebele from Amaveni raided Payne's farm in the Mwanesi range. (80) (This led Hole to call the Charter district the 'nursery' of the rising, but there is no evidence that this was anything more than an attempt to recover cattle lifted by Payne since 1893) (81) An important feature of this thinly-populated zone was that it allowed good long-distance communications between the central Shona and the Ndebele. (82)

One of the dangers of having a keen appreciation of the part played by religious leaders in politics is that their purely religious rôle is sometimes underestimated: this is particularly true of those involved in the train of events that loosely connected the Ndebele and Shona risings. In the first place it must be rem-
embered that there was a very close connection between religion and the economy; religious leaders, of whatever particular cult, were expected to be able to use their connections with the high-god and senior mhondoro spirits to produce rainfall and to avert shangwa, disaster. Like the economy itself, this aspect of religion could not be suspended in wartime. As late as 1897 the Mwari-cult leader Siginyamatshe was distributing anti-locust medicine in Belingwe while on the run from the police. Such activities were, of course, taken by such officials as Hole to be a cunning cover for a political plot, and Ranger's Revolt tends to make the same assumption, yet the evidence for the contact between the Ndebele and Shona risings indicates that it was in the beginning a purely religious-economic contact and only later assumed a political significance. Whatever rôle the Mwari-cult leader Mkwati played in the Ndebele rising, and he was clearly not the supreme that Ranger thought, it is still true that he had been an important local religious figure in the Inyati-Ujinga area. The summer of 1895-6 in the central Shona country had seen renewed attacks on the crops by locusts, and at some time before 24 May Mashayamombe sent some of his people — probably those of Muzhuzha house who had recently returned home after having been forcibly incorporated into the Ndebele state for some time and who still wore Ndebele ear-marks — across the thinly-populated zone to Mkwati near Inyati, to get anti-locust medicine. The first initiative for contact was therefore not Mkwati's, nor did he send his aide Tshihwa out at this point. When the medicine arrived at Mashayamombe's, the ruler's village became a distribution point: 'I remember the people assembling at Mashangombi's kraal to get medicine for the locusts. This had nothing to do with the rebellion' recalled a witness later. Mashayamombe then decided to make a small profit from this, and sent a message to Gumboreshumba, medium of the Kaguvi mhondoro spirit.

Gumboreshumba was of the Chivero dynasty (and therefore not related to Pasipamire, the famous Chaminuka medium who joined the Ndebele in their raids on the other Shona until they killed him in 1883), but he had the advantage of being the grandson of Kawédza, a previous medium of the Kaguví spirit. Kawodza had lived in the territory of Chivero, but Gumboreshumba lived in that part of the eastern Salisbury district where the Chikwakwa, Nyandoro, SekepRusike, Chinamhora and Mangwende dynasties bordered upon each other. His spirit was thought to have been the spirit husband of the Nehanda spirit, and was also thought to have had special rain-making abilities, but Gumboreshumba made the Kaguví spirit more famous for his ability to find game, an attribute that was especially useful in the famine of the late 1880s in the Chikwakwa area. In short, like most Shona religious leaders, the Kaguví medium had a strong interest in the Shona economy. Mashayamombe's message to him was that he had anti-locust medicine from Mkwati available for distribution, but when an envoy from the Kaguví medium went to investigate he found that Mashayamombe would not supply the medicine unless a payment of one cow was made. The Kaguví medium refused to pay this, and sent his own messengers to Mkwati, while Mashayamombe sent messengers at the same time. It was probably about this time that the Kaguví medium moved from the Chikwakwa area back to the area where his grandfather had been famous. It was significant, however, that he did not go to Mashayamombe's but to a village in Chivero's country; from the very beginning, there was a division between him and Mashayamombe.

Meanwhile, another religious leader had made contact with Mkwati, but we have no information as to how, when or why this occurred. Unlike the Kaguví medium, Bonda had a fairly close institutional link with the Mwari cult. A Rozvi, he had been born in the
Selukwe area of the Ndebele state, which would explain why some Charter traditions refer to him as an Ndebele, but from 1894 he lived in the Charter district, probably in the hills to the west. There, he appears to have founded a small, semi-independent Mwari-cult centre, and was reputed to be able to make plates of food appear by magic. We do not know how he came to be there, but in early June he was at Mkwati’s centre at Tabo zika Mambo; possibly he had the same need for medicine as Mashayamombe and the Kaguvi medium, possibly he was making normal contact with Mkwati and the cult in general.

Thus, in late May or early June, Bonda and messengers from Mashayamombe and the Kaguvi medium arrived independently at Mkwati’s, and all the evidence is that at this stage the religious-economic factor was paramount: they had come for locust medicine. Once there, however, they heard news and received encouragement that was to precipitate the main Shona rising. As mentioned earlier, from late 1895 the main Company forces in the central Shona country had been a small force of police and the Volunteers. In April a major force of 150 Volunteers left Salisbury to join the Company forces in action against the Ndebele. To the Shona, it must have seemed as though the Europeans had committed their main strength into the struggle with the Ndebele, especially as they recruited 200 Shona auxiliaries, mostly from the Mutekedza territory on the road to the south. This force fought actions at Makalaka Kop on 30 April, at Amavani on 9 May and Nxa on 22 May, and the news carried back to the central Shona country by Bonda was that this force had been destroyed. This was repeated as far away as the Mazoe valley, and it seems that these actions against the Ndebele mentioned above had far more impact upon the situation amongst the central Shona than any actions on the Umgusa, as Ranger suggested.

So far, it will have been noted, Mkwati’s counterstroke had not been very much in evidence. The contacts between the Ndebele and the central Shona had been confined to the question of locust medicine. Now the political element emerged, though it is difficult to see Mkwati rather than the Ndebele leadership in general as the prime mover. He did send out one of his aides—Tshihwa the Rozvi from Madwaleni—but the Ndebele secular leadership was even more heavily involved, for it sent some men of the Mangoba ibutho to Mashayamombe’s and the Kaguvi medium’s and a force, reputedly led by the influential Manondwana of Insugamini to back up Bonda in Charter, though only six Ndebele were definitely identified. These forces, then, set out with Bonda and Mashayamombe’s and the Kaguvi medium’s messengers in the second week of June to precipitate the rising in Hartley and Charter. The ‘counterstroke’ of the Ndebele—rather than of the Mwari-cult leadership especially—had finally emerged, though as has been seen it had involved a strong element of the fortuitous in the shape of the locust medicine and the actions of the Salisbury Column, but here the resemblance to Ranger’s model of the Shona rising breaks down.

Ranger’s major assumption had always been that the political element of contact between the central Shona and Mkwati had been there from the beginning, since April, and that preconcerted planning at what he thought was the joint headquarters of Mashayamombe and the Kaguvi medium had preceded the arrival of Tshihwa and the Ndebele. In fact, there was no preconcerted planning. Not only was there no joint headquarters, not only was there abundant evidence from each district that the rulers and their people had not known of the rising more than a day in advance in every case, but there were no conferences at the Kaguvi medium’s village before the rising. Ranger’s main evidence that these took place comes from a misreading of the documents.
of the Kaguvi medium's old ruler Chikwakwa, was one of the few actually to visit the medium in his new base, but this was after the rising had broken out in the Chivero territory. Kukubi sent two messengers to Mashonganyika's, they went on to Gonda's and told the people they were to come to Kukubi at once. I went with them. I thought he would give us something to kill the locusts. When I got there I found he had a lot of white men's loot. He ordered me to kill the white men. He said he had orders from the gods. Some Matabele who were there said watch all the police wives. I returned and gave Chiquaquu Kukubi's orders. Since there is no evidence for major thefts from Hartley stores before the rising, and since Ndebele had already arrived at the medium's village, it follows that this 'conference' took place after 14 June. (102) The evidence of Zhanta's neighbour Zawara son of Garamombe only confirms that the Kaguvi medium told Chikwakwa's people to visit him, and does not suggest that this was any earlier than 14 June. (103) The evidence from the Zvimbba ruler, his brother Musonti and the people of Lomagundi district is only that a message reached the Zvimbba ruler from the Kaguvi medium and was then passed on, not that anyone from Lomagundi went to Kaguvi's beforehand, (104) and the evidence for the presence of Panashe the son of Nyandoro, Muchemwa the son of Mangwende and the 'turbulent son of Makoni' at the medium's village wither before or after the rising began remains where it originated, in Ranger's guesswork.

How, then, was the news of the rising spread if it was not preconcerted beforehand? The answer is that since it was nowhere near simultaneous, preplanning was not needed and the different Shona dynasties simply joined the rising, opposed it or stayed neutral as the news reached them. (105) The Shona certainly could have carried out a simultaneous or nearly simultaneous rising if they had preplanned one; they had a lunar calendar, and it would have been easy to start the rising on a previously-agreed day after a certain phase of the moon; or the chiwara fire system could have been used, for visibility is usually fair to good in June and a line-of-sight system of signals could have carried the signal very rapidly indeed. Chiwara fires were used in the Mazoe and Marandellas districts, but apparently only within territories of single rulers, following a political decision by the ruler himself. (106) But the word travelled relatively slowly, taking about five days to cover the 75 miles between Mashayamombe and Mangwende, for example - a painfully slow speed for a prearranged chiwara system, but a fair rate for a message to pass by messenger from territory to territory, all the way for a night's discussion in the process. In fact, the word of the rising spread gradually from Mashayamombe's, from Sunday 14 June, and had covered most of the central Shona country by the following Sunday, though some northeastern areas were not affected until Thursday 25 June. Ranger's Revolt obscures the timing issue by starting with the Marandellas district, which rose on 19-20 June and only later reverting to the rising's beginning in Hartley. (107)

This brings us back to the situation in the Umfuli valley, with the returning messengers and the Ndebele coming to give news of Ndebele victories at Maveni and Nxa. The evidence would appear to indicate that Mashayamombe had actually decided to rise before his messengers returned, or at least that their return tipped the balance in what was already a very tense situation. On about Thursday 11 June, a clash had developed between the wives of Muzhuzha Gobvu, Mashayamombe's nephew, and those of the police of NC Moony, who lived very close by. This clash escalated, and Moony flogged Muzhuzha. The recollections and traditions of Mashayamombe's people are adamant that this was what caused the rising, and Moony's sur-
viving policeman agreed with this in 1897, making no mention of messengers from Mkwati. It is possible that they had not arrived back by then. In any event, Moony's men began to desert on 13 June, and the rising began on the next day with the killing of some Indian traders and Moony himself. (106) An indication of the general unpreparedness of the people is given by the man who actually killed Moony, Rusere: he had just come from the Kagvu medium's village and found Moony being pursued, but was so unready that he had to borrow a gun from his uncle before he could join in. (109) This would suggest that at this early stage the medium himself had not known of the rising - it is noticeable that none of Mashayamombe's people claimed that they had had any leadership from him in the carrying out of the killings, and it was the Mashayamombe medium if the Choshata mhondoro, Dedwende, who gave the religious sanction there. (110) Mashayamombe's forces struck east to kill the Europeans at the Beatrice mine on 15 June, (111) west to the Umsweae (112) and on the evening of 18 June, they began the siege of Hartley. (113) By then, however, the rising had spread.

From Mashayamombe's word was carried southeast to the Mashava ruler, in the only case where the Kagvu medium's name was mentioned outside the Hartley, eastern Salisbury and Longundi districts: 'I remember the beginning of the rebellion, a messenger came from Mashangombi saying that Kagubi had given orders for the white men to be killed so the three prisoners and I and two others started early in the morning.' (114) This took place on about 16 June, and by 18-9 June the Charter district was coming into the rising. Here, however, the leading influences varied. Some unnamed messengers came from Mashayamombe, who had close ties with the Maromo ruler of Charter, (116) but there, was also Bonda. Although Tshihwa claimed in January 1897 that he had set out from Mkwati's for Mashayamombe's with Bonda, (117) it is curious that neither the Hartley nor the Charter sources from June 1896 to the present mention Bonda being at Mashayamombe's until after the collapse of the Charter rising in September 1896. It seems possible that he was not connected with the so-called powerhouse on the Umfuli until he was forced to flee there in about October, and that his arrival and that of Mashayamombe's messengers in Charter was partly coincidental. Once there, Bonda and his Ndebele helped to bring in the Sango, Maromo and Mutekedza dynasties, but this was the limit of his influence. (118)

It was an indication of the unexpected nature of the rising that Mutekedza Chiwashira, who from 1893 had relied upon the Company and his son-in-law Short for support and who had allowed his men to join the Salisbury Column in April, joined in; this left him with men on both sides, which would hardly have happened if he had known of the rising in advance. His daughter was able to hide Short from her father's men until 25 June, but had no time to help him get into safety. (119) Bonda was the only Mwari-cult leader to play a direct part in the central Shona country. Tshihwa went straight back to Mkwati, and only helped reinforce the rising in the Selukwe district in July, long after it had started there. (120) No 'chain-letter' methods of passing messages were recorded in 1896, which is not surprising because this was a ritual used to dispel fever and colds and the only person in that time who thought it had anything to do with 1896 was a rather naive African messenger from Hartley. (121)

The evidence for the spread of the rising north and east from Mashayamombe's not only shows how the 'ripple' effect engulfed areas of preliminary resistance such as Mtoko and Makoni, but gives us a clearer idea of the extent and nature of the Kagvu medium's influence. If he had not known of the rising on the morning of 14 June, he had certainly thrown his weight behind
it by the evening of 16 June, when his messenger arrived at Nya-
wmweda's village on the Hunyani. Norton's cattle were stolen, and
the next day he was killed, though the Kaguvi medium was not alw­
ays obeyed unquestioningly. It was said by Kagubi that the whites
must be killed so Mija my father told his people that it was the
order so we said you are wrong father, why should we kill whites
when we work in the town so I killed the Bushmen servant of Nor­
ton/ (122) From Nya-wmveda's the word went north: on 18 June Shona
on the Gwebi had joined in. (123) By this time the Company's own
system of communications was beginning to run faster than that
of the Shona, and although outlying Europeans were surprised and
killed north and east of Salisbury, in many cases the telegraph
warned people before the Shona started fighting. Thus, Salisbury
was already on guard by the night of 17 June, (124) and many of
the Mazoe Europeans were warned before fighting broke out on 18
June. (125) In the eastern Salisbury district, sixty miles from
Kaguvi's village, the word was brought by Zhanta on the night of
19 June, and the shooting started the next day. (126) The rising
also reached the Mangwende area on the night of 19 June, and again
the fighting started on the 20th. (127) The statement by Farrant that
the missionary Mizeki was killed on the night of 17 June appears
to rely upon Hole's and Edwards' theories and assumes that the
chiwara fires seen by Mizeki before his death burned for two
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minded,'(133) which was obviously not true in view of certain long-
distance raids made by Mashayamombe in 1896-7,(134) but broadly it was true that the Shona rulers fought almost exclusively within their territories and very rarely combined to attack targets.
(135) Where rulers and leaders did combine later, it was usually as a result of having been driven out of their own areas by superior force. Thus Bonda and Maromo joined refugees from Charter at Mashayamombe's after the rising collapsed in their area in September 1896,(136) and when the Kaguvi medium was driven out of his first base in Chivero's country in July, he re-established himself at Kaguvi hill just south of Mashayamombe's. This base, however, was in an enclave of Chivero territory,(137) and although he did co-operate with Mashayamombe's medium Dekwende (188) his establishment remained separate from that of Mashayamombe and in January 1897 a fatal split developed between them. Mkwati and Tenkela, too, eventually reached Mashayamombe's area in early October, but not as part of any preconceived plan. They had gradually retreated eastwards from point to point across the thinly-populated zone and had tried to reorganize Ndebele resistance from Hangayive hill near the Sebakwe-Umnjati confluence, but divisions between their followers prevented this, and only then did they move to Mashayamombe's.(139)

Ranger's picture of Mkwati and the Kaguvi medium forging a new plan to revitalize the rising by reviving the 'Rozvi empire' in late 1896 and early 1897 falls down when the evidence is examined. The Kaguvi medium had been successful in encouraging the eastern Salisbury rulers not to surrender during that summer,(140) but the 'Rozvi empire' idea was a product of the fears of the Native Department, whose officers had in effect undergone a crash course in the significance of Shona history. One incredible rumour of a pan-Rozvi plot had already circulated in the Ndebele state, and Native Commissioners — notably W.L. Armstrong — were all too ready to give credence to rumours. In late December 1896 three senior Rozvi rulers from the upper Sabi valley where the Changamire dynasty had made its last stand in the Mavangwe hills, namely Chiduku, Mbava and Mavudzi, with the son of the Gambiza move ruler whose lands bordered Mavangwe, went to Nanga and called Chikohore Chingombe the leader of the Mutinhima Rozvi house to come back to Mavangwe and be their Mambo.(141) The Changamire leadership had previously been in the hands of the so-called Gumunyu faction, and this selection of a Mutinhima leader as Mambo was significant, but only within Rozvi politics. (142) What alarmed the Native Department was a report from Charter that in March 1897 Bonda had gone down to the Rozvi area of the upper Sabi,(143) that Mwari-cult messengers had been in the Hlengwe country in southern Nanga district and that from the upper Sabi Rozvi had returned to Nanga 'and told the Makalakas that it was no use working their lands as the Mlimo had gone to get the assistance of the madzviti leaders Mpanga and Ngwana Maseko of the 1830s and Manoel António de Sousa who had died in 1892 were going to join the rising was simply false.(144) The whole episode was evidently just another example of ordinary Shona politics being carried on in wartime.

Nor was the departure of Mkwati and the Kaguvi medium part
of any master-plan: Mkwati's movements in December-January were probably part of an abortive attempt to join an intransigent band of Ndebele under Gwayabana on the lower Umfuli, and when he did arrive in the country northeast of Salisbury the evid nce that he did much to keep the rising going is very thin. As for the Kaguvu medium, he left his hill near Mashayamombe's not as part of a grand plan but as a consequence of his having stolen two women from Mashayamombe and a minor war having broken out between them. Mashayamombe informed the police, and a temporary truce between them lasted while the police tried to capture the medium, with Mashayamombe supplying intelligence. When the medium finally fled back to his old area it was because it was impossible for him to remain.

Resistance continued in 1897, but it remained, as it always had been, a local war fought by each ruler in his territory—until he was driven out of it. The Kaguvu medium continued to be influential in the eastern Salisbury area, but then lost influence when he was driven out of it into the Nchanda medium's area his power was much reduced. Even in his home area, his influence had its limitations: in the Seke territory in December 1896 for example, in the abortive ceasefire negotiations the Company had supported the Zhakata house in its bid for the Seke title, and when the Kaguvu medium became involved in this internal dispute all he did was to endorse the Company's nominee. Another notable failure of the religious factor to influence events—assuming any such attempt was made—occurred when NC Armstrong led a force of Budya under Gurupira to join a police attack on the Mangwende-eastern Salisbury resistance strongholds: Gurupira was fatally wounded on 23 April, but far from turning against Armstrong as Ranger has it, the Budya did not lift a finger against him. They remained with the main force until 29 April, when it set out for Salisbury. Armstrong's party of 13 then started back to contact the telegraph party near Mount Darwin, and accompanied the Budya war-party who had been paid off and were on their way home. Because the Budya had briefly risen in June the previous year and in a highly nervous state, and in his melodramatic account he repeated the details of a mhondoro-inspired plot to kill him that he claimed he had overheard, but the Budya did not show any hostility whatsoever, but went on into their territory when asked to do so by Armstrong, leaving him to run for Umtali; if he nearly starved to death in the process, it was his own fault for ignoring supply points nearer at hand. When the next patrol came into the area its reception was perfectly friendly. Armstrong's reports had always been rather excited, and it seems that he had simply panicked.

The central Shona lost their war in 1896-7 for three main reasons. In the first place, the extent of the rising was checked by a number of dynasties that collaborated with the Europeans. Their motives varied: we have already noted that the Gutu, Chirimuhanzu, Zinuto, Chivi and Matibi dynasties in the south collaborated early, in order to avoid the consequences of an Ndebele victory. The western rulers of the Njanganja Confederacy also collaborated, thus preventing the three resisting rulers—Sango, Maromo and Mutekedza—from spreading the rising further east, but it was characteristic of the Njanganja at that stage of their political fragmentation that they did so for different reasons. Gunguwo, for example, had been at war with Maromo in 1892, while his neighbour Maburutse dziva apparently had a land dispute with Maromo. The northwestern Njanganja rulers Ranga and Kwenda, on the other hand, refused to kill the African missionaries living with them when asked to do so by Mutekedza and Svosve, and later came in on the Company side. The Budya, as we have seen, did join in the rising in its initial stage after a period of
preliminary resistance, but then they remained neutral and collaborated later. They had feuds with the central Shona going back to 1887, and in the east, the important Mutasa dynasty remained neutral at first and later collaborated. Not only did the collaborators prevent the rising from spreading farther, but they enabled Umtali and Victoria to be used as staging points for the Company counter-offensive, and supplied food and auxiliary troops.

The second reason for the failure of the rising was a purely military one. Although the Company deliberately played down the role of the Imperial troops that came into the war, they did help shorten it. On the other hand, the pattern of the European victory had already become apparent in the first two months of the rising. By withdrawing from all untenable positions, even abandoning whole townships when necessary, they were able to concentrate on a few impregnable points. From there, they were able to concentrate their manpower and put more men into the field than any single Shona ruler; they won many of their battles because they outnumbered the Shona. The third reason was economic; the Shona rulers were committed to the defence of their fields, without which Shona society could not continue, but they could not prevent Company columns from removing foodstuffs to feed the towns or, later, calculatedly destroying crops. The war ended in late 1897 not so much because of the fighting but because it was vital for the people to start the 1897-8 summer crop.

This paper has been concerned with the organization — or the lack of it — in the 1896 Shona rising. At this point, a few conclusions can be drawn. In the first place, it has been shown that the 'night of the long knives' theory did not apply to the central Shona in 1896, though it may very well have been true of the Ndebele. In retrospect, it is surprising that such a view should have ruled unchallenged for so long. The fact was that Shona society at that time was too disunited to mount such a vast operation in the total secrecy required for its success. There were too many rulers who were prepared to collaborate. As Maburutse's son remarked in July, 1896, the reason he did not report the trouble to the white men was that they did not know it was coming and when it came they ran away. (156) Not surprisingly, the question of collaboration has remained a sensitive issue among the Shona ever since. For years, the Nhowe spat when a Budya passed, and as recently as 1973 a Shona scholar suggested that 'studies in ethnic origins of these collaborators should be carried out. One should really determine whether they were real Shonas or not. This should be done because the 1896-7 Shona rebellion was a reaction against the white rule by the Shona people. If they are found not to be true or real Shonas, then this may explain the reason why they acted as they did.' (157) Another reason why the 'long knives' theory was impracticable was because there were too many marriages between the Shona and the newcomers. Wives of such men as Short or Billy the Xhosa were loyal to their husbands, and were regarded as a security risk. As the Ndebele at Kaguvi's told Zhanta in June, the wives of the policemen had to be watched.

Another factor that emerges out of this paper is that the decision-making capabilities of the Shona in the 1890s have been underestimated. Possibly the Shona did sometimes conform to their stereotype of requiring long discussion before acting, but as they showed in 1896 they could act with remarkable rapidity when the need arose. Yet another factor that emerges is that the Kaguvi mhondoro was probably of greater importance before 1896 than the Native Department thought, at least in his two main areas of influence.

This brings us, finally, to the ideology of the rising. Ranger
suggested that the Kaguvi medium had started to build a new society that looked to the future, just as the 'Rozvi empire' plan had looked to the past. He offered the fighters a war medicine that made them invulnerable, received war-loot from many areas and 'brought thousands of Shona into membership of a new society, the true believers in the M'Lenge, with their own distinguishing symbols and obligations and their own promises of divine favour. This loyalty to a supra-tribal society and this belief in the millenarian transformation of colonial society helps to account for the fervour of the Shona rising.' (158) In fact, this is reading a lot into the evidence: even allowing for the fact that the Kaguvi medium was not influential over such a wide area as Ranger thought, much of this is commonplace. The medium's name murenga meant simply 'rebel, fighter' and was an ideophone of resistance and violence like caindunduma rather than an aspect of a high-god trinity, as Ranger tentatively suggested; (159) his promises of immunity from bullets were typical of African warfare at that time, though it was noticeable that the Shona did not rely upon them but continued to make good use of cover, and it was hardly surprising that he should have been offered loot and women — though sometimes he took it anyway. Even the apparently varied occupations of his followers did not indicate an especially proletarian element, for trial documentation demanded that some 'occupation' be given, and thus a ruler or house-head could be classed as a 'ploughman' or 'hunter'. In the end, the Kaguvi medium himself showed that he saw the rising more in terms of a traditional war, in which the loser could pay compensation: 'I have heard what these women say but it is not true. I only want a place where I can live. If the government want me to pay for these things I will pay with a young girl. I want Nyambe, Goronga and Wamponga brought in, they started the rebellion.' (160) In short, the ideology of the Shona rising seems to have been strictly traditionalist, and it is difficult to see more than a desire to return to the pre-colonial situation as it was: 'They were sick of having the white men in their country and wanted to drive them back to the Diamond fields, they said.' (161) And, if the aims of the rising were backward-looking, so was its social alignment: Maputo scholars are reported to be unhappy with the 'elitist' aspects of the Shona chimurenga of 1896, with its apparent control by rulers and mediums and not by the 'bread masses'. (162) Since it is difficult to see the formation of classes within Shona society — whether as survivals from the undeniably stratified society of earlier centuries or as harbingers of the capitalist system — as affecting the 1896 war, the Maputo scholars' unease may be misplaced on that score, but they and other researchers still appear to be left with a remarkably traditionalist view of 1896, albeit with some new and unsuspected angles.
References

1. Unless otherwise stated, all archival and historical manuscript references are to the National Archives of Rhodesia.

2. The '96 Rebellions.

3. In October 1896 the Company had not yet identified the Kaguvu medium as a factor in the rising, but by December his influence in the Hartley and Salisbury districts had become apparent, and his role was mentioned in the report by P.Inskipp, Under-secretary to the Administrator, Salisbury, 1897. The '96 Rebellions.


7. C.G.Chivanda, 'The Mashona rebellion in oral tradition: Mazoe District', unpubl. University College of Rhodesia Honours Seminar Paper, 1966. Chivanda's criticism of traditions included the observation that the exact sequence of events was not always preserved accurately, a point that my own research confirms.


9. The prime contender for pan-Shona political unity before 1896 was the Changamire Rozvi state, but this had finally surrendered to the Ndebele in 1866. It is argues in D.N.Beach, An outline of Shona history 900-1850, Gwelo and London, in press, that the state had not achieved the degree of political unity previously assumed.


12. Ranger, Revolt, 1-45 13. ibid. 46-86 14. ibid. 1 15. ibid. 81
16. ibid. 196 17. ibid. 200, 225 18. ibid. 191 19. ibid. 86
20. ibid. 127-190 21. ibid. 190 22. ibid. 202-4 23. ibid. 212-8
24. ibid. 216 25. ibid. 282 26. ibid. 219-220
27. ibid. 222 28. ibid. 210-2 29. ibid. 203
30. ibid. 203 31. ibid. 203-4 32. ibid. 205
33. ibid. 202 34. ibid. 204-5 35. ibid. 209-220
36. ibid. 205 37. ibid. 260-7 38. ibid. 289-92, 285-6
39. ibid. 292-4 40. ibid. 289-92 41. ibid. 291-2, 300
42. ibid. 303-4
43. My emphasis.
44. Ranger, Revolt, 200
46. Cobbing, 'Absent priesthood'.
47. D.N.Beach, The Shona economy: branches of production', The Roots.


49. e.g. N 3/33/8 NC Marandellas to CNC, 1 January 1904; Chivanda, 'Kaza', 5 and N 1/1/9, NC Salisbury to CNC, 21 January 1896.

50. e.g. the Gomwe ('Ngomo'), Mutekedza, Maromo, Gutu, Mugabe and Chiruwegwe incidents of 1892-3.

51. S.183, vol. 1, BSA Police Regimental Orders, 1 January 1895-14 May 1897.

52. N 1/1/5 NC Lomagundi to Secy. Nat. Dept., 26 September 1895; N 1/1/3, NC Hartley to CNC 29 December 1895; N 1/1/9, NC Salisbury to Secy. Nat. Dept., 22 July 1895; EC 4/2/1, CNC to Administrator, 1 January 1896.

53. It is not suggested that all theft was classifiable as resistance.

54. Similarly, not all cases of murder can be definitely linked to aggrieved employees, for lack of evidence.

55. N 1/1/2, NC Charter to CNC, 19 February 1895; J 1/9/1, Ferreira to RM Salisbury, 14 July 1894.

56. CT 1/15/6, MC Lomagundi to Acting Ad. Salisbury, 14 August 1894.

57. N 1/1/5, A.J. Jameson to MacGlashan, Lomagundi, 30 May 1895.

58. CT 1/14/6, W.L. Armstrong to H.M. Taberer, 17 July 1898, enc. Report on Mtoko's district or Budija; The '96 Rebellions, 53-4, 59.

59. N 1/1/9, NC Salisbury to CNC, 22 April 1895.

60. A 2/1/6 Acting Ad. to NC Brabant, 8 October 1894; A 2/1/5, G.C. Candler to RM Umtali, 13 August 1894.


63. Edwards, 'Wiri, 3', NADA 39, 1962, 19-21; Rusike's people fired on police in April 1895; N 1/1/9 NC Salisbury to CNC 6 April 1895.

64. N 1/1/3, NC Hartley to CNC 24 May 1896.


66. N 1/1/11 NC Umtali to CNC 15 April and 4 May 1896.

67. NVC 1/1/1 NC Chibi to CNC 21 December 1896.

68. NVC 1/1/1 NC Chibi to CNC 11 September 1897 and NC Chibi to NC Belingwe 17 October 1897.

69. NVC 1/1/11 NC Umtali to CNC 15 April and 4 May 1896.

70. A 1/15/4, OC Victoria to CSO Salisbury 26 October and 6 November 1896; N 1/1/12 NC Victoria to CNC 28 December 1896.


73. S. 401, 339, Regina vs. Kanzanga, Sakara, Kugushu and Tsimota, 30 August 1898, evidence of Kanyenze, Sipolito, Makori, 2 June 1898; A 1/12/27, evidence of Masiewo, 8 July 1898; a similar killing of labour migrants took place in the same area in 1901, N 3/7/9, Acting NC Lomagundi to CNC 6 June 1901.

75. N 1/1/6 NC Mazoe to CNC 30 October 1897; L0 5/4/6 Under Secy. Ad. to London Board, 5 November 1897.


77. Cobbing, 'Absent priesthood', 77-9.

78. It is not certain why this area should have been so thinly populated, apart from there being a high sodic soil area. The Ndebele dynasty, between the Umweswe and the Rutala hills had been fragmented by raiding in the 1660s, but there is no evidence for intensive settlement before the Mwari for a considerable distance south of the Umweswe.

79. N 1/1/3 NC Hartley to CNC 11 April 1896.


82. An apparent anomaly also to be seen in the southeastern low-veld, caused by the necessity of the people to travel long distances between settlements.

83. NB 6/3/1 Report of NC Belingwe 30 June 1897; NB 1/1/2 ANC Filabusi to CNC 21 March 1898.

84. Cobbing, 'Absent priesthood', 76.

85. N 1/1/3 NC Hartley to CNC 24 May 1896; N 1/1/6 NC Mazoe to CNC 30 October 1897. On the confusion caused by Muzhuzha house in the identification of 'Ndebele' near Hartley, see D. N. Beach, 'Kaguvi and Fort Mhondoro', Rhodesiana, 27, 1972, 36n. 45. Ranger noted NC Hartley's reference to Mashayamombe's contact with Mkwati for the purposes of getting locust medicine, but read a political significance into it because it also reported the plan to attack the Hartley police and traders. In Revolt, 202 he omits the statement that this plan had been abandoned, though he had mentioned it in 'The organization of the rebellions of 1896 and 1897, Part Two, The rebellion in Mashonaland', History of Central African Peoples Conference, Lusaka, 1963, 5.

86. Ranger, Revolt, 202-3, traces Tshihwa's movements through L0 5/4/1 NC Chilimanzi to CNC 7 and 10 January 1897, and assumes that Tshihwa visited Mashayamombe's three, on Mkwati's orders in April and June, and with Mkwati in October. Tshihwa in fact made no reference to any journey there in April, only to the 'second' and 'third' journeys.

87. S.401,391, Reg. vs. Zuba and Umtiva 29 February 1899, evidence of Marowa, 6 December 1898. Italicised words omitted in Ranger, Revolt, 220.

88. Papipamire was of the Rwizi dynasty, and his only connection with Chivero was a common totem, shava. On his actual role in Ndebele-Shona politics, see D. N. Beach, 'Ndebele raiders and Shona power', J. Afr. Hist. xv, 4, 1974, 647.

89. N 1/1/6 NC Mazoe to CNC 30 October 1897; Beach, 'Kaguvi and Fort Mhondoro', 33-4; N 1/1/9 NC Salisbury to CNC 3 March 1898.

90. N 1/1/6 NC Mazoe to CNC 30 October 1897. Ranger, Revolt, 218, omits all reference to this haggling over the medicine price, and to the separate contact with Mkwati made by the Kaguvi medium. On the location of Kaguvi's first base, see this reference and White's map in Hist. MSS. WH 1/1/2.

91. NSE 2/1/1 NC Hartley to NC Gwelo 26 September 1897.

92. University of Rhodesia History Department Texts 35, 40-1 Ctr.

93. L 2/3/43, Brabant to Ad. 27 August 94; A 1/12/27 Evidence of Tshenombi et al 13 July 1896.

94. URHD Text 35 Ctr. This concept of a small, semi-independent Mwari cult centre would tend to support the model of J. M. Schoffeleers, 'An organizational model of the Mwari shrines', Guardians of the Land, ed. J. M. Schoffeleers, Gwelo, in press.

95. L0 5/4/1 NC Chilimanzi to CNC 10 January 1897.
96. A 1/12/10 NC Charter to Ad. 3 April 1896; A 1/12/13 Beal to Vintcent 12 July 1896.

97. A 1/12/35 Beal to Vintcent 1 May and 6 May 1896; L0 5/6/1 Grey, to Kershaw, 12 May 1896; Cobbing, 'Absent priesthood', 78.


100. Ranger, Revolt, 182, 190.

101. L0 5/4/1 NC Chilimanzi to CNC, 10 January 1897; A 1/12/27 Evidence of Tshenombi et al, 12 July 1896.

102. S.401,213, Reg. vs. Zhanta, evidence of Zhanta. Italicised words omitted in Ranger, Revolt, 221. Evidence for robbery in Hartley was very slight from March to June: N 1/1/3 NC Hartley to CNC 29 March, 11 April, 26 April and 14 May 1896.


104. The evidence for the southern Lomagundi district shows clearly that a message from the Kagovi medium arrived in Zvimba's area and was given to the medium of the recently-dead Zvimba Musundi, Zvimba and his brother Musonti. A son of Zvimba went with a force to spread the word to Nemakonde, S.401, 256 and 301, Reg. vs. Mangoyo et al 27 May 1898, S.401, 260 and 341, Reg. vs. Msonti, August 1898, S.401, 378, Reg. vs. Samkanga 22 November 1898. There was a man from Zvimba's at Kagovi's, but he was only involved with the death of the African policeman Charlie some time after the first killings, S.401, 253, Reg. vs. Kargubi et al 8 March 1898.

105. This 'ripple' effect was originally considered by Ranger and rejected because it clashed with the opinion of the Company 'experts' of 1896, 'The rebellion in Mashonaland', 2.

106. A 1/12/27 Re-examination of Machine, 4 July 1896. Edwards noted that fires were seen on the hills near Marandellas on the evening of 19 June ('Wiri, 3'25-6) and much later wrote that they were seen on the previous night and also far to the west at Goromonzi and Jeta, (W. Edwards, 'The Wanoe', NADA 4, 1926, 21.)

107. Revolt, 191-3, 225-6. Ranger dates the Mashayamombe outbreak five days too late.

108. Beach, 'Kaguvi and Fort Mhondoro', 36-8. None of Mashayamombe's people mentioned Tshihwa, Bonda or Ndebele at their trials.


110. S.401, 246, 334, 391.


112. N 1/1/3 NC Hartley to CNC, 19 April 1898. Even Kakono, nephew of Mashayamombe and powerful house-head, did not know of the rising until the night before it broke out.

113. The '96 Rebellions, 62.

114. D 3/5/1 Reg. vs. Marubini, 12 July 1898, evidence of Urebwa, see also S. 401, 360, Reg. vs. Mahughlu et al 27 November 1898. The evidence for a very short interval between the first arrival of the rising and the decision by the people to rise also emerges in: D 3/5/1, Reg. vs. Kondo and Matungwa, evidence of Biri, 16 April 1898; 'Billy a Xhosa trader near Charter had been warned he was going to be killed...he knew he could not get away as there were Mashonas living all round.' S.401, 213, evidence of Wampi, Zhanta was Kargubi's postman, he brought a message that day that the Mashonas must kill the whites.' S.401, 241, Reg. vs. Mutuma, 27 February 1898, evidence of Chinyanga: 'I remember the word coming to kill all the whites in June two years ago. Next day Joe Norton and his driver came to our kraal and were killed.' S.401, 243, Reg. vs. Chizengeni et al 23 February 1898, evidence of Tagamania: 'I never heard of killing the whites till Chizengeni called for his impi to kill him'; S.401, 295, Reg. vs. Mzilingeni and Mtshenge, 21 May 1898, evidence.
of Mafunga and Mlele - William and Hendrick, Cape Africans, had been at a beer party, started for home and just then Kagubi's impi came up... and people from the party joined it, followed them and killed them; S.401,381, Reg. vs. Dekwende et al 26 August 1896, evidence of Pemânwâ: 'I heard Dekwende order the men to kill the white men... he said this about 6 p.m. in the night before the man was killed'. (See ref. 112 above); S.401,381, Reg. vs. Tshinwada and Tshisaka 23 November 1898, evidence of Chikuni, 'At the beginning of the rebellion a messenger from Mashangombe came to our kraal and gave orders to kill all whites and their native servants... so at daybreak the prisoners and I took our kerries and went to kill him'; S.401,255, Reg. vs. Mashonganyika, evidence of Mashonganyika, 'Mr. Campbell came the day the god said kill all the white people'. These are the cases that give an indication of the time involved. None claim that there was a pre-arranged rising or that there was a long interval between the decision to rise and the actual killings.

116. S.401,361, evidence of Chikuni; URHD Texts 41 Ctr.
117. LO 5/4/1 NC Chilimanzi to CNC 10 January 1897.
118. A 1/12/27, evidence of Tshenombi et al; URHD Texts 34-52 Ctr.

The rising in the Charter district appears to have spread rather more slowly than in other districts, which tends to support the idea that Bonda's group and messengers from Mashayamombe influenced the three local resistance rulers independently, A 1/12/36 Firm to Acting Secy. 16 June 1896, Firm to Ad. 18 June 1896, 19 June 1896, 22 June 1896.

119. Hist. Mss. WE 3/2/6, reminiscences of M. E. Weale; A 2/14/1 Acting Ad. to Short, 25 October 1893; A 1/12/36 Firm to Scanlen 26 June 1896 and ref. 96 above.
120. LO 5/4/1 NC Chilimanzi to CNC 10 January 1897; Hist. Mss. WE 3/2/6, Reminiscences of M. E. Weale; Ba 2/9/2 Hurrell to GOC 2 August 1896.
121. N 3/14/5 NC Hartley to CNC 29 March 1915 and linked documents.
122. S.401,241, Reg. vs. Mutuma, 22 February 1898, evidence of Mutuma, italicised words omitted in Ranger Revolt 221.
124. The '96 Rebellions, 82.
125. Ibid., 83-95.
126. P. S. Garlake, 'The Mashona rebellion east of Salisbury', Rhode- siana, 14, 1960, 2-3; S.401,255, Reg. vs. Mashonganyika 3 March 1898, evidence of A. D. Campbell. The timing of Zhanta's movements would appear to have been as follows: an un-named messenger from the Kaguvi medium travelled to Chikwakwa's and summoned Zhanta and a few others to Kaguvi's. Zhanta arrived there and saw the loot gathered and the Ndebele from Nkwati's. The loot probably came from Thurgood's agent George's station nearby. Zhanta then returned to Chikwakwa's on 19 June and gave the news of the rising. Assuming that each man travelled only 30 miles a day over the 60 miles between these places, and that each slept a night on the road and at each end of the journey the first messenger need have left Kaguvi's only on 14 June. But it is unnecessary to assume such a tight schedule: as Zhanta pointed out, when he started he thought he was going to get locust medicine, so the first messenger could well have started before 14 June.

The 19th would appear to be the decisive date. Edwards police deserted that afternoon and the fires were seen that night. Parrant, Mashonaland Martyr, 1880217. Parrant adopted a pre-Rangerian stance and assumed a general Ndebele presence in each district.
129. The '96 Rebellions, 59-60, 63-4, 98-101; A 1/12/22, note by Mac- 
Glashan, January 1897.
130. Ranger located the Nyamweda-Norton area in Mazoe, and confused 
house-head Gutu soko of the Shawasha with the Gutu gumbo dyn­ 
asty of the south.
131. See files S.401 and W.3/5/1 in general.
132. Beach, 'Kaguvi and Fort Mhondoro', 33.
133. Beach, 'The rising in Southwestern Mashonaland', 146.
134. Beach, 'Kaguvi and Fort Mhondoro', 38. Other long-distance raids 
by Mashayamombe and Bonda in 1897 were on refugee camps in 
Charter and the neutral Ndebele settlement at Hangayiva, 45 
and 65 miles away, respectively, N 1/1/2 NC Charter to CNC 
24 January 1897, N 1/1/3 NC Hartley to CNC 12 September 1897. 
These raids, which were essentially for supplies for the bel­ 
eaguered Mashayamombe stronghold, involved the killing of sev­ 
eral women and children.
135. The joint attack on the Alice mine in June 1896 may have been 
partly due to its location near the junction of the Hwata­ 
Chiweshe and Nyachuru territories.
136. N 1/1/3 NC Hartley to CNC 6 August 1897.
138. A 1/12/14 Nesbitt to Vincent, 5 August 1896. See ref. 90.
139. L0 5/4/1 NC Chilimanzi to CNC 10 January 1897.
140. Ranger, Revolt, 286-7. The Company officials were partly led to 
exaggerate the influence of the Kaguvi medium because their 
base in Salisbury lay between the two areas where he did play 
a great part.
141. Ranger, Revolt, 158-9; N 1/1/8 NC Ndanga to CNC 2 March 1897.
142. I would now modify my opinion, stated in my thesis, that 
Muposi Chikore had been an undisputed Mambo before c.1893
134. N 1/1/2 NC Charter to CNC 11 March 1897; L0 5/4/2 Report of 
CNC Mashonaland, 19 March 1897.
144. N 1/1/8 NC Ndanga to CNC 2 March and 30 March 1897. Italicised 
words omitted by Ranger in Revolt, 291. Mpanga and Mtshetetum­ 
jani (Masesenyana) are identifiable as mfecane Ngoni from G. 
Fortune, 'A Rozvi text with translation and notes', NADA 33, 
1956, 72, 80 and K.R. Robinson, 'A history of the Bikita district' 
145. Ranger, Revolt, 269-292.
146. Most Rozvi groups of any size had committed themselves to the 
rising long before, and many had been defeated.
147. N 1/1/2 NC Charter to CNC 19 March 1897; L0 5/4/2 NC Makoni to 
CNC c. February 1897.
148. N 1/1/8 NC Ndanga to CNC 30 March 1897.
149. L0 5/6/7 ANC Gwelo to CNC 1 December 1896 and 13 January 1897; 
L0 5/6/8 NC Gwelo to CNC 2 February 1897; N 1/1/5 NC Hartley 
to CNC 9 November 1897.
150. N 1/1/2 NC Charter to CNC 14 March 1897. The evidence that 
Mkwati started another Mwari-cult shrine northeast of Salis­ 
bury is thin, and depends upon the correctness of officials' 
asumptions that a screened cave was a cult centre, N 1/1/9 
NC Salisbury to CNC 19 August 1897.
151. Beach, 'Kaguvi and Fort Mhondoro', 43-4. This uses the same doc­ 
uments as Ranger, who omits mention of this quarrel.
152. L0 5/4/1 Harding to CNC 3 December 1896 and 19 January 1897; 
N 1/1/9 NC Salisbury to CNC 22 July and 1 August 1897. This 
uses the same sources as Ranger.
153. L0 5/4/2 Howard to Grey, 12 and 20 March 1897; Armstrong to CNC 
20 March 1897; L0 5/4/3 Armstrong to Grey 29 April 1897, CNC to 
Grey, 10 May 1897; L0 5/4/4 Armstrong to CNC 26 May 1897; L0 5/4/ 
5 Harding to Moleyns, 21 September 1897; L0 5/4/6 Harding to
Moievns. 9 October 1897;N 1/1/6 Armstrong to Taborer, 17 July
1898;N 1/1/7 Armstrong to CNC 27 February 1897, 19 and 20
March 1897, 14 and 26 May 1897;N 1/1/9 Armstrong to CNC 20
March 1897. This uses the same sources as Ranger.

154. A 1/9/1 Brabant to RM Victoria 26 April 1892;URHD Texts 34-5,
38, 41 Ctr; A 1/12/27 evidence of Tshenombi et al. 13 July 1896;
URHD Texts 41 Ctr, 68 Bsa.

155. URHD Text 44 Ctr; H. E. Sumner, 'The Kwenda stroy', NADA ix, 1, 1967
4; J. White, 'The Mashona rebellion', Work and workers in the
mission field, April, 1897, 151. For reasons why the Njanja would
have wanted to preserve their missionaries, see D. N. Beach, 'The
initial impact of Christianity upon the Shona: the Protestants
and the southern Shona', Christianity South of the Zambezi, i,


W. Mangwende, 'To understand the Shona rebellion one has to
understand the Shona past', URHD Honours Paper, 1973, 6. As
a footnote, I might add that as a result of my 1969 paper
on collaborators circulating among scholars at St. Augustine's
Penhalonga, a boy named Chivi has apparently been victimized
by his fellow-pupils. (Private information)


159. Ranger, Revolt, 219.

160. S. 401, 253, Reg. vs. Kargubi et al 8 March 1898, evidence of Kar-
gubi. Italicized words omitted in Ranger, Revolt, 212, where the
statement is taken as a serious comment on the religious
organization of the rising. It looks a lot more like an at-
tempt to transfer the blame if all the prisoners tried, those
in the Kagubi medium's group were possibly the most unstoic.

161. LO 5/4/4 Van Niekerk to CSO 8 June 1897.

162. Ranger, 'The people in Africa resistance.'