An understanding of the economic history of the Shona-speaking peoples is fundamental to any analysis of the economy of southern Zambezia. The Shona, occupying most of the area, outnumber the neighbouring Ndebele, Valley and Lower Zambezi Tonga, Tsonga, Sotho and Venda by a considerable margin. The establishment of a capitalist economy based upon farming, mining and manufacturing in the region since 1890 has led to great changes in the 'traditional' economy, but it has not destroyed it. Indeed, the capitalist sector of the economy relies upon the existence of the 'traditional' sector to keep wages low. Economic historians who are concerned with the working of the capitalist economy have drawn attention to the effect of the economy in its early stages on the African people. In particular, they have shown how a very rapid African response to the market opportunities offered by the capitalist economy led to the expansion of an African peasantry that prospered on the sale of produce until it was crushed by legislation and other measures aimed at reducing the African people to wage-labourers status.

So far, historians have not paid much attention of the Shona economy as a whole in its pre-capitalist phases. Specific aspects of this economy such as mining and trade have been examined in varying detail, but only recently have studies been made of entire economies from a local viewpoint. The tendency of historians to concentrate on such aspects as mining and trade has been largely due to the rise of the Shona state at Zimbabwe before 1500 and the concentration of the Portuguese upon trade with its successors of Mutapa, Torwa and Changamire. The smaller political units have largely been ignored, and some analyses have come dangerously close to depicting the Shona economy as a mining, manufacturing and trading economy. This study will attempt to give a general account of the Shona economy over the full thousand years of Shona settlement south of the Zambezi.

The analytical techniques of two Marxist anthropologists who studied the peoples of the Ivory Coast, Claude Meillasoux and Emmanuel Terray, provide some useful concepts for the study of the Shona economy. They were primarily concerned with the application of Marxist principles to 'traditional' societies, and thus with the relationship of the economy of these societies to the social and political systems which they saw to be derived from those economies. A parallel study for the Shona is beyond the scope of this paper, for it would involve a detailed study of social and political processes over a thousand years, but an account of this kind can take note of the total economic analysis possible, while concentrating upon a part.
of that analysis. Terray points out that the identification of a 'mode of production' as an analytical tool composed of an economic base, a juridical-political structure and an ideological superstructure, is superior to a simple description of an economy. The mode of production is also divisible into branches of production, and it is with these that we are concerned in this paper on the Shona economy, rather than with the relations of production on which Meillasoux and Terray laid such stress. In other words, we are concerned with the things that people did, rather than with the size or organisation of their labour forces. This sort of analysis is the simplest and most basic part of the whole economic analysis, but unless it takes note of the most complex and refined part of the mode of production, the ideological superstructure it can lead to a highly distorted picture. In plain English, if one lacks statistics for the Shona economy in the past, one has to rely upon oral traditions to a great extent, and these depend upon the thinking of the informant. An embittered old man, talking of the precolonial economy, might say: 'We grew crops in muddy areas along the river banks. We got plenty of food from there. We hunted as we liked. There was nothing which the people were not allowed to do. We did whatever we liked ... One could go and plough wherever one wanted. There was plenty of food in those days. Our children are now unhealthy because of shortage of food. That is what I saw in the old days....' A researcher into the area discussed, Chwaya on the lower Umfuli, might wonder whether riverbank fields were indeed adequate, or whether other lands had to be used, and whether good hunting was compatible with good crops. A document of 1898 would show that at least once in that old man's youth his people had been forced to abandon their land and seek refuge from drought and locusts in Shangwe.

But the ideological superstructure of a people's economy can produce more serious distortions of the evidence than a simple nostalgia for a Utopian past. The Shangwe of the Mafungabusi plateau were known as tobacco-sellers, the Njanja of the upper Sabi as ironworkers, and so on, but it will be shown that such claims as those of the Njanja that they were primarily ironworkers should not be taken too seriously in an economic analysis. Indeed, Meillasoux' emphasis on the rôle of the elder in the 'traditional' mode of production may have owed something to the age of his informants, while Terray paid a great deal of attention to a mode of production based upon communal hunting with nets which, among the Shona at least, was rather rare as a food-producing process, for reasons that probably apply to all agricultural economies, including that of the Guro.

Any analysis of modes of production, therefore, must make some attempt at indicating the relative importance of each of the branches of production within
each mode. This can only be done by applying historical analysis to the picture given by anthropologists, by bringing in the concept of time. This involves not only the question of the various ways in which the people spent the limited number of hours in every year, but also the differences between years, between decades and between centuries. Except for their recognition of the importance of the crop cycle, Meillasoux and Terray made little attempt to show how time affected their analysis, and virtually ignored historical factors such as droughts, the economic development of the peoples they studied over the centuries and other events that could affect the economy.  

Hunting.

Like all the other Bantu-speaking peoples, the ancestors of the Shona accomplished the transition from a hunting and gathering economy to agriculture at some time between c.2000 BC and c.AD 1. Before this transition they had had more or less perfected the techniques of hunting with spear and bow and trapping animals. These techniques accounted for a variety of animals ranging from the edible rat to the elephant, and practically nothing was forgotten. But it is very difficult to calculate the relative importance of hunting as a branch of production from traditions. The hunt was exciting and interesting, the traditional province of the man, and brought in meat that was highly prized as protein as well as by-products such as skin and horns. What we are still in ignorance of is the total number of hours spent by the men of a community in hunting, whether as individuals or small or large groups and the amount of meat produced; obviously, this could vary tremendously.

What we do know is that the picture given by traditions of the importance of hunting in the Shona past has been exaggerated. This is especially true of tradition about population movements in which the incoming group are depicted as hunters. This is because Shona traditions tend to concentrate on male descendants of a founding ancestor, which produces a picture of an abnormally small original group, often one man. Such a group, it is argued, must have been so small that it had to rely on hunting rather than agriculture which supposedly requires a larger work force. Thus founding ancestors such as Mbiru of the Hero, Sabarawara of Manungwe and Nyamubvambire of Manyika who lived at a time when Portuguese documents make it quite clear that the Shona economy was based on agriculture, are seen as hunters. The migration paths of such groups as the Duma and the Namibya skirt dry and sandy areas unsuitable for agriculture, which suggests that they were planting crops as they went, while a movement of Chimbadzwa's Manyika from Manyika to Barwe in 1896 involved hundreds of people and was carried out between reaping and sowing.

Hunting by an agricultural people who far outnumbered their hunting and gathering
predecessors in the same area of land had unfortunate results if pushed too far. The Shona used nets called mambure to catch animals of up to medium size which had been driven by a large crowd of beaters. This involved every available man in the polity, and people under several different rulers would sometimes combine together. It seems to have been a hunting method of deadly efficiency, but it is noticeable that the only times when it was noted were in the droughts of the early 1870s and middle 1880s, and in the dry lowlands of Buhera in 1891. If a large population relied too much on hunting, it could destroy the game and lead to diminishing returns.

In early Shona settlements, hunting was not as prominent as cattle-keeping as a source of meat. The thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Musengezi culture relied mainly on cattle, and middens at Zimbabwe and Khama show that cattle bones were more common than game bones. The nineteenth century saw an increase in the hunting of small cats such as the civet and genet as tribute for the Ndebele in Belingwe, their attractive skins being used for decorated clothing and perhaps for resale to traders. As guns became more common in the Shona country, hunting grew in importance quite apart from the hunting of elephants for ivory. In 1884 Kerr noted the effect of guns on the game, and in 1897 Chitawudze’s people on the Bubye were using their guns for mass slaughter of zebra.

In short, hunting provided a valuable addition to the diet of the Shona, but it was not central to the Shona economy, and could offer only a limited amount of support during famines.

**Gathering.**

The gathering of wild plants was actually more important to hunting peoples than the game they killed, and the Shona have continued to practice it down to the present day. Even in non-drought years, the countryside yielded a great deal of important nutrition in the form of wild fruits, vegetables and insects that were gathered by the women and children. In times of famine, the importance of gathering increased dramatically, and sometimes people relied almost exclusively on wild fruit, herbs and insects. This was true, for example, in south Charter in 1899 and in lower Buhera in 1903. Locusts, themselves the cause of crop failures, were also a source of food, but they were not equal in value to the crops they destroyed. Gathering was peripheral to the Shona economy for the same reasons as hunting: the land would not provide enough to support the larger population that had grown up as a result of agriculture, but it did provide relishes for ordinary food and a standby in emergency.

**Agriculture.**

The Shona communities were all basically agricultural, in that the most import
activity of the greatest number of their people was the production of food by growing crops. All other activities, including mining, manufacturing, building, trade, politics and religion, were secondary to this, and could not have been carried on without it. Shona agriculture dates back to some time between c.2000 BC, when the neolithic revolution, which began in the Near East round about 7000 BC, spread to West Africa, and c.AD 1. The neolithic revolution, which made semi-permanent settlements possible by making a regularly replenished food supply available, was overtaken by the spread of the Iron Age round about the latter date, which made the whole agricultural process more secure by providing a powerful digging and clearing instrument, the hoe. The spread of the Iron Age from West Africa to South Africa was very rapid, and was the work of the rapidly-expanding Bantu-speaking peoples, of whom the ancestors of the Shona formed part. It is not yet known where these ancestors were at this stage, nor how far they had become differentiated from the other Bantu-speakers, but it is important to realise that when the Shona settled south of the Zambezi, they already had about a thousand years' agricultural experience.

The earliest Shona settlements were made in the south round about 1000, the Leopards Kopje and Gumanye cultures, and in the north round about 1200, the Harare and Musengezi cultures. The Leopards Kopje, Harare and Musengezi cultures were almost certainly ancestral to the modern Kalanga, Zesuru and Korekore dialect cluster and there were probably early Shona cultures in the east corresponding to the Nyanga, Manyika, Shanga and Ndau dialect clusters. Although the entire Shona settlement was made fairly early, this does not imply an even spread of population over the whole southern Zambezian region at any time. Not only were there dry, sandy, saline, and frost-exposed lands that were relatively unsuitable for settlement, but over the whole stretch of Shona history there were major demographic movements that create imbalances in population that led in turn to further movements. Thus a buildup of population at Zimbabwe, which arose out of the Gumanye culture, led in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to population movements west to Khami where the Torwa state was founded and north to the edges of the main plateau and the Zambezi valley. This northward movement led in the sixteenth century to a reverse movement to the south-east, down to the coast. In the seventeenth century a double movement of peoples from the movo nuclear area between the Mazoe and Nyadiri rivers to the southwest and southeast founded the Changamire state and the movo Ndau dynasties respectively. During the next century a major movement of peoples from the north and east completely resettled the south and much of the centre, which had not been heavily settled since the fall of Zimbabwe.

All this means that the recent arguments about the soil preferences of the Shor
are strictly academic, since the Shona rarely had a free choice in the matter.\textsuperscript{36} Political units were established by far more factors than the presence of red or sandy soils, and for a people whose land did not include the soil they preferred, the only choice was between emigration, which involved either conquest of the original inhabitants or subjection to them, or making the best of what was available. Even if they possessed a choice, people were also constrained by the need for defensible hills in some areas, the need for water and the need to move their fields every few years. However, given a free choice, informants made it clear that the soil preferred depended upon the type of crop required: finger millet did better in sandy soils, and maize in red clays.\textsuperscript{37}

The crops available to the Shona appear at first sight to have been numerous, but in fact they were rather limited. Rukweza or zviyo, finger millet, \textit{mhunza}, bulrush millet, \textit{mapfunde}, sorghum, \textit{magwere} or \textit{chibagwe}, maize, \textit{mupunze}, rice, \textit{nzungu}, groundnuts, \textit{nvimo}, Bambara groundnuts, \textit{nyemba}, cowpeas and a very wide range of vegetables were grown, but a closer analysis shows that only the finger and bulrush millets were central to the Shona economy. The vegetables and the groundnuts and cowpeas were not staple crops in themselves; rice was grown in well-watered areas,\textsuperscript{38} and near Sofala in the sixteenth century it was of real importance as a crop,\textsuperscript{39} but in most areas the riverbank fields and the marshes were too few to grow enough rice for everyone; sorghum, on the contrary, thrived in dry areas, but in the better-watered areas it was only grown in small quantities in the women's gardens alongside the vegetables;\textsuperscript{40} maize appeared in the Zambezi valley in the eighteenth century and had spread throughout the region by the nineteenth century. But this American crop did not become a staple as it did in eastern Zambia. Informants stated that it was difficult to stamp, and indeed maize when dry has a moisture content as low as 8\% and has to be wetted before stamping in a traditional Shona mortar. Until the Europeans began to buy it and mechanical mills became available, maize was eaten on or off the cob as a relish.\textsuperscript{41} All these vegetables, nuts and grains, in fact, were \textit{usavi} or \textit{muriwo}, relish, to the Shona, and were not relied upon to produce \textit{sedza}, the stiff grain porridge that is a synonym for food itself. They were important in the diet of the people, but they were not as crucial as the two millets.

The process of cultivation itself was comparatively straightforward. The fields were prepared for planting in the dry winter months, and planted at the onset of the summer rains. The exact time of planting depended on the crop concerned. By the end of the rains the crops reached maturity and they were harvested in early winter. Mid-winter was the time for drying and threshing. Part of the crop was then put into the next cycle as seed, and the remainder was stored as food for the
for the village. Like all agricultural cycles, this process depended upon the food supply from one crop lasting through the entire cycle until the next harvest became available. This depended upon the effectiveness of Shona methods of grain storage and the effect of the Shona environment.

The most common Shona granary was a small hut, built on a rock to keep the insects out, with a well-sealed roof and door. This could be made fairly airtight, but in the rainy season there was a general rise in humidity, and it seems that even the best-built granary could not prevent a certain increase in moisture inside. This softened the grain kernels which had been dried in the winter, and made it easier for borers to eat into them. In a normal rainy season this would not be very serious, and the stored crop would dry out again in the winter. If grain was kept through two or more rainy seasons, however, it would become progressively more difficult to keep it in a good condition. In theory it was possible to make an almost totally airtight granary, and individual experiments have shown that it was possible to keep grains for a very long time, but in everyday practice it seems that few crops could be kept for more than two or three years. This problem of storage was of crucial importance to the Shona economy. Sorghum could be stored for a very long time, and was very resistant to drought as a growing crop, but although it was well known to the Shona it was not grown as a staple crop in most areas; presumably there was a good reason for this. Finger millet was also good for storage, and it was generally the most important Shona crop. Unfortunately it suffered more than bulrush millet from drought.

Shangwa is the Shona word for drought, but it also means disaster or misery ... Droughts are, and have been, remarkably common in the southern Zambezian plateau. It is difficult to generalise, but there is about one chance in five that a year will bring subnormal rainfall. But a mere shortage of rain is not the only thing that can produce shangwa. Rains that come too soon or too late, too much rain, locust plagues or even frosts and floods in some areas could destroy the crops of millet on which the people depended. Shangwa could not be predicted in advance: one of the major functions of Shona religions of all kinds was to bring the required rain, but no completely accurate drought-prediction method has yet been invented. The effect of a shangwa was delayed. In a four-year sequence, if the crops sown in the early summer of Year 2 were hit by a drought, the crops sown in Year 1 and harvested in the winter of Year 2 would last until the winter of Year 3. But even if the rains of Year 3 were good, before the crop of Year 3 could be reaped in the winter of Year 4, the crop of Year 2 would have run out. The consequence of this could be terrible, and worse if there were two or more droughts in succession. It is not
surprising that every year saw a certain amount of tension until it became certain that the crops were secure. Traditions stress the effect of a drought: 'At that time there was no water and so the people of Nyashanu were drinking the urine of cattle...' says a tradition of the foundation of the Karivara^religious cult in the eighteenth century. This may be exaggerated, but traditions of movements show that at times the agricultural system simply collapsed and people had to fall back on gathering and hunting, or flee to other areas not so badly hit. Thus in the bad famines in the early nineteenth century the entire Samuriwo group abandoned their lands on the upper Umfuli and sought refuge with Nyandoro in Tsunga, to the southwest. In Lomagundi in September 1895 some villages had no food left after the locusts had struck, and were living on wild fruit and roots. In Charter in 1901, while some areas had done well, others had been so badly hit by locusts that gardens had been abandoned. On the lower Zambezi in about 1810 it was reckoned that one third of the year was spent in gathering when the crops were bad.

These of course are extreme cases, but they show that in spite of a thousand-odd years of experience of the southern Zambezian environment, and in spite of the wide range of crops known and the effectiveness of the hoe culture, Shona agriculture was remarkably fragile. There were ways of countering shangwa within agriculture, but none of them were completely successful. One method was to plant bulrush millet, which stood up to drought far better than finger millet; unfortunately, it could not always be known if a drought was coming, and in any case bulrush millet did not store as well as finger millet. Another method was to plant a second crop in the hope that it would not be hit as badly as the first. Often this worked, though presumably later crops would not be as good as the earlier ones would have been. In Charter in 1899 the first crop was destroyed by the drought, and the second one by frosts, so that by the end of the year some people were living on wild oranges. There was nothing in theory to stop people from growing much larger crops: this was often done when markets became available. But, unless this was done every year, the limitations of the storage system meant that a store of extra grain would eventually go bad. On the other hand, if extra crops were grown every year, what was to be done with them? Most years were not drought years, and no-one needed extra grain.

Factors such as this and the difficulty of transporting grain on anything other than an extremely valuable ox or cow prevented the growth of a grain trade until mercantile and capitalist markets became available. A Shona farmer could not grow a surplus in the certainty that an area near him would be hit by a drought and, nor would he risk his valuable cattle in hawking his grain around in the hope of finding
a buyer. On the other hand, those who were affected by a *shangwa* of some kind would go to those who were better off in search of grain. In 1895 around Salisbury the locusts caused a great deal of damage to the crops in some areas, and by the end of the year about half of an estimated herd of 2,000 cattle had been traded to the people in Marandellas district in return for grain, and a further 500 had been eaten. It is not surprising that in 1896 the Kaguvi spirit medium, who had made his reputation as a locator of game for the *mambure* hunting nets in the droughts of the 1880s, should have been so keen on getting a new locust medicine from Mkwati in the Inyati area, a keenness that led to his involvement in the 1896 Shona rising. The shortage of grain in Manyika in 1896 is said to have been one of the reasons for the slowness of its ruler Mutasa to move against his enemy Makoni, from whom he bought his grain. The people in the Zambezi valley near Sena came as far into the Shona country as Mbire when they suffered from famine, selling ivory and women. 

The coming of the Ndebele did not create a market in grain for the Shona. In the first few years of their settlement, and in times of famine, the Ndebele raided for grain from the Shone, but the Ndebele were primarily agriculturalists and by the early 1850s they were extremely prosperous in grain. Arrighi's suggestion that continual Ndebele raiding and tribute-taking stimulated Shona grain production is unsupported by the facts.

Although the Shona were agriculturalists first and foremost, with many crops and centuries of experience of their environment, the problems they encountered with grain storage meant that their agricultural economy was not totally secure. The contemporary record does not suggest that hunting and gathering were enough to offset totally the food shortage caused by *shangwa*. What was required was some sort of wealth that could outlast the limits of the agricultural growing and storage cycle. The rest of this paper discusses the ways in which this wealth was sought, and their relative importance.

**Herding.**

The domestication of stock by the Bantu-speaking peoples broke their dependence on the crop cycle for food. Sheep, goats and cattle lived much longer than grain could be stored, reproduced themselves and could be supervised by those males who were of less use in the agricultural process, the boys. The Early Iron Age people who dominated southern Zambezia were originally almost entirely dependent upon sheep and goats, but later they acquired some cattle. The Shona, whose settlement has been described above, were from the first the owners of herds of cattle, but goats remained important. The proportion of goats to cattle varied considerably.
from district to district, but generally there were at least twice as many goats
as cows, and often more.\textsuperscript{63} In such places as Bocha in the 1890s there were virtually
no cows, and the people relied almost entirely on goats.\textsuperscript{64} Sheep were much rarer,
but in some areas such as Manyika they almost equalled the cattle in numbers.\textsuperscript{65}
But the cow was justly regarded as being the supreme domestic beast.

The Shona cow was generally very small, averaging round about 350 lbs., as
compared with about 450 lbs. in the average Ndebele cow, about 600 lbs. in the best
Ndebele cattle and about 650 lbs. in Ngami cattle. Selective breeding and favourable
conditions, however, could lead to a rapid increase in size,\textsuperscript{66} and a seventeenth-century
account claims that the cattle of the Torwa state were so tall that one had to stand
to milk them.\textsuperscript{67} Small though the average nineteenth-century Shona cow was, it was
far superior to the goat in the amount and quality of the meat it supplied. Dintweng
Kousu's poetic description of cattle says disparagingly of goats and sheep, 'these
are not like the real livestock/cattle\textsuperscript{7}. Their meat is little and their milk is
little and the work they do is little'. Kousu's account, that of a Kalanga cattle-
guard, stresses the value of every part of the cow.\textsuperscript{68} The mature cow could calve
once a year, and since a heifer almost always calved by her third year and usually
lived until she was sixteen or twenty, giving ten to fifteen calves.\textsuperscript{69} This
represented a great increase from one cow, and careful breeding and herding could
lead to a real increase in a man's wealth in a short time. Of course, factors
ranging from contagious abortion to raiding could cut down this increase, but when
compared with the agricultural cycle the cattle herd did much to make life more
secure.

The record of cattle-herding by the Shona is a long one. The cattle figurines
of the Leopards Kopje and Gumanye cultures, the cattle bones in the middens of
Zimbabwe and Khami, the herds of the Mutapa and the Torwa states, the cattle trade
from the southwest to the Zambezi valley from the sixteenth to the nineteenth
centuries and the cattle-wealth of the Changamire all support this.\textsuperscript{70} It is almost
impossible to get a clear estimate of the total numbers of Shona cattle before the
European occupation. The Ndebele, Gaza and Ngoni took many of them, and after a
raid on Gutu one Ndebele was granted 150 head for himself,\textsuperscript{71} but Gutu was still
reckoned to have 1500 head in the census of 1895.\textsuperscript{72} Since this census was taken
by the Native Commissioners who were counting people and livestock in order to tax
them, and who had already taken 2611 head of cattle as tax, their count of about
16,000 head for Mashonaland was well under the real total.\textsuperscript{73} Not only were some
areas such as Melsetter and Buhera not counted at all, but in many districts the
Native Commissioners had not visited every part. As the Shona had had some decades
in which to perfect their techniques of concealing themselves and their cattle from the Ndebele, it is unlikely that the Native Department raiders had an accurate picture. On the other hand, their estimates of the proportion of people to cattle were probably accurate, and ranged from 3:1 in Victoria through 6:1 in Umtali and 8:1 in Salisbury to much higher ratios in cattle-poor districts such as Hartley and Lomagundi. Later estimates were that the basic herd in the whole country in the 1890s was 500,000 of which about 200,000 were owned by the Ndebele.74

'Here is one important point about cattle. When you have a kraal of cattle, you can say that you have all power; if you are given a wife, you lovola with them; if you have sons, you lovola for them with the same, selling some, and procuring blankets for your wife...Furthermore, if you are without cattle, but have daughters, give them for lovola, cutting a cattle-kraal...,' wrote Kousu.75 The social importance of cattle to the Shona is so well known that it hardly requires stating.76 Generally, it was true that cattle were only killed on special occasions, but we have already seen how, in the Salisbury district in 1895, the people killed some and sold more for grain, in order to survive. In the last resort, the cow was insurance against the failure of the crops, and this lay at the root of its economic importance, but it acquired so much social importance that the main aim of every Shona farmer was to build up his herd.

The basic problem for many of the Shona was the acquisition of cattle, or at least of goats, for they were not distributed equally among the people even in cattle-rich areas. As we have seen, the rate of reproduction of cattle was so rapid that even the payment of the rovora bride-price need not have depleted a herd that had built up to reasonable numbers, though it could affect smaller herds. In any given Shona society, as we shall see, there were relatively rich and poor people. As we have seen, cattle were sold for grain by people who could get grain no other way, but it is unlikely that they would have sold their cattle for grain under normal circumstances. For the Shona farmer who lacked cattle, a number of ways of obtaining them existed. The most direct way was to steal them. The gororo, or professional thief, was a well-known figure in Shona lore,77 and the Shona raiding-party was probably just as responsible for the construction of 'refuge'-type stone walls on hilltop strongholds in the centuries after 1600 as the much-abused Ngoni, Gaza or Ndebele impi. But for many people this was not practicable, and the wealth they sought had to be found in mining, manufacturing and trade. Since in many cases the entire process was carried out by the same man or family group, it will be abbreviated into simple 'trade', internal and external.
Internal trade.

It has already been shown that in practice the precapitalist Shona economy was anything but self-sufficient. The supply of game and wild vegetables in a given area does not appear to have been enough to support an agricultural community whose crops had failed to the extent required, and so grain was purchased from elsewhere. Similarly, two of the most important elements of the Shona village's economy, salt and iron, could in theory be obtained locally, but in practice they had to be obtained through trade. Where specialist groups existed to make or sell special commodities, they sometimes added to their existing wealth by their trade, or used it to make their unfavourable environment more bearable, but in no case did these specialists rely entirely or even largely upon their specialisation: they remained agriculturalists in the main, so that the term 'specialist' in the Shona economy does not imply total specialisation.

Salt was an essential commodity. There were three basic ways of obtaining it. One was to burn certain plants, put their salty ashes in water, filter it and produce salt crystals by evaporation in a specially formed pot. The truly desperate could do the same with the droppings of goats. But the best method used the evaporation process on the saline earths that formed around saline springs in certain areas. This produced salt of noticeably better quality, so that although salt-plants and goats dung were available to all, a salt industry grew up at these rare saline springs that supplied people over a wide area. Some of these springs were in the Zambezi valley, and were well known even in the sixteenth century. In 1859 this salt industry was still operating, a large cake of salt selling for a fathom of cloth. Another such salt-producing area was the Mafungabusi plateau, where as we shall see the Shangwe people were also major tobacco growers. The Shangwe processed and sold salt across the Umniati in Chwaya at a rate of one chicken to a dish of salt, according to one informant. This industry attracted some European commercial interest at the end of the nineteenth century, but it remained a fairly small-scale business. The best-known salt-producing area was the middle Sabi valley. The geological formation led to the rise of saline springs, and those people of the movo and dziva Ndu who for various reasons were pushed out of the well-watered highlands into the dry middle Sabi lowlands found in the salt trade a compensation for their bad crops and fly-ridden herds. In particular, the Chiadzwa and Chamutsa houses of the movo Muwushu dynasty, who had crossed the rivers into lower Bocha and Buhera respectively, specialised in salt-manufacture. The process described above produced an ibvi, knee, of salt in a bark container. Some of the
Bocha and Hera people descended to the lowlands to make these, but the moyo people produced the most, and either sold it on the spot or took it into the uplands for sale. According to Hera informants, the Chamutsa people had to pay a tax to the Hej ruler, which reduced the benefit of the Chamutsa salt trade, which generally brought in one hoe for one ibvi of salt. This trade extended throughout Bocha and Buhera, but north of the Sabi, west of Wedza and in Gutu the price asked apparently became too high, for the people there used the other methods described to produce their own salt. The Sabi salt traders were specialists in the sense that they produced more salt than anyone else, but they were not true specialists since they still relied heavily on agriculture. The most that indicated any special benefit obtained by Chiadzwa's people from the salt trade in 1896 was a rather large herd of 800 goats.

The badza or iron hoe was the mainstay of Shona agriculture, and regular use made it necessary to replace each hoe at intervals of two to five years. Iron deposits are often small, but they are widespread and of frequent occurrence hence very many tiny iron-ore quarries are bound to be overlooked and we can now know only the largest and most recent. This statement by an archaeologist is supported to some extent by traditions and documents. Traditions from Chwaya talk of hoes' from the mountains', though there were suggestions that they were not of true iron. South of the Sabi at the Chburwi, Shava, Bepe and Dorowa hills, hoes were made from the local ores. Other traditions refer to the iron ore of Mahugwi near Zimbabwe. Other iron mines that are known to have been worked were at Makaha in Mtoko, Anwa: Nhove, on the Shawasha goldfield, in Gutu, in the Mwaresi range, at Thaba Insimbi south of the Sebakwe, on the Kwe Kwe river, in the Mulungwane hills, near Filabusi and Gwanda, at Buhwa mountain and in the Matopos. Still more were in Maungwe, a fourteen places near Manyika, in Sanga and in Teve. Thus, although not every small political unit had its own supply of iron ore, few such units were very far from an iron mine — rarely more than fifty miles. It is thus interesting to note the development of the Wedza iron industry.

Wedza, a mountain at the headwaters of the upper Sabi, possessed iron ores that were specially suited to Shona iron-smelting and iron-working techniques. Wedza ores were therefore taken to forges as far away as Gutu, Seke and Selukwe by the settlers of those areas. Wedza originally belonged to the Hera, who lost it to the immigrant Mbire at the end of the eighteenth century, and according to Posselt the Hera worked the iron there and made hoes with which they paid tribute, to whom is not stated. But the main exploiters of the iron of Wedza were the Njanja, a group of people from the Zambezi valley in the northeast who settled at Bvumbure some way south of Wedza, in the early eighteenth century. At the end of that
century they began to expand rapidly, and in fifty years they occupied a wide sweep of land running southwest from Wedza. The Njanja played the major part in the rise of the Wedza iron trade, which was well established by 1857. A recent study has shown how the Njanja organised their labour, smelted and forged the iron and marketed the finished product. The Njanja did not make any major innovations in either smelting or forging, but they did manage to increase production by bringing several forges together in one supra-village factory under the supervision of one expert, and by encouraging apprentices from other peoples to join them, supplying labour in return for training and, often, a daughter. In many ways their techniques were very sophisticated. Their traders took hoes over a wide area, southeast as far as Bocha and the Ndau lands beyond the Sabi, south as far as Gutu and the Duma country, returning with cattle, goats and ivory.

What concerns us in this study is the importance of the Njanja iron industry and trade, both in terms of Shona history, and to the Njanja themselves. In so far as time is concerned, the Njanja iron trade arose at a time when the last of the great Shona precolonial demographic movements was in progress. As we have seen, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a complete resettlement of the modern Karanga-speaking area by peoples from the north and east of the Shona country; no more than a few very small groups survived from the earlier population. This involved a major demographic expansion comparable with that of south Russia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries or of North America in the nineteenth century. Within a century the migrating settlers in their new lands came to equal or surpass the population of their homelands. This involved the breaking of vast areas of new fields, and a consequent demand for many new hoes. It is thus hardly surprising that the Njanja iron industry developed when it did, nor that most of the lands to the south where this expansion was going on should have been supplied by the Njanja, who left the much longer-settled lands to the north, where the demand was not so great, strictly alone.

This does not explain why it was the Njanja and not the Hera or Mbire who benefited from this demand. Nor does it explain the Njanja trade to rather longer-established lands such as Buhera, Bocha and the Ndau lands beyond the Sabi. This, however, is explained by the excellent quality of Njanja hoes, which were preferred because they lasted for three to five years; thus the hoes of the Dorowa area, which were full of phosphatic impurities and lasted no more than two years, were not sold outside northern Buhera. The fact that local industries such as those of Dorowa and the others cited above should have survived at all in the face of Njanja competition, however, points to the limitations of the Njanja industry and trade. In spite of the
Njanja use of multiple forges and apprentices to save labour, there do not appear
to have been sufficient Njanja available to market all their hoes. Thus, although
the Njanja could get a high price for their hoes in places farther away such as
Bocha, Gutu and Murwira, a ward of Buhera facing Gutu, roughly a small goat for
a small hoe and a big goat for a big hoe and a small one, they also sold at the
forge. People from far away brought their goods to Wedza, for prices of hoes
dropped sharply close to the Njanja, ten hoes being equal to a big goat, five for
a small one and one for a chicken in upper Buhera, and three to five for a goat
in south Maungwe and the upper Hunyani. This practice, and the practice of the
Mbire and Hera of taking Wedza ore for their own forges, and the fact that the Njanj
were never able to control Wedza itself, prevented the Njanja from creating a
monopoly, which was important in an economy where hoes were so badly needed that
some of the poorer people of Bocha and Duma had to revert to the neolithic digging-
stick.

There is no doubt that the Njanja benefited considerably from their iron
industry and trade: it brought them cattle, goats, salt and ivory in some
quantities. But did this mean that their political and economic strength lay in
the iron trade? The Njanja today tend to believe that it did. They are today
known as the ironworkers par excellence of the southern Zezuru and northern Karanga
areas, and some even claim that they spent little time in growing crops. This
is simply not supported by the documents of the 1890s, which show that the Charter
district close to the main road, which was largely Njanja country, was one of the
major suppliers of grain to European traders before the 1896 rising, and that
trading centres for grain were established at the villages of Ranga and Chivese, two
of the Njanja rulers. The 1895 census, for all its faults, showed exactly the
same ratio of croplands to people among the Njanja as among the other groups, and
in fact they were not as well off proportionally in terms of stock. Even though
the much more accurate survey of 1899 shows that the Njanja were slightly better
off than their neighbours in terms of cattle and much better off in terms of goats,
this can be accounted for by the fact that their lands were not fought over in 1896,
and by their sales of grain to the Europeans during the risings. If there are
only about four references to the Njanja iron trade in the 1890s, this is surely
due to the fact that in their economy the ordinary economic activity of agriculture
was of paramount importance. The Njanja claim that their political power rested on
the wealth acquired by their rulers from the iron trade must be put into the context
the overall demographic movement mentioned earlier. Under these conditions other
peoples who were not characterised as ironworkers achieved a political and demographi
expansion equal to or surpassing that of the Njanja; the Rufura of the Gutu, Ndanga and Belingwe districts, the Mhisi of the Lundi and Tokwe valleys and the entire Duma confederacy all expanded in a similar way to the Njanja. In short, the Njanja provide a classic example of the dangers in ignoring the ideological superstructure of a mode of production in the examination of its economic base.

Although the Njanja had their economy firmly rooted in agriculture, it does not follow that they corresponded exactly to the model proposed by Gray and Birmingham of a subsistence-oriented trading group. No known Shona economy approximated to Meillasou's model of a subsistence economy in which trade goods had only a conventional, social value and not a universal, monetary value - the inequalities of the Shona environment in climate, land and natural resources saw to it that there was a clearly understood relationship between the values of imported goods as well as salt-cakes and hoes, and foodstuffs and stock. The Njanja can be shown to have organised their production and trade with an eye to market forces. They had neither a monopoly of an ironmaking technique, nor of iron ore, and they were not forced to iron production by an especially hostile environment, nor were their customers forced to buy from them. By increasing production of high-quality hoes, they were able to be fairly sure of selling hoes that had not been specifically ordered. This would qualify them as people who had made the 'transition' from subsistence to market-oriented trade, but it has yet to be proven that any Njanja community relied largely upon its iron trade for either economic or political support. The Njanja were only just 'transitional' from the subsistence-oriented trade of their neighbours, and their transition did not lead to any marked differences from them.

All other Shona groups involved with internal trade were clearly subsistence-oriented in that their trade was small-scale, and primarily intended to offset the problem of an agricultural failure by allowing for a buildup of stock. All the other iron industries mentioned, the salt trade, trade in gunpowder, copperwork, pots, cloth, musical instruments and other articles all followed this pattern. The Shangwe tobacco trade, to take a final example, shows how a basically agricultural people sought to guard against shanawa by growing and selling tobacco. The study of this trade shows how, after a concentration on the purchase of blankets and other trade goods in the early 1900s, the Shangwe used their tobacco to trade for small stock, and, given the problems of grain storage mentioned above, it seems likely that this was the case in the nineteenth century. Yet the figures supplied clearly show that the total amount of tobacco grown in any year of the twentieth century was far outweighed by the grain grown. The suggestion that the nineteenth-century Shangwe grow no grain is highly improbable, and probably reflects the ideology of the
Shangwe rather than their economy.\textsuperscript{116}

\textbf{External trade.}

Obviously, this was market-oriented trade, since it was linked to the demand of the world in general and India in particular for gold, ivory and copper, these being the main products that were exported. Thanks to the attention focused on the stone buildings of the Zimbabwe-Khuni culture and the activities of the Portuguese in southern Zambezia, the general outline and nature of this trade is fairly well known.\textsuperscript{117} What is not so well known is the relative importance of the trade and its effect on the Shona communities concerned.

The settlement of the Shona peoples in southern Zambezia saw a great increase in external trade, compared with that of the previous Southeast-Bantu Early Iron Age people. Although there is no proof that any of the Early Iron Age people carried out reef mining, the import of a very limited amount of beads and references to a gold trade from Sofala in the tenth century suggest that some gold-washing was carried out.\textsuperscript{118} The arrival of the Shona led to reef mining,\textsuperscript{119} and the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries saw the establishment of a trade between the Shona and India. Shona miners mined, washed and rilled the gold, and while Shona traders took it to the coastal ports, Muslim African traders came inland to buy. The gold was then taken in Muslim vessels to India. The goods imported were mainly cloth, beads and ceramics, the first two being dominant.\textsuperscript{120} Two major political and social developments followed the rise of this trade: the rise of the Shona state at Zimbabwe some time after 1200, with its peak in the late fourteenth century and its fall by 1500, as well as its northern and southern successor-states of Mutapa, Torwa and Changamire, and the rise of the East African coastal cities who acted as middlemen in the trade, being succeeded after 1500 by the Portuguese conquista based on Moçambique.\textsuperscript{121} The developments in the politics, society and architecture of these Shona, Muslim and Portuguese organizations are too well known to require detailed analysis here.\textsuperscript{122} What is of crucial importance is the position of this mining industry and trade in the Shona economy.

The Shona miners were efficient prospectors and good miners who exploited a difficult geological situation to the limits imposed by their technological ability to pump water and provide ventilation. Within these limits they worked out very nearly all of the payable reef gold by the beginning of the nineteenth century, so that by the time the Ndebele occupied the southwest in the 1840s and the Europeans the northeast in the 1890s it was nearly all gone. Their goldwashing continued into modern times. Their milling of the ore was rather less effective, and perhaps 40\% of t
gold mined was lost at this stage. The goldmining and washing process was nearly always seasonal and carried out in the 'slack' period of the agricultural cycle to which it was definitely secondary. There is no reliable evidence that any Shona goldmining area was not primarily an agricultural unit.

The uneven distribution of the goldbearing areas meant that very many of the Shona people were never involved with the gold industry in any way. The gold figures of Sofala give some idea of the relative size of the industry in the early sixteenth century, when Zimbabwe had already declined, but when the successor-state of Torwa was flourishing at Khami, and the Mutapa state was powerful in the Zambezi valley. The trade of Sofala was then being partly bypassed by Muslim traders using the Zambezi, there was certainly unofficial trade that was not recorded, and the records themselves are incomplete, but Sofala was receiving some of the trade of the Mutapa state, and was well sited to receive at least some of the gold trade of Torwa and Manyika. In a twenty-year period, with fluctuations ranging from 25,028 miticais in 1513-4 to 5524 in eight months of 1518-9, Sofala officially received round about 5,580 miticais or about 930 ounces of gold a year, If this was only 60% of the gold yield of the ore mined, if an ounce of gold to a ton of ore was a fair yield, if Sofala was receiving only one third - say - of the total gold trade of southern Zambezia, if a team of six people could mine about a ton of ore a day, and there were two such teams to a village working only one of the two main months in which gold was traditionally extracted, then at a time only a century after the height of Zimbabwe's power, perhaps eighty villages in the whole of southern Zambezia were mining gold. Since these figures obviously err very much on the side of caution, the figure of about a thousand Shona digging for gold in the early sixteenth century is rather an exaggerated one. As is well known, the Portuguese efforts to control the Shona gold mines and trade led, if anything, to the decline of the industry in the Mutapa state in the seventeenth century. In the Changamire state, whose goldfields in the seventeenth century under the Torwa been known as the mae d'ouro, the mother of gold, the output of gold in the middle of the eighteenth century through the Zambezi was about 60 mastas, 990 ounces, a year. The evidence for this relates to a single year, 1762, and may have been exceptional, but the Changamire goldfields had less than eighty years of active life ahead of them.

The export of copper was worth only a fraction of the trade in gold, and copper mines were relatively rare. The second great item in Shona external trade was ivory. Elephants had always offered a great deal of meat to the more daring hunters, and according to Santos they were mainly killed for their meat by men who dug pit-traps
Another method used was the spearing of elephants by men in overhanging trees. But the method remembered in traditions was one that let the hunter pick out the tusker he considered to be the best. It was first recorded among the Shona of Inhambane in the 1560s. Approaching the elephant from downwind or through a specially prepared cloud of medicine-dust that hid his sme the hunter struck at its hamstring with a big axe. The helpless elephant could then be killed with a large spear. This demanded skill and luck: if the wind changed or the hunter made a noise, if he hit the wrong place or not hard enough, the corps of hunters would be reduced by one. Individual enterprise brought an individual reward: the ruler usually took one tusk, the meat was distributed to the community, but the hunter kept the upper tusk. The hunter and the ruler faced the same problems in disposing of the ivory. Locally, a tusk would pay the bride-price of a wife, allowing more croplands to be opened up and planted. Alternatively, an area poor in iron such as Bocha might use the tusk to buy good iron ore from places such as Wedza. But usually ivory, like gold, went to the coast.

The Shona owner of gold and ivory faced much the same problems from the very earliest years of the export trade up to the nineteenth century. If the goods were taken to the coast they would command a higher price than that offered by a trader from the coast, whether mwene, Muslim, or zungu, 'Portuguese'. On the other hand the long journey to the coast took a man away from his fields and herds and exposed him to robbery and hardship. Naturally, rulers found it easier to organise and finance convoys to the sea, but individuals did make the journey. People in Bocha and Gutu used to go to Chiluane and nearby Buene, while the people of Buhera could choose between Buene and faraway Sena. The traders reached at least as far in as Zimbabwe and Khami, Muslims up to the seventeenth century and African vashambad pedlars, acting on behalf of the Portuguese, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Manoel António de Sousa, holder of the prazo of Gorongosa from the 1860s, was so well known in the interior that his Shona name, 'Kuveya', became a synonym for all zungu traders. The importance of this trade in gold and ivory was that it gave the Shona in their villages right across the country a very clear idea of the state of the economy over a very wide area indeed, as we shall see below in the context of migrant labour.

The volume of the ivory trade appears to have risen as that of the gold trade fell. The records of Sofala for the early sixteenth century, subject to the same caveats as those for gold and even less comprehensive, show that 488½ quintals of ivory were traded between 1506 and 1519, probably averaging about 60 quintals a year if full records had survived. This was equivalent to about 7,680 lbs or
about 71 elephants at 40 lbs a tusk. Santos, writing of Sofala after the Zambezi leak in the trade had been brought under Portuguese control, thought that 3,000 arrobas or 97,020 lbs of ivory left the coast every year: 646 elephants at the rate given above. In 1762 the total export of ivory from the Rivers of Sena, Sofala and Inhambane, drawn from a hinterland that included the north bank of the Zambezi, and much of the Tsonga country southeast of the Shona, was 130 bareas, or 84,084 lbs: 1,051 elephants. Unfortunately, these latter two references are isolated estimates, and even the Sofala figures for ivory are less good than those for gold. Putting these very unsatisfactory figures into human terms and assuming for argument's sake that the average hunter killed three elephants a year, this gives us about 215 hunters operating in the 1590s and about 350 in the 1760s. Once more, we can see that the external trade of the Shona, no matter how important it was to entrepreneurs such as the Muslims and the Portuguese, or even the Shona rulers of the Zimbabwe, Torwa, Mutapa and Changamire states, was only peripheral to the economy of the great bulk of the Shona people. Yet, if the total volume of Shona industry and trade was so small, this does not reduce its value in the eyes of the people. Far from it. The historical record shows an extraordinarily rapid response to economic opportunities of all kinds, ranging from the Mutapa's rapid approach to the Portuguese after they took Sofala to the individual man's sale of vegetables to the incoming British in 1890. The task of the economic historian is to get a more accurate picture of the nature of the Shona economy than can be given by a simple list of branches of production. One of the factors that must be taken into account, even before we have an analysis of relations of production, is that relative wealth and poverty.

Wealth and poverty.

We have already seen that in the economic history of the Shona, not all the people have shared the same degree of prosperity or poverty. Partly, this was a question of space: some areas were too dry, too sandy, too alkaline in their soil structure to support an agriculture as flourishing as that of other areas. Some areas were affected by tsetse fly that prevented them from building up herds of cattle. Others were deficient in minerals, iron and salt, gold and copper. A second kind of difference involved time: not only were there short-term changes in the economic state of the country caused by droughts, wars or locust plagues, but there were much more gradual changes. Goldfields were worked out, there may have been long-term climatic changes. To take one area, Buhera, which has been occupied as far back as traditions go by the shava Hera people: at some time between c.1400 and
c. 1700, this area was wealthy enough to finance the construction of several stone
zimbabwe.s, even though there was no gold in the area. Yet by the nineteenth
century Buhera, even though affected only briefly by raids in the 1860s, was
clearly at a lower economic level than in the past, and the Hera were generally
much poorer than they had been two or three centuries earlier.

A third difference involved the people within a single community at a single
time. The archaeology of the Shona people of Zimbabwe shows that there was a wealthy
class of people who could afford elaborate stone walls around their well-built huts,
and who used a specialised pottery for liquids, their cooking being done away from
their own huts. At the same time there were poorer people whose huts, and pots were
less elaborate. In the Mutapa state there was a clear distinction between the
court of the Mutapa, rich in cloth obtained from taxation, and the ordinary people.
The situation in Teve was the same, and the use of cloth as a currency by the
Portuguese up to the nineteenth century as well as the production of excellent -
but expensive because time-consuming - cloth by the Shona shows that in the earlier
centuries the amount of cloth owned was an index of wealth.

In the later centuries, with the help of oral traditions, it becomes easier
to distinguish the poor than the rich. There were four groups of people whose
low social position was linked to a lower level of economic power and wealth:
women, children, slaves and bondmen. Both women and children played a considerable
part in the running of the economy, yet they were legally classed as minors and
received little more than the food for which they worked, their wealth being limited
to a few immediate belongings and, very rarely, a few beasts. In the Zambezi
valley before the Portuguese came, there were two kinds of akaporo, slaves who
were captured in war or sold by their home community in times of drought, and
bondmen who sold themselves under similar circumstances. Shona communities were
generally better off than those of the drought-prone valley, and were keen to acquire
extra members. Men from Manyika went to Sena and Tete with hoes, goats, gold and
skins to buy women and small boys. Sena traders sold people for ivory near
Zimbabwe and in Chwaya, and famine-stricken Sena people exchanged women for
grain in Mbire. Male slaves 'were given any kind of work, and they had no voice
to complain or report anywhere'. Slaves could be bought and sold: Mangwende
Mungati bought one for his son Muchemwa, the 1896 Rising leader. Slaves were
not very common, but bondmen, varanda, were. Poverty led a muranda to sell
himself to his father-in-law in return for a wife - an extension of the idea of
uxorilocal marriage extended to a lifetime. A muranda 'is not a free man. He can
be sent anywhere... his chief work was to do difficult work and to do all the home
work. He would plough... Both slaves and varanda were unfree for life, but their children were free. There was no theoretical bar to the acquisition of wealth by such people, but it was difficult: often a slave could not afford to marry.

This kind of differentiation between wealth and poverty between the extremes of the rulers of Zimbabwe and the varanda of the nineteenth century was both an end product of the entire economic process and a cause of the remarkable efforts made by the Shona to develop their economy in all directions. It is one of the major underlying factors in the situation created by the onset of the capitalist economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Precolonial peasantries and migrant labour.

The date of the onset of colonial rule is difficult to define. Obviously, the theoretical annexation of a territory by a colonial power is of little relevance. The true date can be taken as being either the beginning of practical administration of the people by a government or the date of their surrender to that government. The date of the onset of colonial rule over the Shona ranges from 1894, when the British South Africa Company began to collect tax, to 1903, when some of the people of the northeast were still refusing to recognise the Native Department as anything but a raiding force. Some writers prefer to concentrate on the onset of the capitalist economy, but this too is a variable date. In either case, Shona peasantries and migrant labourers are recorded at very early dates - 'peasant' being defined for the moment as an independent agriculturalist who plants in the hope of profit.

For a long time, until the Portuguese established the prazos da coroa at the beginning of the seventeenth century, they relied upon African growers for their food. In December 1506 a ruler in the hinterland of Sofala informed the Portuguese that he had brought peace to the land in order that he might send them supplies, and in about May 1507 he himself arrived to meet them. If this commerce in food was the prerogative of the ruler, other such trades were not, and by the 1590s Sofala was reliant upon the vegetables grown by the people both near Sofala and at the mouth of the Sabi. Thus, where a mercantile economy was unable to supply its own food, an African peasantry arose to supply that need. When a capitalist economy appeared and had the same need, there was the same response, before any governmental pressures were applied. From 1890 to 1894, before the Native Department began to levy tax, the Shona rapidly expanded their acreages and diversified into growing maize as a staple crop for sale to the mines, as described above in connection with the Njanja, and elsewhere.

One of the definitions of capitalism is as a situation in which a man sells
his labour for money, and in this case capitalism can be seen to have been affecting the Shona by the early 1870s. We have already seen that the gold and ivory trade, in which Shona traders travelled long distances to the ports, encouraged a very shrewd appreciation of market opportunities of all kinds. This extended to the south as well as to the east. There are traditions of Shona economic contact with the Zulu, and men such as Karemba, one of Selous' men who was hired by Montagu Kerr in Klerksdorp in 1884 and who had contacts in the southeast as well as in Chimere's country on the Umfuli must have done much to spread news of opportunities. The Kimberley mines began to employ African labour on a significant scale in 1869-70, and by 1873 at least one Shona was returning from work there. By 1883, over 25 Shona from the Duma country were returning from Kimberley. By 1890 the people near Zimbabwe had been to Kimberley, and in 1895 much of the hut tax was paid in gold earned at Johannesburg and Kimberley.

Migrant labour also appeared at Rhodesian mines before 1894. There were few cases of labour enforcement by the Company before the Native Department began this practice on a large scale in 1894. The average wage offered of 10/- a month for a Shona labourer was not an attractive one, and under the circumstances it is surprising that any Shona people at all cared to work for the mines, yet this seems to have been the case. In June, 1893 'a good many' Shona from Lomagundi as well as 'Shangaans' arrived at Hartley, and some at least of the labour force at Victoria at the same time seems to have been Shona. Since the Europeans, in the fond belief that race determined achievement, paid 'Shangaan' labourers more than Shona, many of the 'Shangaans' who were employed on the mines before 1894 may have been Shona, especially from the Ndau-speaking areas. One group from Bikita set out to look for work in Salisbury in 1893.

Most of the product of early peasant sales and migrant labour went into trade goods, some of which could be exchanged against stock as the traditional bulwark against shangwa, and in many cases guns, which offered several methods of economic advancement from raiding to elephant hunting, were secured. But it is interesting to note that by 1895 coin was being used directly by the people of Lomagundi whose crops had been ruined by the locusts to buy food. And by 1897 a great deal of the tax paid in Bocha was in Portuguese coin, which also implies a wide, and possibly early, movement of labourers and crops to Portuguese Manyika.

The very brief account given here of the transition from the 'traditional' economy to the capitalist economy shows how rapid was the response of the Shona to changing conditions. The rapid expansion of Shona agriculture to meet the opportunities offered by the mercantilist economy in the sixteenth century and the
capitalist economy in the nineteenth was dramatic enough. The speed of the Shona response to the opening of Kimberley - and, since we are reliant at present upon scattered missionary reports for the period before 1890, there were certainly other Shona migrant labour movements that went unrecorded - was also rapid. But the truly surprising thing is that anyone cared to become a migrant labourer, either to Kimberley and the Rand before 1890 or to the Rhodesian mines after then, until compelled to do so by the Native Department’s demands for tax and labour. Labour conditions in South Africa were not princely, and in Rhodesia they were much worse. Most goods, including guns, were available in the Shona country from zungu and Venda traders. The conclusion seems to be, once more, that in the era before colonial pressures there were pressures within the Shona economy and society that forced people to go to considerable lengths to acquire wealth of some kind.

**The Shona economy: conclusions.**

The picture given here of the Shona economy stresses the importance of agriculture as the base of the Shona economy, and points out the limitations of other branches of production, ranging from hunting to goldmining, in terms of relative value, even though in some cases these branches of production involved very sophisticated techniques. Yet the agricultural base itself is shown to have suffered from a serious weakness, in that longer periods of prosperity in farming were followed by short but weakening periods of disaster, *shangwa*, against which the Shona were not able to devise an absolutely reliable defence. It seems likely that the root of the problem lay in a range of crops and storage methods that did not stand up to the demands of the harsh environment. Since the agricultural base was not completely secure, livestock, and especially cattle, assumed a special importance as an emergency food supply and as a self-perpetuating form of wealth. Mining, manufacturing and trade were developed as far as possible, but for a variety of reasons were not able totally to offset the limitations of agriculture. Consequently, there was not only a rapid response to mercantilist and capitalist market opportunities in the form of peasant production of crops, but there was even a certain amount of migrant labour towards the generally uninviting mine compounds before government compulsion began at the end of the nineteenth century.

This account of the Shona economy offers two main elements for discussion and development. In the field of twentieth-century studies, its explanation of some of the weaknesses of the economy explains the speed with which the Shona reacted to the opportunity presented of becoming peasant producers. It also shows that this opportunity gave the Shona the chance of achieving true economic security through agriculture, the one field in which all the people could participate. The
destruction of Shona agriculture after a few years of prosperity was thus especially tragic, since it forestalled the achievement of the kind of economic and social stability sought after in developing nations today. In the second place, this discussion of the relative importance of the branches of production of the Shona economy can help in the identification of modes of production. An examination of the ways in which the people produced and consumed things, whether in the smallest village or in the early Shona states, can be helped by a knowledge of the limits of each branch in which they worked. It should be possible to calculate the game cover in a given area and the extent to which an agricultural group could survive upon it, for example. At the other end of the scale, the knowledge that Zimbabwe's population probably did not exceed 5,000 and that there were probably even fewer part-time gold miners in southern Zambezia shows us how much Zimbabwe must have relied upon agriculture. Yet our knowledge of Shona agriculture makes both the linked rise of Zimbabwe and the East African coastal cities through the gold trade and the suggested fall of Zimbabwe for environmental reasons readily understandable. We are thus getting closer towards an understanding of Shona precolonial history.

(This paper is based on a paper read at the Umtali History Conference, December 1975.)
References.

1. The identification of 'southern Zambezia' as an economic zone cuts off many of the peoples mentioned from greater numbers of them to the north and south.

2. P.S. Harris, Black Industrial Workers in Rhodesia. (Gwelo, 1974).


6. The main exception being Manyika, covered by the thesis and articles of Dr H.H.K. Bhila.

7. e.g. Sutherland-Harris, 243.

8. C. Meillasoux, 'From reproduction to production; a Marxist approach to economic anthropology', Econ. and Soc., 1, 1972, 93-8, 103; E. Terray, Marxism and 'primitive' societies, (New York, 1972), 95, 183-4.


10. Ibid., 99.

11. University of Rhodesia History Department Text 93 Gta.

12. N 9/2/2 unless otherwise stated, all archival references are those of the National Archives of Rhodesia, Salisbury Report of NC Hartley, 30 Sep. 1898.


This is a very tentative dating. Pottery, and hence almost certainly agriculture has been dated to round about BC 1500 in the neolithic Kintampo culture of Ghana, P.C. Ozanne, 'Ghana', in The African Iron Age ed. P.L. Shinnie, (London, 1971), 39. Iron was well established in Nigeria by BC 200-300 (F.Willett, 'Nigeria', in Shinnie, 12) and in South African by the third century AD. Whenever the Shona ancestors were at this time, they almost certainly became agriculturalists then.


W. Montagu Kerr, The far interior, (London, 1887), i, 44.

NB 1/1/2, ANC Mpateni to NV Belingwe, 16 Dec. 1897.


D.N. Beach, An Outline of Shona history, (in production) ch. 1.
35 Beach, Outline, chs. 2, 4-6.


37 URHD Texts 87 Gtu, 98-9 and 102 Gzi, 105 Wza.

38 URHD Texts 71-3 Uti, 82-3 Bha, 87, 89 Gtu, 97-9 Gzi, 105 Wza; Gelfand, 73 - 80; Roder, Sabi, 56.


40 Gelfand, 74.


42 I am indebted to Mr F. du Toit and to Dr G. Smith of the Department of Education, University of Rhodesia, for their help in the question of grain storage. The final conclusions are my responsibility.

43 Personal communication from Mr R.H.G. Mtegwa, who comes from a dry, mapundu-growing area; Gelfand, 74.

44 URHD Texts 82-3 Bha, 87, 89 Gtu.


47 URHD Text 88 Gtu; A. Livneh, 'Some notes on drought... in Rhodesia', SOAS/ICS AHS paper, 1974.

48 N 3/33/8, NC Marandellas to CNC Salisbury, 1 Jan 1904.

49 N 1/1/5, NC Lomagundi to CNC Salisbury, 26 Sep. 1895.


51 F.H. Ferrão, 'Account of the Portuguese possessions within the Captaincy of
52. URHD Texts 82-3 Bha, 87, 89 Gtu.


54. Ibid.; Phimister, 'Peasant production', 220.

55. N 1/1/9 NC Salisbury to CNC Salisbury, 22 Jul. and 24 Nov. 1895.

56. N 1/1/6 NC Mazoe to CNC Salisbury 30 Oct. 1897.


58. URHD Text 103 Mds.

59. Hist.HSS. WI 8/1/1 Nkani 1-2.


64. URHD Texts 71-2 Uti; N 1/1/11 ANC to NC Umtali, 22 Dec. 1896.


67. 'Viagem que fez o padre Antônio Gomes', 1648, Studia, 3, 1959, 196-8.


70. Garlake, Great Zimbabwe, 156, 122; personal communication from Dr T.N. Huffman


72 F 4/1/1, Report of NC Victoria, 1 Jul. 1895.

73 A 15/1/1, Hut tax return, 19 Jul. 1895.

74 Nobbs, 331; Cobbing, 13.

75 Kousu, 9.

76 e.g. J.F. Holleman, Shona customary law, (London, 1952), 161 - 169.


78 URHD Texts 87-8 Gtu, 94 Gta, 102 Gzi, 105 Wza.

79 J.D. White, 'Some notes on the history and customs of the Urungwe district', NADA x, 3, 1970, 38.

80 Santos, 265.

81 White, 38.

82 URHD Texts 93-4, 96 Gta.

83 EC 3/1/1, No. 124, 13 May 1899.

84 Roder, Sabi, 66.

85 URHD Texts 72-4 Uti, 82-3, 85 Bha; N 1/1/11, ANC to NC Umtali, 22 Dec.1896.

86 URHD Texts 72-4 Uti, 80-3, 85 Bha, 89 Gtu, 96-9, 102 Gzi, 103, 105 Wza.


88 URHD Text 93 Gta.

89 URHD Texts 81-2 Bha.


91 Prendergast, 225.
Izidoro Correia Pereira, 'Mappa das minas conhecidas no distrito de Senna', 30 Jul. 1857 and Francisco de Paula Carvalho, 'Relação das minas conhecidas na província de Moçambique', 15 Oct. 1879, in Memoria e Documentos Acerca dos Direitos de Portugal aos Territorios de Machona e Nyassa 1890 (Lisbon, 1890), 296 - 328.


URHD Texts 93 Gtu, 97 Gzi.

N 3/33/8, NC Marandellas to CNC Salisbury, 1 Jan. 1904.


Beach, Outline, ch. 6.

Pereira, 292.

MacKenzie, 'Iron industry'; URHD Texts 71 Uti, 89 Gtu; Mtetwa, 'Dynamic economy'.

Beach, Outline, ch. 6.

URHD Texts 81-2 Bha; personal communication from Dr C.A. Lee.

URHD Texts 71 Uti, 82 Bha, 88 Gtu.

URHD Text 80 Bha. This may be a depressed price due to the proximity of the Dorowa iron industry.

URHD Texts 98, 102 Czi, 107 Rse.


Phimister, 'Peasant production', 220; N 1/1/2, NC Charter to CNC Salisbury, 17 Jul and 26 Aug 1895; Range Diary, 19 - 20, 21, 25, 30 Sep., 1-2, 13 Oct., 15, 27 Nov. 1896; N 1/1/12 NC Victoria to CNC Salisbury, 12 Jun. and 1 Jul. 1895; in 1895 the trader H. Short moved from his trading station at Umniati in the Hera country to Altona near Ranga's, L 1/2/2, Surveyor General to E.E. Homan, 5 Mar. 1895.


N 9/1/5, Report of NC Charter, 1 Apr. 1899.

MacKenzie, 'Iron workers', 6, 8, 16.

Beach, Outline, ch. 6. These are the most spectacular examples, but most Karanga groups and many Zezuru carried out remarkable demographic expansions at this time.


MacKenzie, 'Iron industry', 6 - 14; Gray and Birmingham, 3 - 10.

Kosmin, 558, 565, 568.


Beach, Outline, ch. 1.


Beach, Outline, chs. 1-5.

e.g. M.D.D. Newitt, Portuguese Settlement on the Zambezi, (London, 1973),

I.R. Phimister, 'Precolonal mining', unpublished paper, Salisbury, 1974, passim. I am indebted to Mr Phimister for permission to refer to his thesis in production, of which this forms a chapter.

The main statement to the contrary, H.H.K. Bhila, 'Trade and the survival of an African polity: the external relations of Manyika from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century', Rhod.Hist.3,1972,11. relies upon C. Alcantara Guerreiro, 'Inquerito em Mocambique no ano de 1573', Studia 6, 1960, 12-8. This refers to the moradores, the Portuguese settlers, buying food from elsewhere, not the people of Manyika itself.
See map.


Notes of Gaspar Veloso, 1512, Documenta iii, 187.

Dickinson, 150. The annual averages arrived at are based on an average of the monthly figures available.

Pero de Anhaia to the King Treasurers, 19 May 1506 and Manuel Fernandes to the King's Treasurers, 21 Oct. 1506, Documenta i, 507, 687.

See map.

Dickinson, 150.

Phimister, 'Precolonial mining', 20.

Ibid., 22.

Diogo de Alcanova to the King, 20 Nov. 1506, Documenta i, 3957, who otherwise greatly overestimated the bulk of the gold trade, thought that the Zambezi trade was only a fraction of that Sofala. The Portuguese in their disappointment at the low return from Sofala in turn exaggerated the gold trade of the Zambezi, but when they finally came to control the trade in the 1540s it did not prove to be very great.

H. Preston; 'Primitive mining in Central Africa', Chamber of Min.J., vii, 2 1965, 41. I am indebted to Mr I.R. Phimister for this reference.

Phimister, 'Precolonial mining', 5.

It is obvious that estimates of this kind, based on so many variables, must be handled with care: if a ton of ore averaged only half an ounce, it could double the labour involved for the same amount of gold exported. But it is important to have some idea of economic activity in terms of human activity rather than in ounces or tons, which mean little to most non-specialists.

Antonio Gomes, 197; Raimundo de Moraes Pereira, 'Memorias da costa d'Africa Oriental e algumas reflexões uteis para estabelecer melhor, e fazer mais florate seu commercio', 1762, Relações de Moçambique Setecentista, ed. A.A. Andrade, (Lisbo 1955), 219. A further 60 pastas of gold, some of it probably from the Changamire state, left through Sofala. An accurate summary of trade figures over the whole Portuguese period is long overdue: Marco Antonio de Montaury in the same year cruised Zumbo alone with 300 - 400 pastas (5,775 ounces) of gold a year. (Rea, 163-4). At this late date in the Shona gold industry, the lower figure looks more probable.
139 Pereira, 296.
140 Santos, 321-2.
141 Roder, Sabi, 63.
142 André Fernandes to Luis Frois, 25 Jun. 1560, Documents vii, 483.
143 URHD Texts 71, 74 Uti, 80-3, 85 Bha, 87 Gtu, 93 Gta.
144 Ibid.; URHD Texts 73 Uti, 89 Gtu, 94-5 Gta, 98, 102 Gzi, 103 Mds.
145 André Fernandes to Fr. Provincial, India, 24 Jun. 1560, Documents vii, 467.
146 URHD Texts 73 Uti, 80, 83, 85 Bha, 87 Gtu.
147 Garlake, Great Zimbabwe, 132; António Gomes, 197: Mudenge, passim.
149 Dickinson, 153.
150 See note 137.
151 Santos, 321-2.
152 Moraes Pereira, 212.
153 Beach, Outline, ch. 2.

157 N 9/1/5 Report of NC Charter 1 Apr. 1899.
158 Personal communication from Dr T.N. Huffman. Work on the pocrer parts of Zimbabwe is only now being developed.
159 Duarte Barbosa, 'Description ... ', Documents v, 359; Barros, 270-1; T.N. Huffman, 'Cloth from the Iron Age in Rhodesia', Arnoldia, v, 14, 1971, 1 - 19.
Mtetwa, 'Dynamic economy',  

A. Isaacman, Mozambique, the Africanization of a European institution, (Madison 1972), 47-9.

Hist. MSS. MA 14/1/2, Lesson 43.

Carl Mauch, 213; URHD Texts 93-4 Gta.

URHD Text 103 Mds.

Hist. MSS. MA 14/1/1, Lesson 43.

N 3/1/15, Evidence of Manando, Inquest at Matuniki's, 9 Nov. 1898.


URHD Texts 71 Uti, 82, 85 Bha, 87 Gtu, 97 Gzi.

Hist. MSS. MA 14/1/1, Lesson 43.


Manuel Fernandes to the King's Treasurers, 30 Dec. 1506, Documents i, 769; Martin Fernández de Figueroa, 'Account, 1505-11', Documents, iii, 612.

Santos, 186.

Phimister, 'Peasant production', 220.


Kerr, i, 99.

H. von Sicard, Zvakaitika kare zveKereke vamaluthere munvika veRhodesia. (Gwelo, 1972), 17. The response from Shona living under Ndebele rule was equally rapid. Cobbing, 53-4.

Hist. MSS. BE 2/1/1, Half yearly report, Tahakoma, Ist. semester, 1883.

180 N 1/1/12, ANC Victoria to CNC Salisbury, 3 Feb. 1896.


182 DL 1/1/1, Report of CC Hartley, 23 Apr. 1895.


184 DL 1/1/1, Report of CC Hartley, 23 Apr. 1895.


186 N 1/1/5, NC Lomagundi to CNC Salisbury, 26 Sep. 1895.

187 N 1/1/11, ANC Umtali, 9 Dec 1897.